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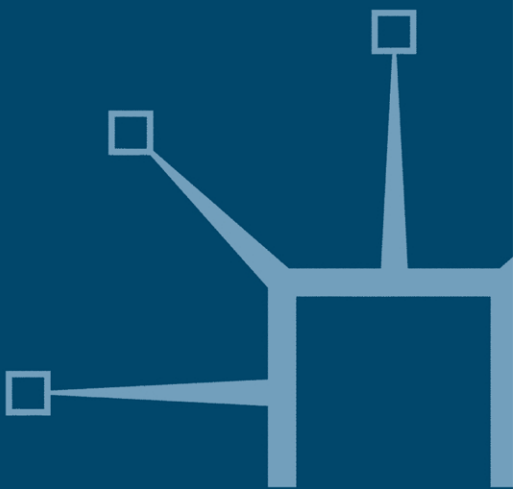
The Russian Reading Revolution

Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras

Stephen Lovell



The Russian Reading Revolution

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The Russian Reading Revolution

Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras

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List of Abbreviations

KD	*Knizhnoe delo*
KIM	*Kniga: Issledovaniia i materialy*
KO	*Knizhnoe obozrenie*
KT	*Knizhnaia torgovlia*
LG	*Literaturnaia gazeta*
LO	*Literaturnoe obozrenie*
NG	*Nezavisimaia gazeta*
NKO	*Novoe knizhnoe obozrenie*
NLO	*Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*
NM	*Novyi mir*
Og	*Ogonek*
RGALI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva
SI	*Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*

1
Introduction: Russia's Reading Myth

Anyone who has spent much time with urban educated Russians over recent years can testify that they tend to get rather emotional about reading. One often hears (even from people with no great love of the Soviet system) that the Soviet people was the 'best-read' (*samyi chitaiushchii*) in the world. According to most accounts, Moscow students of the 1970s chose their friends not for their drinking capacity, or for the brand of their jeans, but for their ability to hold conversations on a range of ideas and authors that provided a *lingua franca* for the intelligentsia of the time. And now, in the 1990s, the rhetoric of cultural crisis – with its particular reference to 'the death of the book' – is heard with much greater insistence than in the West.

All these are highly subjective opinions, of course. But reading is inescapably bound up with subjectivity. It is very hard to be sure that what reading means to us is shared by other people. Cognitive science, after more than 2000 years of trying, has still not come up with a satisfactory account of how we read.[1] And the reader response criticism of recent decades, although it has produced some interesting new ways of analyzing the 'codes' that structure texts, has never made any headway in explaining how people 'really' treat the written matter that comes their way.[2]

Yet, at the same time, reading is an inherently social activity. It always brings together a producer and a consumer, and usually involves a whole range of additional mediating institutions. It makes possible the dissemination of knowledge, ideas and information across societies that may not have anything else to give them cohesion.[3] A readership, in fact, is one of the best examples of an 'imagined community'.[4] Moreover, the ownership and use of books and other printed material invariably have socially symbolic value in their own right;

often they are linked to notions of social status and/or cultural prestige.

So reading may be regarded as an enormously productive site of cultural creation, as an interface between the world of the individual and the values and meanings circulating more widely in society. Precisely for this reason, it has figured large in social and cultural history of recent decades. The historical sociology of print culture is now a sprawling discipline which comprises at the very least the following areas of study:[5]

(i) *The route print culture takes from author/editor to public* This includes various mediating institutions: libraries, publishers, printers, periodicals, critics and journalists, sellers and distributors of books.
(ii) *The reception and consumption of the printed word* The mutual influence of print culture and its audience; literature as a means of socialization; the transmission of social values through literature; different modes of consumption of print culture.
(iii) *The differentiation of reading according to socio-cultural strata* How does a group of readers become a distinct reading 'public'?
(iv) *The representation of reading* The construction of images (or myths) of readers and reading in societies over history.
(v) *The social anthropology of reading* The interplay between written and oral cultures; definitions and uses of literacy.
(vi) *The social meanings inscribed in print culture* Texts as social comment or critique; literature as a means of the cultural thematization of social meanings (for example, war, justice, individual identity); the social significance of literary form.
(vii) *Books (magazines, journals, pamphlets, newspapers) as artefacts* The ways the material form of print culture conditions its social impact.

In this book I shall touch on all of the above areas. That is not to say they will all be represented equally. To be sure, the mediating institutions and vehicles of print culture (especially publishing and periodicals) will receive fuller attention than, say, the social anthropology of reading. By being so frankly catholic in my methodology, however, I wish to emphasize that the existence of print culture in society ('reading') cannot be reduced to separate studies of 'producers', on the one hand, and 'consumers' on the other. What concerns me here is the interaction of these two groups over time in a particular set of socio-

cultural circumstances. While it would be an exaggeration to say that this approach is entirely new to the study of Soviet cultural history, it has certainly been relatively neglected.[6]

The aim of this introductory chapter is to establish a comparative and theoretical, diachronic *and* synchronic frame of reference for the study of reading in Soviet Russia. The first section looks back at the history of reading in Western Europe and tries to determine whether, in this part of the world at least, there are 'norms' for the role of reading in cultural development.[7] I then examine the arguments for and against considering Russia 'abnormal'. In the third section, reading is linked to the problem of culture as it figures in Russian/Soviet history and in social theory generally. Finally, I explain how the following chapters are intended to shed further light on these areas of inquiry.

A brief history of reading in Western Europe

So heavily indebted is our culture to the written word that it is easy for us to forget that reading and writing have at certain times and in certain places been regarded as a very mixed blessing. There is a venerable tradition of hostility to writing which extends back at least as far as the birth of Western culture. Plato's critique of written culture has inspired some modern philosophers to deconstruct the 'logocentricity' of Western civilization. According to such theories, belief in the power of the written word is the central myth of Western culture.[8]

Even if one accepts that Western civilization has been centred on the Word for the past 2000 years, it can hardly be denied that attitudes to writing and reading have undergone several fundamental shifts (some have called them 'revolutions'). The history of modern reading (that is, reading as an individual, rather than a predominantly social and ritualized activity) is usually held to begin with the Renaissance and the advent of the printing press. Elizabeth Eisenstein has argued that Gutenberg's invention played a crucial role in the social and intellectual development of Western Europe. Although it is generally prudent to see technological advances of this kind as accelerators of social change rather than as causes in their own right, printing seems to have brought an 'unacknowledged revolution' to the literate culture of the fifteenth century. The significance of this change has sometimes been overlooked, as it involved a shift not from an oral to a literate culture, but rather from one kind of literate culture to another. The widespread acquisition of literacy would have to wait another couple of centuries

at least; in the first decades of its existence in Western Europe, the printing press altered above all written communications within the 'Commonwealth of Learning'. As one example we can take university tuition: once books could be reproduced mechanically, it was no longer necessary for students to sit at the feet of their teachers to acquire knowledge; learning was, in theory, accessible to all. Printing also assisted the imposition of social and intellectual norms: it brought standardization along with an increasing recognition of diversity. Even more fundamentally, printing hastened a far-reaching change in the world-view of the educated classes. As Eisenstein concludes: 'Intellectual and spiritual life, far from remaining unaffected, were profoundly transformed by the multiplication of new tools for duplicating books in fifteenth-century Europe. The communications shift altered the way Western Christians viewed their sacred book and the natural world.'[9]

The centrality of reading in Western culture since the Renaissance has drawn many researchers to the relatively new discipline of 'book history'. The book is promising material for cultural history, as it both exists as a material object (and hence is subject to economic, social and political influences through the printing and distribution systems), yet also contains a cultural charge that triggers a response in its recipients. One of the most persuasive accounts of this new approach to cultural history has been given by Roger Chartier, the renowned sociologist of literature, culture and ideas. Chartier is not inclined to ignore the role of socio-economic factors that influence artistic production, but he also emphasizes that a central place must be given to the 'relationship of the text and the readers, individual or collective, who construct it at each encounter'. The 'new cultural history' strives to develop a non-quantitative conception of representativeness that can combine 'structures' and 'representation'; it thereby offers a third way between abstract history of ideas (*histoire des mentalités*) and what Chartier calls 'serial quantitative writing'.[10]

Some of the leading practitioners of book history have laid great emphasis on periods of socio-cultural modernization. In Western Europe and America, that means the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Scholars have made the wholly justifiable assertion that the full impact of print culture was felt not in Gutenberg's lifetime, and not even for several lifetimes after his death. The breakthrough occurred only during the eighteenth century, when improvements in the technology of printing and communications ensured books and other printed material an enormous role in the dissemination of information

and culture. Robert Darnton, in his study of pre-revolutionary France, sees books as advantageously situated at the crossroads of the disciplines: they were 'products of artisanal labour, objects of economic exchange, vehicles of ideas, and elements in political and religious conflict'.[11] The nineteenth century, so this argument usually runs, then saw a definitive shift from the 'intensive' (that is, repeated) reading of a restricted number of works to the 'extensive' consumption of a much wider range of printed material. This 'reading revolution' prepared the way for the mass reading public of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[12]

The pace of the 'reading revolution' varied considerably from one country to another. Habitual readers in eighteenth-century England had a relatively unchanging diet of the scriptures and a few other religious texts. Bible reading remained an essential part of the daily routine for most Victorian families. Examples such as this suggest that the notion of a 'reading revolution' may in fact be quite problematic: there was no straightforward transition from 'intensive' to 'extensive' reading. In England, secular and religious concerns reached a compromise only very gradually. In Catholic France, on the other hand, reading became more secularized earlier. Literary norms, moreover, were quite relaxed, and the eighteenth century saw the emergence of the French 'novel of worldliness', a genre that never quite had an equivalent in Protestant Anglo-Saxon countries. The French Revolution served only to deepen the gulf between secular and religious literary traditions.[13] Darnton has studied the most secular and least religious literature of eighteenth-century France: those illegal, or at least semi-legal, books containing salacious and/or philosophical literature. Darnton perhaps goes too far in asserting the power of pornography to bring down the *ancien régime*, but he does make an extremely vivid contribution to the cultural history of this period.[14]

The reading public was certainly expanding in France and England in the eighteenth century, but the printed word did not yet have a mass audience.[15] It is in fact the story of the mass reading public in the nineteenth century that most concerns me here, as it will later provide the foundation for a comparative study in socio-cultural modernization. The relationship of 'bourgeois' and 'mass' culture has special relevance for the study of reading in Soviet Russia, as I will try to show. The steps leading to what might be called the 'modernization' of print culture are clear enough: the industrial revolution increases the common people's need for literacy; education reforms are eventually introduced, and illiteracy is largely liquidated; as the

class of readers expands, publishing becomes potentially more profitable; and these new commercial opportunities fuel the development of wide-circulation periodicals and serials. However, if we stop to look at these processes in greater detail, we begin to see that they interact in complex and variable ways. In particular, the rise of a mass reading public inevitably meets opposition from sections of the educated classes and causes social, cultural and even political tension.

The case of England in the nineteenth century is perhaps the most striking example.[16] In 1800, English society had a rigid class structure, and the culturally (not to mention politically) disenfranchised 'masses' were only grudgingly granted representation in the books and periodicals of the time.[17] In the first quarter of the century England was probably the closest it ever came to being a police state: government vigilance was heightened as the fear of Jacobinism persisted. The books and pamphlets circulated to the lower classes were, by and large, chapbooks and religious tracts that aimed to safeguard the moral well-being of the population. A notable and early example of the latter was the series of Cheap Repository Tracts co-ordinated (and largely written) by the Evangelical Hannah More, which enjoyed an enormous print-run of two million in its first year of publication (1795–6). Religious societies produced vast quantities of tracts and homilies, and constantly inveighed against imaginative literature and in particular the type of novel commonly available in the circulating libraries. The common people struggled even to gain the tools of reading. The spread of popular education was obstructed by religious dogma for most of the first half of the century, and also by the no less repressive ideology of utilitarianism. Literacy and schooling were to be strictly rationed so as to enable the lower orders to perform their functions more efficiently without, however, giving them ideas above their station. Progress in education was achieved by the Reform Bills only with huge difficulty: in this area England lagged shamefully behind much of the rest of Europe. One of the main historians of literacy has stated baldly that there was 'practically no educational progress in England between 1800 and 1850'.[18] Library provision was also inadequate: when a bill was finally passed authorizing a council levy to raise money for public libraries, most local councils actually voted against implementing it. England's early and socially traumatic Industrial Revolution created a working class that might appear just as culturally disenfranchised as any that existed under the 'totalitarian' regimes of the twentieth century. These were people whose working and living conditions were

such as to make almost unthinkable any recreational activity beyond drinking and bear-baiting.

None of these circumstances would seem to favour the emergence of a mass reading public, yet the leading historian of the nineteenth-century English reader claimed to be telling 'the story of how, through numberless tribulations, and against what sometimes appeared to be hopeless odds, there took root and eventually flourished in nineteenth-century England a revolutionary social concept: that of the democracy of print'.[19] There were two main factors that assisted this 'democratization'. First, the middle classes were expanding rapidly and provided the demand for a new periodicals market. Many of the measures that were designed to bring education to workers ended up benefiting the aspiring middle classes (one notable example is the adult education movement, including the Mechanics' Institutes). Even more importantly, the middle classes were expanding rapidly in absolute terms: the professional and white-collar classes increased by 80 per cent between 1851 and 1881. Second, the market itself (eventually) drove publishers towards democratization. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century book prices were extremely high. Publishers made no attempt to aim books at a popular audience, and, on economic grounds, they may well have been right not to do so: in this period the costs of publishing were high and the book-buying public was still extremely limited. Publishers knew that if they produced small, high-quality editions, they would find a ready market in the circulating libraries that provided most readers with their access to contemporary works (for example, the novels of Walter Scott). In the years 1800–25 the cheap end of the market was left to the small-scale publishers of popular almanacs. In the late 1820s, however, a general economic crisis and the pathbreaking initiative of individual publishers led to a change in publishing strategy. The market was soon flooded with much cheaper books, of which the middle classes were again the primary beneficiaries: they may have been cheap, but they were still not accessible to the working class, by either price or subject matter.

These two linked tendencies – the broadening of the middle class reading public and the change in publishing policy – persisted to the end of the century. As an immediate response to the lowering of prices in the late 1820s, publishers collaborated in 1829 to take measures against underselling. In the 1850s, however, the debate on pricing came to a head once again, and in 1852 free trade in books was finally authorized. From 1860 to 1890 the middle class and the reading public continued to expand, and book prices fell steadily. Price legislation

only returned in the late 1890s as a response to the competition publishers (and print culture in general) were experiencing from other consumer goods. In 1899 the net book agreement came into force, and it was only abandoned in the mid-1990s. The market in periodicals underwent similar changes to those in book publishing: it expanded and diversified as the public grew and legislation restricting its diversification (notably the newspaper tax) was lifted. Newspapers, serialized novels and even illustrated magazines became widely affordable. Not only the periodicals themselves but also the methods of their distribution were transformed. The most famous example of a pioneer in widespread distribution is W. H. Smith, who in 1848 set up his first railway bookstall.

French booksellers and publishers in the nineteenth century were forced to be more innovative than their English counterparts. The Revolution had disrupted the traditional reading public, and the middle class of the early nineteenth century acquired the book-buying habit only slowly.[20] In the 1830s and 1840s, however, the bourgeois public was ready to become a consumer of print culture, and it was in these decades that the famous self-made men of French publishing (Garnier, Hachette, Larousse and others) made their fortunes. These publishers were instrumental in changing the appearance of books. In the nineteenth century, paper covers and tables of contents became the norm: books were valued more as providers of information and/or entertainment than as items of high value and prestige. In the words of Henri-Jean Martin, 'Books of the period were no longer treasures to be carefully saved but simple consumer items.'[21]

Martin's assertion leads us to a very important question: how did the social status of reading change as the reading public broadened? What, for example, were the representations of reading in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and how did they affect 'practices'? In government policy on libraries and public reading in general, there was 'tension between promotion and guardedness, between commercialization and exclusivity' caused by a 'conflict between support for the increased production and circulation of print, and moral and political misgivings about the extension of reading'.[22] For the middle classes in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, there was no doubt that reading was becoming an ever more widespread and prestigious activity,[23] and that the domestic library was acquiring new social importance (evidence of this is provided by sale catalogues of house clearances, which contain a good deal of library furniture).

The emergence of a broad reading public and the attendant commercial opportunities transformed British publishing in the nineteenth century. Towards the end of the century there was a further development of comparable importance: the rise of the mass media, starting with the newspaper. Buoyed by the success of the previous forty years, publishers in the 1890s continued with their large print-runs – and many suffered huge losses as a result. The structure of the print market was changing once again: the book had lost its once pre-eminent place in the culture, and for many readers was rapidly becoming a commodity like any other. It therefore had to face strong competition from consumer goods and the mass press. The range of titles was greatly reduced during the First World War, and then, in the late 1920s, general economic depression dealt an even more powerful blow to the publishing business.[24] However, the market for popular reading matter was by this time well established, and the more enterprising publishers were able to diversify and/or target their products effectively.[25] The best-known example of such market restructuring was the so-called 'book revolution': the arrival of the mass paperback in the 1930s. In the twentieth century Western European publishers have had to resign themselves to the fact that they will never manage to cross the booming bourgeoisie of the second half of the nineteenth century with the mass public of the audio-visual era. They have had to adapt and vary their production methods intelligently, as in the recent 'second book revolution' – 60-page mini-paperback editions.

What significant conclusions can be drawn from this excursus into the history of publishing in Western Europe from the early nineteenth century? First, the democratization of print culture is invariably problematic: it is contested by both political and economic means; it also spawns the doom-laden discourse of sections of the educated classes who fear the vulgarization and cultural degradation attendant upon such democratization. This discourse, moreover, does not simply fade away as culture becomes 'massified'. It may even intensify, as has seemed to be the case in America since the 1970s.[26] The term 'mass culture' itself arose as a response to the perceived social and cultural breakdown in Europe between the world wars. Interpretations of mass culture as a symptom or a cause of social decay have been extremely persistent in Western Europe. They have been put forward by both conservative and liberal intellectuals: the former are aghast at the destabilizing potential of a democratized culture, while the latter feel betrayed that culture is not fulfilling its civilizing mission.[27] In short, it is not only in countries as socially polarized as Russia at the beginning

– or the end – of the twentieth century that the democratization of print culture causes problems.

My second conclusion is that the difficulties outlined in the previous paragraph were eventually overcome in Western Europe thanks to two main factors: the relatively free print market; and the expanding, diversifying and culturally active middle class. Crucially, this middle class began to draw extensively on the lower classes from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; it thus stimulated the further broadening of the print market. Russia, as we shall see, found a quite different way to resolve the tension between the bourgeois/intellectual and the mass reading public.

Reading in Russia, 1861–1924

How does the Russian case compare with the historical development of reading in Western Europe? The differences are certainly more striking than the resemblances. In the late nineteenth century, Russia had a far smaller literate public than England or France; its record in popular education compared very unfavourably with Western Europe; it had experienced no renaissance, no reformation, and no industrial revolution, and even its Enlightenment had had limited impact; despite the strong institutional position of the Orthodox Church, the individual reading of religious texts, which had inculcated in many Western Europeans the book habit, was not a significant part of Russian culture (even the Bible was not fully translated into modern Russian until the 1870s);[28] the market in printed material was limited by the small potential audience; and there were, moreover, huge logistical problems in the dissemination of books and periodicals.

If these factors point to the weak development of the reading public, there are others that suggest an important role for print culture in Russia. Given the relative weakness of mediating civil institutions, literature acquired a significant role in nation-building and political debate; educated and socially active groups (the intelligentsia) inherited Enlightenment ideas concerning the socializing effect of literature and applied them dogmatically. Not only did the printed word assume great importance for the educated public, there are signs of it also penetrating other strata of Russian society in the last third of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Two important books have appeared on popular reading matter between the Great Reforms and the Revolution. Jeffrey Brooks has argued that the popular literature of this period helped to bring about changes in

popular attitudes to accompany modernization and Westernization.[29] Russia was certainly dragging its feet in socio-cultural terms, but after Emancipation there were signs of an emerging mass reading public that had definite 'uses' for literacy. As a result of their reading, 'Russian common readers began to think of themselves and the world around them in increasingly individualistic terms' (Brooks, 1985, p. 166). Brooks concludes that for the Bolsheviks to ban the market was 'to unhitch at least part of the train of cultural development that had carried many ordinary people into a world of more modern thought and imagination' (ibid., p. 356). In a subsequent article, Brooks has argued that the effects of two great international cultural movements – modernism and commercial popular culture – persisted well into the 1920s.[30] Louise McReynolds, in a study of the mass-circulation press that neatly parallels Brooks' work, notes that popular newspapers 'established an institution between private individuals and the state in which a public opinion could take shape and find expression'.[31] In particular, these newspapers encouraged participatory citizenship and assisted the secularization of culture. They were also bound up with the creation of a new intelligentsia, which valued facticity over didacticism, which wrote in newspapers rather than thick journals, and which tried to mediate between state and society, not to raise the consciousness of the *narod* with a view to radical social change.

It was, however, the old intelligentsia that dominated pre-revolutionary discourse on the reader. The first serious studies of the Russian common reader were carried out by 'revolutionary democrats' (to use the Soviet terminology) in the 1860s, and this initiative was followed up in the 1870s and 1880s by their radical successors in the *narodnik* (Populist) movement. At the same time, some members of the liberal intelligentsia, along with a few smaller groups (notably the Tolstoyans), launched their own investigations. Last (and probably least), the Tsarist Ministry of Popular Enlightenment had its own view on the desirability of various types of popular reading matter. By the 1890s radicals were more concerned with disseminating printed material among workers in the major urban centres, as these were the readers who had the best chance of becoming the politically conscious vanguard of the revolution; the task of investigating popular tastes and spreading enlightenment was increasingly left to the liberals and to the section of the radical movement that had remained populist instead of turning to revolutionary Marxism.[32]

These groups often disagreed on the fundamental question of what the reader wanted and/or needed to read. The populists, for example,

asserted that it was time to create a new, genuinely 'popular' literature; liberals, on the other hand, argued that the best of the existing culture could be made both palatable and morally beneficial for the people.[33] Liberals and Marxists did, however, have a great deal in common in their approach to popular reading. First, they both assumed it was their business to issue prescriptions to the people. Second, they believed that if the prescriptions issued were correct, great social good would inevitably follow. Third, they were united in their hostility to commercialization of culture: the market, they believed, should never be allowed to determine what the people wanted to read.[34] In its reformist and radical wings, the intelligentsia believed passionately in the civilizing power of the written word. Thinkers as different as Rubakin and Lenin were heirs to universalist assumptions about the impact of reading: they held that print culture was capable of inspiring far-reaching social change. The only question was how best to ensure that print culture fulfilled this function.

The Russian intelligentsia may have surpassed the Western European middle class in its sense of moral, social and cultural responsibilities, but its social base was far narrower and its position more precarious. The intelligentsia drew on men and women from all social estates (*sosloviia*) who worked with their brains rather than their hands and were generally left-wing in their political views.[35] Even a cursory knowledge of late Imperial Russian society suggests that this group must have been small and socially marginalized. It was hated and feared by the government (*vlast'*), and distrusted and misunderstood by the people (*narod*). The Russian intelligentsia only deepened its isolation by explicitly rejecting that expanding mercantile middle class which served as the dynamo of cultural change in Western Europe in the nineteenth century. In any case, the mercantile middle class was much smaller than its counterpart in England or France.[36]

The intelligentsia's cultural project was jeopardized not only by the problematic social status of its self-appointed implementers. The task was made enormous by the backwardness of Russian society on the eve of the Revolution, and in particular by its widespread illiteracy. As Lenin typically said, 'an illiterate person stands outside politics, and must first learn the alphabet. Without this there can be no politics'.[37] Just as striking as the general illiteracy of Russian society was the huge variation in literacy rate according to sex, age and region. By the early 1900s most young men in the major urban centres could read, but the 1897 census had revealed an overall literacy rate of only just over one in five. There were millions of middle-aged and elderly people in the

villages who had little or no experience of the written word. By 1920 the literacy rate had gone up significantly, but two thirds of the population still could not read or write. Even when literacy had been achieved by the majority of the Soviet people, their inexperience as readers placed definite limits on the uses to which they could put their new skills.

These serious obstacles to cultural 'progress' brought the projects of the pre-revolutionary *prosvetiteli* (educators) into sharp focus when one group within the intelligentsia (the Bolsheviks) gained a monopoly on enlightenment. For twenty years the struggle against illiteracy stood at the top of the new regime's cultural agenda. However, the history of the Soviet Union illustrates that near-universal literacy is not by itself any guarantee of democratization and modernization. The relationship of the 'modernity syndrome' to literacy is rather complex. As Harvey Graff has argued, literacy 'can no longer be seen as a universalistic quantity or quality to be possessed however unequally by all in theory'.[38] The mechanical ability to read and write is no guarantee of the ability to think independently; indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that a mass public recently introduced to literacy is particularly susceptible to manipulation by the printed word. To assert that writing leads directly to modern civilization is highly simplistic: the effects of literacy depend on the state of culture and on the economic situation prevailing in the particular society where writing is introduced. The replacement of oral transmission by solitary reading does not always correspond to an increase in the individual's self-awareness.[39] The image of the solitary reader was established as 'the West's most powerful icon of self-absorption' in the Middle Ages, but reading is an activity with a definite social and historical dimension: its effects can often be more 'socializing' than 'individualizing'.[40]

The attainment of mass literacy in the first twenty years of Soviet power is an important case-study in the social anthropology of reading. A population that was rooted in a largely oral tradition was given a crash course in the written word. It is not, therefore, surprising that peasant attitudes are evident in several surveys of the new mass Soviet reader. Particularly striking is the importance many peasants attached to the 'usefulness' (*pol'za*) of any reading matter. All books – even imaginative literature – might be read for practical advice by the culturally inexperienced Soviet 'masses'; for them literature was in a very direct sense a 'guide to life'.[41] It is thus a mistake to assume that the new Soviet readers read the printed texts they were offered in the way intended by their authors. However, it is an even bigger mistake to

believe that literacy brought the Soviet population some kind of cultural liberation. The low levels of literacy at the time of the Bolshevik seizure of power prevented any quick reversal of the pre-revolutionary hierarchy. When the campaigns for popular education began to achieve spectacular results, it was easy to ensure that literacy 'would not come to be synonymous with independence of mind at a crucial and unstable stage in Soviet history'.[42] In short, it is hard not to agree with Roger Pethybridge that the prevalence of illiteracy was an important element in the 'social prelude to Stalinism'.

In a sense, therefore, the mass illiteracy facing the Soviet leaders as they took power made it easier for them to impose a new model of culture and create a new reader. More directly, it had the effect of making 'cultural revolution' one of the main causes of the new social and political order. The pre-revolutionary intelligentsia's urge to enlighten (*prosvetitel'skii pafos*) became more dogmatic and politically charged in its Soviet successors.

The problem of culture

Marx never actually worked out a full theory of culture. And what he did have to say would not have been of much use to the Bolsheviks in the years when they were creating the Soviet institutions of culture. Marx was against the separation of culture and socio-economic activity – man's alienation and, in fully-developed market conditions, his reification. However, such alienation is surely as old as the most primitive form of exchange in human societies. In other words, it far predates capitalism. This problem would only be eliminated in the communist society of the future, when economic activity would finally become fully integrated with human self-expression. To achieve an egalitarian society, Marx envisaged more than just the elimination of economic class: he also sought to address the alienating effects of economic production itself. Marx has a total vision of culture as man's self-realization in labour or what Soviet commentators used to call *samodeiatel'nost'*.[43]

On the question of culture, as in so many other areas (one well-known example being ideology), Lenin differed significantly from Marx. As a professional revolutionary, he did not have the patience to wait for the culture (*kul'tura*) of communism. He needed the quick fix of *kul'turnost'*: the proletariat had to acquire as quickly as possible the know-how necessary to run a modern state. It is important to recognize that, by replacing *kul'tura* with *kul'turnost'*, by defining culture as

a standard of civilized behaviour and a particular set of social skills rather than a set of deeply-held social or moral values, Lenin did much to determine the treatment of the concept in the later Soviet period.

All this is not necessarily to denigrate Lenin's approach to culture; my intention is rather to demonstrate the prominence of culture in theories of the transition from capitalism to socialism. This point can be developed further by considering other approaches to culture within the Marxist tradition. Lenin's rival, Bogdanov, was the deepest thinker on culture amongst the Bolsheviks. His idea was to cultivate proletarian values through educational work (on Capri in 1909, in Bologna in 1910–11, and subsequently in the ill-fated *proletkul'ts*). For Bogdanov, the vanguard influence of the Party was not on its own sufficient to raise the consciousness of Russian society: the only solution was to create a proletarian intelligentsia as soon as possible.[44] But in the social and political conditions confronting the Bolsheviks that was unlikely to happen. Lest Bogdanov be dismissed as an idle dreamer, let us take Gramsci, a better-known thinker who has become something of a totem for the intellectual Left. Gramsci is of interest here partly because of his serious efforts to grapple with the popular. He made interesting observations on folklore, arguing that it should not be reduced to mere *couleur locale*. He was a prolific reviewer of popular culture (serial novels, detective novels, popular theatre), and recognized that any socialist culture would have to take entertainment literature on board. Although the creation of a proletarian culture was one of Gramsci's main preoccupations, he (unlike Bogdanov) perceived with brilliant clarity the problems facing this project. 'What is really difficult is to put the stress on discipline and sociality and still profess sincerity, spontaneity, originality and personality.'[45] The danger, in other words, was that socialist culture would become the instrument of a new, coercive form of 'hegemony'. Gramsci saw the particular obstacles to Italy's cultural development: the country had missed out on the Reformation, and it had had no bourgeois revolution; it therefore lacked a hegemonic, 'national-popular' stratum of intellectuals that could bring about non-revolutionary cultural change. Here the parallel with Russia is all too clear.

The conclusion we arrive at from a reading of Lenin, Bogdanov and Gramsci is that a political revolution wresting power from the hands of the dominant classes, and a cultural revolution preparing the proletariat to take over the power thus relinquished, are incompatible. At best, they are severely out of step. The discourse of the Stalin period

gives us a clue: if we study the public pronouncements of the time, we find that the notion of a specifically proletarian culture was abandoned after 1932. Stephen Kotkin, in his recent study of the birth of Magnitogorsk, has shown what replaced it: a combination of revolutionary iconography and *kul'turnost'*.[46] What Soviet society was left with, after this Thermidor of social symbolism, was a truly 'middlebrow' culture which tried to preserve the 'high' values and relative cultural homogeneity of a bourgeois educated public (such as the English reading classes in the second half of the eighteenth century) with the scale of a mass public.

In the next section I shall begin to flesh out the concept of the Soviet 'middlebrow culture' by linking it to two theoretical problems: first, the relationship between class and culture; second, the distinctions and convergences between 'mass', 'popular' and 'elite' culture.

Class/culture

In Western sociology of culture there have been some impressive and imaginative attempts to demonstrate a close relationship between class (socio-economic formations) and culture (the processes of meaning creation within a society). Pierre Bourdieu has approached this task with a unique combination of empirical thoroughness and theoretical ambition: he has used extensive survey material in order to show how the 'field of cultural production' can be mapped out socio-economically. In one project he has studied French middle-class taste in order to examine the relationship between cultural competence, educational capital and social origin. One of the most striking examples of this method is Bourdieu's attempt to correlate the reception of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, *Rhapsody in Blue* and *The Blue Danube* with 'legitimate', 'middlebrow' and 'popular' taste respectively.[47] More generally, Bourdieu has tried to analyze the structure of the 'field of cultural production', its relationship to the economy and social/political authority (respectively, the 'fields' of 'economic production' and of 'power'), and its role in social and political 'legitimation'.[48]

Bourdieu's attempt to match up class and culture in modern France has been criticized as being oversimplified and methodologically flawed: he has been accused of (among other sins) conflating bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and various other social fractions into a single undifferentiated 'middle class'; of underplaying the role of social institutions; and of failing to create a workable synthesis of existentialism and structuralism (which is, in fact, one of the main tasks he sets himself).[49] Whatever the merits of these criticisms, Bourdieu's concep-

tual framework can be fitted to Soviet culture, with interesting results.[50] In early Soviet Russia, I contend, culture was issued with an imperative to be both 'legitimate' and 'popular', and as a result became 'middlebrow'. There was no 'high' culture that corresponded to a dominant social class, nor can we really speak of a 'popular' culture; there emerged a single 'Culture', which was not allowed to reflect diverse social interests, but rather provided the model for the Marxist–Leninist project of social unification. Naturally, in the West there similarly exists a 'middlebrow culture' which offers a socially neutralized product to a culturally 'docile' (Bourdieu's term), socially undifferentiated mass consumer. The point is, though, that in Western countries, even those apparently dominated by the 'culture industry', middlebrow culture is supplemented by a range of other cultures (or subcultures) which are by and large granted public representation, even if they are economically deprived (examples include hippies and academics).

In Soviet Russia, on the other hand, subcultures were forced out of public view and social consciousness. In particular, the autonomous intellectual field characteristic of 'bourgeois' society was removed and replaced by a new legitimizing authority. If we are looking for a reasonable comparative case in the history of Western Europe, we have to turn the clock back to the pre-bourgeois period, to seventeenth-century France and the reign of the Sun King. Where Louis XIV had a select group of courtiers and artists to create and maintain a cult of personality that doubled as the state ideology,[51] the Soviet regime had at its disposal a much larger, and rapidly expanding, socio-cultural base. Besides establishing control over all institutional mechanisms of culture, co-opting sections of the intellectual and managerial elite and creating its own elites, the Party was, by the mid-1930s, able to lay claim to considerable common ground with other sections of Soviet society. To create a culture that would give people a sense of 'belonging' to the new society was one of the main tasks of the new regime. This new culture, as conceptualized in Soviet public discourse, had always had 'the masses' as its foot-soldiers. But, in typical Soviet style, it also required a vanguard. Various names were given to that culturally cohesive group which was held to embody the core values of Soviet society. One was *obshchestvennost'*, a term that differs from the general *obshchestvo* (society) in carrying connotations of active collectivism and social engagement.[52] Another was 'intelligentsia' (prefaced either by 'proletarian' or – more often – simply by 'Soviet'). This word, treated with extreme suspicion in the years immediately following the

Revolution, made an improbable comeback in the later Soviet period. By the 1960s, in fact, *intelligentnost'* had taken over from *gramotnost'* (literary) and *obrazovannost'* (educatedness) as the culmination of the 'civilizing process' for the urban 'middle strata'.

All this is not to suggest that 'the intelligentsia' was a Soviet ideological fiction devoid of any social content. There is strong evidence that the publicly-expressed aims of the Soviet state struck a real chord with the values and aspirations of (mainly young), recently-educated and upwardly-mobile people in the first half of the Soviet period. Like its pre-revolutionary counterpart, the newly-formed 'Soviet intelligentsia' occupied a position between government (*vlast'*) and people (*narod*), but it was bigger and broader, and its relationship to those 'above' was by no means antagonistic: in certain institutional settings – for example, in the new education system – it acted rather as an enthusiastic intermediary and set about the creation and dissemination of a middlebrow Soviet culture.[53] Instead of disputing this historical evidence, I wish simply to echo the cautionary assertion of one cultural commentator that it is unwise 'to treat the concept of social class as part of the solution to the problem of cultural meanings, rather than as an instance of that problem'.[54] The term 'intelligentsia' in the Soviet Union was loaded with a significance wherein social forms and cultural meanings were hopelessly entangled.

What I have said so far implies that the 'fields' of politics, society and culture in Soviet Russia may have had an unusually close – even incestuous – relationship. There is one other broad area of Bourdieu's theories that can usefully be tried for size on the sociology of Soviet culture: his analysis of the relationship between culture and the economy. What Bourdieu finds in French society is that the fields of economic and cultural production have an antagonistic relationship, and the hierarchies of cultural and economic value are opposed. Within a particular class there is generally an inverse relationship between cultural and economic capital, to the extent that one can often be traded for the other. For example, a successful businessman may become a patron of the arts, or a well-known intellectual may become a best-selling pop philosopher (the latter example perhaps provides further evidence that Bourdieu's theories are more specific to France than he would care to admit). In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, there was no equivalent inverse relationship between economic and cultural hierarchies of value; culture was not antagonized by the market, because it was assumed to be totally separate from the very small and insignificant area allowed to market activity in Soviet society. In fact, it even seems plausible to speak of a

directly proportional relationship between cultural and economic value. In the absence of a legitimate market, the fetishization of cultural capital replaced that of exchange value. One of the best examples of this is the Soviet black market in books, which will be described in detail in Chapter 3.

Mass/popular/elite culture

One of the most telling indications of the Soviet homogenization of culture was the reluctance of Soviet intellectuals to apply terms such as 'mass', 'popular' and 'high' culture to their own society, let alone to use more refined analytical tools.[55] The concept of culture was essentialized, and the problem of its particular social manifestations hence obscured.[56] Culture remained a missionary idea in Russia, a standard of civilization to be met, not a descriptive or relativistic term. As a consequence of this, the terms 'popular' and 'mass' culture have been used rather differently in Russia and in Western Europe. The term 'mass culture' arose, as in the West, as a response to the development of a 'culture industry' comprising mass media, mass audiences and the commodification of culture. 'Mass culture', originally a term loaded with Kulturpessimismus, is now becoming rather more neutral in our supposedly post-modern era. In Russia the term *massovaia kul'tura* was not applied to the Soviet Union – it was regarded as a phenomenon specific to Western capitalist societies, which Soviet society, thanks to its late and rational modernization, had managed to avoid.[57] The term 'popular culture' presents an even more striking contrast. In the West, popular culture has been part of the consciousness of intellectuals ever since early Romanticism, and has had a consistently good press. The main problem, in fact, has been to persuade intellectuals to be a little less gushing about it. The temptation for left-wing cultural commentators has been to oppose a realm of authentic, autonomous popular culture to that of the class-dominated high or official culture. But, as Stuart Hall pertinently reminds us, 'there is *no* whole, authentic, autonomous "popular culture" which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination'. A simple opposition of popular and non-popular is hard to construct, as the ground is always shifting. Hall argues further that 'what is essential to the definition of popular culture is the relations which define "popular culture" in a continuing tension (relationship, influence and antagonism) to the dominant culture'.[58] It is perhaps because of underlying anxieties about the social tensions that might be revealed by such categorization that Russians were reluctant to speak of *narodnaia* (people's)

or *populiarnaia kul'tura* in their own society. To use either of these terms seemed to make the unacceptable implication that there was a part of Soviet culture that was *not* 'popular'. In addition, for Soviets to use the term *narodnaia kul'tura* raised the problem of defining the *narod* whose culture this was; for an empire of the Russian/Soviet variety, this was a real area of difficulty.[59]

Now that we have looked briefly at mass and popular culture, what of high culture? As Stuart Hall suggested in the passages quoted above, the distinction between high and low is constantly being constructed, negotiated and reconstructed in different periods and locations. Paul DiMaggio, for example, has traced this process in Boston in the late nineteenth century. 'Classical music', he suggests, was born not because of some revolution in musicology, but because new middle-class elites needed to stake out their cultural territory. High culture arose as a result of cultural politics, not for aesthetic reasons.[60] Moving on to Russian history, Iurii Lotman has demonstrated the interaction of mass and elite culture in Russian literature of various periods. The popular literature of the late eighteenth century was, culturally speaking, a gigantic heritage site (*gigantskii zapovednik*): it combined elements of folklore, Church literature, and the Western European novel. The mass literature of the early twentieth century was no more an expression of *narodnaia kul'tura*: often it was a semi-competent imitation of 'high' norms. To conclude, mass literature draws just as heavily on 'high' literature as it does on folklore.[61]

So it is quite possible (and even, the evidence might suggest, inevitable) for societies to create distinctions between 'high' and 'low', 'popular' and 'non-popular', or 'elite' and 'mass' cultures. But it is also possible for real socio-cultural cleavages and inequalities to be concealed by a model of cultural unity and homogeneity. This, I will argue, was the great achievement of Soviet culture, which managed to blur the distinction between culture 'for' and 'of' the people. According to Marxist–Leninist dogma, the two were meant to coincide. But that is no excuse for researchers to harbour the same delusion – even if, for cultural studies in the post-Soviet era, this is a tempting belief to hold. In the case of cultural history of the Soviet Union, which has come relatively late to the study of the popular and finds a well-defined 'mass' culture waiting invitingly, there is a tendency not to be too fussy about the status of this mass culture as a source of social representations.[62]

Soviet culture was never monolithic, least of all towards the end of the Soviet period – there was always interplay between official cultural producers and popular taste.[63] However, thanks in large part to the

system of centralized economic planning, this interaction was strikingly limited and one-sided compared to other modern societies: demand could be controlled by controlling supply, and hence it was possible to maintain the public pretence that culture was homogeneous. This makes Soviet culture somewhat enigmatic: a culture that was, if not monolithic, then at least monochrome, obscured as much as it revealed about popular taste and the relationship of popular culture to the maintenance of the Soviet system.

Reading in Soviet culture

As can be seen from the above, there are several reasons for the importance attached to culture by the Soviet regime. First, culture was identified by the canonical revolutionary thinkers both as a problem to be solved and as a weapon in the cause of revolutionary social construction. Second, culture could help to bind Soviet society together and/or to conceal its inequalities and cleavages (be they socio-cultural, economic, political, or ethnic). Third, culture deflected attention from the market and other non-'cultured', anti-ideological mainsprings of human motivation.

It now remains to explain how reading – or, more broadly, the production, dissemination and consumption of print culture – relates to the above generalities. Reading became an extremely significant part of the Soviet cultural project for rather specific social and historical reasons. For one thing, the campaign against illiteracy became the *cause célèbre* of the early stages of cultural revolution. In the first twenty years of the Soviet period there grew up a generation for whom the ability to read, and in particular to read 'well', was an important mark of social distinction. Add to that the importance attached to the printed word in the Marxist–Leninist tradition and the highly literary upbringings and sensibilities of several leading Bolsheviks, and it is no wonder that print culture became the main transmitter and emblem of Soviet *kul'turnost'*.

In the Soviet period reading was an activity so rich in social symbolism that it is quite possible to identify a Soviet reading 'myth'. Put simply, this myth can be reduced to the following two assertions: first, that in the Soviet Union people read a lot, and would read even more as society progressed further towards Communism; second, that the printed word was capable of uniting people and instilling in them the core values of Soviet society. In their most popular form, these beliefs were reflected in the Russians' self-image as the 'most active readers in the world' (*samyi chitaiushchii narod v mire*).[64] In large part, I contend,

this 'enchantment' of reading in the Soviet Union was made possible by the prevailing anti-commercial ethos. Reading was not subjected to demystification by the market, which has its own brutal ways of finding out what and why people read. As a result, it was possible to believe (and to make-believe) that the Soviet *narod*, by virtue of being the best-read, was also the most *dukhovnyi* (spiritually profound).

Just as the activity of reading became increasingly mythologized in Soviet Russia, so 'the reader' underwent an analogous change. Empirical reality was gradually replaced by a notion of the typical Soviet reader which began to underpin the Soviet system of publishing and periodicals. The 'mass reader' was, in fact, a broad category which took in everyone from peasants who had recently 'liquidated' their own illiteracy to the most politically-conscious worker.[65] The connection between the 'average public' and the homogeneity of 'middlebrow culture' has been spotted by Bourdieu:

> It is legitimate to define middle-brow culture as the product of the system of large-scale production, because these works are entirely defined by their public. Thus, the very ambiguity of any definition of the 'average public' or the 'average viewer' very realistically designates the field of potential action which producers of this type of art and culture *explicitly* assign themselves, and which determines their technical and aesthetic choices.[66]

Not only did the Soviet 'average reader' figure large in public discourse, he/she also played a crucial part in the homogenization that became so central to the Soviet cultural project. The history of print culture in the glasnost period, as I will argue in later chapters, is best regarded as a process of 'relocating the reader', and hence of exposing the gulf between cultural consumers and producers that had for so long been concealed or ignored.

Conclusions

In analyzing the specific forms of Soviet print culture and their transformation in the early 1990s we need to have in mind from the outset certain fundamental questions. To what extent was the route of cultural 'modernization' blown off-course by seventy years of Soviet socialism? How are we to define the Soviet intelligentsia, and what was its function? How applicable are the terms 'mass', 'popular' and 'elite' culture to the Soviet case?

We have discovered that there is no blueprint for cultural modernization that will fit every case perfectly: even Western Europe is far from being homogeneous. It is, however, possible to observe some very general similarities between the French, English and German cases. First, the reading public grows gradually as people's uses for literacy increase, the education system develops and the publishing sector expands. Second, the ensuing massification of the reading public generates a corresponding differentiation in print production. With the changes in the structure of the reading public, and in the place of reading itself in the structure of the media, print culture is forced to adapt (witness the two 'revolutions' in book publishing in the twentieth century).

Soviet society immediately veered off this path of cultural development. It was not granted the luxury of the gradual, 'organic' broadening of the reading public. At the time of the Revolution the percentage of literates in the Russian Empire was roughly the same as the percentage of *illiterates* in England in 1851 (that is, less than a third). In the fifteen years after the Revolution the ruling party went about the task of creating a mass reading public. At the same time it gradually brought its ideology to bear on all institutions of cultural production and diffusion; in particular, it protected culture against any incursion of market principles. As a result, the growth of differentiation in print culture – which in Western Europe had been the necessary corollary of the mass reading public – was stunted. Moreover, the middle class, which did so much to aid the democratization of print culture in Western Europe, was powerless – or simply absent – in the Soviet Union. The upwardly-mobile middle strata (sometimes known as the Soviet intelligentsia) performed a very different role – one of cultural homogenization.

This attempt to explain in general terms the distinctiveness of Soviet culture provides the starting point for my account of the later period. The Soviet system of production, diffusion and reception of print culture will be described in greater detail in Chapter 2, which analyzes the institutions of Soviet print culture that were established in the 1920s and 1930s, and also traces the birth of a mythical Soviet reader in the same period. Chapter 3 takes this account up to the start of the glasnost period, paying particular attention to the emergence of a new reading public in the post-Stalin era and to the interactions of print culture and the shortage economy. The rest of the book will be devoted to the period beginning with the Gorbachev reforms and ending with the establishment of a new cultural model in the 1990s. I dub this the

period of the 'Russian reading revolution', as it was in these years that Soviet culture was suddenly and disconcertingly undermined by the contradiction between monophony and and the mass public. Not only that, Russia's greatest readers, the intelligentsia, were forced to acknowledge that the age-old cult of the printed word in Russia had been replaced by indifference.

2
The Creation of the Soviet Reader

It has long been a commonplace to speak of the special role accorded to literature in Russia. From the Decembrist revolt onwards, Russia was remarkable for the contrast between the extreme backwardness of its social and political system and the remarkable intellectual intensity of one section of its educated elite. This Russian intelligentsia was denied any real involvement in social and political institutions; it therefore looked to imaginative literature to provide a forum for debate on all manner of social and political issues, from sex to national identity.

Like most commonplaces, this one is largely accurate. When we reach the late Imperial period, however, it needs to be qualified slightly. From the 1880s until about 1930 the Russian reader was a more constant preoccupation of the intelligentsia than was Russian literature. Intellectuals of various political persuasions (liberals *and* Marxists) had a profound faith in the socializing power of the written word and were deeply curious about the new class of Russian readers. We saw in Chapter 1 how controversial and politically sensitive the rise of a mass reading public can be in any society, even those that experienced a relatively stable and gradual socio-cultural modernization. When Soviet Russia began to push for mass literacy, the stakes were much higher than they had been in Western Europe during the preceding century. The reading public had the potential to expand not just significantly but exponentially; print culture was called on to provide social models for an enormously diverse and culturally stratified population; the institutional pressure on writers (from politicians, publishers and literary groupings) was much more intense. Under the particular circumstances of Russia's social and cultural development, reading was guaranteed a prominent part in the Soviet 'cultural revolution'. The printed word was intended to bring about a

transformation in the values of Soviet people, to inculcate the new *kul'tura*, and to narrow the gap between the intelligentsia and the people. Russia's new rulers were painfully aware of the need to catch up with the West, yet at the same time confident that Russia's delayed historical development would enable it to effect a uniquely accelerated and harmonious socio-cultural modernization.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the part that print culture was intended to play in this project – to provide an overview of the institutionalization of reading in the early Soviet period. I use the term 'institution' very broadly, to include not only writers' unions, publishing houses, libraries and other political and socio-economic structures that influence a society's reading habits, but also the cultural norms that govern the consumption of print culture. These are, in other words, the norms that define the reader (and techniques of reading).

In the 1920s almost all cultural commentators had an opinion to offer on the Soviet reader. Many of them regarded this reader as the main arbiter of cultural value. Soviet writers, for example, were not slow to express devotion to their public: 'nowhere in the world has there ever existed a reader so deserving of deep consideration, respect and affection as our Soviet reader'.[1] These words belong to Maksim Gorky, who was well known for his romanticized faith in reading as a means of achieving individual spiritual uplift and social progress. His sentiments accord perfectly with the general Soviet pride at the immense cultural achievements of the first twenty years of the regime. Not only were millions taught to read in this period, it also became common to speak of the culturally mature 'Soviet reader', who supposedly came on the scene in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Soviet writers and publishers began the 1920s with the aim of creating a new Soviet literature for a new reader, and by the start of the next decade Soviet literary *obshchestvennost'* felt entitled to claim that this had largely been achieved.

Reading and 'cultural construction' in the early Soviet period

The Bolsheviks, as we saw in Chapter 1, were not inclined to underestimate the importance of the printed word. In the first year of the new regime, leading representatives of the Party discussed intensively the practicalities of taking control of the publishing system. In the first half of 1918 state and private publishing organizations maintained an uneasy relationship as the balance of power swung inexorably towards the former. In 1917 private publishers accounted for 79.5 per cent of

titles published, but in 1918 that figure was reduced to 58.4 per cent.[2] In October 1918 a serious blow was struck against private operators when the book trade was municipalized by the Moscow Soviet. In the following months over a hundred cities followed suit.[3] The publishing division of the Ministry of Enlightenment (LITO) was *de facto* the state publishing house until May 1919, when Gosizdat (the state publishing house proper) took over with the explicit aim of regulating the publishing system (for the time being it was not in a position to take full control).

It is strikingly illustrative of the Bolsheviks' mindset that from the very beginning, even under the truly catastrophic conditions of the civil war, they attached great importance to the publishing of cheap editions of imaginative literature (and especially the classics). In May 1918 they even sought to enlist the help of the literary intelligentsia in this project, but met a hostile reception from writers who objected to the highly politicized commentaries that were invariably appended to the works of the classics.[4] The Bolsheviks, quite naturally, were neither surprised nor particularly dismayed by this cultural opposition, and carried on regardless. In 1918 a 'People's Library' of cheap mass editions was set up and began to be circulated free of charge. The Petrograd section of LITO was able to boast that it had published twenty-seven titles in this series in one year (May 1918 to May 1919), with an overall print-run of 2 400 000.[5] In the first two years of its existence (1919–21) Gosizdat produced and distributed free of charge 59 million copies of printed products.[6] In its programme of bringing literature to the people, Gosizdat co-opted the resources of private publishers, which by 1920 were working almost exclusively to the orders of the state.[7]

But, as the civil war drew to close, it was clear that the new state could not afford to continue providing the population with cheap literature, as it had been doing under War Communism. The free distribution of publications was largely discontinued, and non-state firms were effectively invited to share the economic burdens of publishing. A few months after the announcement of NEP at the 10th Party Congress the book trade too was liberalized. In decrees of August and December 1921, first in Moscow and then all over the country, private publishers were permitted to restart operations. The response was immediate: two months after the decree pertaining to Moscow, fifty-eight publishing houses had been registered; in the mid-1920s there were nearly 600 private publishers of various kinds.[8] These non-state publishers performed a crucial function: they were able to apply limited resources in

much more flexible and differentiated ways than could the large State Publishing House. It was, for example, the private publishers who launched the careers of numerous Soviet writers by printing small editions of their works in the 1920s. Publishers in the early 1920s were competing to identify (and define) the needs and wants of the new Soviet reader, and their efforts had a distinct impact on the 'literary process' of the 1920s.[9]

However, although the years of NEP certainly had greater cultural diversity than the subsequent Soviet period (until glasnost), it would be a misjudgement to call them liberal.[10] Censorship was firmly institutionalized in 1922 with the creation of Glavlit, and controls over publishing tightened steadily during the 1920s.[11] In addition to its pre-publication censorship of printed material, the Communist Party was quick to seize control of the institution where the 'mass reader' was most likely to come into contact with the printed word: the library. A number of theorists and political activists – much the most famous was Krupskaia – started to produce lists of books recommended for mass consumption in the libraries; particular attention was paid to the reading 'requirements' of children, who formed the most culturally malleable constituency in Soviet society. But early Soviet library policy was concerned more with interdiction than with recommendation. Purges of library holdings were conducted throughout the 1920s. Books of a pronounced 'anti-Soviet' nature were, of course, the first to suffer, but the criteria for the purges were soon expanded to take in much that did not have such obvious political import – notably pre-revolutionary popular literature (*lubki*) and magical folk tales (*skazki*).[12] The Bolsheviks' hostility to any popular culture they had not themselves helped to forge was extreme and intransigent, and it underlined their determination to use print culture as an instrument for the total re-education of Soviet readers.[13]

Library policy was perhaps the segment of the cultural sphere where the Bolsheviks acted most decisively and systematically in the 1920s, even if here, as elsewhere, there were polemics and confrontations. The Party had not yet formulated, let alone imposed, a single set of ideological criteria to govern 'cultural construction', and conflict was quite often observed between various government and Party institutions; yet the basic Soviet principle of the extreme politicization of all areas of cultural life was already established. As Michael S. Fox has observed, 'in retrospect, "NEP in culture" seems less an official endorsement of compromise or moderation than a contest between differing approaches'.[14]

The reader in the public arena

The institutional combat of the 1920s – in publishing, censorship, libraries and so on – had as its backdrop constant public debate on the role of print culture. The urgency of this question in the 1920s is shown by the number of periodicals devoted to it. By one researcher's reckoning, there were no fewer than 1814 Soviet periodicals on literature and the arts between 1917 and 1932 (even if many of them were extremely short-lived).[15] The reader, in particular, was ubiquitous in early Soviet articles on cultural issues. The easiest and least controversial way to distinguish the new Soviet literature from its predecessor was not to engage in formal debates or to assess the activities of literary groupings (as the ferocious polemics of the 1920s demonstrate, both these methods were fraught with difficulties), but rather to emphasize its profound socio-cultural impact on a new public. For this reason, the 'new Soviet reader' became the base-line of literary debate in the 1920s and helped to create its peculiar idiom: everyone could agree that the new reader must be catered for; differences of opinion centred on what this reader actually 'wanted' or 'needed'.[16] The 'Soviet reader' always existed in Soviet public discourse as a largely mythologized figure, a vessel for the socio-cultural projects of the many commentators who made pronouncements on this subject. Nevertheless, the urge to mythologize coexisted, at least in the early Soviet period, with genuine curiosity about the tastes of the mysterious 'mass reader'.

Even literary scholarship in the first decade of Soviet power took a real interest in sociological aspects of reading, and, let it be noted, not always in a crudely reductive way.[17] More importantly for our present purposes, there was no shortage of sociological research proper. In 1924 alone around 200 books and articles were written on the subject of the new Soviet reader.[18] The new regime itself commissioned large-scale readership surveys. Jeffrey Brooks relates that as early as 1920–1 the political department of the Red Army found time to circulate to 11 900 soldiers a questionnaire inquiring about the popularity and effectiveness of mass literature. Studies of the reader in the early to mid-1920s took a genuine interest in the demands of the common reader (even if these demands were not acted on); by the end of the decade such surveys, while almost as widespread, were more structured and selective.[19]

What can we conclude from the readership surveys and other research of the 1920s? These studies, despite their methodological and

ideological limitations, suggest that the Bolsheviks achieved only limited success in putting across their message. The prevailing top-down model of mass communications presupposed a stable, well-defined and passive audience, but NEP was a period of enormous cultural indeterminacy. In the 1920s a large, partially-literate reading public was exposed to a highly-developed written culture, and the outcome of this encounter was extremely unpredictable. The 'educated' and politicized language disseminated via newspapers and other agitational materials was only very imperfectly assimilated by its addressees.[20] Practices of reading and attitudes to written culture were in flux just as much as literature itself. The collective loss of cultural bearings was reflected in satirical *feuilletons* on various aspects of reading and the book trade in the 1920s. Writers such as Zoshchenko, Bulgakov, and Il'f and Petrov reflected on the new Soviet reader's experience of the printed word and on the chaotic system of publishing and distribution.[21]

The gap between the message emitted by the Bolsheviks through print culture and its reception by real readers has been noted by several commentators in more recent times. Régine Robin cites the surveys carried out by Iakov Shafir in the early 1920s as evidence that the language of Soviet newspapers needed to be simplified substantially if it was to make its point to the masses. She concludes that the new discourse of print culture that formed in the 1930s was, by contrast, created very much with the mass reader in view.[22] Jeffrey Brooks has emphasized in a number of articles the problems faced by the Bolsheviks in effecting cultural change.[23] Following a similar path, Vadim Volkov has revealed the uncertainty of the Soviet regime as to the addressee of its print propaganda and has described the flawed attempts to overcome this uncertainty.[24]

In the 1920s various efforts were made to reconcile the interests of the empirically observed reader with the normative requirements of educators, propagandists and other cultural workers. One well-publicized measure was the encouragement of 'reader's cricism' (*chitatel'skaia kritika*) or criticism 'from below' (*nizovaia kritika*). Typically, workers would be invited to give their opinions of various pieces of contemporary writing (both fiction and technical literature) at public meetings where the authors themselves were sometimes present. Research was also carried out by questionnaire. A. Bek and L. Toom, for example, took as their sample the written responses of miners in the Donbass to books they had borrowed from their library. As true representatives of the 'ultra-leftist' tendency, Bek and Toom

claimed to have identified a new 'worker reader' imbued with proletarian values.[25] G. Brylov organized similar research into the literary tastes of metal-workers in Leningrad in the late 1920s.[26] Despite the democratic rationale of such undertakings, 'readers' criticism' always struck an uneasy balance between recognizing popular opinions and (increasingly) 'organizing' these opinions. One manual of 1927, offering instruction on how to conduct 'evenings of worker criticism', observed that an 'organ of worker control over mass literature' was essential, but that workers, when expressing their opinions, should not 'repeat themselves or stray from the main objective of the meeting'.[27] This objective was, of course, to be firmly defined by Glavpolitprosvet or some other agency of the Party's cultural policy.

Thus, in the 1920s, tension was frequently felt between normative standards (as expressed, for example, in self-education manuals) and practices of reading as actually observed. The rest of this chapter will be concerned with explaining how this tension was resolved by the creation of a unified Soviet culture.

The new Soviet reader emerges

In the 1920s the mainstream view held that the printed word was a powerful agent of change; there were disagreements only on how best to bring it to bear on the Soviet reader. Some laid greatest emphasis on the creation of a proletarian literature; others on the propaganda of the printed word amongst the masses (an approach exemplified in the journals *Knigonosha* and *Krasnyi bibliotekar'*); others on the structure of the book trade and book distribution (notably *Na knizhnom fronte*, the bulletin of Gosizdat); and still others on a truly Marxist literary criticism (*Krasnaia nov'*, *Na postu* and several others).

These journals provided the main forum for debate on the new literature and the new reader. They were all agreed that a genuinely popular socialist literature had to be created. They were also united in their distrust of Western-style popular entertainment literature. Books were to be read for self-improvement, in order to *porabotat' nad soboi*, not for idle amusement. However, critics often disagreed profoundly on how books were to perform this function and hence engaged in violent yet inconclusive polemics. In the second half of the 1920s pressure was gradually applied for the debates to be resolved. Here one can point to the familiar political landmarks – the rout of Trotsky's 'Left Opposition' and the pronouncements of *Pravda* – but perhaps a more significant factor was the growing anxiety felt for the fate of cultural

revolution. Several much-publicized cases of crimes by young people demonstrated very effectively that ten years of Soviet power had not brought about the desired transformation in society's *kul'tura* (that is, educational and moral standards). Soviet *obshchestvennost'* was shocked to discover that Komsomol members were capable of being rapists.[28] The results of the 1926 census dealt a further blow to the cause of cultural revolution. The campaign against illiteracy had stalled badly under NEP: in some regions there even appeared to be more illiterates in 1926 than there had been in 1921.[29] In addition, as we shall see below, there was a 'crisis' of over-production in publishing in 1925–7. This seemed to indicate that writers and publishers were badly out of touch with their readers.[30]

The resulting sense of crisis provided a powerful impulse for the unification of Soviet culture in general and the creation of a mythical 'new Soviet reader' in particular. The 'new reader' was an ideological construct born of frustration with the various unsuccessful attempts to foster a genuinely proletarian culture. There are various ways of monitoring how the term 'Soviet reader' lost empirical grounding in the usage of the 1920s. Perhaps the simplest and clearest is to examine the history of sociological readership surveys and questionnaires, which gradually began to impose a preconceived typology of readers on the (often very extensive) data that was collected. Another method is to examine the public debate of the time: the Soviet reader was increasingly whipped out as a rhetorical trump card in discussions of literature, publishing and the book trade.

One of the more telling examples is the newspaper *Chitatel' i pisatel'*. This publication, for the most part weekly, lasted little more than a year (from December 1927 to the end of 1928), but it appeared at a critical moment in the development of Soviet culture: it offers telling insights into the main areas of socio-cultural debate just as a new, intensified phase of 'cultural revolution' was beginning in earnest. *Chitatel' i pisatel'* is particularly relevant to the present theme in that it was conceived by Gosizdat as the organ of the Soviet mass reader. Its first editorials paid tribute to the cultural achievements of the first ten years of Soviet power, and numbered among them the emergence of a new Soviet reading public. The new readers were supposedly too culturally mature to respond to the old agitprop methods; it was now high time to pay more attention to their actual requirements, to establish a closer link between readers and writers (through published criticism, public meetings and the like) and, finally, to create a new Soviet literature to cater for the new Soviet reader. The newspaper took the

initiative in this project by giving up one of its eight pages to a forum for readers' opinions.

These may have been the initial intentions, but in the few months of its existence *Chitatel' i pisatel'* underwent a gradual but significant transformation. The newspaper became more an instruction manual for readers than an outlet for their opinions. The letters page symptomatically shrank; articles on prescribed approaches to reading, on literary groupings and on literary style gained correspondingly greater weight. Readers became strikingly unanimous on the style and content of literature they required. Readers' 'needs' and 'wants' slowly but surely fused into one, as references were made more frequently to the 'collective opinion' of the reading public. Responsibility for giving adequate expression to this collective opinion was placed increasingly with literary critics.[31]

Despite the concessions it made to the prevailing ideology of reading, *Chitatel' i pisatel'* drew constant criticism from rival publications and was duly closed down at the end of 1928. It had already done too much to expose the gulf that still existed between professional literary critics and other readers. This struggle for cultural hegemony was brought to a head in 1930, when Gosizdat published Adrian Toporov's *Krest'iane o pisateliakh*, a book which, unlike all the other publications on *nizovaia kritika*, took as its subject the peasant reader.[32] Toporov, a village teacher by profession and a spreader of revolutionary enlightenment by calling, had noted the neglect of peasant culture in official publications and set about filling in this lacuna. Throughout the 1920s he had been carrrying out cultural work in a peasant commune ('Maiskoe utro') in the Altai region of Western Siberia. In particular, he organized literary evenings where he read out to his peasant audience selections from classic and contemporary works of both Russian and foreign authors. Toporov noted down the spontaneous comments of his listeners during the readings and their often quite extended discussions afterwards. The peasants' language was not edited, but rather reproduced in all its non-standard variety. Toporov declared boldly: 'My working principle is complete impartiality.'

The peasants' interpretations are a fascinating mixture of eccentricity and anti-aesthetic orthodoxy. On the one hand, their readings had little in common with textbook exegesis. For example, in the heated discussion of Babel''s story 'Salt' from *Red Cavalry*, some readers identified the woman with the pregnant bulge as a *spekuliantka* (black marketeer), and hence gave their unequivocal approval to the drastic action taken by the soldier-narrator after he discovers she is actually

concealing a bag of salt under her dress. Yet, on the other hand, all the speakers at Toporov's meetings shared an ignorance of (and resistance to) any interpretive code that lay beyond their own pragmatic–psychological and ideological horizons. When these horizons were unable to accommodate a text's psychological or moral complexity, the peasants looked to the author to help them out by giving a clear assessment of the action. Here, of course, they found Babel' wanting. 'Salt' was criticized for its 'unclearness' (*neiasnost'*). Toporov's peasants, in other words, were already responding to texts largely within the terms of an aesthetic that was socialist realist *avant la lettre*.[33]

But, although the *kommunary* of Maiskoe utro were the vanguard of the peasantry, *Krest'iane o pisateliakh* was not well received in the early 1930s.[34] The peasants' interpretations, it was claimed, lacked focus and cohesion, and this failing was attributed to Toporov's wilful 'impartiality'. Toporov ran into further trouble because the Soviet reader was by now expected not only to take up the correct ideological standpoint, but also to talk proper. It is a well-known fact that the CPSU never regarded the peasantry as a cultural *étalon*, and Soviet literary *obshchestvennost'* by the early 1930s reacted rather badly to any deviations from the norms of the literary language.[35] The image of the reader promoted and implied by the Soviet system of cultural production was at this time becoming steadily more 'monolithic'.[36]

The questions raised in *Chitatel' i pisatel'* and (less explicitly but more powerfully) in *Krest'iane o pisateliakh* were eventually answered by the launch of a new aesthetic. The great achievement of socialist realism was indeed that it stepped into the breach between the Soviet reader and the new culture. Discussion on its origins and essence has tended to consist of polemically opposed interpretations: those that regard it as a doctrine, a contrived tradition imposed from above; and those that treat it as a manifestation of mass culture in the Western understanding of the term. Neither of these approaches is satisfactory. The Soviet Union found a 'third way' in art and literature; it created a middlebrow mass culture, one that combined bourgeois homogeneity and stability with mass print-runs.

In her justly celebrated account of the 'middlebrow' culture of the late Stalin period, Vera Dunham finds that a new Soviet 'middle class' of the late 1940s acquired its own distinctive lifestyle and quasi-'bourgeois' set of values.[37] This Soviet model of *kul'turnost'*, Dunham argues, was reflected in all aspects of everyday life (*byt*;) some of her most striking illustrations concern Soviet tastes in interior decoration. However, *kul'turnost'* was frequently invoked even before the advent of chintz

curtains and polka-dotted teacups. Nowhere was it felt to be more perfectly embodied than in the idealized Soviet reader, who in the late 1920s began to migrate from the pages of advice literature into much broader cultural terrain. In a standard instance of Soviet rhetorical slippage, a normative model, after a decent amount of time had elapsed, was assumed to have entered 'reality'. The reader thus delineated was generally male, serious-minded, studied books in a planned and 'organized' way, and was interested in *pol'za* rather than entertainment; he was not aggressively proletarian, he did not have any taste for popular genres such as fairy-tales or adventure stories, but nor did he share the values of the old intelligentsia. He was, in fact, very hard to pin down, being neither iconoclastic nor straightforwardly conservative; although he was politically conscious and actively pro-Soviet, his precise class allegiance was given surprisingly little emphasis.[38]

Homogenization becomes systemic

The treatment of the reader in public discourse was linked closely not only to the aesthetic and ideological norms of Soviet culture but also to the structure of publishing and the book trade. During the 1920s Gosizdat had to operate alongside a number of private and co-operative publishers, but its relationship with them was always tense, verging on openly hostile. State and private publishing houses put forward fundamentally different models of publishing and of the reader. Gosizdat considered its great strength to be its size and its independence from the profit motive. If, for the period of the NEP, Gosizdat was organized as a commercial enterprise, that was only the 'form' and certainly not the 'content' of its operations.[39] Co-operative and private publishers, on the other hand, were both more modest in their aims and more closely aware of the workings of the book market. They argued that book production should be substantially devolved to smaller units (even if the state retained overall control through a system of censorship). Gosizdat, they claimed with full justification, was experiencing some teething troubles: its instincts, which had formed during the civil war, were to reduce the number of titles and increase print-runs enormously. In the 1920s, when the reading public was extremely dynamic and defied comprehensive sociological investigation, these methods were foolhardy and led directly to publishing crises of over-production in 1922 and 1925–7. The problems of taking print culture to the people were exacerbated by Gosizdat's inability to establish an efficient relationship with the book distribution network.[40]

Private publishers were tolerated for a few years, but the outcome of their struggle with Gosizdat was only ever likely to favour the latter. Economic and political pressure was gradually applied to squeeze non-state publishing out of existence. Independent operators were even made scapegoats for the crisis of over-production in 1926–7. Their accusers alleged that they had duplicated each other's production by selfishly pursuing profits, and as a result had been left with remaindered books to the face-value of tens of millions of roubles. For the first ten years of Soviet power, state publishing had had its hands full catering for the mass reader, and had left to the private and co-operative sector the business of differentiated publishing for a more educated readership. By the end of the 1920s, however, the mass reader was growing more sophisticated and demanding, and the old intelligentsia was being replaced by a 'people's intelligentsia'. It was therefore time to change the model of the publishing system in favour of more planning and greater centralization.[41] The 'typification' (*tipizatsiia*) of publishing houses was advocated as a means of eliminating commercial competition, bringing down prices, and creating a truly 'mass' readership.[42] In 1930 'parallelism' in publishing was finally liquidated and the state monopoly on publishing firmly imposed with the formation of the Union of State Publishing Houses (Ob"edinenie gosudarstvennykh izdatel'stv, or OGIZ).[43] N. Novikov, a spokesman for 'book collectivization', asserted starkly the need for an undifferentiated mass literature: the time had come, he argued, 'without harming the cultural development of the masses to reduce the print runs of whole categories of literature, and the tons of paper that are saved can be thrown into mass literature.'[44] The image of the 'mass Soviet reader' is thus not simply of rhetorical interest. It actually underpinned the Soviet system of cultural production. In the early 1930s the reader was an important factor in debates about publishing policy, but this was a collective, homogenized 'mass reader', not an active consumer but the passive object of print culture. This construct of the reader helped to stifle diversity by sanctioning massification without allowing differentiation; in this respect its impact persisted until the late 1980s.

The publishing system formed in the first half of the 1930s directed its enormous *tirazhi* (print-runs) primarily at the 'mass' libraries. In the 1920s, librarianship (both theoretical and practical) was riven by highly politicized conflicts just as in other areas of NEP cultural life. By the early 1930s, however, library staff were largely Soviet-trained, and their responsibility was unambiguously to take control of, and to

systematize, readers' behaviour. The emphasis shifted from mere 'propaganda of the book' to the 'direction of reading' (*rukovodstvo chteniem*).[45]

A similar process of homogenization can be observed in the book 'trade'. In 1930 there appeared the first empirical study of the Soviet book-buyer. A number of factory book kiosks in Leningrad provided the sample. The authors were trying to work out how best to direct readers to the books most 'appropriate' to them. They were concerned that kiosks should perform their function of political education: they were troubled to discover that 15 per cent of workers left the bookstalls without making a purchase (a figure that most people in the modern Western book trade would consider remarkably low). The staff of the kiosk were no longer to be 'sellers' but rather political educators (*politprosvetchiki*); kiosks were to be supplied with mass literature just like public libraries. Kiosks, the authors concluded, should not seek profits but rather educate their customers.[46] Other articles of the time argued that people employed in the book trade were cultural workers rather than sellers.[47]

If Soviet readers were not 'consumers', then Soviet books were not commodities whose value might fluctuate according to the vagaries of market-driven fashion. Several ways were found to emphasize the status of books outside commodity exchange. The lowering of prices for many editions was one. Another was the increasingly widespread publishing practice of subscription editions, which presented the purchasing of books as a genuine cultural investment, not as a short-term transaction. In addition, the very appearance of Soviet books 'decommodified' them. In a free book market, the natural publishing strategy is for editions intended for a mass audience to come in bright attractive covers, but in paperback. In a modern book economy, mass appeal and long shelf-life tend to be opposed. This, however, was not the view taken in the Soviet Union. The loose book cover, as the leading Soviet specialist on this question commented in 1929, had 'almost completed its historical mission': it had assisted the democratization of reading by making books cheaper and more accessible to a wider public. An undesirable by-product of this process was that the book cover often provided no more than a gaudy advertisement for the book and 'masked' the book's true contents. Now that the Soviet cultural revolution was in progress, such advertisements would soon no longer be necessary: readers would naturally head straight for the 'best' books; they would not use the appeal of the dust-jacket as a criterion for their choice of reading matter. The new Soviet reader, it was claimed, valued permanence and long-term value over short-term

attractiveness: Soviet book production should accordingly make good-quality bindings a priority.[48] Public disapproval was likewise directed at 'constructivism', 'formalism' and other 'cheap effects' (*triukachestvo*) in book design and illustration; these were to be abandoned in favour of more accessible, 'realist' aesthetics.[49]

By 1932 the state had imposed a monopoly not only on publishing and book distribution but also on literature itself. As early as 1918, fifty-seven 'classic' authors were 'nationalized'. During the 1920s the Soviet canon of the Russian classics took shape and hardened; writers such as Leskov and Dostoevskii were banished to the cultural periphery, while Pushkin, Tolstoy, Korolenko and others moved to the centre. The position of the approved classics was strengthened by the official celebrations surrounding the anniversaries of their births and deaths, and by authoritative commentaries and multi-volume editions of their works.[50] As the 1920s wore on, a single set of aesthetic and political criteria for the value of literature emerged and was brought into focus by the bitter polemics between the various literary groupings. For the first ten years of Soviet power, writers had been working out how best to approach the cultural and social issues confronting the new socialist society. In 1927, *Pravda* began to tell them quite insistently that this trial period was nearly up.[51] Sure enough, the Party called a halt to the literary polemics in 1932 when it disbanded all independent literary groupings with a view to forming a single Union of Soviet Writers.

High Stalinism: myth and reality interlock

It was in the 1920s that the main institutions of Soviet culture were created as the Party extended its control over the production and dissemination of books and periodicals. Naturally, it could never exert the same kind of control over the reception of culture. Even the limited research on this subject has provided ample evidence of the divergence of 'popular' readings from the official standard. But such evidence should not lead us to underestimate the effectiveness of the Soviet institutionalization of reading. The Soviet system was not able to force each individual reader to subscribe to a single authoritative reading of every text (surely not even the most dogmatic 'cold warrior' would make that assertion), but it did impose a single way of talking and thinking about the reader, a single set of norms for cultural reception. The Soviet institutions of reading proved to be extremely habit-forming, as we shall discover in later chapters.

On closer inspection, the 'myth' of the Soviet reader can be seen to be inextricably linked to certain fundamental aspects of the Soviet cultural project. First of all, it posited that culture was radically and absolutely opposed to the market. The Soviet reader did not behave as a frivolous consumer ready to chase after the latest publishing sensation, but rather as a serious student of culture (*kul'tura*) interested in books for their educative value. Secondly, Soviet society was contrasted to the West. Whereas the USSR was undergoing accelerated and planned cultural modernization (its cultural revolution), in the West this process had taken place haphazardly and at great length. As a result, in the West culture had lost its great power to unify and civilize, while in Russia it retained this power. The Western reading public was fragmented, its Soviet counterpart united: the Soviet reader truly spoke with one voice. Third, the existence of a universal Soviet reader proved that culture could be universal: national tensions, social conflict, inequality and disparity were, accordingly, ruled out. Fourth, in the figure of the Soviet reader were fused intelligentsia and *narod*; thus one of the perennial tensions of Russian history and culture was resolved. The assumption of the classless Soviet reader and his/her Soviet way of life underpins much Soviet work in this area. One researcher commented on the first half of the 1930s that 'mass and intelligentsia readers were rapidly coming closer to one another, sometimes even coinciding. This allows us to presume that they finally fused into one in the following period'.[52] In fairness, it should be pointed out that the same writer in an article ten years later reached a much more restrained and convincing conclusion: because of the doctoring of data and the mythologization of this whole question, 'to construct a complete typology of readers in the 1930s according to social groups is impossible [...] Study of the mass reader is further complicated by the vagueness and amorphousness of the concept itself, which by the beginning of the 1930s was already beginning to lose definition'.[53]

It is hard not to agree with this assessment. We are not – and probably never will be – in a position to reconstruct the full profile of the reading public in the 1930s; the extensive public discussions of reading tell us more about the institutions of literature than about the 'real' reader. Moreover, as John Barber has pointed out, the first five-year plan is unlikely – in the short term, at least – to have done much for the homogenization of the reading public, given the enormous changes it brought about in the composition of the working class.[54]

But, although it is certainly true that we should be distrustful of public pronouncements on reading and of the determinist theories of

reception they implied, neither should we rush to set up a dichotomy between private, demotic 'reality' and public, ideologized 'myth'. Here, as elsewhere in the historiography of the Stalin period, a 'third way' beckons. The distinctions between 'public' and 'private', or between 'subjective' and 'objective', that historians (both the 'Sovietologists' and the 'revisionists')[55] have been prone to work with, sometimes seem rather crude and not particularly helpful. We need to call off the search for monocausal explanations of cultural Stalinism; to shift our attention from the question 'why?' to the question 'how?'.

This 'third way' has already had its pioneers. Régine Robin has presented what she calls the 'quasi-popular culture' of the period 1928–41 as a 'hybrid compound of genuine folk motifs, genuine popular creation and communist propaganda'.[56] In social history, Stephen Kotkin has investigated the 'mechanisms by which the dreams of ordinary people and those of the individuals directing the state found common ground'.[57] Following Kotkin's innovative study of 'speaking Bolshevik', other historians have launched research into a 'Stalinist subjectivity', where deeply personal values and preoccupations took shape within a politicized language and world view.[58] More recently still, Oleg Kharkhordin has sought to break down the dichotomy between private and public realms of activity by showing how profoundly Soviet forms of collective life were bound up with methods of 'individuation'.[59]

These new approaches to Soviet history might profitably be brought to bear on the discussions of reading that were conducted in the 1930s. Reading, after all, was thought of as a means of socializing the individual, of binding him or her to the collective, yet at the same time it was to to be practised individually and to contribute to the development of the individual self. On the one hand, Soviet theories of reading implied a passive receiver who was straightforwardly moulded by the messages sent out via books and the press. On the other hand, reading was also presented as active and productive, and associated with individual self-fashioning.

For an illustration of how these subjectifying and objectifying functions might be combined in practice, we can turn to the diary entries of a young, politically conscious 1930s reader. When Leonid Alekseevich Potemkin composed his first love letter to a fellow-student at the Sverdlovsk Mining Institute, his feelings were formulated in terms set by his recent contacts with the printed word:

> My comrades have complained to me about my only values being refinement, purity, and beauty but they notice only the external

> side, but in our socialist society we must demand this from each other too. Gleb Uspensky's luminous thought during socially filthy and parasitical times, arising from his rapt contemplation of the *Venus de Milo*, that there will come a time when people will all be as beautiful as the *Venus de Milo*. And as Marx says, the people's relations between people should be clear and transparent as rock crystal. [...] I picture our friendship as fraternal in the sense of an ideological unity whose goal is to aid in the development of an independent personality through the spiritual cooperation of both parties in their community work. This is the source of its beauty and wholesomeness, the preservation and justification of which is a test of character and heart, as Heinrich Mann put it.[60]

In the event, the object of Potemkin's affections was spared these bookish effusions; the second and final draft of the letter was in a somewhat lower key. Nevertheless, Potemkin's commitment to systematic study as the path to self-validation and emotional fulfilment (not to mention self-advancement) remained. A few weeks or months later,[61] in a moment of genuine apotheosis, girls cluster round him after he has given a masterly exposition of dialectical materialism:

> The girls seize me by the arms. I don't have any gloves on and they won't let me carry my book bag. Cheerful, interesting, ardent, friendly relations seethe up around me. Me, whom no one ever loved and in fact who had nothing to be loved for. The love in me which was not accepted by a single girl flared up in the form of a love for society and the bright joy of a great love of society. Not only will I compel a girl who has infatuated me to love me, but all society will love and respect me too.[62]

Potemkin should not, of course, be taken as a representative of the 'reading masses' of the 1930s. It does, however, seem legitimate to place him in the vanguard of *kul'turnost'*, among those people in whom normative models for cultural reception chimed with subjectively-held aspirations and values.[63]

Although the function of *kul'turnost'* – to generate an evolving normative structure for urban public order by creating a productive interface between public and private domains – remained constant, its content underwent several important shifts. It has, for example, been pointed out that there was a distinct change of emphasis in the second half of the 1930s from general 'culturedness' (personal hygiene, order-

ing of the domestic environment, attendance of cultural events, reading of literature) to more rough-edged Bolshevik virtues and ideological mastery (*ovladenie bol'shevizmom*).[64] As regards the relationship of reading to *kul'turnost'* in the early Soviet period, there is one very fundamental shift that sheds light on the homogenization of the reader in the early Soviet period. Under the terms of the Leninist 'cultural revolution', great emphasis was placed on the educative power of print culture. Readers were expected to be formed by the books they took into their hands. This was an explicitly 'top-down' model of cultural transmission (and reception). At the same time, a parallel ideological tradition, rooted rather differently in Russian Marxism, stressed the active, productive aspects of reading. According to this political philosophy, the function of books was to sow seeds of enlightenment in the consciousness of worker readers which would then sprout into true knowledge, not mechanistically to transform that consciousness. In an extreme form, this philosophy led to the erasing of the boundary between the reception and the production of written culture.[65]

The two approaches to reading outlined above were not always mutually exclusive in the 1920s; believers in 'top-down' transmission would on occasion pay lip-service to the importance of readers' 'creative' appropriation of the text, while the supporters of *nizovaia kritika* tended in practice to use determinist models of reception. The point is, though, that they existed in a relationship of tension. In the 1930s, on the other hand, they were accommodated within a single model of 'directed reading' (*rukovodstvo chteniem*). Despite its name, this model required not only that readers be suitably 'directed', but also that they produce and give voice to their own readings in an ideologically acceptable way. 'The Soviet reader' had in the 1920s been one of the most controversial phrases employed in cultural debate; in the 1930s, however, it was thoroughly taken over as an unproblematic term of Stalinist discourse. The reader was no longer to be feared, but could rather be trusted by the authorities as a subordinate co-commissioner of Soviet culture.

How precisely was this achieved? In large part, of course, thanks to the official appropriation of all means of public cultural expression. But there was another, more profound reason. The norms for reading (the 'myth' of the Soviet reader) did not originate in the fantasy of leading Party functionaries; as is well known, imagination was never their strong point. Rather, these norms took into account readers' actual values *as they were interpreted by* those responsible – at all levels – for Soviet cultural policy.[66] This, I think, is what Evgenii Dobrenko

means when he writes of the 'ideal' state reader as 'a product of the joint creative work of the authorities and the masses'.[67] The image of the reader thus generated was certainly distorted – most fundamentally because a single model (such as Soviet culture required) can never do justice to the heterogeneity of any reading public. But nor was it entirely divorced from reality. As Dobrenko observes, a good many of the defining (anti-)aesthetic attitudes embedded in socialist realism – the demand for accessibility, heroism, a clear moral message, and so on – would certainly have been shared by the majority of Soviet readers. In fact, the Soviet reading myth, like Soviet culture itself, came about in order to achieve an optimal balance between inclusivity and ideological rectitude (with the latter, however, always retaining the option of upsetting the equilibrium).

How this balancing took place in practice can be illustrated by the reception of Vasilii Azhaev's hugely successful construction novel *Far From Moscow* in the late 1940s.[68] Speakers at public meetings and (to a lesser extent) authors of letters sent directly to the author couched their readings in highly politicized terms: references to the leading lights of Marxism–Leninism were frequent, and comments were made on such matters as Azhaev's depiction of socialist competition and his neglect of the menace of Japanese espionage in the Far East. From Azhaev's personal archive we gain a clear sense of the writer's total entrapment in the public domain. Yet, at the same time, readers tended to bring the novel sharply within their own personal frame of reference. The action of the novel was compared with readers' own experience of 'real life', and assessed on this basis. In an extreme case of the congruence of literature and life, one reader actually recognized events from her own past depicted in the novel.

So for Azhaev's readers, just as for Toporov's *communards*, reading was a means both of reinforcing and articulating a range of public values *and* of achieving individual emotional fulfilment. There were, however, a couple of slight but significant differences between these two interpretive communities. The post-war readers showed a somewhat surer touch in articulating the public values of Soviet society than did the Siberian peasants (here the extra twenty years of discursive training had clearly had some impact); and in the 1940s, 'complete impartiality' was certainly not observed in the editing of readers' public statements for wider consumption (the stenographic reports of readers' conferences were subject to stylistic 'improvements' prior to publication).

So what light does all this shed on the powerful cultural norms that obtained during the Stalin period? As is well known, these norms were

strictly policed at the institutional level (in editorial offices, publishing houses, schools, libraries, and so on), yet their successful maintenance also depended on a shared notion of culture's main addressee – the imaginary Soviet reader. In Stalin's Russia we find the culmination of a homogenizing process identified by Iurii Tynianov, the scholar and literary theorist, in the early 1920s. Noting that 'the reader' had become 'very complex, almost impossible to pin down', Tynianov observed that the many critics who invoked this receptive presence inevitably overrode its complexity by imposing on it their own imagined model of literary reception: the reader that resulted was 'either some sort of ideal construct – not a person, but a kind of human specimen in need of education [*kak by antropos, nuzhdaiushchiisia v vospitanii*], or the first acquaintance [the critic] happens to come across, or even the critic himself'.[69] Ten years or so later, *all* public discussion of the reader had become overlaid with such cultural myth-making. And the myths in question were generated not by a single critic, or even by a single literary grouping or movement, but by the whole system of cultural production. Of course, these myths were not just plucked out of the air; cultural myths never are. The 'ideal' reader of the 1930s and 1940s had socio-cultural credibility and *pafos* for all those who expected or desired the success of the Soviet cultural project, and particularly for those who aspired to active participation in this project. Even more important, this reader's criteria for literary evaluation were to a large extent modelled on (and constrained by) the perceived tastes of the Soviet mass public. In a sense, therefore, the 'ideal', public reader complemented the 'real', individual reader. But, crucially, this negotiated relationship had rules and restrictions: where individual response could not be reconciled satisfactorily with public norms (where, for example, it took non-standard linguistic form), it was denied access to all means of public communication. In the public sphere, a central – and non-'negotiable' – role was reserved for 'the reader' as bearer and arbiter of cultural norms. As one radical but justifiable formulation has it: 'Soviet *obshchestvennost'* was formed as a reading public'.[70]

In the next chapter, and indeed in all subsequent chapters, we shall investigate how this normative framework responded to changes in the Soviet reading public and was challenged by alternative strategies and models of reading in the second half of the Soviet period. At the same time, we shall see that Soviet *kul'turnost'* (as reflected in reading practices) had struck deep roots in people's system of values and was strongly supported by the unusual relationship of culture and the economy in Soviet Russia.

3
The Arrival of the New Reader: The Post-Stalin Period

By 1932 the Soviet reader, as featured in Soviet public discourse, was a thoroughly ideologized and homogenized figure. We now need to examine how this myth of the Soviet reader stood up to the real behaviour and values of the post-Stalin reading public and in what ways the practices and representations of reading changed from the mid-1950s onwards.

The rediscovery of the reader in public discourse

The return to a supposedly unblemished Leninism in political life after the Twentieth Party Congress had a corollary in the cultural field, and particularly in the area of reading. Print culture was again called upon to assist in the cause of social change. The 'Thaw' did not seek to challenge the forms of Soviet cultural life, but rather to reinvest them with the significance they had lost over the previous thirty years. The Party began to show concern that print culture should be efficiently produced and distributed, and that it should genuinely perform its allotted role of enlightenment. A Central Committee resolution of 27 July 1958, 'On the printing schedule of newspapers and journals and their delivery to the population', noted that too many periodicals were held up in the distribution network and consequently pulped. Similar concerns were expressed in 'On measures to improve retail sales of newspapers and magazines to the population' (1 October 1959). An important new consideration for the post-Stalin regime was the financial viability of any publishing enterprise. Publishing houses had officially been on a kind of *khozraschet* (self-financing) since 1921, but in practice any ideologically sound periodicals were allowed to be loss-making. In the resolution 'On liquidating losses made by newspapers

and journals' (31 July 1959) the Party spelled out the need to curtail unnecessary and expensive evening editions of newspapers, minor arts periodicals, and factory newspapers (what, it argued, was wrong with the wall newspaper?).

In the period of the Thaw, however, the Party's concern was not simply to monitor the costs of printing and distribution and to act as a watchdog of ideological orthodoxy, slapping the wrists of editors who stepped out of line. It also hoped to accelerate cultural change through the promotion of a particular set of values. To this end a significant number of new journals and newspapers were established in the late 1950s: of 121 Soviet non-specialist journals in existence in 1987, Gudkov and Dubin calculate that twenty-nine (24 per cent) were set up in the period 1950–65.[1] In addition, a number of existing periodicals were criticized for failing to take the desired line. Party resolutions of this period show a very clear sense of the values to be inculcated in the new reader. For example, one criticized the weekly *Ogonek* for devoting too much space to travel writing and *detektivy* ('On serious defects in the content of the magazine *Ogonek*', 9 September 1958). It also considered the magazine's illustrations to be inappropriate and its range of contributors unnecessarily limited to in-house journalists. Some newspapers were criticized for tilting the balance of text and pictures too far in favour of the latter ('On the incorrect practice of excessive illustration in certain newspapers', 11 February 1958). Local newspapers were reprimanded for reprinting without authorization undesirable popular literature ('On the incorrect practice of reprinting works on adventure and fantasy subjects in local newspapers', 19 November 1958).[2]

This flood of new instructions from above shows that Party controls over print culture proliferated in the post-Stalin period, even if they did not intensify. Just as in the early 1930s, one of the Party's refrains was an insistence on a closer link between books and periodicals and their readers. The publicly promoted image of the reader had changed little in its essentials, but there were subtle differences of emphasis. For a rough comparison, let us take two bibliographical journals, one published in the late 1930s, the other in the late 1950s. (Coincidentally, they bear the same name: *Chto chitat'*.) The earlier of the two gives more detail on its intended addressee: it is a 'monthly journal of bibliographical recommendations [*rekomendatel'noi bibliografii*] for librarians in urban mass libraries and the mass reader'. *Chto chitat'* mark two describes itself more laconically as a 'monthly journal of critical bibliography' (*ezhemesiachnyi kritiko-bibliograficheskii zhurnal*). The Stalin-era journal offered readers lengthy book reviews centred on political topics

such as 'the Leninist plan for electrification' and 'the flowering of socialist culture', while its post-Stalin counterpart was more open-ended, treating 'self-education' as a slightly more autonomous process. In addition, there are differences of tone: the rhetoric of the 1930s had softened somewhat twenty years later. In 1958, the Minister of Culture envisaged the journal run by her organization as offering 'advice' and 'assistance' to 'millions of readers'. Reflecting on the almost 2 billion roubles that Soviet readers spent on books in 1957, she suggested that: 'Soviet people and books are firm friends' (*sovetskie liudi krepko druzhat s knigoi*).[3] The increasing sugariness of official pronouncements on the Soviet reader was characteristic of the post-Stalin era; cultural diabetes set in only much later. Not only that, in 1958 there is a slight but marked tendency to avoid stark references to 'the Soviet reader', and to speak instead of 'the Soviet people' (accompanied by a number of bland epithets), thus weakening the prescriptive *pafos* of such statements.

But, while public discussion of the reader remained highly ideologized, it would be wrong to deny that the campaign launched under Khrushchev to reinvigorate Soviet print culture had any significant results. The *tolstye zhurnaly* were allowed to become a much freer and more challenging forum for discussion, and the mood of social optimism they induced was reflected in the tone and quantity of readers' letters.[4] The link between readers and their chosen periodicals was thought to be epitomized by readers' conferences. Few such events caught the mood of the times as effectively as those conducted by the editorial board of *Novyi mir* in Moscow, Leningrad and Novosibirsk in the mid-1960s. At one of these, in March 1964, Aleksandr Tvardovskii typically asserted that 'The reading habit must have merit, it must go hand in hand with a fully developed consciousness and a correct set of principles, it must not be mere consumption devoid of any intellectual involvement.'[5] Tvardovskii encouraged a frank and, if necessary, critical statement of readers' views on the journal. He fielded detailed comments and questions about Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and his own works. All these meetings – and particularly those in Novosibirsk – were notable for the audience's willingness to engage with questions of both aesthetics and literature's social role. Tvardovskii cited proudly the words of a French acquaintance of his: 'our writers are perhaps no worse than yours, but we don't have readers like yours'.[6] The *sovetskii chitatel'* was evolving into the *samyi chitaiushchii narod*.

That Tvardovskii's public meetings called forth genuine civic enthusiasm is indisputable, but it remains true that readers' conferences were

on the whole much less lively occasions. Public libraries and other cultural institutions were instructed to organize a fixed number of such events each year, most of them focused on a particular theme (for example, historical interpretations of the Time of Troubles or the Petrine period). Librarians would organize a display of recent literature on the subject in question. These conferences soon became empty rituals; they tell us almost nothing about the real profile of the Soviet reader.[7]

Whatever their shortcomings in practice, readers' conferences in the post-Stalin period did raise an important question: how, in the absence of a market and of public opinion surveys, to gauge the popularity of books and periodicals? How, moreover, to assess the impact of print culture on the mentality of Soviet society? These questions became even more urgent when the debate on 'cultural revolution' was revived in the 1960s. Most commentators could agree that cultural revolution began in 1917, but when did it end? Had it, in fact, ended? The most authoritative volume on this subject in the 1960s failed to reach a consensus view.[8] When Soviet theorists of the 1920s spoke of cultural revolution, they meant a great deal more than the liquidation of illiteracy: they had in mind nothing less than the transformation of the values of all Soviet citizens, the creation of a new socialist ethos (or culture) and, ultimately, a new man. Now, this is a formidable task for any state to undertake, let alone one confronted by the backwardness of Russia in 1917 (or 1928). By the 1960s the Party had had ample opportunity to observe the propensity of culture to lag behind the revolutions in politics and economics.[9]

Systematic studies of the reader resumed in the 1960s after the hiatus of the Stalin era. This is one manifestation of a general preoccupation with the 'rational use of leisure' in the Brezhnev period.[10] Naturally, the purpose of this research was not to rejoice in popular diversity, but rather to gauge the effectiveness of attempts to socialize the population through print culture. Groups of sociologists began to investigate the cultural impact of social change since the death of Stalin, and they took a particular interest in Soviet reading habits.[11] The surveys produced as part of these research programmes are interesting, even if their validity is sometimes limited by the methodological restrictions placed on them. The emphasis is placed strongly on the workings of traditional institutions of culture (notably public libraries) at a time when the private domain was becoming increasingly significant in book consumption. Moreover, data on the official system of book production and distribution tended to obscure as much as they revealed

about popular tastes. In the absence of a functioning market, these tastes were extremely hard to assess. Another fundamental problem is that Soviet sociologists of reading usually approached the empirical data with a preconceived 'typology' of readers in mind.[12] All these limitations must be borne in mind as we now look at the results of some of this research.

The most thorough and sustained sociological investigation of Soviet reading habits is to be found in the work of a group of researchers centred in the Lenin Library in Moscow. A spokesman for this group set an agenda for research in an article presented in the form of a dialogue between a sociologist and a literary scholar. He emphasized the need to trace and analyze the extent to which books were read (their *dinamika chteniia*), and concluded that the fate of a book depended on two main factors: the degree to which it corresponded to the expectations and values of the reading public; and the influence of social institutions in the book's production and distribution. So far, he added, research on the reception of literature had run the risk of combining a sociological with a normative approach: in other words, interpretations of a work through history were compared with the 'correct' reading, and no effort was made to analyze or explain these varying interpretations.[13]

The first major publications by the Lenin Library research group came out in the late 1960s, and more followed throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[14] The findings were based on detailed questionnaires which quizzed library-users on their social background, free time and reading habits.[15] The reading public that this research sketched out was gratifyingly enormous and active: an estimated 180 million Soviet citizens were consumers of print culture. Readers (especially those living in small towns) were avid consumers of fiction: in the town of Ostrogozhsk (Voronezh region), where a major case-study was carried out in the period 1969–71, 58 per cent of those questioned were found to be reading imaginative literature 'constantly'.[16] In most cases, however, this was not an informed literary interest: their choice of reading matter was guided primarily by its theme or genre. When selecting books, readers were more likely to pay attention to the advice of friends than to librarians or shop assistants; almost no one looked to literary critics for guidance. What the results of this research implied was that the publishing methods that had apparently worked so efficiently in the 1930s were now becoming inadequate to the needs of a rapidly growing public. No one could imagine now that there was a single mass reader. Instead, it became common to speak of the birth of

a 'new reader'. There was a sense that a gap had opened up between popular taste and Soviet publishing output and library collections. The printed word was, moreover, facing competition from other media that had not existed back in the 1930s.[17] However, a central premise of Soviet sociological research into reading was that all these problems could and would be overcome once the situation had been properly analyzed.

In the 1960s the reader re-entered the discourse not only of sociologists, but also of writers and literary critics.[18] This renewed interest in the reader can be dated back to an article by A. F. Asmus published in 1961.[19] Asmus's lead was quickly followed by others. The well-known *shestidesiatnik* critic Stanislav Rassadin made the point that each society and each epoch provides its own reading of works of literature (and especially of the classics); readers therefore deserved a more prominent place in the work of literary scholars and critics.[20] Rassadin and others made mention of the 'bibliopsychology' of Rubakin, a 'subjectivist' approach that had been in disrepute since the 1930s. Over the following twenty years, several collections of scholarly articles would seek to analyze the place of the reader in the writer's imagination.[21] In January 1972 no less an authority than the Central Committee of the CPSU brought out a resolution 'On literary criticism', which emphasized that critics must remain closely in touch with the needs of the reader.

The growing preoccupation with the reader was further demonstrated by a number of articles in the mainstream *Literaturnoe obozrenie* in the 1970s. This monthly journal was formed in 1973 as an explicit response to the Central Committee Resolution of 1972 on literary criticism. It quickly took a position among the leading Soviet literary journals, but its function was none the less slightly different from that of the older publications such as *Znamia* and *Novyi mir*. This was not intended to be a specialized literary publication: rather, it was addressed to anyone with a general interest in contemporary Soviet literature. It aimed to provide plentiful and varied book reviews in order to keep the reader abreast of the Soviet 'literary process'. Even more important, for our present purposes, was its regular publication of articles on the sociology of literature.[22] The subjects covered included sociological research on reading in the Soviet Union, the relationship of print culture to the other media, the genres of 'mass' literature (thrillers, science fiction, popularized historical and biographical works), and the relationship between authors, publishing houses and readers. In the 1970s *Literaturnoe obozrenie* advocated a 'partnership' between sociologists and literary critics: the former would provide a

socio-cultural diagnosis, the latter would then help to bring literature closer to its readers.[23]

The relationship between Soviet writers and readers was a rhetorical trope of Soviet culture from the 1920s onwards (see the remarks on *Chitatel' i pisatel'* in Chapter 2). Readers' letters were regularly published to provide direct feedback on works of literature, although one may certainly question how many of these letters were 'spontaneous'.[24] In 1977, *Literaturnoe obozrenie* ran a questionnaire on the extent to which Soviet writers consciously took account of their readers. The journal received forty replies.[25] Soviet critics were invited to perform a similar exercise in 1979–80, and the results obtained were rather more engaging. Interpretations of the critic's role could be divided into two broad categories: first, the notion of the critic as intermediary (*posrednik*) between literature and reader; second, the assessment of literary criticism as an 'independent social phenomenon, tied inextricably to art, but at the service of more than just art' rather than merely a 'transmission belt from the "producer" to the "consumer"'.[26] This debate captures nicely the inbuilt contradictions of Soviet culture: print culture was produced for a reader (most often the 'mass' reader), but many of its producers were not too interested in this addressee. After writers and critics had had their say, *Literaturnoe obozrenie* in 1981 finally threw open its pages to readers with the questionnaire 'The Writer and the Reader: Feedback' (no. 5 onwards).

Readers' tastes as represented in Soviet publishing

What, though, was the real relationship between popular taste and the selection of books offered by the publishing system? Back in the 1920s the aesthetic of socialist realism had emerged as a response to the challenge of creating a Soviet literature that was both ideologically constructive and in some sense 'popular'. However, the concessions made to 'popularity' did not – at least in the 1930s and 1940s – extend to certain literary genres of proven mass appeal. The production of 'Red Pinkertons' did not last beyond the 1920s, but the Soviet taste for popular literary genres – detective story, love story, fantasy – none the less persisted.[27] In the late 1950s the term *prikliuchencheskaia literatura* (adventure literature) was rehabilitated as two new *serii* (series of publications) – the 'Biblioteka prikliuchenii' (Adventure Library) and the 'Biblioteka sovremennoi fantastiki' (Library of Contemporary Fantasy) were launched.[28] Thereafter *detektivy* commonly appeared in middlebrow non-literary *serii* such as 'Iskatel'' and 'Podvig'. Western

detective novels and works of science fiction were treated with more caution: they were commonly published not in separate editions, but in provincial or specialist journals such as *Vokrug sveta*, *Nauka i religiia*, *Chelovek i zakon* and *Khimiia i zhizn'*, and also in *bibliotechnye serii* (series intended for library holdings). In the early 1970s a quite intense public debate took place on the merits and demerits of the detective novel.[29] Western thrillers had first appeared in the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s, but the works selected did not include any current best-sellers on the Western book markets. Soviet publishers did not go much beyond Agatha Christie. The authorities reckoned, with good reason, that the Soviet population should not be exposed to descriptions of contemporary society in the West.[30]

In the Soviet Union, *fantastika* was always a more respectable 'popular' genre than the *detektiv* and consequently attracted a lot more public discussion.[31] The official Soviet fantasy series ('Biblioteka sovetskoi fantastiki', 'Zarubezhnaia fantastika') each brought out a few titles every year. Although science fiction in particular knitted in rather well with the utopian project of the would-be Communist state, it too attracted a good deal of controversy. Western writers again tended to be off limits, and many devotees of the fantasy genre had to resort to the black market to obtain the works they required.[32]

The Soviet publishing system was generally very hostile to the genres of 'mass' or entertainment fiction. 'Mass culture' was regarded as the morally corrupting product of late capitalist Western societies. As a result, Soviet popular print culture neglected or ignored completely genres that are the staple of popular literature in the West: detective novels, violent thrillers, romantic fiction, comics. A Western European or American reader would not be able to identify much that resembled popular entertainment literature in the output of Soviet publishers in the 1960s and 1970s.

But all the evidence suggests that, while the Soviet publishing system may not have produced much that was reminiscent of Western 'pulp fiction', there were a great number of books that were read because they belonged to certain formula genres. The values of the Soviet reader, it emerged, were not too unlike those of his/her Western counterpart. A project masterminded by Vladimir Shlapentokh in Novosibirsk in 1968–70 found a distinct lack of selectivity in readers' consumption of fiction: for most readers the subject matter (*tematika*) of a work was more significant than its 'aesthetic qualities'; *detektivno-prikliuchencheskaia literatura* was overwhelmingly the most popular genre. It was very hard to discern readers' preferred

1 'SOS! Save Our Souls' (*Krokodil*, no. 18, 1959)

A clear illustration of publicly expressed Soviet attitudes to Western mass fiction.

topics or authors; for the most part readers simply seemed to name books that they happened to have read recently. For example, 3600 readers of *Pravda* named 2000 different books.[33] Other surveys of reading in the 1960s and 1970s suggest that readers were guided by preferences for particular types of literature; the Soviet taste for the classics was greatly exaggerated. Moreover, readers were more likely to be influenced by television adaptations of classic novels than by the school programme. The favourite genres were historical novels, war novels and *detektivy*. Readers were undiscriminating in their consumption: surveys failed almost totally to identify books that readers had not enjoyed.[34] Most readers took less interest in the classics and more interest in formula literature than was considered culturally healthy. S. Shvedov, for example, in an analysis of popular reading matter carried out in 1983, found that most readers preferred a diet of epic novels, whose plot lines were generally interchangeable and often confused by readers.[35] One further conclusion demands to be cited, as it points to a sharp distinction between the Soviet and the Western consumer of 'pulp fiction': 'It is very common to find readers relating to it [imaginative literature] as a universal means of obtaining new knowledge about various aspects of life, about the past, present and future, about philosophical and moral problems of various eras, and about relationships between people.' Soviet readers, in other words, were more concerned to extract practical guidance from literature; contrast this with the predominantly 'escapist' function of such literature in the West.[36]

This general Soviet tendency towards 'instrumental' readings of imaginative literature can in part be ascribed to the reluctance of the Soviet publishing system to provide the population with self-help books. In the 1920s advice literature was published quite extensively (sometimes in several editions); it was heavily politicized (of course), and offered doctrinaire solutions to problems in limited areas of everyday life. The subjects of hygiene and self-education dominated, as they then seemed central to the project of creating a new proletarian ethic. In the 1930s such overtly prescriptive literature became less prominent. Its functions were transferred partly to popular magazines, but most of all to a range of other socializing institutions (notably schools and libraries). In the 1930s, we may hesitantly conclude, the Soviet citizen was acquiring *kul'turnost'* through social practice, and not by responding directly to ideological recommendations articulated in behaviour guides. In the post-Stalin era advice literature made a strong comeback. In the mid-1950s, guides to household management reappeared, and

then, under Khrushchev, there came a boom in behaviour (that is, etiquette) literature, a genre that had been almost unknown in the 1920s and 1930s. The fortunes of various types of advice literature continued to fluctuate interestingly in the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, but their right to exist was no longer in question.

Catriona Kelly has found that both the overall publishing policy on advice literature and the actual content of behaviour guides in the post-Stalin period betray distinct ideological confusion. The regime was by no means consistent in the ethos it tried to promote. Particularly striking was the tension between, on the one hand, the assertion of the intelligentsia's social importance, and, on the other, an unchanged commitment to a classless society. Similarly, importance was attached to private values at the same time as the collective regulation of behaviour continued to be emphasized.[37] Moreover, the practical handbooks of the post-Stalin period often seemed to bear little relation to the realities of Soviet *byt*. For example, the publishers of the book *Kniga o syre* (1974) showed signs of an ironic sense of humour: in this volume, the Soviet consumer, never exactly spoilt for choice, was given information on 117 types of cheese.

The Soviet regime of the 1960s and 1970s behaved so 'inconsistently' not because it was particularly incompetent, but rather because it was attempting an impossible task: to create a single social ethos for a society that was rapidly becoming more differentiated. The model of *kul'turnost'* that had served its purpose admirably in the 1930s and 1940s was no longer adequate. The rediscovery of private (that is, non-collective) life in the post-Stalin period was reflected in the area that most concerns us here: the circulation and consumption of print culture. The state monopoly of publishing and the book trade was able to conceal, but not to prevent, the growth and differentiation of the reading public.

The mechanisms of the 'book boom'

Sociologists have often spoken of the urbanizing 'revolution' in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. In this period people became better-educated, migrated to the cities, moved out of communal flats, and gained slightly more disposable income. Spotting a link between social change and developments in reading patterns, Soviet researchers dubbed this the period of the 'book boom'. They found, for example, that recent migrants to the city were inclined to regard books as a means of symbolic adaptation to the 'higher' urban culture; that the

size of workers' private collections had doubled over 10–15 years; that there were in 1985 ten times more books in homes than in libraries.[38] In the late 1960s Soviet sociologists began to recognize that, although there was only a slight correlation between wealth and size of private collections, there was great variety in the reading public according to level of education.[39]

The book boom had provided welcome evidence of the rising cultural level of Soviet society, but it was also associated with a less desirable phenomenon: 'book hunger' (*knizhnyi golod*). The state system of production was simply not sophisticated enough to meet demand; moreover, for the state to recognize the full diversity of popular taste would have required the ideologically unacceptable admission that Soviet society was not culturally as one.[40]

The several decades of Soviet power tended only to strengthen the centralization and homogenization of print production. Book output rose steadily: by 1957 the Soviet Union could boast of one billion copies per year – even if this figure was artificially inflated by pamphlets and reprints. Between 1913 and 1957 there had been a twelvefold increase in overall print-run, but, significantly, only a 70 per cent rise in the number of titles.[41] The number of publishing houses fell from a pre-revolutionary peak of over 4000 and a Soviet maximum of 2000 in the mid-1920s to a little over 200 in 1957.[42] The situation did not change radically after the Thaw. The differentiation of printed material between the 1960s and 1980s remained limited. Between 1960 and 1990 the growth of print-runs and volume of production far surpassed that of the titles published. In short, the Soviet publishing system remained unchanged in its essentials from 1930 to 1986. It naturally inclined towards grand projects that were not necessarily of much benefit to Soviet readers. Besides the large editions of 'grey literature', one could also mention the large-scale foreign-language editions of the founding fathers of Marxism–Leninism.[43]

There was some debate on the status of publishing in socialist production relations. Publishing was commonly identified as a branch of *nematerial'noe proizvodstvo* (non-material production); however, the argument was made that books were also material products, in the sense that their production involved calculable expenditure. This question may have remained a grey area, but all were agreed that the commodification of the book under capitalism was to be resisted by the Soviet system.[44] The criterion for publishing a book should be the popular 'need' (*potrebnost'*) for it, not the 'demand' (*spros*). The systematic reluctance to recognize demand can be seen in pricing policy. After

1952 standard national price lists were adopted, which gave publishing houses very restricted room for manoeuvre. The two recognized criteria for pricing were the production costs of a book (so, for example, illustrations or colour printing would raise the price) and the subject matter. Price differentiation by subject matter became steadily more extensive and comprised 191 categories by 1977. Fiction (especially in translation) was more expensive than any other category apart from high-quality illustrated books. It is also worth noting the raising of prices in 1977 for fiction, encyclopedias, dictionaries, books on domestic pursuits and hobbies, and small-edition scholarly works. These were identified as the types of literature suffering the heaviest unsatisfied demand.[45] Pricing, however, remained too inflexible to keep in step with *spros*.

How was the Soviet book crisis to be alleviated? It was clear that the state-run system of book production had become hugely inflexible and inefficient, and that it was failing the Soviet reading public.[46] Publishing houses had never been free, at least not in theory, to ignore the demands of readers. The principle of *khozraschet* had been introduced in publishing in November 1921. A tension between commercial and ideological motivations had been registered by reader research in the 1920s, but it was not until the 1970s (and even then only partially) that it began to be recognized in the Soviet system of publishing. The strength of the profit motive in Soviet publishing is a complicated issue. On the one hand, Soviet publishing ventures were generally expected to be *rentabel'ny*, to balance their books; on the other, editors were often more concerned to meet ideological requirements, to perform an educative function, and to protect their own fiefdoms, than to maximize profits. Soviet publishing – and this is true of many other areas of Soviet life – did not work straightforwardly according to either of the opposing models of strict economic rationality and Marxist–Leninist ideology. In the 1970s, publishing houses were urged to become more profitable or, at the very least, to ensure that income covered expenditure. In practice, however, loss-making publishing houses continued to be tolerated.

The ideology of Soviet publishing always laid great emphasis on the size of its print-runs; at the same time it systematically reduced the variety of printed material. The idea was to nurture writers who were capable of writing thick books that millions of people could and should read, and then to publish these books in millions of copies. This approach proved adequate for the first twenty years of the Soviet reader's life: until the mid-1950s, mass reading was library-based, and

the masses could thus be directed towards the appropriate books. Starting in the 1950s, however, private collections started to catch up with libraries; the demands of readers became more varied, and the unwieldy publishing system was unable and unwilling to respond. 'Book hunger' was the inevitable result. The difficulties associated with reform of the Soviet publishing system will be examined in Chapter 4.

The defects of publishing were exacerbated by those of the distribution system. The rational distribution of printed matter over an area as huge as the Soviet Union was a problem that would have taxed an economic system more sophisticated than the Soviet book trade (*knizhnaia torgovlia*). The rise of the subscription edition was in large part a measure designed to structure and make more 'rational' book consumption in the Soviet Union – to avoid short-term fluctuations in demand that would strain the system to the limit. For individual books the approach devised was the 'Kniga-pochtoi' system of preliminary orders (*predvaritel'nye zakazy*). Readers would fill in forms to reserve copies of the books they needed; that way, the centralized book distribution system would know exactly how many copies to send to each bookshop.[47] This, at least, is how the system was supposed to work, but from the 1960s onwards there is ample evidence of it malfunctioning. The system of centralized planning required publishers to predict reader-response in advance, on a very long cycle, and when the orders for popular books failed to match their predictions, there was no way of adjusting the print-run.[48]

Given the lack of consultation between the publishing system and the book trade, booksellers were commonly allowed no choice in *what* they sold: they simply had to distribute the books they were presented with. We have seen how, from the early 1930s, booksellers were expected to be propagandists as well – to help readers select the literature to meet their 'requirements'.[49] In the post-Stalin period, tension between these two functions became apparent, as, in the light of the 'book hunger', it became more important to sell and distribute books efficiently. The best place to look for these developments is the specialist journal *Knizhnaia torgovlia*, which from the early 1960s ran articles on possible ways to revitalize the book trade. These methods included the exchange of remaindered books between bookshops,[50] more attractive window displays,[51] the extension of the second-hand book trade,[52] and the improved central organization of the book trade.[53] By the 1980s, complaints were even more frequent and boasts of cultural progress were carrying less and less conviction.[54]

2 From *Krokodil*, no. 8, 1959.

Although Soviet people were supposedly the 'best-read' in the world, the books available in Soviet shops were not generally the ones they wished to read. Hence the need for promotional strategies of the kind shown in this cartoon. (The substituted final letter changes the meaning from 'Bookshop' to 'Bookcake'.)

As a result of the book boom and the continuing inadequacy of the publishing system, literature and reading were increasingly driven out of the public domain and into the private sphere. This conclusion may be extended from print culture to culture in general in the late Soviet period. Ann White, in her study of the Houses of Culture, concludes that, despite the stream of resolutions on cultural enlightenment in the 1970s, the privatization of leisure was more significant than top-level decisions.[55] As a further important example we may take the prime Soviet institution of socialization-through-culture: the library. By the 1980s no one could have failed to notice how much ground the *massovye biblioteki* had lost to private collections.[56] Special measures were taken to boost the libraries. For example, the mass-circulation 'Bibliotechnaia seriia' was intended to supply them with large numbers of popular titles. The publishing plan of this series was supposed to make up 0.4 per cent of the titles put out by the central publishing houses and 2.1 per cent of their circulation. However, this scheme proved ineffective, as publishing houses appeared reluctant to target their production at those titles that were under-represented in libraries. For example, Russian classics were regularly reprinted, even though many of them had reached saturation point. Nikolai Ostrovskii's Stalinist Bildungsroman *How the Steel Was Tempered*, of which there already existed many millions of copies, and which was encountered by all Soviet children on the school syllabus, came out in two further editions, in 1979 and 1982. Such over-represented works forced the exclusion from the series of genuinely popular authors. Worse still, the series had failed by fifty titles over ten years to meet its commitment to publishing a hundred titles per year; and the proportion of paperback titles had gone up unacceptably (only hardbacks could withstand life in a Soviet library). The main criteria for inclusion in the 'Bibliotechnaia seriia' were stated by T. Gurtovenko in 1987: 'literature of exceptional value and popularity which corresponds to the most general interests of readers. It is also intended to publish in this series literature which is valuable but not exceptionally popular; the publication of literature that is popular but not in all respects valuable is permitted'.[57] Libraries were still forming their collections with a view to the novice reader of the 1930s.

'Book hunger': effects and proposed remedies

From the 1960s onwards various new attempts were made both to inculcate the reading habit and to meet rising popular demand. The

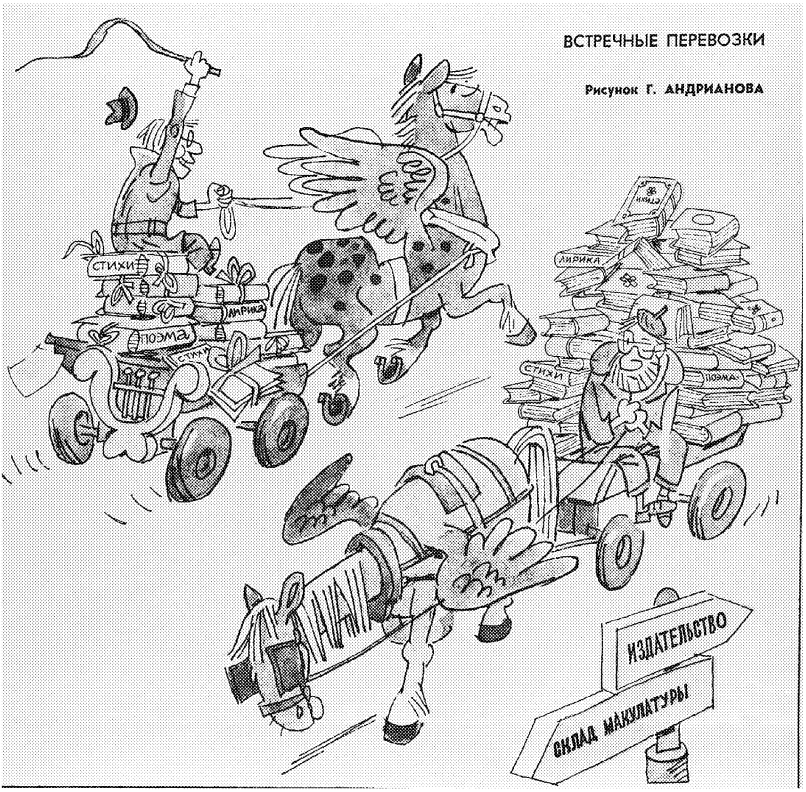
practice of book exchange in state shops deserves special mention. It was instituted in the late 1970s as a possible remedy for the book shortage, and in fact it could only ever function in the particular conditions of the *kul'tura defitsita*. Participants in this barter system would fill in a request form at the same time as they handed over their own book(s). They would only part with their own property when they found something they considered to be a suitable swap. Given that readers had to bring along a valuable book to have any chance of getting something worthwhile in return, this often proved a hard decision to take (only 20 per cent of customers used book exchange as often as once a month). Choices tended to be conservative (Dumas, Druon, and Pikul' were the preferred authors:[58] in one shop, Pikul' was requested twenty-five times and parted with only once); people wanted to make sure they stood to gain from any deal they struck. The request forms offer a good insight into the criteria of the common reader (I suspect we are indeed speaking mainly of the common reader here, as more specialized consumers of literature would generally find other, more efficient channels to satisfy their reading needs). Sometimes the boxes for the required title and author were left blank. Instead, readers specified the *seriia* they wanted – the foreign *detektivy* put out by Progress and Molodaia gvardiia, or the 'Podvig' series of 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei' (Lives of Remarkable People).[59] Not surprisingly, the sensibilities of some were offended by this brutal reduction of culture to commodity.[60]

The problem faced by the publishing and book distribution system was how to keep up with the increasing demand of a rapidly expanding reading public without, however, freeing prices or otherwise devolving control over the production and circulation of print culture. One solution was to try to control the consumption of books by publishing them in *serii* and subscription editions. This mode of publishing had a definite impact on reading practices. For example, the frequent requests in libraries for 'something historical' (*chto-nibud' istoricheskoe*) were invariably met by a volume from one of the historical *serii*.[61] In the Soviet Union there was, moreover, a mania for collecting books in complete series. Readers would subscribe to a new edition (of someone's collected works, say) and would pick up the individual volumes as they were published (often over a period of several years). Books were published not as unique and individual artefacts but rather as part of a planned and coherent collection. The popularity of these series varied greatly: some, like the Gorky-inspired 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei', enjoyed consistently high ratings, while others had mixed fortunes. One interesting example is the series

of 'fictionalized documentaries' 'Plamennye revoliutsionery' (Fiery Revolutionaries). It was published by Politizdat from 1968 onwards; by 1989, 140 books had appeared, with a typical print-run of 300 000. A survey carried out by the All-Union Book Chamber (the national bibliographical organization) between 1976 and 1978 showed that one reader in five tried to acquire all the volumes in the series, over half bought volumes selectively, nearly one in five borrowed copies from the library, and only a tiny minority were not at all interested. From 1985, however, the demand for this kind of book started to fall sharply. A survey carried out by the Institut knigi in 1988–9 demonstrated that 'book-buyers have doubts about the historical accuracy of many books in the series'. By this time, in any case, there were many more engaging sources of historical information available to the Soviet reader. The publishing system was, however, slow to react to the changes in demand: the bookselling organization Soiuzkniga continued to order the same print-runs from the publishers, while in fact it had no hope of finding purchasers for this number of copies.[62]

In general, though, there can be no doubting the cultural impact of the *seriia*. This format helped to make reading routine, regular and organized. It served to emphasize that the purchase of a book was not a spur-of-the-moment decision, but rather a long-term planned cultural investment. The subscription edition had a particularly significant role in introducing the culturally inexperienced and unconfident to the world of books. In the 1970s the most active readers of *serii* were those with a secondary education; those, in other words, who felt a pull towards cultural authority, towards hardback editions, large print and glossy covers.[63] For them the series presented a ready-made world view, which was intended to be assimilated in its entirety.

Serialized literature played a similar role in structuring readers' behaviour. Many Soviet periodicals had 'literary supplements',[64] but the most important periodical provider of popular literature was *Roman-gazeta*. This publication was set up in 1927 to break up the monopoly of the publishing houses and provide a regular and accessible supply of literature for the mass reader.[65] It was cheap, delivered direct, varied, accessible and provided complete works. Its policy was to publish works only by living authors that had already appeared elsewhere. *Roman-gazeta* was thus required to compensate for the lack of a market mechanism by reprinting works of Soviet literature that had recently been published and had proved popular. This rationale should



3 From *Krokodil*, no. 7, 1972.

A comment on the deficiencies of the Soviet publishing system: one cartload of books is heading joyfully (and over-hastily) to the publishing house, the other mournfully to the pulping station.

not, however, obscure the fact that *Roman-gazeta* served the literary *kon"iunktura* (status quo) no less than the next literary journal.[66] Despite – or perhaps because of – its stable circulation of 2–3 million in the Brezhnev period, it was not allowed to make excessive concessions to popular taste.

Another measure taken to alleviate the book shortage in the 1970s was the creation of the *makulatura* series. This venture began in 1974 in ten major cities, and offered a roundabout way of obtaining desirable works of fiction: readers would bring a certain quantity of paper (usually twenty kilos) to a recycling point, and in exchange for this would receive a coupon that entitled them to buy a book from a list of 'shortage' titles. By 1985 about a hundred different titles had been offered, with an overall print run of 80 million. *Makulatura* was a unique experiment in Soviet print culture, because – unlike, for example, the ordinary *serii* – it almost entirely ignored readers as receivers of culture and instead focused on them as consumers of books. Quite simply, some account had to be taken of readers' tastes in order to guarantee the required quantity of pulp. As a result, a new category of habitual reader was attracted to print culture. These were people who had not previously gone out of their way to buy books, but, now that they were presented with a source of enjoyable and non-ideological literature, began to assemble private book collections. Dumas and Druon – the staples of the *makulatura* series – are prominent on the bookshelves of Russian readers to this day. The *makulatura* series not only helped to make book-collecting more widespread in Soviet society, it also raised the status of this activity in the eyes of a broad reading public. Desirable books suddenly became obtainable with difficulty (*dostavaemy*) for many millions of Soviet citizens, which, in the conditions of the Soviet *kul'tura defitsita*, was certain to raise their social prestige.[67] It was thus shortage that triggered the 'book boom', and not the other way round.

The *makulatura* system did more to stimulate demand for reading matter than to satisfy it. Many readers, their appetite whetted by the few dozen *makulatura* titles, looked elsewhere for other sources of literature, but most were disappointed by what they found. State bookshops had little of interest, and few readers had access to samizdat. Under these conditions it is little wonder that the black market in books flourished in the Soviet Union of the 1970s and 1980s. As the state refused to introduce the principles of differentiated production and rationalized distribution, Soviet readers were forced to attempt this task themselves. The 'alternative' book economy took over some of the functions of the state system. At times, in fact, it was hard to draw a distinction between official and unofficial channels of book distribution. One article describes how in one of Moscow's main bookshops particularly desirable books were sold in a 'private department'

(*vnemagazinnyi otdel*) only to customers possessing 'letters of recommendation'.[68]

According to research carried out in 1987, 83 per cent of the population paid extra for goods and services outside the official system of distribution.[69] G. Iakimov, amongst others, has argued that books occupied a very prominent position in this unofficial trade network: a book was a 'item of universal value which served a whole spectrum of spiritual and economic needs, as well as social self-definition and consciousness'.[70] Books entered the black market through several channels. The most obvious, but least promising, source was bookshops. Access to the most desirable volumes was only obtainable by employing *blat* with the shop assistants. The second category was books stolen from public libraries. Third, books were stolen from printing houses before they had been properly bound (the name for these patched-together products was *samopaly*). Fourth, there was the trade in *makulatura* coupons. A fifth method was for buyers to hang around second-hand bookshops and buy up books before they reached the shop counter. The sixth, and most significant, channel feeding the black market was the system of closed distribution: shops and kiosks serving particular organizations (for example, ministries, creative unions, academic institutions) would be exploited by those enjoying access to them.

The unofficial trade in books, as it became more extensive and intensive, developed its own 'systemic' features. For example, prices would vary significantly from one region of the country to another (books were normally cheaper in Moscow, given the extreme centralization of book production). A fairly stable scale of prices for individual works became established; at any given time there were certain titles that were identifiably the hard currency of the book trade. Even more strikingly, research found that the proportion of fiction 'selected' for the black market was more or less constant at around 20 per cent. In this way, market prices were effectively introduced for the books most in demand. The black market was not substantially checked even by the introduction in the mid-1980s of flexible pricing (*dogovornye tseny*). However, one important difference between the black market in books and an open commercial market should be noted: a lot of those people involved in this trade made their profits so as to reinvest them in the book market. Chain reactions were triggered, rather like on the Western housing market. In addition, it is worth noting the ambivalent relationship that existed between unofficial and official cultures. On the one hand, the 'market leaders' of unofficial trade sometimes

embodied a set of values profoundly at odds with the official world-view; on the other, the particular mechanisms of the unofficial trade (which were very profitable for those exploiting them) depended totally on the official system of production and distribution.[71]

For many Soviet readers, *defitsit* became a defining feature of the book trade. The culture of shortages affected print culture just as it did all other categories of goods. The impact of *defitsit* on Soviet cultural life had several aspects. From the beginning of the 1960s, Soviet people had more money and, given the shortage of consumer goods, buying books was one of the few available ways to spend it. Books accordingly became status items.[72] Their prestige was heightened by the fact that certain books and categories of books were themselves in extremely short supply. They were no longer bought but 'obtained'. Naturally, a black market arose to distribute the books in greatest demand. From the 1960s ever more readers obtained their books by unofficial means. According to a sociological poll conducted by the All-Union Centre for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM) in 1989, only 14 per cent of the population said they had no problem acquiring the books they wanted;[73] the volume of the black market in books was in the same year estimated at 1.2 billion roubles annually.[74] Even so, the black market did not threaten the fundamental stability of the Soviet cultural system. If anything, it made even more immovable the barriers separating the various cultural groupings of Soviet society; moreover, it strengthened the prestige of the book, which became both a status symbol and a secure investment (it could always be resold at market rates).

As the *defitsit*, the *makulatura* series and other factors raised the prestige of reading, book-collecting became an increasingly fashionable pursuit. There were accordingly signs of a more tolerant attitude to *bibliofil'stvo*. From the late 1950s societies of book-lovers and book-collectors began to appear. The second-hand book trade was reactivated.[75] Those who valued books as objects rather than bearers of information were no longer stigmatized as bourgeois.[76] Book-collecting, when it was practised by Soviet citizens, was an activity informed by the spirit of collectivism: 'The individualist book-lover, the closeted-away bibliophile of the old days no longer really exists in our society.'[77] However, a Soviet citizen did not have to be a card-carrying *knigoliub* to appreciate the role of books in interior decoration. In millions of Soviet flats books were carefully selected and displayed to project the desired

4 From *Krokodil*, no. 28, 1961.

The caption reads: 'The Gogol goes with the chest, the Zola goes with the armchair, but where are we going to put the Cervantes? – On the sideboard [*servant*]!'

image of their owner's personality and values.[78] Given the high social prestige of reading, and the shortage of consumer goods on the Soviet market, it is not surprising so many Soviet families invested in books. By the mid-1980s, the average home collection was over 500 volumes. Books were acquired not only to be read: they were also there to be displayed, to bring an essential element of *kul'turnost'* to the domestic environment. As one commentator remarked, 'The effect is the same as when you put on display a set of crystal or china, or show off a pet dog with a good pedigree, but a dog has to be taken on walks, while a book doesn't need feeding or exercising, and is many times cheaper than ornamental crockery.'[79]

The view of books as symbols of *kul'turnost'* was strengthened by the unwillingness of the publishing system to distinguish between their ornamental and informational aspects. This explains the underproduction of paperbacks, and the reluctance to price high-quality books for collectors accordingly. The cult of the book was in fact supported by book design and presentation, the Soviet *kul'tura izdaniia*, whose origins were explained in Chapter 2. In the Soviet Union books might be published on poor-quality paper, in monotone bindings, but were almost invariably hardback. Books were supposed to be treated with care, to stand proudly on the shelves of every Soviet family, not to fall apart and be thrown out.[80] This reverential attitude to the book is typical of the middle social strata as they accumulate knowledge and cultural 'capital' in the early and middle phases of modernization. We find much the same phenomenon in Western Europe from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth, and indeed in late imperial Russia (where, of course, the middle strata were much thinner than in the late Soviet period). When the pre-revolutionary publisher A. F. Marks brought out the illustrated magazine *Niva*, he very successfully exploited the striving of his 'bourgeois' public for a defined cultural status by encouraging readers to bind the year's copies into a book (the bindings cost extra, of course).[81] What happened subsequently in Russian history was that the 'bourgeois' phase of cultural development was extended into the era of mass communications. In the West, the book became one of many sources of knowledge, entertainment and prestige, while in Russia it became *the* major source for an ever widening public. The West has gone through two 'revolutions' in publishing (first, the arrival of the mass paperback in the 1930s, and then, in recent years, that of the 'mini-paperback', sixty-page edition), but in Soviet Russia the concept of the throwaway book was extremely underdeveloped.[82] As late as 1987 readers of *Knizhnoe obozrenie* were indignant that books with stitchless binding were intended to last a mere 20–25 readings.[83] In the West it would hardly cross anyone's mind that any book might be read that extensively.

Should we really treat so ironically the reverential treatment accorded the book in Russia? What is wrong with taking books seriously enough to put them in hardback? Sociologically speaking, it is asking a great deal for a single volume to combine a mass audience with a long shelf life. One eloquent example is the 200-volume 'Biblioteka vsemirnoi literatury' (Library of World Literature), which came out during the 1970s. This was a typical Soviet-style late

Enlightenment project: the Soviet reader was to be presented with a universal version of world culture that would fit into a Soviet flat. The volumes of this series combined the solidity of an academic edition (good-quality paper and bindings) with the accessibility required to attract a mass public (popularizing commentaries, bright covers, colour pictures). This recipe did not satisfy the reading public for long: in the 1970s and 1980s the more obscure volumes of this series were among those most frequently seen in second-hand bookshops.[84]

Conclusion

The Soviet regime continued in the 1960s and 1970s to stress the socializing effectiveness of reading, yet at the same time underplayed an unwanted side-effect of this emphasis on print culture. Books in modern societies do not only help to establish new communities of readers; they also develop a private sphere. Books can divide, or at least differentiate, society far more than unite it. Readers who are increasingly able to make choices about what they read, and what they put on their shelves, begin to think independently of any would-be single social ethos. Extensive research on Soviet reading habits was launched in the 1960s and continued well into the Gorbachev period. In a typically voluntarist Soviet application of scholarship, the sociology of reading was called upon to perform the function of the market – in the absence of a market. This research revealed that the problem was no longer the number of people who read, but rather *what* they read.[85] The reader (and, more generally, the consumer) was feared by the guardians of Soviet culture precisely because he/she was likely to make the wrong decisions; according to some, taste was in danger of being corrupted by the arrival of mass literature. The image of the Soviet reader, always an artificial synthesis of several potential addressees of print culture, was in danger of breaking down completely.

The Soviet case was unique in the history of reading in that it attempted to fuse characteristics of the bourgeois and the mass reading public. For several decades the Soviet Union apparently achieved this: it had both the cultural homogeneity associated with bourgeois culture, and the enormous reading public associated with mass culture. Ultimately, however, I think we need to speak not of fusion but of *confusion*: it was all too easy for the producers of Soviet culture to imagine that the high values of *kul'tura* were compatible with a mass audience and to overlook that this mass audience for the printed word arose for

highly specific historical reasons. The special relationship that existed between the printed word and *kul'turnost'*/*kul'tura* proved strong enough to obscure the fact that, by the 1970s, most people read not just for self-improvement, but for entertainment and even for social prestige. The terms of the 'Big Deal' identified by Vera Dunham, when they were extended to include the post-Stalin mass intelligentsia and not simply the elite of Stalin's time, were extremely hard to define. Tension was increasingly felt between cultural diversity and the Soviet homogenizing project.

Happily for the Soviet regime, this vagueness at the heart of late Soviet culture was not exposed until the glasnost period. Until then the educative and shortage-based models of culture proved mutually reinforcing. Books were so sought-after in the late Soviet period not just because of an atavistic Russian hunger for the Word; a more crucial factor was the lack of alternative sources of entertainment and social or material status symbols. It is surely the case that any commodity beyond the basic material necessities acquires symbolic value under the conditions of the *kul'tura defitsita*. In the absence of a market, the fetishization of culture replaces that of money and exchange value.[86]

For various historical reasons, the relationship between print culture and economic exchange in Soviet Russia was particularly loaded with social symbolism. The institutions of the Soviet book trade aimed to protect the value of books from market-driven fluctuations in their price. The 'free' market in books was hence outlawed – but this could not put a stop to their commodification. In the post-Stalin period books often retained an exchange value even after they had passed into someone's private possession, and this value usually bore little relation to official prices. The determining of value is a process whose subtleties are generally obscured by the apparently smooth functioning of modern monetary economies. In the first part of *The Philosophy of Money*, Simmel gives a very suggestive account of the prerequisites for according economic value to an object: 'Whether the effective definition of the object arises from its scarcity, in relation to demand, or from the positive effort to acquire it, there is no doubt that only in this way is distance established between the object and ourselves which enables us to accord it a value beyond that of being merely enjoyed.'[87]

In the second half of the Soviet period, under conditions of institutionalized 'scarcity', and given the shortage of other symbols of social prestige, books were subject to considerable, albeit hidden, inflation. In the glasnost period inflation seemed to turn into hyperinflation, as the

gap between the prices defined by the publishing system and the value attached to books by consumers was fully exposed. The various attempts made in the late 1980s to remedy this situation will form one of the main subjects of the next chapter.

4

Reading Revitalized? The Perestroika Project and its Aftermath

In the first three chapters we have had occasion to observe that reading came to the forefront of public debate in Soviet Russia at times of attempted social transformation. In the 1920s, and then in the Khrushchev era, print culture was called upon to perform a mobilizing and educative function. Glasnost offered a particular variation on this perennial Soviet theme of cultural revolution. In the 1980s the task was no longer to make Soviet society literate, as it had been in the 1920s, or simply to help it acquire the reading habit, as had been the case under Khrushchev, but rather to improve the *quality* of reading in Soviet society.[1] The Soviet mass reading public was no longer to be kept in forced ignorance of its own history, and of the social and economic problems facing its country: it was to be provided with the information that the elite intelligentsia, thanks to samizdat and informal networks, had possessed since the 1960s. Perestroika in the cultural sphere was, in fact, nothing less than the attempted 'massovization' of the Soviet intelligentsia. The early stages of glasnost were outstandingly successful in this respect: an enthralling public debate began on most aspects of Soviet history and society; the circulations of the major journals shot up from hundreds of thousands to millions; Soviet society did indeed seem on its way to becoming 'civilized' and 'intellectualized'. By the early 1990s, however, this cultural 'progress' had proved to be illusory.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first looks in some detail at the concept of 'intelligentsia' in the post-Stalin period, and more generally at the relationship between the forms of Soviet print culture and their social addressees. The second section examines the

various attempts made in the late 1980s to refit Soviet book production to the demands of the reader as well as to the cause of perestroika. In the third section I show how these attempts ran into trouble as economic reform proceeded and publishing diversified in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and in the fourth I seek to explain *why* they ran into trouble by examining the behaviour and attitudes of Soviet readers in the same period.

The intelligentsia and late Soviet culture

'Intelligentsia' is a notoriously (and sometimes infuriatingly) slippery term. When people speak of the intelligentsia, they often mean the 'best part of the intelligentsia', those fearless and morally upright intellectuals whose social conscience invariably forces them into the role of opposition to the the prevailing state authority. The opposite extreme is the over-inclusive definition of traditional Soviet sociology, which more or less equates the intelligentsia with white-collar workers of all kinds.[2] In this section I want to find a 'third way', to argue that this group may be defined in cultural, not to say literary terms, and thereby to demonstrate the importance of the concept of 'intelligentsia' for the present analysis of cultural change in the glasnost period.

In 1989, just before visiting Russia after an absence of sixty-seven years, Nina Berberova was asked by a Soviet journalist to comment on the readership of her celebrated book of memoirs, *The Italics Are Mine*, within the Soviet Union:

> You see, I still have the old Russian habit of thinking of the reader of literature as an *intelligent* [member of the intelligentsia] ... all the people I've met here [that is, in America], who have come over the past fifteen years – it's been a great gathering, there have been Jews, Armenians, a lot of Russians ... And I don't remember a single person who failed to say: 'I've read your *Italics*.' Everyone's read the book. For me that is the intelligentsia, the Soviet reader who knows me in Russia.[3]

Berberova does not claim to be anything other than subjective as she recalls her personal experience of reader response, but her main idea – of the relationship between a reading public and a socio-cultural stratum – deserves further exploration. According to my simple working definition, the Soviet intelligentsia of the 1980s was made up of those people who were consumers of samizdat and other unofficially

circulated literature from the 1960s to the 1980s, but not necessarily its creators or distributors.[4] These were people who had some share in the 'cultural capital' of the elite: many of them had read Solzhenitsyn, Bulgakov, Orwell and perhaps even the Bible before any of these were published freely in the USSR. They were not, on the whole, dissidents – most of them did not carry their intellectual resistance to the official world view into the realm of public action – but they did share the knowledge and at least some of the beliefs of the more vocal opponents of the Soviet regime. I guess that this intelligentsia numbered somewhere around 2 million in the mid-1980s.[5] As a distinct but related concept, I wish to introduce the term 'mass intelligentsia'. This group consisted of people with a Soviet higher education who were engaged in what went under the name of 'intellectual labour' (that is, professional and clerical work). They were active readers and took a keen interest in literature and history, particularly that of the Soviet period. Unlike the intelligentsia proper, they were not able to satisfy their curiosity until the glasnost period. Estimates of the size of the mass intelligentsia on the eve of glasnost vary between 20 and 50 million.[6]

The educated elite is necessary and privileged under Soviet-style state socialism. As well as its role in administering the state bureaucracy,[7] it is also entrusted with a significant cultural mission: to act as the bearer of enlightenment and the instiller of a particular state-sanctioned model of culturedness.[8] By the last two decades of the Soviet Union's existence, this section of society enjoyed social prestige and material security, even if it was far from being straightforwardly conservative in its social values and political orientation. From the 1970s onwards the concept of 'doublethink' gained great currency as an attempt to characterize and account for this anomaly. The intelligentsia suffered from Soviet 'doublethink' more than any other group: it enjoyed stable employment in the state administration of culture, along with the social status that such employment conferred, while at the same time creating a subculture with its own 'oppositional' ethos.[9] The stability of Soviet culture was not threatened by the existence of this subculture, of which some members of the ruling Party elite themselves partook.[10] The Soviet system was quite willing to allow *intelligenty* to discuss ideas in their kitchens, and even, within limits, to distribute their own literature in samizdat, as long as their ideas did not circulate more widely through Soviet society. The Brezhnev years witnessed the emergence of an intellectual elite that was both extremely sophisticated and increasingly frustrated.

The announcement of a new party line in 1986 gave intellectuals hope that they could not only act as the passive, if respected, transmitters of cultural values, but actually enter the political arena as the authorities' equal partners in reform. The elite intelligentsia was actively and flatteringly courted by the Party. In the words of one of Gorbachev's most valued advisers, 'Perestroika is impossible without the intelligentsia because perestroika is also the intellectualization of society'.[11] The assumption was that, once the intelligentsia was free to air democratic ideas in public rather than just at the kitchen table, it would carry the rest of society along with it and turn the Soviet Union into a civilized and democratic place.

Under glasnost, then, the culture of the intelligentsia was offered to the mass intelligentsia with the aim of creating a new, larger constituency for civilized values and reformist ideas. Many Soviet intellectuals made impressive use of the opportunities offered them under glasnost. The late 1980s were for several of them a glamorous and exciting time. A group of journalists, historians, economists and literary critics carried the fight to the hard-liners, who still maintained a strong presence in Soviet organizations. The literary intelligentsia in particular found itself the bearer of enormous cultural riches. It was able to serve up a seemingly inexhaustible list of 'forgotten' works of the Soviet and émigré past. The mass intelligentsia and even some sections of the *narod* were gratifyingly enthusiastic in their initial reaction to the forbidden (or simply inaccessible) intellectual fruits of previous years: never before in the modern world had hitherto 'highbrow' literature drawn such a fascinated response from a mass public.

By 1991, however, the intelligentsia was commonly declared to have 'failed' and to have entered a profound 'crisis'. As so often in its history, it had found itself caught uncomfortably between *vlast'* and *narod*, and estranged from both. This 'failure' may certainly be analyzed in political terms,[12] but here I want to consider its cultural aspects. The remarkable popular interest in the contents of the *tolstye zhurnaly* (literary journals) and other vehicles of the intelligentsia culture was – and could only be – temporary. During perestroika the circulation of the major literary journals shot up to several million; in 1988 it seemed that everyone wanted to read Zamiatin, Grossman, and Pasternak.[13] But this was only a temporary surge of interest. Naturally, Soviet society wanted to turn over the hidden pages of its own history, and, as always, it preferred to do this through the medium of fiction.[14] However, once people had satisfied their immediate curiosity, they had little inclination to delve into the finer aesthetic and historiographical

points of interpretation. When several of Solzhenitsyn's major works were published in 1990, the popular response was disappointingly muted when compared to the enthusiastic reception of more lightweight writers a couple of years earlier. The Soviet intelligentsia made the unpleasant discovery that no one – not even Solzhenitsyn – could hold the interest of a mass reading public for ever.

The Soviet people was rather more concerned to develop a mass culture than to plug the many gaps in its knowledge of the high culture. This interest in mass culture was nothing new, but it was only in the 1990s that it was permitted to find open expresssion. The Soviet people may have been the *samyi chitaiushchii v mire*, but it also read a high proportion of what was, in the eyes of the intelligentsia, bilge.[15] Soviet culture was always a bizarre – to a Western understanding – mixture of high and low. On the one hand, culture had the elevated task of inculcating moral and social virtues in its audience, and yet at the same time, to justify its existence in a socialist society, it had to have genuine mass appeal. These were not always incompatible aims: in the 1960s Tvardovskii's *Novyi mir* managed to act as a bearer of both high and popular (*narodnyi*) culture (the outstanding example is its publication in 1962 of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*). However, by the late 1980s these twin tasks of Soviet culture were proving hard to perform simultaneously. The Soviet cultural model – the transmission of socially necessary qualities to the masses through the medium of the printed word – posited an inert and unsophisticated audience without any strongly formed tastes of its own. The Soviet people had once read – with genuine pleasure – Gorky, Nikolai Ostrovskii, Sholokhov, and a range of Soviet hacks; now it was expected to read – with equal pleasure – Bulgakov, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn. However, the Soviet reader of the early 1990s was rather different from the one the literary intelligentsia had constructed in its imagination, as we shall see in more detail in the fourth section of this chapter.

The perestroika of reading, 1986–9

Glasnost opened up enormous new publishing opportunities. As the *tolstye zhurnaly* grew ever more daring in their publication of works hitherto considered ideologically beyond the pale, censorship was gradually relaxed (throughout 1988) until, in late 1989, Glavlit was becoming little more than a symbolic presence. The last known example of direct ideological interference in literature by this organiza-

tion was a fine it imposed in March 1989 for the illegal distribution of a work by Sasha Sokolov.[16] In the libraries books were steadily returned from the *spetskhrany* (restricted access collections) to the main collections. The persecution of samizdat authors and distributors steadily weakened in the glasnost period until, by the second half of 1989, it had practically been abandoned. However, the gradual dismantling of the censorship apparatus should not blind us to another set of problems concerning the access of the reading public to print culture. How was the publishing system to follow the inspiring lead of the *tolstye zhurnaly* and help to spread the cultural riches they had unearthed?

The creation of a new dynamic reading public required the overhaul of the existing system of cultural production. For decades, Soviet publishing houses had been singularly unresponsive to the demands of readers: unwanted political literature piled up in the bookshops and at the same time exacerbated the shortage of other types of reading matter. The result was 'book hunger'. Despite the special pleading of Soviet publishers, this *defitsit* was caused not primarily by a shortage of paper or the inadequacy of printing facilities, but rather by the inadequate management of these resources. Most Soviet readers, however, did not understand this. They were conditioned by their 'shortage mentality' to assume that there could never be an absolute sufficiency of goods and, correspondingly, that there could never be enough books to go round. The publishing reforms of glasnost attempted to prove the contrary: that, if the correct measures were taken to reform the existing system, Soviet citizens' thirst for the printed word could be satisfied. But this new publishing policy, although it certainly made a difference in the short term, never quite got to the heart of the problem, as it refused to allow a differentiated conception of culture by decentralizing and liberalizing the publishing 'business'.

The question of how to improve the circulation of books and other printed material through Soviet society had been raised in the press from the 1960s onwards. In the first half of the 1980s it was discussed ever more frequently.[17] By 1986, 'book hunger' had become a widely – and publicly – recognized fact, and it was decided that a remedy had to be found. Over the next few years several methods of alleviating the book shortage were proposed; it is worth pausing to consider them in some detail as they shed much light on the practices and ideologies of reading in the Soviet Union.[18]

One of the first ideas put forward was to encourage book donations by private collectors to public libraries and thereby to maximize the number of books in the public domain. We saw in Chapters 2 and 3

that book-collecting experienced fluctuating fortunes in the Soviet period; in the mid-1980s these fortunes took a turn for the worse once again. Early in 1986, a press conference in the Ministry of Culture launched an appeal for the 'unrecompensed transfer of literature from private collections to public use'. A twice-over Hero of the Soviet Union who had just made a gift of books to a school commented meaningfully, 'I'm not one for frenetic book-collecting'.[19] Several readers followed his example in the next few months.[20] Articles later in the year spelt out to readers the difference between book-collecting and ordinary reading: not all readers needed multi-volume collected works on their shelves at home. The prestige of certain editions was such that they were bought automatically, only to gather dust in the flats of their unreflecting owners. Readers needed to be less 'stereotyped' in their choice of literature.[21]

The changing relationship of book-collecting and *kul'turnost'* throughout the Soviet period is very suggestive. *Kul'turnost'* was an empty vessel for fluctuating socio-cultural values in all areas of life. It could refer to book-keeping (that is, accountancy) or to flower-arranging, depending on circumstances. Unqualified approval of interest in the printed word was sometimes replaced by concern that such interest might conceal a bourgeois preoccupation with social status.[22] The 'Big Deal' that the Party struck with the Soviet middle class in the late 1940s was constantly being renegotiated during the later Soviet period. By the late 1980s, however, it was hard to speak of anything so orderly as a 'deal'. A mass public was suddenly granted access to literature that had previously been the sole preserve of specialists. It is not therefore surprising that reader demand had a somewhat 'elemental' character.[23]

Appeals to readers' civic conscience had only limited success: in the perestroika period greater incentives than a feeling of moral rectitude were required in order to stimulate the circulation of books through Soviet society. From 1986, greater attention was paid to the criteria for pricing in the second-hand book trade (*bukinistika*).[24] In July 1986 trade was further encouraged by a Goskomizdat resolution that allowed bookshops to pay face value (the *nominal*) for second-hand books, and to add a 20 per cent mark-up when selling them. In previous years book-owners had only received 80 per cent of the face value of their books in *bukinisticheskie magaziny*.[25] However, this 20 per cent mark-up was still a very low ceiling to place on pricing, given the often significant difference between a book's *nominal* and its price on the black market. Probably because of these restrictions, the flow of goods in the second-hand book trade remained, relatively speaking, a trickle.

In September 1988 Goskomizdat resolved to impose further economic measures to stimulate trade.[26] Later that year a further attempt to improve the situation was made when books were withdrawn from the collections of public libraries in a few cities and put on the market. However, on the whole they did not attract purchasers any more than they had borrowers. Many of these books were among the 40 per cent that had never been issued to readers.[27]

As a further measure, efforts to stimulate book exchange were renewed. In the debates surrounding this practice we see the usual Soviet fear of exposing culture to the market. One article noted the 'unhealthy hullabaloo surrounding books' and the 'materialistic' behaviour (*veshchizm*) of many book-buyers, but argued that book exchange, as long as no money changed hands, was a good way for true book-lovers to gain access to the literature they wanted.[28] In 1986 no less than 20 per cent of the second-hand book trade went through this channel; in most cities a substantial proportion of bookshops had special sections for book exchange.[29] A further suggestion was to create a nationwide exchange pool (*obmennyi fond*) of the few hundred most popular titles.[30] A version of book exchange persisted well into the 1990s in the rubric 'Chitatel' – chitateliu' (One Reader to Another) in *Knizhnoe obozrenie*: this feature differed from equivalents in Western newspapers and magazines in that the 'wanted' section generally featured mass-circulation literature rather than out-of-print curiosities. In 1990–1 the 'hard currency' of Soviet book exchange could still clearly be identified as Western *detektivy*, selected historical novels, and *fantastika*.[31]

Another idea was to loan popular works to readers for a fee so that they could read them on the premises of *punkty kollektivnogo pervoprochteniia* ('centres for collective first read-throughs').[32] Like book exchange, this had the virtue of not offending Soviet sensibilities, but neither did it bring about much improvement in the situation. A new stage in the commercialization of the book was reached with the introduction of book auctions. This was a controversial step, given that the word 'auction' itself sounded rather pejorative in Russian. However, these events did indeed take place, despite the limits placed on the ideology and language of the books sold.[33] In a controversial move, the scope of these auctions was extended beyond antiquarian books to current *defitsitnaia* literature. The staff of one bookshop rebelled against the local book trade organization by calling these auctions 'little short of profiteering under the wing of state trade'.[34] But there was no doubting the enthusiasm called forth by such events: one

writer recalled that the first Moscow auction (at the Tsentral'nyi dom literatorov) had induced 'some sort of collective psychosis'.[35]

In 1986–9 the Soviet system of book sales and distribution went into extraordinary contortions to avoid breaking a major Soviet taboo by exposing culture to the market. It was willing to return to barter and natural exchange rather than to introduce market principles. In practice, this tinkering with the system of book-selling and distribution did not much change the behaviour of the Soviet reader. The books most in demand were still likely to be obtained through unofficial channels.[36] The reforms introduced in the book trade were well-intentioned but ultimately powerless to 'liquidate' the book shortage or fundamentally to lessen readers' reliance on unofficial trade. If anything, they served to blur the distinction between the semi-legal and illegal book trade. In a typical case in 1988, one speculator was reported to have made books out of materials stolen from the print shop where he worked. After an investigation, the charge of speculation had to be lifted, as the books had not been bought in a shop but manufactured at home. The accused was instead made to pay a fine for hand-to-hand trade in an unauthorized place.[37] In a more widely publicized case in the same year, a street trader was arrested at Kiev Station in Moscow and found to belong to a group of book speculators whose profits had amounted to 10 000 roubles in a year. After a prolonged investigation, the ringleaders were sentenced to between six and nine years in prison. Even as he reported these sentences, however, the journalist added that most *spekulianty* got away with a ten-rouble fine. The police who raided the street market at Kuznetskii most (in the centre of Moscow) looking for these profiteers were often reluctant to enforce even this derisory punishment, as the paperwork required to process the fine took between two and three hours.[38]

The black market had been flourishing since the 1960s, but only in 1987 was it discussed constructively in the Soviet press. Some readers reflected that the black market functioned quite rationally, and was only making up for the deficiencies of the state publishing system.[39] The only practical way for the state to combat *spekuliatsiia* would, of course, have been to legalize small-scale private trade, and then regulate it (for example, in registered street markets). In practice, however, the state not only stimulated black market practices by its intolerance of private trade, it actually tolerated them in its own operations. Readers' hackles were raised especially by the necessity to buy a certain quantity of unwanted books in state bookshops as 'ballast' (*nagruzka*) along with each desired purchase. The practice of *nagruzka* (less collo-

quially known as 'forced assortment' (*prinuditel'nyi assortiment*)) was investigated by *Knizhnoe obozrenie* in 1986 and found to be quite widespread.[40] A more far-reaching version of *nagruzka* was practised in the book trade itself. The orders placed by 'book traders' (*knigotorgi*) for new books never reflected true demand, as limits were placed on the number of 'shortage' books that could be ordered; orders were therefore placed for unpopular books simply to fulfil the plan. This arrangement was called *raznariadka*.[41]

Readers were only forced to acquiesce in the imposition of *nagruzka* by the continued failure of the Soviet publishing and distribution system. Demand from readers was still systematically misassessed by publishers, and the system of book trading (*knizhnaia torgovlia*) was unable to apportion efficiently even the literature that was produced.[42] The result was that thousands of books were proving a 'dead weight' (*mertvyi gruz*) in bookshops across the country. In 1987 *Knizhnoe obozrenie* published a questionnaire inviting readers to name books that had attracted no interest from the reading public.[43] One journalist, A. Shakhmatov, then launched a crusade to carry out a 'national inventory of bookshelves'. Every few issues in 1987–8 Shakhmatov would report back on a trip to the provinces where he had ruthlessly been hunting down the lame ducks of the Soviet book market.

In 1986 Mikhail Nenashev was made head of Goskomizdat (after eight years as main editor of the newspaper *Sovetskaia Rossiia*) and entrusted with the considerable task of reforming the publishing system. When he arrived at Goskomizdat, he found that 'stagnation phenomena' – extreme centralization and a reluctance to devolve decision-making – were especially rife in publishing. Five research groups were quickly set up to advise on the reforms.[44] One early result of their efforts was the resolution 'On the broadening of the rights and independence of publishing houses', adopted in November 1986, which gave publishing houses the right to adopt and change their own 'thematic plans' and to fix their own print-runs. This was a very radical piece of legislation for the times, even if many publishing houses were reluctant to take advantage of the powers newly bestowed upon them.[45]

The first co-operative publishers began to appear in 1987 and their number grew steadily over the next four years. By 1990 the number of books produced by non-state publishing houses had increased sixfold since 1988 and constituted about 8 per cent of the total number of books published in the country. Co-operatives and other non-state ventures were particularly active in the publishing of fiction.[46]

However, the projects of these new publishers were to some extent at odds with the strategy of Goskomizdat, whose new policy was intended to grant publishing houses some autonomy without threatening the overall centralization of the system. Goskomizdat aimed to tackle the problem of the book shortage head-on by identifying the books most in demand and then gathering its strength to publish them in enormous editions. One of the first measures taken to alleviate the book crisis was the mass publication of the Russian classics.[47] The Soviet belief in the grand scale (*masshtabnost'*) died hard: bigger still meant better. Full *khozraschet* in publishing had been introduced from 1 January 1986, yet its primary function was to make the existing system more efficient, not to bring about any real decentralization. As Nenashev's deputy stated: 'On the one hand, we need to strengthen the general role of the centralized management of this branch of production. On the other hand, we must broaden the rights and at the same time increase the responsibilities of the publishing houses.'[48] The 'critical' state of book production was used as justification for keeping co-operative publishing off the agenda. Now was the time, so this argument ran, for the state to marshal its limited resources and to employ them with perfect rationality; to devolve this power to smaller economic units would be to invite chaos.[49] The sad irony was that it was precisely the large-scale state structures that had shown themselves to be incapable of managing resources; co-operatives, in the brief period of their existence in the Soviet Union (the 1920s), had proved much more efficient.

Nenashev and his colleagues understood very well that their new measures would only succeed if a way was found to to identify the demand of Soviet readers for particular books, authors and types of literature. The old system of 'preliminary orders' (*predvaritel'nye zakazy*) was malfunctioning, and could not in any case respond quickly enough to changes in demand. There was no obvious alternative mechanism by which to gauge the notional 'market'.[50] Soiuzkniga made a token effort to identify demand in its annual 'days for the registering of demand'.[51] An 'Institute of the Book' was set up in February 1987 under the auspices of the Book Chamber, its function being to assess the population's need for printed material and to make recommendations for publishing programmes.[52] Five-year plans were devised to provide books of various categories, from fairy tales to medical textbooks.[53] In the short term, 'rapid-response programmes' (*programmy bystrogo reagirovaniia*) were set up to bring out book editions of the most popular of the works published in journals. Examples included

well-known contemporary novels such as Aitmatov's *Plakha* and Bykov's *Znak bedy*. A similar function was performed by *Roman-gazeta*, a periodical that was a veritable Soviet institution. Its editor, Ganichev, caught the 'democratic' mood of early perestroika by consulting readers when selecting the works to be published in 1986.[54] The result was a steady increase in subscriptions to 3.5 million in 1988. That is not to say that readers always had their way: a panel of 'experts' was called in to check the readers' wish-lists, and Ganichev always kept in mind the educative function of his newspaper: 'It is essential to take into account readers' interests, but to channel them in a healthy direction, towards the true values of literature.'[55] Ganichev was unwilling to do away with the system of annual subscription, arguing that it was not economically feasible for the newspaper to be sold as individual issues.[56] This did not convince readers, who became ever more insistent that *Roman-gazeta* should not impose its own kind of *nagruzka* on them.[57]

One of the most striking attempts to gauge popular taste in the glasnost years was the selection of the '100 best books' in a given year (the results were published in *Knizhnoe obozrenie* from 1987). The '100 best books' ratings were determined by questionnaires, which proved a very popular genre in *Knizhnoe obozrenie* in the late 1980s. These *ankety* were designed to help the Soviet publishing system overcome its ignorance of the reader. To find out which books are truly 'popular', what could be better than to ask the people? The questionnaires were thus conceived as direct cultural democracy, as 'referenda' for readers. The first of them, published in June 1986, is curious for the fact that, while it elicited thousands of replies, its respondents seemed by and large to speak with one voice. This voice belonged to a male reader, reasonably well-educated, who made eminently sensible suggestions which tended to back up the programmes formulated by Goskomizdat.[58] This is not to suggest that the results were compiled dishonestly. It is more accurate to say that the very format of the questionnaires orientated them towards a relatively homogeneous mass Soviet reader rather than the diverse groups of readers that existed in Soviet society. Readers were offered the chance to compile a 'wanted list' of 'shortage' literature. They were encouraged to speak not as individuals but as responsible representatives of the reading public as a whole. In conditions defined by *defitsit*, the Soviet reader was only capable of 'speaking' in a certain way, of formulating certain demands.[59] The Soviet system and the Soviet reader in a sense defined each other, as they had done all along. Soviet publishing was producing books 'for' the Soviet reader, whose

expectations were in turn formed by the selection of books offered. This neat symbiotic relationship could not be preserved, however: the publishing explosion of glasnost served to raise readers' expectations considerably. When the Soviet reader became independent of the publishing system, the latter was forced into a reform far more fundamental than anything that had happened under Nenashev. It is significant that when in April 1987 yet another list, a 'sample list' (*primernyi spisok*) of candidates for publication, appeared in *Knizhnoe obozrenie*, some readers were already beginning to lose patience. One asked bitterly 'Who are these "grandads" from Goskomizdat to decide that the books listed in *Knizhnoe obozrenie* are subject to mass demand? And why not present the same opportunities to the readers themselves, who actually determine this demand?'[60]

Liberalization and crisis, 1989–92

Thus far we have examined two main types of cure that the publishing system proposed in order to treat its own malaise. First, ever more ingenious methods were devised to improve the circulation of books through Soviet society (auctions, book exchange, second-hand trade and so on). Second, publishing houses looked more closely at their production plans (*tematicheskie plany*, or *templany*), and tried to fit them better to readers' real needs and interests. Neither of these solutions worked, because they both failed to address the fundamental problems of the *defitsit*: a new differentiated type of relationship between publisher and reader was required. What finally forced this change was economic reform and liberalization.

To transform shortage into sufficiency, more was required than simply the reform of the production and distribution system (in this case, publishing and the book trade). More radical measures had to follow, in particular a change in pricing policy. This was an extremely sensitive question for Soviet social psychology, and the subject was broached gently and gradually in the Soviet press of the perestroika period.[61] It is significant that, when Otto Latsis, one of the leading political commentators of the time, chose to argue the case for price increases, he took as his main example the Soviet book market. He was able to back up his case by pointing to the despised black market: better, he argued, for above-board traders to take the mark-up than for this extra money to go straight into the hands of *spekulianty*. Latsis remarked that 'when there were fewer books, we had enough of them, but now that there are more, we don't'. He explained this paradox by

indicating the huge expansion of the reading public. A selected edition of Pushkin with a print-run of 200 000 had been sufficient in 1949–50; in the late 1980s an edition of nearly 11 million had not exhausted demand. A snap calculation based on these figures suggested that purchasing power had risen by a factor of fifty-five in the intervening years. Given the enormity of demand and the particular psychology of the Soviet consumer – namely, the impulse to chase after anything with the cachet of *defitsit* – the slightest lapse in production was liable to lead to the total disappearance of a particular work from the official book trade. No system of production – let alone the Soviet one – was able to handle this situation on its own: the assistance of a price mechanism was desperately needed.[62]

Several articles in the late 1980s followed Latsis' lead and argued that the system of *nominaly* urgently needed reform.[63] In 1982 a national price review had been carried out; the resulting increases in the cost of paper and printing meant that over 50 per cent of books published were loss-making.[64] It was now time to reduce loss-making editions to a minimum. The principle of flexible pricing was gradually introduced in limited areas of the book trade, and then extended to other categories of literature. In 1987 Goskomizdat introduced a new price list (*preiskurant*) which permitted negotiated prices (*dogovornye tseny*) between publishing houses and the book trade. Publishers, in other words, were forced to take into account the market demand for each of their titles when they fixed its price. However, this did not always change deeply-ingrained habits. Publishing houses were sometimes too cautious to raise their prices to anything approaching market levels. *The Guinness Book of Records*, for example, was offered to readers by Progress publishers at a price of 45 roubles at a time when it was fetching nearly 100 roubles on the black market. From 1 January 1989 *dogovornye tseny* were permitted in the second-hand book trade, but only for books published up to 1977. More recent books could not be resold at a price higher than their *nominal*. Even with these restrictions, it was found that the 'negotiated' price on average exceeded the *nominal* by 25 roubles.[65]

The first stage of the price reform had to meet the fierce opposition of some readers, who considered it 'legalized profiteering'.[66] The proportion of books sold officially at free prices rose slowly from 7 per cent in 1988 to 13 per cent in 1989, but early in 1991 E. Kucherova, the head of the economics department of Goskompechat', was called upon to justify the further loosening of price controls. She argued that the state could not afford to sustain further huge losses from the

publication of certain types of book (notably children's literature and school textbooks). The only way to retain some control over the book market was to further liberalize pricing. Kucherova further asserted that publishers were not in a position to abuse the power to set prices more independently: if they charged too much, the consumer would simply refuse to pay.[67] However, despite this attempt at reassurance, many consumers remained justifiably anxious: a headline on the front cover of *Knizhnoe obozrenie* a few weeks later spoke for all of them by asking the question 'Where will these deals leave us?' (*Do chego dogovorimsia*?) (no. 13, 1991). The problem of school textbooks has remained acute throughout the 1990s (it was not helped by the fact that many Soviet textbooks had to be rewritten and replaced for ideological reasons). A bankrupt state has proved incapable of being protectionist in an area of publishing which cannot, in Russia especially, work on market principles alone.[68]

Many readers in the late 1980s found themselves paying more for the same books. Flexible pricing made books more expensive without solving the problem of shortage. While publishing was still monopolistic there was no hope of fundamental change. The state continued to control the publishing houses, and through them the book market; what it really needed to do was control (or monitor) the market, and let the market control the publishing houses. It may therefore be argued that the *khozraschet* of the glasnost period combined the worst features of the free market and of state protectionism: the reader was no longer protected against punitive price increases, yet price-lowering competition did not yet operate. There were effectively incentives for publishers *not* to diversify their production: the simplest way to generate profits in 1988 was to increase the print-runs, not the number of titles.[69]

From 1991 all the contrived methods for tackling the book shortage were finally rendered obsolete: book traders were at last granted the right to add to the publishers' price; from this moment, therefore, there was no need to seek ways of concealing the adding of value to the *nominal*. However, even then those working in the state-run book trade often had little incentive to employ initiative in price-setting: the market was unstable and hard to gauge, and risk-taking was not encouraged; moreover, low prices would continue to guarantee the high status of the book retailing network by creating an artificial shortage: the consumer would continue to chase after titles that were affordable but not necessarily accessible. Black-market pricing mechanisms continued to operate in 1991.[70]

In general, however, there was no doubt that economic reform had by 1991 decisively shifted the balance of power from the state system of publishing and book distribution to the new, smaller-scale publishing ventures and retail distributors. As early as 1988, an attempt had been made to diversify publishing without financial risk to Goskomizdat through the introduction of 'self-published editions' (*za schet sredstv avtora*). Publishing houses had, however, been reluctant to handle these editions, as they were much less profitable than mass-circulation works. Less than a year later trade discounts were introduced to encourage this practice.[71] With the rise of small publishers and their increasing access to desktop technology the number of such editions grew to several hundred in 1991.[72] The number of publishing entities continued to grow throughout 1991 until it reached well over 4000 in 1992.[73] The proportion of co-operative editions in the book trade overall increased greatly in 1991, as did the volume of retail trade in books.[74] Soiuzkniga faced hard times, as small-scale book retailers proved to be in a much better position to exploit the commercial potential of the 'book business'.[75] And this potential was undeniably enormous. A 100 per cent profit margin was common in the Russian book trade of 1991. For a brief period, small publishers and booksellers enjoyed perfect conditions: a consumer still feeling the effects of *defitsit*, along with prices for paper and printing facilities that remained low. In fact, raising the price for a book often only increased the demand for it, as this led readers to assume it was a shortage item. The result of this highly favourable entrepreneurial climate was a cut-throat world with very little in the way of business ethics, where bribe-taking and corruption were rife, but where fantastic profits could be made: according to some estimates, no less than 15 per cent of the 'new Russians' acquired their initial capital in the book business.[76]

The traditional publishing houses reacted with great hostility to the rise of private publishing. They pointed to the fact that, after the peak of book production in the late 1980s, the number of books published had declined steadily (and, after the liberalization of prices at the beginning of 1992, it would do so precipitately).[77] Publishing and distribution organizations were gripped by definite panic as they took collective action to defend themselves against the threat of the market.[78] By early in 1992 some former Soviet publishing houses (along with other institutions of culture) were reduced to begging for handouts.[79] Representatives of the publishing system were speaking with increasing regularity of 'crisis'.

The distribution system underwent an even more public transformation. From the middle of 1991 books came out on to the streets in greater numbers than ever before. The centralized unofficial market at Kuznetskii most (which, as we have seen, was regularly raided by police in the late 1980s) was replaced by a large number of bookstalls operating all over Moscow. Not only the location of the unofficial book trade was displaced: so was its cultural orientation. In 1991, Barbara Cartland overtook Stalin as the most published author ever,[80] and this was symptomatic of the change sweeping the Russian book market. Demand for the big literary names of glasnost – Akhmatova, Mandel'shtam, Pasternak, Nabokov, Solzhenitsyn – began to fade in the first half of 1991, and prices for their works began to fall. In late 1991 all the signs were that the market for certain 'elite' types of literature had been saturated – and this just as the cost of paper and distribution was about to shoot up. Detective fiction, textbooks on economics and management, and erotica gained ground on the traditional 'genres'.[81]

The economic liberalization of 1992 further undermined the cultural hierarchy of the Soviet period in general, and the glasnost years in particular. An analysis of the post-Soviet book market will follow in Chapter 6. Now, however, it is time to take a look at the real motor of the changes that took place in print culture in the early 1990s.

The late Soviet reader

The system of Soviet cultural production that was set up in the early 1930s was, as I argued in Chapter 2, orientated towards the Soviet 'mass reader'. This ideological construct continued to underpin Soviet publishing even after Stalin's death, and remained unchanged in its fundamental principles until the economic liberalization of the late 1980s. It was only under glasnost that real Soviet readers began to make their voices heard and, even more important, to exercise the right to choose what they read. It is time now to look in more detail at these Soviet readers of the late 1980s, whose values and behaviour were heavily influenced by the past, yet at the same time on the verge of a profound transformation.

Before we embark on this, however, it is worth reflecting on two fundamental methodological difficulties that face any investigation into reading habits and readers' values. The first problem is that book buying (and even library borrowing figures) may correlate quite poorly with actual reading and actual 'interest'. Second, it is not clear that any

connection can be established between the patterns of reading within a small group and the general phenomenon of a book's 'popularity' across a whole society. More particularly, in the case of the Soviet Union, how can we draw conclusions on the basis of data collected in Moscow and other major cities that are valid for the whole of Russia?

No researcher of reading in Soviet Russia can afford to sweep these problems under the carpet. It is quite obvious, for example, that book sales in the Soviet period bore little or no relation to 'popularity', however that word is understood. What we must do is piece together evidence from a number of sources (from Gosizdat to the black market); and even then, of course, the picture will be incomplete. In the glasnost and post-glasnost periods, the situation improved significantly: statistics and documentary sources became both more plentiful and less ideologically distorted. Even so, they still have limitations which must be borne in mind: much of the information we have *is* focused on the major cities in European Russia; moreover, as was suggested in the previous paragraph, sociological accounts of reading will always be less exhaustive than we would ideally like them to be.

These difficulties do not, however, invalidate the present project. Rather, they strengthen its main conclusion: that, over the seventy years of the Soviet Union's existence, a gulf opened up between the ways in which people had grown accustomed to thinking about their culture and the much more complex realities of that culture. The following account, while it does not claim to provide a full profile of the Russian reader in the glasnost period, aims to show why *samyi chitaiushchii narod* is not an adequate or even a helpful description of the late Soviet reading public.

One of the best sources we have on Soviet reading habits in the late 1980s is research on private book-collecting, and in particular on the relationship between the books people owned and those they borrowed from public libraries. By 1990 it was recognized in almost all quarters that Soviet libraries were not only under-funded and poorly maintained,[82] they were also facing a crisis of social self-definition. Soviet library attendance and book-borrowing rose steadily from 1950 to 1980; in the early 1980s, however, the figures began to creep back down again. In the second half of the decade the statistics became more striking: in 1986 116.5 million people visited libraries in the Soviet Union, but in 1988 that figure was down to 103 million. Worse still, from the 1960s onwards the better-educated sections of the population were becoming steadily less likely to use libraries. By the late 1980s it was the least influential members of society – pensioners,

students and the poor – who were the most active library users. Many of these readers formed queues for popular writers and genres such as the historical novel, fantasy and the *detektiv*.[83] A library was regarded by these users as a 'temple' of culture rather than a 'workshop' for self-improvement. A 'utilitarian' or functional view of the library was much less common, as most readers requiring specialist literature were none too confident that public libraries would be able to provide it.[84]

There were good reasons for Soviet libraries' loss of prestige and authority in the 1980s. The Soviet library system was constructed in the 1920s with a clearly-defined cultural mission: to socialize millions of culturally inexperienced Soviet citizens, and in particular recent migrants to the cities. In order that they could carry out their task with maximum efficiency, these *massovye biblioteki* were subordinated to the centralized authorities, they were organized almost identically across the Union (their holdings and activities were very little differentiated), and they enjoyed near-total control over readers' consumption of books. When a second wave of education began in the 1950s, libraries responded in the same way they had thirty years earlier. Now, however, the situation was fundamentally different: to be sure, mass migration to the cities was again occurring, but the result was a more urbanized and modernized society with a wider and more differentiated demand for reading matter. In these new cultural conditions the socialization of the population could no longer be achieved by the edifying propaganda material of the 1930s; it was more likely to be attained by certain genres of imaginative literature – the historical novel, the epic novel, science fiction and so on. Libraries continued to target their holdings at the 'mass reader', but in doing so they alienated all but the poorly-educated.[85] In the mid-1980s no less than 85 per cent of Soviet libraries were of the mass education (*massovo-vospitatel'nyi*) type; their holdings accounted for 62 per cent of the total number of books in libraries.[86]

The decline of the mass libraries had been accompanied by the rise of private collections. From the 1970s onwards readers increasingly came to accept that if they wanted to read a book they would, as likely as not, have to buy it (or at least borrow or steal it from a friend). In a survey in 1988, 81 per cent of respondents indicated that they had a private book collection, and nearly 60 per cent owned a hundred books or more.[87] Collections were becoming more varied: imaginative literature predominated, but educational works, reference books, and specialist literature were gaining some ground. It was also significant that family book collections were playing a more important role in the

reading of children, whose naturally broad and undiscriminating consumption of literature had in the past been catered for primarily by libraries.[88]

Even if, by the mid-1980s, books had come increasingly to reside in the private domain, that should not lead us to be unduly sanguine as we analyze the cultural impact of the 'stagnation' years. Stagnation there undoubtedly was. The book shortage acted as a form of cultural prophylaxis: it prevented the free distribution and circulation of knowledge without which a culturally dynamic modern society cannot function. The limits placed on cultural differentiation by the library network and the publishing system ensured that only a tiny elite had access to a wide range of literature. Less than 7 per cent of families owned more than 40 per cent of books.[89] If we pause to consider the composition of book collections in the late 1980s we can see further evidence of cultural 'stagnation'. Research has shown that as the size of family collections increased from around 50 to 400 books, the proportion of non-fiction fell from just under 80 per cent to just under 50 per cent. Small and medium-sized collections (100–500 volumes) had the highest proportion of children's literature and much the lowest of specialist literature.[90] What can we deduce from this? Recent additions to the book-owning classes (those with private collections of less than 500 books) were tending to stock up on imaginative literature; they were relatively deprived of self-help manuals and self-education literature in general. Such know-how was reserved for a small minority of book-owners (between 5 and 10 per cent).[91] When selecting works of fiction, the less experienced readers tended to make short-term decisions and as a consequence were left with unwanted titles by contemporary Soviet authors that were good for little more than *makulatura*. Research over the period 1983–6 revealed to what extent Soviet literature outweighed pre-revolutionary literature in collections of fifty volumes and above.[92] The preferred themes of fiction were the Great Patriotic War, history (both Soviet and imperial, Russian and foreign), love, adventure and fantasy. As Reitblat has remarked, these collections resembled nothing so much as the *massovye biblioteki* in miniature.[93] Their prime function was *not* to transmit long-standing cultural traditions from one generation to the next, but rather to keep readers abreast of the Soviet 'literary process'. If the Soviet Party-state had culturally uprooted the reader in the 1920s and 1930s by carrying out more or less systematic purges of library collections, in the later Soviet period the publishing system helped readers to grow new, shallower roots.

The Soviet reader had over the years of stagnation grown used to a system where supply consistently met, if not demand, then, at least, expectations. But this system also *formed* expectations. Books had played an indentifiable role in socialization and 'acculturation' not only through what they contained, but also in the way their contents were presented to the reader. Soviet book subscriptions and serial editions (*serii*) had proved a very influential means of synchronizing personal or domestic time with societal time. Inexperienced readers were offered a simple and gratifying *entreé* into the world of the prestigious written culture. They were eager for the status and authority conferred by ownership of serious hardback editions. In this way the educative function of print culture was reinforced by the *defitsit*, which served to harden the hierarchy of Soviet culture and reinforce its homogeneity, while at the same time concealing social inequality and disparities.

Glasnost destabilized print culture. Time was suddenly accelerated, as it became important not only *what* was read, but also *when* it was read. From 1986 to 1989 one publishing 'sensation' followed another, as the literary journals made widely available a large number of 'rediscovered' works. In 1987, for example, Anatolii Rybakov's account of Stalin's Purges, *Children of the Arbat*, briefly took centre stage, but a couple of years later Rybakov was to seem tame by comparison with Solzhenitsyn, whose hitherto banned works were starting to find their way into print. Such was the pace of literary re-evaluation that the cultural hierarchy could not reform itself fast enough: after a while, the reading public no longer remembered why, for example, Rybakov was better than Sholokhov but worse than Solzhenitsyn, and was not even interested. The seventy-year-old educative model of Soviet print culture faded away, leaving the shortage-based model unchallenged. This is an important point: we must not assume, just because readers in 1989–92 were no longer guided by anyone's prescriptions, that they had become independent of Soviet cultural traditions. Print culture was certainly becoming 'liberalized', but society was not able to keep pace by producing a public requiring differentiated reading. The conservatism of the Soviet reading public was noted by many researchers in the late 1980s: the favourites of previous years remained at the top of the list for longer than one might expect. In 1989, for example, choices showed all the signs of being influenced by the *makulatura* selection and other *serii*.[94] The *makulatura* series itself survived and was successful as late as 1991.[95] In a survey carried out in 1992, Dumas and Nikolai Ostrovskii came top of a list of favourite childhood authors.

Overall, the 'bestsellers' of the 1970s and 1980s (Dumas, Pikul', and so on) and the genres of mass fiction traditionally favoured in Soviet Russia retained their dominant position.[96]

Several public figures voiced concerns that, once publishing was open to market forces, the quality and diversity of books would decline catastrophically. In its distrust of the tastes of the mass reading public the Soviet intelligentsia was hardly unique: this is the normal reaction of an educated public in such a situation. But it is worth considering in more detail what happened when literature was finally allowed to become 'popular'. We saw in Chapters 2 and 3 that the Soviet system was generally very hostile to the genres of 'mass' or entertainment fiction. 'Mass culture' was regarded as the morally corrupting product of late capitalist Western societies. As a result, Soviet popular print culture comprised many writers, works and genres that would not perform a similar function in the West (perhaps the best example of this is in the perestroika period is Bulgakov, whose works came out in dozens of editions from 1988).[97] Whether a book belongs to mass or mainstream culture depends on the way it is read by real readers in a particular society at a particular time. Hence a work such as Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* may be regarded as a work of mass culture *avant la lettre*. Within the intelligentsia it provoked a huge polemic about the historical roots of Stalinism, but the novel's enormous popularity with the wider public was due more to its engrossing plot and the immediacy of its depiction of the 1930s. Rybakov's fictional portraits of Stalin and Kirov were regarded as questionable by critics, but they must surely have exercised considerable fascination for most general readers. Dudintsev's *Robed in White*, another novel written before glasnost but previously unpublished, was adapted for television in a way that emphasized the novel's love interest, rather than its account of Stalin's assault on the natural sciences.

We have seen that the Soviet mass reading public selected its reading matter primarily by 'genre' or 'theme'. Research carried out in 1989–90 suggests that these remained the most significant criteria even after readers had been presented with much more detailed information about a wider selection of titles. Request forms in provincial public libraries showed that readers were still more likely to specify the genre of fiction they required rather than a particular author or work. Of requests for 'adventure' fiction (*prikliucheniia*), under 30 per cent were specific (and, of those, nearly half were for Dumas). Very common were requests for 'anything historical' (*chto-nibud' istoricheskoe*). However, requests were one thing, actual reading quite another: given

the defects of library collections, many readers had to settle for novels on the Second World War instead of what they had requested.[98]

Many Soviet families rushed to acquire their own copies of such writers as Pikul', Dumas, and even Efremov and the Strugatskii brothers, when these became more widely available in the late 1980s. As new writers and titles came on the scene, their fame quickly spread by word of mouth: many readers explained their interest in a particular title by observing that 'lots of people are talking about this work'.[99] For many readers, a very palatable way of obtaining 'something historical' was to read historical novels. This genre had an interesting and quite varied history in the Soviet Union, but by the 1980s its most popular exponent was unquestionably Valentin Pikul'. This astonishingly prolific writer churned out long novels on most periods of Russian imperial history, many of them implying nationalist and anti-Semitic views. Pikul''s works attracted controversy and sometimes polemically opposed interpretations.[100] The detective novel became the most popular genre of the early 1990s as the range of Western authors available was gradually extended.[101] Romantic fiction took off a little later, when novels from the 'Harlequin' series began to be translated into Russian. When hitherto prohibited genres – notably Western thrillers and romantic fiction – were made available by publishers in 1990–1, they gained instant mass popularity.

The popular fiction lists of the late 1980s show that the book shortage was underpinned by more than just the limitations of Goskomizdat: the purchasing behaviour of Soviet readers was conditioned by their own 'shortage mentality'. By the 1980s readers were fixated on problems of the publishing and distribution of literature, of their own access to culture.[102] They tended to focus their energies on a restricted number of 'bestsellers'. It should be noted that a Soviet 'bestseller' was by no means guaranteed to be a book that had 'sold' well: it was usually defined in the mind of a Soviet citizen as a book that many other readers wanted to buy. The book shortage was in this sense self-generating and self-reinforcing.

The influence of the book shortage can also be observed in late Soviet attitudes to the form and presentation of books. Books were not simply passive bearers of information but rather artefacts to be preserved. In 1991–2 hardback books continued to predominate over paperback, even though a pocket-book format would have been wholly appropriate to many people's requirements. In one survey carried out in the late 1980s, around 70 per cent of respondents in twenty-four major cities said they usually combined reading with other activities

(for example, watching television, cooking or washing, sitting at work, standing in queues).[103] Publishers did not believe readers valued convenience over permanence, and they may well have been correct in this assumption. They also banked on Soviet readers' traditional fondness for solid multi-volume editions. In the West, a new edition of a writer's collected works would only be published if it reached a new scholarly standard. In Russia in the early 1990s publishers produced numerous multi-volume editions in order to gain authority in the eyes of the reading public.[104]

Of course, *khudozhestvennaia literatura* (imaginative literature) was not the only reading matter of which there was a shortage in the late 1980s. Children's literature, textbooks, how-to manuals, self-help books and reference works of all kinds were in short supply.[105] Goskomizdat, at the same time as it was advocating new *templany* for fiction, was putting together long-term publishing plans for non-fiction.[106] For example, in 1987, Goskomizdat noted the shortcomings of the publishing house 'Meditsina', which was failing to produce practical guides on such subjects as childcare and healthy living.[107] By 1990 the range of subjects covered in medical guides had expanded considerably.[108] In 1991 we find the first discussions of etiquette books in *Knizhnoe obozrenie*: for most of the Soviet period this subject had borne the stigma of the 'bourgeois'.[109] However, the shortage of non-fiction remained acute and was remedied more slowly than that of imaginative literature.[110] For publishers it was simpler and more profitable to cater for the demand for mass fiction than to delve into the non-fiction market. This situation began to change fundamentally in 1992, when the money the Soviet reader had to spend on books became scarcer and self-education became a more pressing priority.

Co-operative and private publishers met a hostile reception from the state publishing system, primarily because they were in a position to cash in on the cultural deformity of the Soviet consumer, whose interests and behaviour were so predictable. The boom in book consumption that occurred in the early 1990s in Russia was the stuff of dreams for any entrepreneur. Fortunes that had taken decades to amass even during the 'consumer revolution' of eighteenth-century England could be gained in a couple of years by Russian entrepreneurs who made their start in publishing.[111] The explosion of unsatisfied demand was not accompanied by an equivalent diversification of readers' tastes. Feeding the reading public an unchanging diet of Dumas, Christie, Pikul' *et al.* was guaranteed to be a commercial success until 1992.

Conclusion

Soviet publishing in the 1970s showed that, even confronted by a relatively sophisticated reading public, it was possible to limit this public's expectations by controlling book production. The publishing system was ably assisted in this aim by the *defitsit*, which both stifled and concealed socio-cultural diversification. Under the conditions of shortage, books were both cultural and real capital. This dual status enjoyed by books contributed to the highly efficient 'production of belief' in particular forms of literature. Thus, for example, a particular work was assumed to have value because it was hard to obtain, and it was hard to obtain because enough people believed in its value. To appreciate the specificity of the Soviet case, it is worth citing some comparative analysis. According to Bourdieu's model, the 'field of cultural production' in bourgeois society is contained within the 'field of power' but stands in an antagonistic relationship to it. What is prestigious artistically is often opposed to what is profitable economically. Or, to put it more crudely, the values of high culture and the market are usually at odds.[112] Culture in Soviet Russia never before had this problem: where a market had existed (in various unofficial spheres), it underwrote the value of print culture.

Glasnost, however, dealt a blow to the stability of Soviet print culture. If the 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of a new Soviet reader, the 1980s brought into being a new literature. The result of combining the two was an enormous and uncontrollable rise in reader activism. When economic liberalization enabled readers to formulate and communicate their interests more independently, the end of the Soviet system of cultural production was nigh.

That said, it is not true that Soviet readers became free-market consumers overnight (or, perhaps, at all): they were profoundly marked by their experience of *defitsit*. The profile of the late Soviet reader/consumer presents an interesting case-study in social psychology. It also helps to raise certain important questions pertaining to Russia's cultural 'transition'. How was the cultural hierarchy of the late Soviet period affected by the changes in the reading public? More generally, how can and does a society's system of values renew itself in such a situation? Cultures usually find ways of reproducing themselves, but it is easy to form the impression that in Russia in the late 1980s a cultural hierarchy came crashing down so suddenly that it is more appropriate to speak of rupture than of continuity (or, to use the terminology of the time, of 'crisis' rather than of regeneration).

What actually happened was both less dramatic and more significant than such interpretations might suggest. Soviet cultural producers were no longer able to impose a model of homogeneity on the reading public or even to break it down straightforwardly into groups according to a limited number of socio-demographic characteristics (town/country, 'intelligentsia'/'working class', educated/uneducated). We shall find much more evidence of this process in the next chapter, which focuses on the reading of periodicals.

5
The Periodical Press: Background and Case-Studies

Books and periodicals are often treated separately in sociological studies of reading because they attract different audiences structured in different ways and hence perform different social functions. This general point has interesting applications in the study of Soviet print culture. The first section of this chapter provides a historical overview of Soviet periodicals and establishes an analytical framework for the study of Soviet newspapers, magazines and journals. The rest of the chapter is concerned with particular forms of Soviet periodical publication as they evolved in the perestroika period. This is not intended to be a comprehensive account of the Russian periodical press as it developed between 1986 and 1992 – such an account would fill the book on its own. My aim is rather to analyze the most important changes in the relationship between periodicals and their readerships by combining general surveys of the main forms of periodical publication with more focused case-studies.

History and background of Soviet periodicals

What is it that distinguishes books from journals and magazines? One can certainly point to such factors as volume and periodicity, but there is perhaps a more fundamental – functional – distinction. Books are addressed to those individual readers who will find their contents informative or entertaining, or who like the book's physical appearance, or who know and like the author, or who know someone else who likes the author ... In short, there are many reasons why a reader might take an interest in a particular book; the important point is that each reader's motives for selecting a book are in large measure specific to that reader. As a consequence, books tend to appeal to readers as

individuals and transmit long-lasting cultural values.[1] Journals, on the other hand, implicitly address themselves to a particular *group* of readers who (especially if they are subscribers) have little control over the form and content of a particular issue, but who have identified the general profile of a publication as being congenial or interesting to them.[2] Journals are therefore inherently more 'socializing' than books, but the values they transmit are, on the whole, more temporary. If we compare journals with newspapers, we find that the latter are even more 'socializing' than the former, the readership of a newspaper being even broader and less differentiated. In the modern world it typically numbers hundreds of thousands.

It is possible to make the same kind of distinction between different types of journal/magazine. Those with circulations of a few thousand will typically be targeted at small groups of specialists; a readership of a few tens of thousands will comprise a broader group of readers with quite specialized interests; a magazine read by hundreds of thousands will be a general-interest, middlebrow publication; for a magazine to have a circulation of a few million, it must communicate values and information instantly accessible to practically the whole of society.

On seizing power, the Bolsheviks were naturally more concerned to gain control over the forms of print culture most orientated towards a mass public. For this reason they took action in the sphere of the daily (or near-daily) press much earlier than they turned their full attention to book publishing and monthly journals. Lenin was openly and consistently hostile to the idea of a free press. He lost no time in insisting that oppositional newspapers be closed down and party-sponsored newspapers established instead. The content of newspapers was rapidly and almost totally ideologized as the daily press became the main instrument of print propaganda in the 1920s.[3] How well it performed this propaganda function is another matter. Jeffrey Brooks in particular has argued that the early Soviet press was much less effective than the pre-revolutionary popular press. The latter had been so successful because it emphasized collectivities and value systems other than class (thus, for example, it stressed personal ambition and success rather than class solidarity). The Bolsheviks, who frowned on all commercially-motivated forms of culture, were unable to create genuinely 'popular' newspapers. For the greater part of the 1920s, their language and ideology went over the heads of their intended audience.[4] Brooks has, however, suggested that the Bolsheviks, even as they lost touch with the common reader, gained an 'alternative audience of activists, enthusiasts and state employees'.[5] Soviet newspapers in the 1920s were able to carve out three distinct

and increasingly effective 'spheres' of information: the active, the informational and the inspirational. This model of communication was to underpin Soviet public discourse for the next sixty years.[6]

The journal press of the 1920s was considerably freer than the newspapers. This more relaxed situation was due substantially to the Party's unwillingness (until about 1928) to involve itself directly in this less *massovyi* area of print culture. There was, however, another important factor: in the 1920s, several cultural elites were competing for the right to establish cultural authority. The avant-garde, the proletarian culture movement, the 'fellow-travellers' and many other literary and cultural groupings all had their own publications, which formed and re-formed throughout the early Soviet period. The rapid turnover of new journals is indeed one of the more striking cultural phenomena of the early Soviet period. Any revolutionary regime has to work hard to generate new sources of cultural authority; it is quite understandable that the Bolsheviks were prepared to devolve this task to writers and literary critics for a few years. And, it should be noted, writers and literary critics did a lot of the hard work for them: the 1920s, for all their socio-cultural 'fluidity' and 'indeterminacy', laid the foundations for Soviet cultural and intellectual life for the next seventy years.[7]

Journals maintained some independence of the party line for rather longer than newspapers, but in the early 1930s they too were to succumb to the dictates of *partiinost'*. Sheila Fitzpatrick, for example, notes that Soviet journals are a better source for social history of the 1920s than newspapers, while the most promising place to look for information on the 1930s is *oblast'* (regional) newspapers, which became more widespread in that decade and were somewhat less restricted than central newspapers in their treatment of social and economic issues.[8] In general, however, there can be no doubt that the Leninist partisan model of the press was established quickly and decisively in the Soviet period.

The post-Stalin period: newspapers

The Party continued to keep an iron grip on the central newspapers all the way through the Soviet period. Regional or district newspapers, while they occasionally contained material of interest to the researcher, more often than not offered watered-down versions of the 'news' presented in the national publications. Even in the post-Stalin period, when the *tolstye zhurnaly* enjoyed something of a renaissance, newspapers remained firmly in thrall to edicts from the centre. Newspapers, far from acting as monitors of state power, provided a

transmission belt for the state ideology; their function was to educate, not to inform.[9] An editorial of 1956 gives a good description of this model of communication: 'It is important for us that, when someone picks up a newspaper, he actually reads it, that he treats it as a good, interesting companion who can tell him some useful things, share some news, tick him off for some things, and give him good advice.'[10] The Party's guiding principle in creating new periodicals was that a particular administrative unit or organization deserved its own 'organ', not that a particular group of readers required information, representation or (least of all) entertainment.[11]

This striking non-correspondence between the structure of the newspaper press and the socio-cultural profile of its audience continued to obtain in the 1960s and 1970s. There were relatively few newspapers and magazines, and those that did exist could not really be said to be targeted at particular socio-cultural groups. A study of the postbag of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in the late 1960s revealed that pensioners were represented more fully than students. If it was to live up to its name and appeal to communist youth, the newspaper needed to develop a more differentiated approach to the requirements of its readers.[12] A more prominent cultural group that required its own forum in the 1960s was the intelligentsia (as defined in the first section of Chapter 4). The existence of a highly educated elite with a strong interest in current affairs and social and political discussion was acknowledged only grudgingly by the Soviet press. The intelligentsia was eventually offered *Literaturnaia gazeta* as its 'house publication'. Ever since its creation, this newspaper had been focused on narrowly 'professional' questions: it usually contained a number of interviews with prominent literary figures and accounts of writers' meetings, and also regularly gave up space to birthday greetings for writers. In 1968, however, the newspaper changed its format: it gained a second section of eight pages, and hence doubled in size. The first eight pages were, as before, devoted to narrowly 'literary' problems, but under the cover of this first section began a more general discussion of social issues in the second eight pages.[13] This proved to be a very successful transformation: between 1968 and 1973 the newspaper's circulation rose more than fourfold. The Soviet reading public simply had nowhere else to look for topical and moderately lively social and political debate. Although *Literaturnaia gazeta* managed to transform itself into the newspaper most closely approximating to the tribune of the intelligentsia, tension remained between its specialist and general functions.[14]

Although the Soviet press stuck to the partisan, non-representative model worked out by Lenin, it would be misleading to assert that interaction between reader and newspaper was all one-way traffic. The Soviet press was designed not only to instil the core values of Soviet society but also to provide an important feedback function. If Soviet citizens came across abuses within the system, they could always appeal to their local (or even, in certain cases, a national) newspaper in the expectation that some action would be taken. Readers' letters were certainly registered: in the Soviet system, newspapers and journals were actually *obliged* to record receipt of readers' letters and reply to them;[15] to ignore their contents was certainly not impossible, but not always easy. In the absence of public opinion surveys, newspapers were envisaged as performing a crucial feedback function.[16] This system of social communication is more than a little reminiscent of the age-old Russian tradition of petitioning: the Russians had to make do as best they could without a Western-style civil society, a fully-fledged legal system and effective institutional forums for the voicing of popular concerns.[17] In the Soviet period the assumption – often warranted – was that newspaper editors had connections in the *apparat* and would be able to offer practical help with housing, food queues and other *byt*-related problems.

Readers' published contributions to Soviet newspapers took two principal forms: the 'spontaneous' letter and the 'solicited' contribution. The latter were generally produced to order by *vneshtatnye avtory* (in the case of single articles) or *obshchestvennye korrespondenty* (regular articles).[18] The first such articles were penned by *rabsel'kory* (worker-peasant correspondents) in the 1920s, and they became a genuine Soviet institution.[19] Given the prominence of the reader's voice in Soviet newspapers, one could be forgiven for believing that Soviet journalism kept closely in touch with the opinions of its audience. This often rhetorical use of the reader arguably fooled no one: Soviet readers were well aware that theirs was not the determining voice in editorial policy. But the institution of readers' letters did none the less strengthen social stability by giving Soviet citizens a perfectly safe – and sometimes effective – outlet for their grievances. Journalism had to play a compensatory role, given the lack of other tribunes for public opinion. If readers had felt that the publication of their letters was a mere formality, they would not have written to the newspapers in their millions. The principles of *narodnost'* and *massovost'* were felt to be enshrined in Soviet journalism thanks to readers' letters.

For evidence of how the reader–newspaper connection operated in practice, we can turn to work carried out in the mid-1980s by Alla

Verkhovskaia. The findings of this research were based on questionnaires completed by around 100 journalists working on newspapers at various levels (*krai*, *oblast'*, city, *raion*). According to these journalists, by far the largest category of readers' letters was 'personal complaints and requests' (*lichnye zhaloby i pros'by*), followed by critical comments about various organizations and institutions, and general requests for information; readers would also volunteer information of their own about the local area, and even send in literary compositions and photographs. (There was slight variation according to the type of newspaper: the party press would receive more criticism and complaints than literary contributions, while in youth newspapers the situation was reversed.) Verkhovskaia commented that this system of classification in some ways reflected the shortcomings in journalists' analysis of readers' letters: letters classified as 'personal complaints' might actually contain important general reflections on social issues. In any case, it was strange that journalists were untroubled by the shortage of letters replying to discussions initiated in the newspaper. Verkhovskaia suggests that journalists were too concerned with 'forming' public opinion to reflect much on its expression, even when that took place under their very noses. She concluded that editorial teams needed much better sociological training if the institution of readers' letters was to perform its vaunted feedback function.[20]

We may conclude from Verkhovskaia's work that on the eve of glasnost the system of readers' feedback functioned very imperfectly, but readers still had a good deal of faith in it. This is confirmed by slightly earlier research on the reception of the mass media in Taganrog, where letters to newspapers scored very highly compared to other means of expressing opinion: they were both highly accessible and relatively effective (they quite often led to action).[21] People considered that the institution of readers' letters gave some (albeit limited) expression to public opinion, and, even more important, that it was in some way linked to political authority, and so had the power to change the work of other institutions.[22] In the glasnost period the social practice of writing letters to newspapers would be revitalized.

Verkhovskaia offered further reflections on the institution of readers' letters in 1991. She conceded that the importance attached to letter-writing by Soviet citizens could be regarded as evidence of the dysfunctionality of a society that had no better method of self-contemplation. Not only that, the Soviet system was not even inclined to take proper account of these letters and use them for genuine sociological inquiry. That said, in the period 1987–9 the flow of letters did not abate but

remained at approximately the same level. There may not have been any major quantitative change, but there was certainly a qualitative one: letters had become much more politicized, although 'complaints' still dominated. Editors maintained that letters had become more direct and forceful; they expressed anger and anxiety much more often than in the past. Verkhovskaia concluded that, given the social and economic problems faced by most Russians and the continued weakness of democratic institutions, letter-writing would continue to serve an important social and psychological purpose.[23]

The post-Stalin period: magazines and journals

If Soviet newspapers were poorly differentiated and at best only vaguely targeted at a particular audience, in magazines and journals these failings were even more pronounced. Publications of medium periodicity (that is, which appear less frequently than dailies but more frequently than specialized journals) play an important part in providing information to particular socio-cultural groups and in ensuring communication between these groups. In the Western periodicals market, an enormous range of magazines exist with the functions of providing practical know-how (DIY, photography, cooking and so on), spreading information and opinions (on social, political and moral issues), and (last but certainly not least) communicating socio-cultural norms of various kinds (for example, 'educatedness', 'motherhood', 'fashionableness' and many others). For this reason, such publications comfortably outnumber newspapers. A 'normal' ratio in Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century is several magazines/journals to each newspaper.

In the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, on the other hand, there were six newspapers for every magazine/journal.[24] Periodicals in the post-Stalin period suffered from the same defect we have observed in Soviet book publishing: a remarkable lack of differentiation. The thematic breakdown of the 1500 Soviet *zhurnaly* is also revealing. The largest category was 'scientific' (*nauchnye*), with 409 publications; then came 'mass' periodicals (334), and publications relating to industry and technology (322). The rest lagged far behind. In other words, Soviet periodicals output was dominated by journals with a highly specialized target audience and by those intended to have 'universal' appeal across Soviet society; there was relatively little in between.

Even within the category of 'mass' magazines, we find very little differentiation: the subscriptions market was dominated by a small number of publications. The readerships of *Krest'ianka* and *Rabotnitsa*,

for example, were astonishingly broad: the circulation of both these publications was pushing up towards 20 million in the mid-1980s, and almost all of this circulation went to individual subscribers rather than to institutions. *Zdorov'e*, too, had well over 10 million subscribers in the same period, while *Krokodil* took the fourth spot with approximately 5 million. Even 'mass' magazines whose contents were addressed to particular interest groups were much broader than they would be in the West. Just as there was only one 'mass Soviet reader', so there was a single 'mass Soviet angler' and 'mass Soviet car enthusiast' (catered for, respectively, by *Rybolov* (The Angler) and *Za rulem* (Behind the Wheel)).

All this is not to deny that the leading Soviet mass magazines were widely read; subscription figures for *Krest'ianka*, *Rabotnitsa* and *Zdorov'e* were flourishing in the first half of the 1980s. However, this success was achieved thanks to the enormous captive audience and the absence of competition, not because these publications were particularly well conceived or produced. The receptiveness of the Soviet mass reading public to a livelier mass press was demonstrated by the spectacularly rapid rise of new publications (notably *Argumenty i fakty*) in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In fact, the Soviet reading public had outgrown the periodicals available to it as early as the 1960s (if not before). Newly educated and urbanized people were eager for information on all aspects of modern living. But it was rare for them to be able to look to specific magazines for help with particular questions. Instead, there existed a number of publications that might be said to be concerned with general aspects of modern urban civilization – *Nauka i zhizn'* (science and technology), *Sem'ia i shkola* (education and child-rearing), *Vokrug sveta* (travel), and so on. Significantly, the three magazines mentioned here enjoyed a rapid increase in circulation throughout the 1960s; thereafter, their subscription figures levelled out. Further increase was impossible without differentiation – without, that is, addressing the magazines' contents to more specific interest groups.

The Soviet publishing system had no interest in meeting the varied needs of the reading public, so these needs often had to be met in unexpected ways. The category of 'scientific-popular magazine' (*nauchno-populiarnyi zhurnal*), very respectable throughout the Soviet period, not only provided general knowledge but also functioned as self-help literature. On occasion, practical advice might be obtained in even rather specialized publications: for example, the unpromisingly named *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* (Public Catering) increased its circulation to

more than one million after it started including material on cooking, etiquette and other aspects of everyday life. And certain magazines – both 'scientific-popular' and more specialized – were able to attract the interest of readers by publishing popular fiction (fantasy and detective novels in particular). In the post-Stalin period we quite often observe a curious disjuncture between the 'form' and the 'content' of periodicals. Certain publications, while publicly retaining their professional or demographic profile, might in reality address themselves to particular interest groups that lay outside, or on the margins of, their designated audience. This is a story that can be told of many other areas of Soviet culture in the 1960s and 1970s: processes of creeping differentiation were taking place, but they were only very incompletely recognized as such, because they were masked by unchanging institutional forms.

The more heavyweight *tolstye zhurnaly* were a rather different matter, because their role in the cultural revival of the post-Stalin era was rarely underestimated. Under Stalin, the number of such journals had ceased to grow, and circulations remained very low (on the whole, thousands, or at best tens of thousands). The journal, as a dynamic force for communication across social groups, was stifled.[25] In the mid-1950s, however, a few of the literary journals became vehicles for the more daring works of Khrushchev's 'Thaw'; even more important, they established themselves as a forum for the (albeit restricted) exchange of opinion within the intelligentsia. They enabled educated sections of society to re-establish long-severed horizontal ties.[26] However, the rout of the editorial board of *Novyi mir* in 1970, followed by other such 'reshuffles' in the first half of the 1970s, took the wind out of the journals' sails. Although they still performed a valuable function for elite intellectual groups, they were not able to follow through the project they adumbrated in the 1960s: to provide the impetus for the wider 'intellectualization' of Soviet society. That had to wait until glasnost.

Soviet periodicals and their readers on the eve of glasnost

In the 1970s and early 1980s a fundamental but largely unacknowledged change occurred in the nature of the Soviet audience for the mass media. As the media began to saturate society, formerly distinct audiences appeared to coalesce: in the past it had been possible to distinguish between city, small town and village, and between intelligentsia and workers, according to the access these groups enjoyed to various forms of information. By the sixth decade of Soviet power, however, almost everyone in Soviet society read newspapers, watched television and listened to the radio. Quantitative differences were

evolving into qualitative ones: the main differentiating factor was not the act of receiving information, but the use that receivers made of the information they had at their disposal.[27] The more astute Soviet researchers had noted as early as the 1960s that processes of differentiation in the reading public were well under way,[28] yet these changes were, by and large, ignored by the Soviet press system. As a result, Soviet newspapers in the mid-1980s were being read more selectively and more critically than ever before.[29] The mobilizing project of perestroika put the Soviet periodical press to the test by calling on it to dynamize Soviet society intellectually.

The 'thick journals' in the glasnost era

The thick (often monthly) journal was originally a phenomenon of the Western European Enlightenment. Its function was to circulate ideas for a small, educated public. In the nineteenth century its influence weakened greatly as it met competition both from journals and magazines that offered entertainment and information for a wider audience and from the artistic avant-garde, which created its own ultra-elitist publications. In addition, a significant part of the social and political comment that the thick journals had once carried was now transferred to broadsheet newspapers.

Towards the end of the imperial period, Russia seemed to be going the same way. The traditional journals that had published most of the Russian classics of the nineteenth century were finding their niche threatened by the popular commercial press, elite artistic and philosophical journals such as those produced by the Symbolists, and the increasingly professional and informative newspapers. The Bolshevik Revolution, however, was the salvation of the *tolstyi zhurnal*. The new social order desperately needed an intellectually authoritative forum, and the 1920s accordingly saw the formation of most of the prestigious Soviet literary journals.[30] These publications received a boost in the late 1950s when they were taken up by the post-Stalin generation of the Soviet intelligentsia. In fact, the Soviet intelligentsia of this period may be regarded as coextensive with the readership of *Novyi mir*, *Iunost'* and a few other 'liberal' journals.[31] In the 1970s, although an end had been put to liberalization, the institution of the thick journal remained a crucial bridgehead of diversity for the culture of the intelligentsia. It not only provided a record of the Soviet 'literary process', but also opened up invaluable channels of communication between, for example, town and village, provinces and centre, and 'technical' and

'creative' intelligentsia. In a society denied a satisfactory public forum for ideas, the journals offered the best opportunity for relatively open debate. By generating new sets of ideas for society, they set a distinct agenda for eventual reform. It has often been observed that the social philosophy of the 'democrats' and 'liberals' of the 1980s was substantially that of the 1960s generation; moreover, the furious polemics that were waged between democratic and conservative camps in 1987–9 tended to repeat arguments that had been carried on within the intelligentsia over the previous twenty years.

In the early glasnost period Soviet society proved remarkably keen to acquire a share in the intelligentsia's 'cultural capital'. The late 1980s were the period of the 'journal boom': the circulation of the major literary journals shot up to several million. There were several historical and social factors that caused the hypertrophied development of the journal press under glasnost. The inadequacy of the publishing system meant that Soviet readers had to endure constant book shortages. The total non-correspondence of supply and demand ensured that the journals, as soon as they became free to do so, would try to remedy the situation by publishing in sufficiently large quantities the works most people seemed to want to read. Journals were able to respond to demand and to changes in the ideological climate much more rapidly than the central publishing houses. The feverish pace of journal publications was intensified further by the fact that many works that appeared under glasnost had not been published at all in the Soviet Union. The literary journals fought to publish the same body of 'forgotten' texts; as a result, they came increasingly to be read as almanacs.[32]

The authority of the traditional journals was such that most interested readers accepted them unquestioningly as the source of the forbidden fruits of the past. In the long run, however, the journals were being placed in a weak position: readers who really wanted to acquire a copy of *Doctor Zhivago* or *The Gulag Archipelago* would soon have the chance to buy it from one of the rapidly-emerging co-operative publishers. Besides, as we saw in Chapter 4, the demand for such works was itself a temporary phenomenon. The other main function of the journals – keeping readers informed of cultural, social and political processes – was now being usurped by newspapers (not to mention television). The time-lag in the production of the journals denied them the immediacy needed to win a new audience. This was sensed as early as 1987 by Elena Starikova, who noted that 'at the moment you want to write either for a newspaper or for eternity'.[33]

By 1991 the journal boom was turning to bust. The mass circulations of the late 1980s were no longer conceivable, and independence was placing new financial burdens on all publications: now they had to fight for an audience in the absence of adequate or guaranteed state subsidies.[34] Journals could not continue working to the same recipe that had brought them success under glasnost. In the opinion of some commentators, journals had lost sight of their particular social function by trying to cater for too wide a public.[35] In some cases they had allowed themselves to become little more than anthologies for the interested general reader. At the same time, their social and cultural agendas were too often dictated by polemics within the intelligentsia. The journals were continuing to fight battles that had been under way for twenty years and no longer interested anyone outside a small group of intellectuals.[36]

The precipitate decline in the influence and prestige of the literary journals was regarded by many intellectuals as a symptom of profound cultural crisis.[37] As one might expect in such a literature-centred culture, it was a change in popular reading habits that presented members of the intelligentsia with real evidence of their dislocated status in the society of which they had considered themselves the leading representatives. Articles and round-tables pondering (and usually bemoaning) the present and future of the *tolstye zhurnaly* were remarkably frequent in the first half of the 1990s.[38] In fact, they continue to be published in even more recent times.[39]

The change in orientation from a select group of readers to society at large proved traumatic for many intellectuals writing in the traditional journals. The reason lies in another important feature of the Soviet intelligentsia (but one which, understandably enough, received little attention in the second half of the 1980s): the sometimes tragic, always awkward position of the intelligentsia between ruling elite and people. Just how far intelligentsia and people had grown apart since the War was only discovered thanks to glasnost, which unclogged the flow of sociological information. Lev Gudkov and Boris Dubin have frequently made this point in their journal articles. Under Brezhnev, there emerged a samizdat culture (or 'subculture') that was by definition denied a mass audience. During the 1970s a peculiar situation had arisen: there was one culture for the masses, and samizdat for the intelligentsia. The consequent split between the intellectual elite and the rest of society made the transmission of moral and cultural values more difficult. Under the new conditions of glasnost, the dissident heritage was finally served up to a mass audience.[40]

In later articles, Gudkov and Dubin have explored the crisis and failure of the Soviet intelligentsia in more detail. The intelligentsia's loss of authority is shown by the loss of interest in the literary journals; the intelligentsia saw itself as the mediator between the elite and the masses, but when the masses went their own way, *intelligenty* were left with nothing to do: they were unwilling to take their cue from society at large, as they considered themselves to be major formers of public opinion.[41] They still believed they could play a significant role in constructing the 'myths' or symbols that go to make up culture; however, the symbols they chose were ineffective and unrepresentative. According to Andrei Chernyshev, 'l'intelligentsia soviétique, rhétorique par nature, crut possible de libérer la conscience collective en ne tenant absolument pas compte des particularités de ses phobies': intellectuals made the unwise assumption that their own preoccupation with exorcising the Stalinist period was shared by the rest of society; and when diverse groups in society did take an interest in revelations about Stalin, the intelligentsia misinterpreted the reasons for their interest.[42] Mikhail Iampol'skii has interpreted the repentance complex of the Soviet intelligentsia in the light of the totalitarian *donos* (denunciation). He concludes that the idea of universal guilt, so commonly articulated by intellectuals under glasnost, has led to the end of the intelligentsia as a source of moral authority; now it is people with fewer complexes who are taking the initiative.[43]

Bolstered by similar arguments, Gudkov and Dubin make the very logical inference that the intelligentsia's despair at cultural 'catastrophe' is not necessarily shared by anyone else.[44] Talk of crisis is very often evidence of self-interest: the intelligentsia is reluctant to relinquish its privileged position in Soviet culture.[45] The intelligentsia was too seized by euphoria under glasnost to diagnose correctly the cultural malaise of Soviet society. Ever since the 1960s the cultural and intellectual orientation of the intelligentsia was taking it ever further away from the rest of society; social dislocation and cultural atrophy had been the result. This rift between the intelligentsia and the people would lead to the death of the former.[46]

Elsewhere Gudkov and Dubin make the point that the sign of a lively culture is a wide range of journals with a regular turnover of new titles. The period 1922–5 saw the birth of twenty-one Soviet journals which were still in existence in 1988;[47] in the 1980s, by contrast, there were only four new journals (of which three were unsuccessful, and the fourth – *Rovesnik* – changed in 1986 from a journal to an almanac). In the late Soviet period, the ratio of books to journals to newspapers was

unduly weighted in favour of books. This may be taken as a symptom of a stagnant culture, as a journal is a forum for the representation of group interests, which, in a healthily developing society, should be dynamic rather than static. Cultural substructures lacked representation in the Soviet Union until new journals started to appear in 1987–8. The conclusion to be drawn is clear: the weakening authority of the traditional journals in the early 1990s was not at all a catastrophe, but rather the first step towards a remedy for the real catastrophe of intellectual stagnation in Soviet society.[48] The next section examines one way in which the devolution of cultural authority occurred: through the proliferation of small periodicals.

The rise of unofficial and small-scale journals

The renaissance of the *tolstye zhurnaly* in the late 1980s is well-documented, but they were by no means the only beneficiaries of glasnost. Another peculiarly Soviet form of print culture that enjoyed a late flowering in this period was samizdat. If we take a broad historical perspective, samizdat may be defined as books, periodicals and other written material, produced independently of the state and all other authorities, that develop ideas and artistic trends which are not adequately reflected in the existing press or which diverge from recognized ideological and social norms.[49] In Russian history there have been very few periods when such 'self-publishing' has not occurred (the best twentieth-century example is the interlude between the two revolutions of 1917). At most other times, an unofficial print culture was required to fill the space that would in most modern societies be occupied by the 'public sphere'. State and society in Russia have had a confrontational relationship; the educated elite (the intelligentsia) has found itself particularly frustrated and oppressed, as it has been denied free participation in public debate. In most Western European countries the public sphere grew steadily as socio-cultural modernization proceeded; in Russia, despite periods of relative freedom, it tended to contract violently under state coercion. The unofficial press (be it pre-revolutionary Bolshevik propaganda or the subculture of the Soviet intelligentsia) went some towards to circulating ideas whose free and open expression was not permitted.

The unofficial circulation of printed materials had begun in the late 1950s, and in the second half of the 1960s (particularly after the trial of Siniavskii and Daniel' in January 1966) it intensified considerably. In the 1970s a number of samizdat journals were established and led a

relatively stable, if circumscribed, existence.[50] Back in the early 1960s texts were usually typed using four or five carbons or even copied by hand (there were, for example, handwritten copies of Solzhenitsyn's novels in circulation). The system of samizdat production and distribution became rather more sophisticated in the 1970s, as informal networks grew and members of the intelligentsia enjoyed greater access to photocopying machines. By the end of the 1970s samizdat enjoyed a much more stable, even 'systemic' existence in Soviet society. Samizdat journals tended to appear more regularly over a longer period, and some of them were very thick (up to several hundred pages). In the 1970s many samizdat texts changed hands for money, which suggests the extension and slight depersonalization of the original close-knit informal networks. The status of samizdat texts was further strengthened by smuggling them abroad for publication in the West (this practice was called *tamizdat*). In some cases, *tamizdat* works were subsequently smuggled back into the Soviet Union, where they were copied and once again circulated in samizdat. The most celebrated example of this is *The Gulag Archipelago*, whose publication abroad Solzhenitsyn authorized in 1973 when he knew the KGB was aware of the work's existence. Editions of the work subsequently returned secretly to the Soviet Union, where they were copied and distributed, thereby exerting a formative influence on a generation of Soviet intellectuals.

In the 1970s, then, the gaping chasm between the declarations of the Soviet leaders and the reality of Soviet society was perceived by a growing number of educated and politically conscious people. For this Soviet intelligentsia samizdat functioned as a crucial means for the dissemination of culture and information. In the words of the human rights activist Sergei Kovalev, 'the weariness from censorship is so great that potentially all of our intelligentsia [...] is a reserve of illegal readers [...] A country of censorship does in truth pave the way for a whole army of thankful readers'.[51]

The Soviet reading public had occasion to show its gratitude in the glasnost period. Almost all the works of literature that had been circulated in samizdat under Brezhnev were published officially in the late 1980s, often in hundreds of thousands of copies. The public discourse of perestroika bore unwitting testimony to the samizdat heritage, as many of the historical and social debates of this period did little more than rehearse arguments first made twenty or more years earlier in unofficial circles. Once liberalization had been signalled in 1986, traditional samizdat journals became even more fearless and ambitious in

their operations, while at the same time new unofficial publications mushroomed. Samizdat dovetailed with the informal organizations (*neformaly*) that sprang up in 1987–9. Three of the most popular and influential journals of this 'new samizdat' first appeared in 1987: *Glasnost'*, *Ekspress-khronika* and *Obshchina*. The height of the samizdat boom – in 1989 – coincided with the peak of the politicization of Soviet society. By this time samizdat journals represented not simply a range of 'oppositional' opinion but a full spectrum of political views.[52] Not only that, improved access to publishing equipment was boosting their circulation. The combined monthly circulation of samizdat journals in 1989 was estimated at over 80 000.[53] In the 1970s the basic 'print-run' of a samizdat publication had been in the range 20–50; in the early 1990s it was sometimes tens of thousands. Samizdat had, moreover, become a truly national phenomenon. Regions that had once proved barely (if at all) accessible to the dissident literature of the 1970s were now acquiring unofficial journals of their own.[54]

But samizdat cannot really gain ideological respectability and large print-runs and hope to remain samizdat. The liberalization that was sealed by the Law on the Press of August 1990 brought the end of the old-style unofficial press: samizdat could no longer be distinguished by its ideological or its material independence of the state, as such independence was now the norm for Soviet periodicals. However, samizdat did have its natural heirs in the small-scale journals that proliferated in 1989–91. If we regard the journals press as a forum for the articulation of complex group interests in modern society, then it was only to be expected that the large central journals and magazines should be challenged by a much more diverse print culture.

The statistics bear out this interpretation. In 1980, the number of Russian journals was 954, the number of issues published was 10 291, and the actual number of copies produced was 2 025 725 000. For 1990, the same statistics were 1140, 11 335, and 2 687 102 000. This is what we might expect for the peak of the journal boom – a rise of over 15 per cent in both the number of titles and the overall *tirazh*. By 1991, however, the figures tell a rather different story: 1301 titles, 10 434 issues, but only 1 483 674 000 copies. The number of journals[55] continues to rise significantly, but the number of issues put out by these journals is falling in absolute terms, and the overall *tirazh* plummets. (The same patterns can be observed in newspapers.)[56] From this we can deduce that a profound destabilization and decentralization of print culture began to take place from 1990 onwards. The 1990s spawned a large number of new independent publications with small readerships.[57]

How these publications fared in the post-Soviet period is something I shall investigate in the next chapter.

Ogonek

I offer *Ogonek* as a case study of cultural change in the glasnost period and afterwards not because of the ground-breaking articles the magazine ran in the late 1980s, although these did indeed make a significant contribution to the rediscovery of the Soviet past.[58] Rather, I wish to suggest that *Ogonek* occupied a significant socio-cultural niche in the glasnost years, and that its subsequent travails are revealing both of the peculiarities of the Soviet print media and of the difficult adaptation these media have undergone in the 1990s.

It is my contention that the weekly *tonkii zhurnal* (thin journal) had a distinct and important social function in the glasnost period. Up to now it has been rather neglected by Western scholarship, which has preferred to focus on monthly journals. However, it is by no means clear that these journals are the most promising case studies of cultural change in the late 1980s. It is true that they were widely read for the early access they provided to 'forgotten' works of the Russian literary heritage, but their expanded circulations came at a price: the journals no longer kept to their highly distinctive civic positions, and began to resemble almanacs rather than live centres of debate; once readers' taste for rediscovered literature began to wane, the monthly journals had no future as mass publications. Weekly magazines, on the other hand, were able to popularize and transmit knowledge and ideas of interest to a wide public rather more quickly. As we have seen, the well-established 'mass' magazines – in particular, *Rabotnitsa*, *Krest'ianka* and *Zdorov'e* – were increasing their circulations even in the first half of the 1980s (that is, well before the start of the 'journal boom'). Under glasnost, they were joined by a handful of other publications with rather different cultural and intellectual profiles, but with similar aspirations to attract a mass readership.

Against a background of intellectual stagnation and declining popular confidence in the print media, it is revealing that Gorbachev picked *Ogonek* (along with *Moscow News*) as a place to launch his campaign of social reconstruction. Under its long-standing editor A. Sofronov, *Ogonek* had become a nondescript product of the *zastoi* (era of stagnation). Its circulation was healthy, but – by Soviet standards – not enormous. Feliks Medvedev, *Ogonek*'s leading interviewer in the first two years of Vitalii Korotich's reign, recalled in 1990 just how cut

off the magazine had previously been from the real concerns of society: he identifies its old readership as 'devotees of serialized detective novels, crossword-lovers, collectors of colour illustrations'.[59] What, then, did the magazine have in its favour? First, it was established as a truly national publication – its distribution network ensured that it would be able to spread the word to all corners of the Union. Second, it was ideologically malleable, and, thanks to its crossword and full-colour reproductions of art works, it had a tradition of attracting a general readership. The crucial point about *Ogonek* in 1986 was that it had the potential to become a *zhurnal dlia vsekh* – a magazine to unite all right-thinking middlebrow citizens in the cause of Party-led democratization. *Ogonek*'s aim was to replenish its readership with broad swathes of the Soviet mass intelligentsia. This intelligentsia was too socially and culturally differentiated to be united by a crude propaganda sheet, and yet it was not prepared to wade through the lengthy articles and small print of the *publitsistika* (social and political commentary) of the traditional journals, or to tolerate the inevitable time lag of these articles.

Ogonek was a cross between a newspaper and a thick journal – not just in size and periodicity, but also in its social function. *Ogonek* clearly belonged to the category of mass journals with a circulation of several million, and it shared their aim 'to integrate the whole of the literate population around a core selection of values and skills of "civilized cohabitation" and "social existence"'.[60] Yet it also sought to establish links between different subgroups of the educated strata and between these educated strata and political power; in this respect it had much in common with journals read by slightly narrower sections of society (hundreds of thousands rather than millions).

It has perhaps not been sufficiently recognized just how original Korotich's *Ogonek* was. It was not unusual for the Soviet press to take on a popularizing, mobilizatory role; nor was it unknown for intellectual debate to be initiated in the print media. However, in the former case newspapers were always the preferred organ, and the latter role was usually assumed by the *tolstye zhurnaly*. For one publication – a general-interest illustrated weekly – to attempt to combine these functions was a significant new development, which in itself reveals something about the nature of perestroika. The last in a long line of Soviet mobilizatory campaigns was to be pitched at a higher intellectual level than those that had gone before. In publications such as *Ogonek* the liberal ideology of the *shestidesiatniki* (of whom Korotich was, of course, a representative) was to be made accessible to the mass intelligentsia.

This was to be a magazine not just for intellectuals but also for interested and moderately educated general readers. Briefly, in the second half of the 1980s, these sections of society could enjoy *Ogonek* together. Lacking alternative sources of information, intellectuals were able to take an interest in revelatory material on their own history and society; the broader 'mass' audience, on its way to becoming socially conscious, was temporarily willing to be 'intellectualized'. Magazines of similarly wide appeal do not exist in the West – and for a good reason. In a free print market, investigative reporting, middlebrow culture, and literary and historical discussion have different audiences and would not be found together in a single magazine.[61] When the Soviet print market was substantially liberalized in 1990 a conflict arose between the intellectualizing impulse of *Ogonek* and its instincts as a mass-circulation magazine.

Even in the 1980s, the task of becoming a *zhurnal dlia vsekh* was hazardous. In the first few months of Korotich's reign (he was installed as general editor in July 1986) the magazine felt its way towards a new line that was acceptable both to readers and to the authorities. *Ogonek* set itself the task of becoming a truly *narodnyi* (people's) magazine cutting across all the categories in Soviet society. Although *Ogonek* was infused with the spirit of party-mindedness in 1986–7, it showed some uncertainty as to how it might best unite people in the Party's cause. The magazine certainly had its fair share of articles on economic 'acceleration' and other slogans of perestroika, but it is noticeable that Korotich's *Ogonek*, in the very first months of its activity, advocated respect for the past and the stimulation of national memory. For example, in the second half of 1986 *Ogonek* was still able to throw its pages open to Valentin Rasputin, who would subsequently be a prominent opponent of all that the magazine stood for. (Rasputin was even given one of *Ogonek*'s prizes for 1986 – along with liberal *shestidesiatniki* such as the poet Voznesenskii.) A typical article for this early stage of *Ogonek*'s renewal was an interview with Viktor Astaf'ev. Special correspondent Feliks Medvedev flew out to Siberia to meet the writer, and this location set the tone for the whole interview. It symbolized the writer's set of values, his link with the past and the *narod*. The seriousness of Astaf'ev's ideas is underscored by Medvedev's reverential attitude to his subject.[62] This kind of article led Aleksandr Arkhangel'skii to call *Ogonek* a 'moderate *pochvennik* publication' in 1986–7. Arkhangel'skii goes on to identify the interplay of mobilization and representation as the dynamo of the magazine's transformation.[63] This was a creative tension: the ambition both to reflect and to form public

opinion meant that *Ogonek* rarely stood still. Various readers – both hostile and sympathetic – have noted the magazine's haphazardness and breadth in the late 1980s.[64] *Ogonek* never took a totally fixed political line until perhaps 1989. Lenin may have been removed from the masthead at the beginning of 1987, but socialism continued intermittently to be depicted with an all-too-human face.

A good way of gauging the magazine's success in achieving its twin aims of mobilization and representation is to analyze its postbag. In the absence of sophisticated sociological surveys, readers' letters were expected to provide an important outlet for feedback and a guide to public opinion for policy-makers. *Ogonek*, which set out to mobilize the considerable energies of Soviet society in the cause of reform, naturally granted the letters column some prominence in the late 1980s.[65] Readers clearly saw the magazine as a defender of consumer and constitutional rights: the publicity of glasnost and the new investigative journalism was the best guarantee against official abuses. It was not unknown for letters addressed to Mikhail Sergeevich to find their way to the editorial offices of *Ogonek*. Irène Commeau Rufin has analyzed the postbag (both published and unpublished) of *Ogonek* in the period 1987–9.[66] She divides the letters into four main categories: the reaction of Soviet citizens to glasnost and perestroika; questions of national and Soviet identity; the debate on the past; and complaints about Soviet society. Of all these areas it is clearly the last that predominated in 1986–7. Readers brought to public attention occasions when they had come up against social injustice and entrenched bureaucracy. These individual cases might lead to reflection on the more general tasks of perestroika, but for the most part they remained resolutely personal in their preoccupations. In 1986 it appeared that *Ogonek* was mildly exasperated at the letters it received: it had hoped to set up a forum for vigorous discussion of social reform, and instead it had received a barrage of complaints about *byt*. The letter department complained that one third of letters began with the plea 'Send a reporter'.[67]

Ogonek's readership was in transition, just like the magazine itself. Readers of very different ages, backgrounds and political convictions could all, in 1988, consider *Ogonek* to be 'their' magazine. Commeau Rufin observed that it was possible for a reader to praise Stalin and Gorbachev in the same breath at the same time as the magazine was making huge efforts to draw an absolute distinction between these two leaders. Nevertheless, as the volume of mail and circulation continued to increase,[68] *Ogonek* gradually succeeded in replacing the older

habitual reader of the Brezhnev years with a democratically-orientated 'fairly well-educated reader with an interest in contemporary life'.[69]

Ogonek may have been developing a closer relationship with its own readers, but its (and perestroika's) dream of uniting the whole of Soviet society was quickly shown to be hopelessly unrealistic. One of the fondest illusions of perestroika – especially as early as 1986 – was that the whole of society could be brought together when the pressure of the 'totalitarian' regime was lifted. Regrettably, Soviet society did not have that degree of cohesion.[70] The cracks were soon to appear. Between the winter of 1986–7 and the August coup a fierce 'civil war' was waged between the radical press and the statist/nationalist organs such as *Sovetskaia Rossiia* and *Molodaia gvardiia*. As soon as the battle lines were drawn up, *Ogonek* was quick to take up its place in the radical camp. Aleksandr Arkhangel'skii sees *Ogonek*'s symbolic entry into the fray as its publication of Trifonov's memoirs in November 1986: in the midst of his reminiscences of Tvardovskii's *Novyi mir*, Trifonov makes a passing reference to 'the undigested *pochvennik* arrogance of the nineteenth century which has not brought Russian art any particular achievements'. Apparently this phrase was enough to infuriate the nationalist periodicals and to make them *Ogonek*'s implacable enemies for the next few years.[71] It is appropriate that *Ogonek*'s entry into the polemics should be signalled by a literary controversy. One significant result of glasnost was to bring to public attention the disagreements that had arisen within the intelligentsia since the late 1960s. This is clear evidence of *Ogonek*'s *shestidesiatnik* pedigree: it regarded literary politics as acceptably representative of society in general.

The prolific writings of literary critics such as Natal'ia Ivanova, Nataliia Il'ina, Sergei Rassadin and Benedikt Sarnov were a natural vehicle for the ideas that *Ogonek* wished to transmit to Soviet society. All these critics used analysis of authors and texts mainly as springboards for social and political comment. In the wake of Trifonov's memoirs, there were numerous references to Tvardovskii's ousting from *Novyi mir* in 1970. This distasteful affair had great symbolic value as a moment when the rift between the 'democratic' and the statist intelligentsia came out into the open. The literary bureaucracy, and particularly the reactionary Union of Soviet Writers, were also frequent targets of *Ogonek*'s socially-minded critics.[72] One of the most eloquent and persuasive voices in the chorus of comment under glasnost belongs to Natal'ia Ivanova, a critic who made her name with scholarly work on Trifonov before throwing her weight behind the radical cause

in the late 1980s. In her articles in *Ogonek* she drew attention to the creeping Stalinism of the literary and political establishments.[73]

Of all *Ogonek*'s regular literary critics in the late 1980s, separate mention ought to be made of Tat'iana Ivanova. Although she deviated not a whisker from the general ideological line of the magazine, the style of her articles differed significantly from those of her colleagues. Rather than assuming familiarity with, and interest in, the literary controversies of the day, Ivanova addressed her articles to an interested, but non-specialist, reader. Adopting the manner of a literary agony aunt, she gave engaging practical advice on which novels and stories to look out for under the deluge of printed matter. She offered a comforting vision of literature's ability to provide moral education for its readers and remain socially engaged.[74] Ivanova's articles were an interesting and novel experiment in Soviet print culture. They acknowledged that, if 'high' literature was to attract a mass readership, it needed to be presented to that readership in an appropriate way. By 1990 Ivanova was seen very rarely in print – there were by this time other ways (besides literary criticism) of targeting the mass reader. However, the coexistence of the two Ivanovas in the *Ogonek* of the late 1980s – the one making a foray into mass journalism from a career in academia and the thick journals, the other creating a new, popularizing genre of literary commentary – is further evidence of the breadth (or haphazardness) already noted.

The momentum of the political struggle carried *Ogonek* through the 1980s. A content analysis carried out on the issues for May 1989 found that 38.7 per cent of articles were devoted to art, culture and science; a further 21.4 per cent to internal politics; and only a handful to international politics. A further analysis applying a different set of categories revealed that cultural politics was the most prominent theme (16.9 per cent), closely followed by the reworking of history (15.9 per cent). Economic reform (10.8 per cent) and general treatments of perestroika and the transformation of society (7.7 per cent) were also prominent.[75] The magazine's reformist zeal perhaps reaches its peak in the April Fool's Day issue of 1990 (no. 14). Here a humorous mock-celebration of neo-Stalinism was attempted. Tat'iana Tolstaia took on the role of an anti-Semitic literary critic trying to prove the Jewish origins of all Russia's great writers from Pushkin onwards. Gazing into its crystal ball, *Ogonek* offered its readers an interview conducted by the correspondent of a fictitious foreign newspaper with the meaningfully-named N. A. Dreeva,[76] the Secretary of the Central Committee of the

party that came to power after a coup on 1 April 1990. This satire may now seem heavy-handed, but in the first half of 1990 *Ogonek* had every reason to believe that the line it was taking was correct: subscriptions were up to well over four million, and, barring a coup, continued success seemed guaranteed.

Ogonek reached the peak of its popularity in 1990, but it started to face a crisis of self-definition in that same year. The signal for this crisis was not any political cataclysm, but rather a new piece of legislation: the Law on the Press that came into effect in August 1990. This law was a triumph for liberal journalists, as it guaranteed the independence of the press from party institutions. It gave publications the chance to throw off the shackles of Soviet bodies by registering under a new 'founder' (*uchreditel'*). But the liberal press discovered that, while the passing of the law was one thing, its implementation was quite another. *Ogonek*'s registration, though eventually successful, turned out to be a protracted and painful affair that had ramifications for the magazine's future development.

Ogonek had complained regularly in the past about being chained to the Pravda publishing house, about having its circulation restricted by Goskompechat', and its distribution hampered by inadequate infrastructure (these complaints were often accompanied by dark accusations of politically-motivated sabotage).[77] *Ogonek*'s decision to proclaim itself a joint-stock company and make its staff the 'founder' was a welcome break with the past, but it took some time for it to be accepted. After Korotich announced that the magazine's staff would become the founder (no. 30), the wrangling really began. Goskompechat' seemed determined to extract a high price for independence: it was forcing up the price of subscriptions, a decision that *Ogonek* considered to be analogous to the misguided anti-alcohol campaign of 1985.[78] The financial squeezing of the press was described as a settling of accounts with glasnost. The liberal press felt that the state was still in a position to hold it to ransom thanks to its monopoly of paper production and allocation and its near-monopoly of publishing facilities.[79] The Ministry of Finances was slow to open a bank account for *Ogonek*, and so the registration process was delayed. A meeting at Goskompechat' on 21 August confirmed that registration was being held up. The state bureaucracy seemed to be applying pressure to the Pravda publishing house to put in a bid to be considered the founder of *Ogonek*.[80] A representative of the CPSU Central Committee appeared in *Ogonek* saying that if the magazine wanted to be independent of the Pravda publishing house, it was free to do so. *Ogonek* responded that a high proportion of its

profits had already been taken by the state, and that if it was to set up on its own it would require financial compensation.[81] In exasperation, *Ogonek* announced in no. 38 its intention to sue. But one week later the battle over registration was finally won. Korotich promised 'the return of *Ogonek* to its origins, to the concept of a weekly for broad sections of the population' (no. 39, inside cover).

This was not an easy promise to keep, however. In 1990–1 tension made itself felt between the *shestidesiatnik* old guard that had made such an enormous contribution to the magazine's flowering under glasnost and the younger generation of journalists. Opinions differed substantially on the best way to seek the magazine's renewal. A number of the more senior and experienced journalists refused to make what they saw as unacceptable compromises in order to repackage the magazine for a less politically engaged post-glasnost audience; the other camp believed that the magazine would have to provide a new product if it wanted to survive in the radically new economic conditions of independence. This fundamental clash of ethoses was not the only source of conflict; however, as we shall see below, the dispute was further stoked up by allegations of legal and financial impropriety.

The disagreements soon came to a head when, at the end of 1990, fourteen journalists demonstratively announced their resignation. The substance of the row remained unclear to outsiders for several months. Vladimir Vigilianskii, the most vocal of the dissidents, finally went public with his grievances in *Stolitsa* late in 1991.[82] In the open letter he circulated to his colleagues at the time of the controversy, Vigilianskii stated that the staff, mentioned as the 'founder' of Ogonek in the registration document, had been excluded from the decision-making process. *Ogonek*, the champion of democracy, had suffered from a total lack of democracy in its own operations. Vigilianskii accused Korotich's deputy, Lev Gushchin, of obstructing the committee set up to inspect the accounts in the wake of registration. Many of *Ogonek*'s profits from foreign publications and other ventures were, he suggested, still not accounted for. Perhaps Vigilianskii's expectation of workers' control within *Ogonek* is unrealistic. In any case, it is hard to know just how well-founded his accusations of financial malpractice are. More interesting are the general disagreements with Gushchin and Korotich expressed in the open letter and the ensuing interview with Mikhail Pozdniaev of *Stolitsa*. Vigilianskii states clearly the motives that brought him and others like him – *shestidesiatniki* from an academic rather than a journalistic background – to join *Ogonek*. Above all, he

wanted to be part of the 'revolution in society's consciousness' that glasnost was about to unleash. Throughout the late 1980s many journalists threw themselves into this task, united by a genuine common purpose. In 1990, however, at the moment the press became free, journalists had for the first time to struggle against censorship from within their own publication: they were liable to be frustrated by the line taken by their own editors. Vigilianskii saw his magazine facing an ideological crisis as its reformist vigour petered out and it tried to provide mass entertainment. His belief was that 'The crisis of *Ogonek* was a manifestation of the crisis of perestroika in its "Gorbachevite" and – more broadly – in its "shestidesiatnik" version.' Vigilianskii saw a danger of *Ogonek* becoming no more than a 'lacklustre appendix to the collected works of Dumas, Conan Doyle and the "Library of Satire and Humour"'. In the early 1990s *Ogonek* provided a particular illustration of the cultural crisis that so preoccupied the Soviet intelligentsia in this period.[83]

In 1990–1 *Ogonek* was forced into difficulties by its own success: having acquired its mass readership of several million, it had to find ways to keep it. The privileged position it had occupied in the structure of the Soviet media was already being challenged by other sources of information and entertainment. Arkhangel'skii noted that *Ogonek* in 1990 could either become an 'informative-enlightening' (middlebrow) or a more highly specialized political magazine. Compromise between these two aims was dangerous, but tempting – *Ogonek* was reluctant to relinquish either its mass audience or its crusading intensity. There were indeed signs of the trivialization and intellectual rudderlessness that Vigilianskii feared. As early as no. 1 of 1990 James Hadley Chase's *Casino* began to be serialized in the rubric 'Library of Foreign Detective Fiction'. In the introduction to this publication a reader was quoted as saying 'People have got tired of endless political comment, historical materials and polemical writing. Some kind of counterweight is required.' Novelty was likewise provided at the start of 1991. In no. 2 it was reported that the material situation had improved, and that changes in personnel and rubrics would follow. The first new rubric came in the very same issue: a society column ('Svetskaia khronika'). The editors declared in a foreword that 'Our rubric is absolutely unprincipled. In the sense that we're not setting out to make any judgments – think what you like. And the main thing is that you should relax when you read in our section about beautiful women, fashionable perfumes, weddings, divorces and famous people.' A similar desire

to separate print culture from politics was shown by Viktor Erofeev as he introduced the rubric 'Over the Barriers' ('Poverkh bar'erov'). The first featured writer was Sergei Dovlatov, whom Erofeev offered as a much-needed antidote to the politicized literature of the glasnost period: 'The personal accusations that readers are now rather sick of have no place in Dovlatov's prose – he does not judge life, but rather shows his affection for it.' *Ogonek*'s effort to revitalize its image was given visual impact when the famous logo was changed slightly in no. 17 of 1991: the hitherto vertical diaresis became slanted and a white border appeared around the red background of the logo.

These changes were a foretaste of what was to come, but they did not transform the general outlook of the magazine in 1990–1, which remained just as politically engaged as before. The violence in the Baltics early in 1991 was described with horror. *Ogonek*'s traditional opponents in the cultural bureaucracy continued to be the targets of polemics. The head of the literature department, Oleg Khlebnikov, gave a bitingly sarcastic account of the Seventh Congress of Russian Writers in the first issue of 1991. In issue No. 5, Korotich published a rallying-cry to democrats: he noted that *Ogonek*, because of continuing distribution problems, was not reaching readers, and that the democratic cause still needed to be fought for. It could hardly be ignored that the magazine's former patron, Mikhail Gorbachev, was tending increasingly to appease its ideological opponents.

The political landscape only changed significantly with the defeat of the August coup, an event that was greeted at *Ogonek* with a mixture of euphoria and soul-searching. One question hung in the air, despite the general mood of buoyancy: how, in spite of *Ogonek*'s best efforts, had a group of mediocre putschists come so close to success? The coup also marked the beginning of a period of ideological transition in radical circles. It was recognized that anti-Communism was not equivalent to a coherent democratic programme; in the future the political press would have to put forward constructive ideas instead of engaging in polemics. Radical sentiments were beginning to sound like platitudes. The defeat of the coup-plotters was evidence of the social change that *Ogonek* had helped to foster, but it also heralded a new media world where periodicals would have to struggle not for a political cause but for their own independence and economic viability. The magazine quite literally could no longer afford to remain the bearer of *shestidesiatnik* enlightenment and Soviet middlebrow *kul'turnost'*; it had to carve out a post-Soviet cultural niche for itself.

Moves towards diversity in the periodicals market

We have seen that, by 1990, there was no future for magazines and journals driven by the mobilizatory ethos of perestroika. It was time for new publications to make their appeal to smaller, more differentiated sections of the reading public. It is revealing that, while the overall *tirazh* of Soviet magazines and journals went up by 47 per cent between 1985 and 1989, the number of publications increased by only 5 per cent.[84] The tendency was clear: massovization without differentiation.

In the glasnost period, despite the general tendency to ideological liberalization, there were still ways for the state to control the periodicals market. It achieved this partly through censorship, although journalists were highly adept at pushing back the limits of the permissible, and Glavlit was losing its power even before it was formally abolished by the Law on the Press of June 1990. A more significant control mechanism was the state's monopoly on supplies of paper and newsprint. Independent publications often found their access to printing presses and the distribution network significantly restricted.

Even after the Law on the Press was passed, there were fears in liberal circles that state control of the press would persist. In general, however, the effect of the new law was undoubtedly to bring in 'from a state of legal limbo the hundreds of hitherto "unofficial" publications, as well as paving the way for a veritable explosion of new publications on to the market'.[85] *Nezavisimaia gazeta* was one of the early beneficiaries of the press law (it was founded in December 1990). The highly successful *Kommersant* was able to continue its activities on a more secure legal basis. The older publications that had improved their reputation under glasnost were able to make themselves independent of their founding institutions. We have already seen how *Ogonek* (not without a struggle) disentangled itself from the Pravda publishing house; in much the same way, *Argumenty i fakty* dissociated itself from the Znanie society, and *Literaturnaia gazeta* from the Soviet Writers' Union. All in all, approximately 8000 periodical publications had registered by spring 1991, and about half of them were new.[86]

But independence was soon found by many of these publications to be a mixed blessing. By 1991 the circulation figures of almost all newspapers and journals were falling, and this downward trend was greatly accelerated by the liberalization of 1992. Several of the main Soviet newspapers – notably *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* – were kept afloat only by government loans.[87] The changed economic situation meant that newspapers and magazines of the glasnost model – mass-circulation

publications with a strong emphasis on politically-engaged social comment – could no longer survive. Periodicals now had to target a smaller readership and respond more flexibly to the demands of the reading public. One of the very few newspapers to be strikingly successful at this time was the semi-pornographic *SPID-info*, first published in late 1991, which grew so rapidly that its circulation in 1993 was second only to that of *Argumenty i fakty*.[88] Although the circulation of *Argumenty i fakty* fell from its glasnost peak of over 25 million, it still flourished. It may indeed be argued that the newspaper's editor, Vladislav Starkov, understood the transformation of the periodical market much earlier and much better than his colleagues at other periodicals. He was the first to make a relatively apolitical bid for a mass reading public by focusing above all on the everyday concerns of readers[89] and then, when the norms of Soviet journalism became more relaxed, offering them avowedly 'lowbrow' entertainment.

Boris Dubin has identified three 'revolutions' in Soviet print culture from the 1970s onwards. First came the 'shortage revolution', which in the mid-1970s edged out the educative model of Soviet print culture; second was the journal boom of the late 1980s (Dubin calls this the 'revolution of mobilization'); and third, from 1990 a 'revolution of differentiation' began to occur. The leading initiators of this new surge of activity were not the monthly journals and *Ogonek*, but rather a number of new weeklies (*Stolitsa*, *Megapolis-Ekspress*, *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*) and dailies (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, *Kuranty*, *Chas pik*, and others). At the same time, a number of Soviet newspapers managed to adapt immediately and successfully to the new market for print culture: these included *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, *Trud*, *Vecherniaia Moskva*, *Moskovskii komsomolets* and, of course, *Argumenty i fakty*.[90] What became of this 'revolution of differentiation' in the post-Soviet period is a subject to be covered in Chapter 6.

The periodical press, 1986–91: overview and conclusions

By the start of the glasnost period the Soviet Union had finally attained a mass audience with highly differentiated needs and wants (which were not, of course, adequately catered for by the existing set of periodicals). One of the main reasons that the Soviet system of the media failed to recognize the requirements of this mass audience was that it continued to operate with the old social categories: the Soviet Union was held to have avoided the social fragmentation of the West, and so it could make do with a far narrower selection of newspapers, journals

and television channels. Where differentiation was acknowledged, it was conceived in class terms; in reality, as Western media research has shown consistently since the 1970s, the structure of mass audiences is much more complex than that.[91]

Glasnost launched the search for a large intellectual vanguard that was to be both active and selective in its consumption of the media and thus to provide the social base for a democratic socialism.[92] Earlier in the Soviet period 'good' readers had been those who read every book or periodical from cover to cover. In the late 1980s, however, one of the leading Soviet researchers of this subject explained that 'selective' reading was a positive sign of social engagement, and that 'the phenomenon of omnivorous reading is a cause for concern'.[93] Yet it is quite clear that the boom in consumption of print culture which reached its peak in 1990–1 was sustained precisely by 'omnivorous reading'. Soviet readers could not go on devouring every new publication for ever, so the reading boom soon petered out.

The differentiation of the reading public had been concealed by the near-universal enthusiasm of the early glasnost period. The collapse of the Soviet reading public, when it did finally occur, led directly to a truly chaotic state of affairs in the periodicals market. The problem was that the production of periodicals, like most other areas of the Soviet social and economic system, had been profoundly 'under-structured'. This assertion depends on a particular definition of 'structure' as something that determines the relationship between the elements out of which it is composed, but does not fix them in a rigid hierarchy. 'Structures' are not inherently static; they are perfectly capable of transformation. What they do, therefore, is to provide a set of ground-rules for the functioning of a system; they do not interfere in individual instances of exchange within that system. The more impersonal a structure, the stronger it is. One of the strongest conceivable structures is a pure market system, where the individual actor (unless, perhaps, he or she has billions of pounds with which to launch an assault on a particular currency) cannot exert any significant influence; value will always be determined by the operation of the system as a whole.

The Soviet system was weakly structured because it had no generally valid arbiters of value (except the ruling ideology, which was notoriously inconsistent and subject to unaccountable change). The quality of production was assessed not by retailers or by consumers, but by particular 'patrons' within the command system. Action proceeded on the basis of personal negotiation (for example, between the Party and editorial boards), not through the operation of impersonal laws.[94]

When the Soviet system of cultural production began to be undermined, such personal 'negotiation' became difficult (and in some cases impossible). At the same time, impersonal structures – the relationships between periodicals and their readerships – had not had time to form. The next chapter will investigate whether the first post-Soviet *piatiletka* has managed to put them in place.

6
Reading in Post-Soviet Russia

The post-Soviet period has in some quarters been described as one of crisis for print culture. Many periodicals were on the brink of closure in 1992. In the same year, book publishing reached a spectacular low of just 28 000 titles, which was roughly on a par with 1913; in 1993 the number of titles began to rise very slowly, but the overall print-run continued to plummet. From a peak of two billion in 1991 it fell to 470 million in 1995.

But is 'crisis' an accurate assessment? Not really: the socio-cultural processes at work in Russia since 1992 are rather too complex to be reduced to this single-word description. In the following analysis I attempt to chart a path between two polarized interpretations: the first, that the coming of the market has meant the death of culture in Russia; the second, that Russia is serenely becoming culturally 'normalized'. To do this, I continue the lines of inquiry pursued in Chapters 4 and 5: an account of developments in publishing and bookselling is followed by a review of the periodicals market (with *Ogonek*, once again, as a detailed case-study).

Post-Soviet publishing and bookselling

We have already seen that Soviet print culture was characterized by a very low degree of differentiation, and that the socio-cultural abnormalities caused by the resultant *defitsit* acted as the dynamo of the reading boom of the late 1980s. It now remains to examine what happened when the immediate requirements of Russian readers had been met, the shortage was liquidated, and reading began to enter a new phase.

In Chapter 4 we saw publishers making huge profits in 1990–1 as costs remained low and reader demand intense. This degree of com-

mercial success was no longer possible in 1992, for two main reasons: first, the 'book boom' was finally coming to an end, as readers' shortage-induced 'hunger' for books was close to being sated; second, printing costs had risen enormously after the price liberalization early in the year.[1] As a result, profit margins were falling, even for the most successful private publishers. These developments forced book producers to come up with new measures to monitor and respond to the market. Small publishing ventures would, for example, contract with large state publishing houses for joint publications. Publishers began to specialize in order to claim their share of the market. They also gave more thought to selecting their trade partners now that there was so much more to choose from than state organizations.[2]

This last point was crucial. One hangover from the Soviet system was the poor co-ordination between the three links in the chain of book production and distribution – printers, publishers and sellers. Each of these groups had its own interests. Generally speaking, the printers were now in the strongest position as they were able to insist on immediate payment from the sellers (that is, before any of the books in question had been released on to the market). Mikhail Nenashev, the former head of Goskomizdat and now director of the private publishing house Russkaia kniga, has argued that a system of deferred payment is essential if the smaller publishers are to survive. The relationship between publishers and booksellers could on occasion be just as tense, as the latter were sometimes reluctant to be honest about the number of copies sold.[3]

From 1992 onwards, several committees were set up to safeguard publishing from the pressures of the market. Various projects were drawn up, notably 'The Special Federal Programme for Book-Publishing in Russia in 1993–95'. Mikhail Fedotov, Minister of Press and Information, announced in 1993 his intention to combat the unregulated operation of the market in books. He argued for a differentiated system of taxes and export duties for printed materials, and for concessionary rates for rent of premises and public services.[4] The subsequent publishing programme for 1996–2001 aimed to reverse a trend which had seen the number of titles published in Russia in 1994 falling to 62 per cent of its level in 1990 (35 per cent of overall print-run (*tirazh*); 45 per cent of printed volume (*listazh*)). These programmes also aimed to safeguard some sections of state publishing against the dangers of the market. Just as in the 1920s, the relative weight of private and state publishing was a subject of constant discussion. Towards the mid-1990s encouraging signs for the state sector began to emerge: after the

early boom in private operations, the state share of publishing went up from 41.5 per cent of titles in 1992 to 57.8 per cent in 1993.[5] This shift in the balance was caused not so much by state protectionism as by the changed economic conditions which made profits harder to come by for small independent publishers.

The state-run book trade was undermined by the market just as much as its partners in publishing. Soiuzkniga (renamed Kniga in 1992) was brought to its knees by the dearth of publishers willing to work with the old distribution network and by the unreliability of those that did. In many cases, state publishers were unable to meet their commitments to Kniga. A general crisis of payments was causing the under-fulfilment of planned series. The first year after price liberalization saw a worrying dip in all areas of book production.[6] Iurii Sapozhnikov, the director of Soiuzkniga from 1987, explained in several interviews just how difficult the position of his organization had become. In the Soviet system, Soiuzkniga had not quite enjoyed a monopoly, but it did oversee 55 per cent of the book trade. Now, however, the size and responsibilities of the organization were proving to be great weaknesses: its structures were too unwieldy to respond to the changing market as effectively as the smaller retail centres (*optoviki*).[7] The more successful of the new publishing organizations preferred to deal with small traders, who kept in close touch with day-to-day fluctuations on the book market. In fact, a mark of the success of these organizations was that their books were seen quite rarely in normal bookshops: they went direct to the consumer.[8]

Book distribution in remote parts of Russia was proving a huge economic burden, given the substantial withdrawal of state subsidies. In the 1990s it has often (and with justification) been argued by people within the publishing business that, given the size of Russia and the remoteness of many of its outlying areas, the task of book distribution cannot be left to the unregulated market.[9] State subsidies were desperately required if the provinces were not to be starved of books. Provincial publishers were not economically strong enough to meet local needs themselves: when forced to fend for themselves, they had no option but to abandon any thoughts of local specificity, and instead to target their production at the more lucrative mass market.[10]

The collapse of the Soviet distribution system did not affect all book-buyers equally. Rather, in the major urban centres books circulated faster and more efficiently than they ever had in the Soviet period. In Russia in the mid-1990s there was a boom in street trading of all kinds. Bookstalls were particularly in evidence. In 1992 their number had

already risen to an estimated 1200–1500 in Moscow (in good weather).[11] The rise of these *knizhnye lotki* coincided with the weakening and near-collapse of the state system of bookshops, which was forced to fight for its own survival in market conditions. Let us again take Moscow as an example. The bookselling organization Moskniga was liquidated by a decree of the city administration on 30 June 1992. This independence proved to be a huge burden: after the price liberalization of January 1992 the cost of books had risen in line with colossal price increases for paper and shipment, and now bookshops had the added expenses of rent, taxes, transport, repairs and security. The immediate result of Moskniga's demise was that bookshops started selling furniture, clothing, even vodka – almost anything was more profitable than books.[12] In the privatization programme it was stipulated that shops should retain their existing 'profile' after privatization,[13] but that did not prevent bookshops diversifying, as long as they continued to sell at least some printed material.[14]

The market in books was generally reviled in the perestroika period and regarded with great suspicion thereafter. It is true that it operated brutally in 1990–3, when some of the private publishers were able to gain privileged access to resources and trading networks. In publishing, as in most other areas of post-Soviet life, the rule of law proved hard to enforce. In the absence of an effective copyright law, book piracy flourished. In 1993, for example, it was estimated that the combined pirated print-run since 1986 of the works of Agatha Christie was 30 million, while the corresponding figure for Serge and Anne Golon was even higher (32.8 million). In one highly controversial case, the publishing house Khudozhestvennaia literatura bought the rights to Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett* (the lucrative sequel to *Gone with the Wind*) only to see it come out in a pirate edition by the Petersburg publishers Piruet; this was followed by half-a-dozen other editions (with a combined print-run of 1.5 million) before the work's lawful owners were able to put their edition on the market.[15]

The book market was, however, by no means an unqualified evil. In the mid-1990s a more stable market came into existence and, as the number of publishing entities grew, competition soon brought book prices down in relative terms. In other words, books were getting dearer more slowly than other kinds of goods. The mechanism of competition can most simply be illustrated by considering the prices for books accompanying the South American soap operas that took Russia by storm in the 1990s. The first version of, say, *Bogatye tozhe plachut* ('The Rich Also Cry', a 1970s Mexican TV series) would go on sale for

several hundred roubles, but soon, when other versions of the same story came on to the market, the price would come down.[16] Fluctuations in prices for other categories of literature can be traced through the rubric 'At the Bookstalls of Moscow' in *Knizhnoe obozrenie*. It is revealing, for example, that prices for *detektivy* fell noticeably in the second half of 1992 as the market for this type of literature came close to saturation.[17] One of the first post-Soviet dissertations on this subject asserted that the book market was one of very few areas of the post-Soviet economy 'where it has been possible to achieve a reasonable balance between supply and demand'.[18]

In the absence of a developed system of book advertising, most readers were guided by the recommendation of friends, by the selection they found in bookshops,[19] and by the system of literary values they had acquired in the years of the Soviet book shortage. Fiction publishing in 1991–3 was still dominated by traditional Soviet 'best-sellers' such as Agatha Christie, Dumas, Chase, and Simenon – all of these had a combined print-run of over ten million.[20] Even after the *defitsit* had been liquidated, it continued to be a factor in determining popularity and even in according literary value. The top six books in the list of the 'Best Books of 1991' published in *Knizhnoe obozrenie* offer a useful snapshot of readers' tastes at this period: they include two translated modern classics boosted by film versions (*Gone with the Wind*[21] and *The Godfather*), along with novels by two of the favourite historical writers of the shortage period (Sue and Dumas) and two of the best-known contemporary Russian writers (Kuz'menko and Pikul'). The popularity that 'elite' writers such as Nabokov, Solzhenitsyn and Grossman had enjoyed in the late 1980s would never be recaptured. The new publishers of the early 1990s understood the mindset of Soviet book consumers very well and flooded the book market with crime novels and other established favourites of the reading public. By mid-1992 there were, however, definite signs of a change of orientation among the reading public. Publishers began to recognize that the market for *detektivy* was coming close to saturation. Now it was no longer sufficient to publish *any* Western thriller writer: popular fiction had to be presented and marketed more carefully. Some publishers decided to focus their efforts on a number of 'prestigious' names in popular fiction. The lists of the most-published works that appeared in *Knizhnoe obozrenie* in 1992 show a revealing mix of Soviet favourites (Mikhalkov, Efremov, Pikul', Beliaev, Marshak, Chukovskii) with traditionally prominent Western writers of various periods (Dumas, E. R. Burroughs, Christie, the brothers Grimm, Druon, the Golons,

Forsyth).[22] We see here evidence of the formation of a post-Soviet 'canon' of entertainment literature.

The new spirit of competition in the book market was fostered by an explosion of commercial activity. The compact Soviet system of 230 publishing houses was replaced by a multitude of new operators: at the beginning of 1995 there were over 7200 organizations with a licence to engage in publishing activities.[23] As the number of publishing entities grew and readers' demand became less inexhaustible, publishers had to make their mark. For this reason, publishers' marketing strategies are an instructive source on the profile of the post-Soviet reading public.[24] One good indication we have of a change in publishing practices in 1992 is the increasing number of collections (*serii*) of thrillers and of selected anthologies of works of this genre. An English publisher would be very surprised to learn that in the mid-1990s a hardback 40-volume collected works of Agatha Christie was being published in Russian (by the Poliaris publishing house in Riga with a print-run of 20 000 copies).[25] Other, broader series made an interesting selection of authors: in mid-1992, just at the time that the market for 'women's novels' (the *zhenskii roman*) was being recognized, the publishers Germes launched a 30-volume 'Library of the Sentimental Novel' ('Biblioteka sentimental'nogo romana') which contained works by Margaret Mitchell, Charlotte Brontë, Georges Sand, Madame de Stael, Diderot and many others.[26] This was an intriguing attempt to marry an inherited cultural hierarchy (which accorded greatest weight to 'classics') with the demands of a new reading public. A similar attempt was made by the publishing group Lada-M, which announced a 15-volume series 'Woman's World' ('Mir zhenshchiny'). Here, the emphasis on the classics was even more pronounced: the works listed included *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. At the same time, this publishing group announced four other series, all of them 'classic': 'My Classics' ('Moia klassika') (45 volumes, mainly for children); 'Selected Classics' ('Izbrannaia klassika', mainly foreign authors); and 'Foreign Fantasy Classics' ('Zarubezhnaia klassicheskaia fantastika').[27] In a throwback to the grand publishing projects of the Soviet period, the publishers 'Karavella' (St Petersburg) announced a 200-volume series of 'World Literature' ('Vsemirnaia literatura'). In order to subscribe, readers had to pay out 2000 roubles immediately for a 'certificate of deposit' (*zalogovyi sertifikat*).[28] This emphasis on the classics tells us that readers still wanted to acquire cultural capital through the books they acquired (or at least this is what publishers believed), but now they were more careful in the way they made their cultural

investment (partly because their money was limited, and partly because the selection of literature available was far richer than it had been in the 1970s and 1980s).

One striking feature of Soviet book publishing was the preponderance of hardback books and the scarcity of attractive paper covers. The Soviet emphasis on *kul'tura izdaniia* persisted well into the 1990s. One of the first post-Soviet publishers to adopt the pocket book format was the publishing centre 'Knizhnoe obozrenie – pul's' based in Rostov-on-Don. Announcing its pocketbook novels (*Roman-v-karman*), it promised readers up-to-the-minute, pure entertainment literature in a convenient format with low prices guaranteed. At the same time, however, it felt it necessary to remind readers that 'your flat can acquire a library of beautifully presented books which will not take up much room'.[29] Publishers, in other words, still did not feel able to present books as expendable sources of information or entertainment; they were to remain items of prestige and hold out the promise of cultural permanence. By the mid-1990s paperbacks and glossy covers were finally gaining ground in Russia – this was especially true of mass-circulation romantic fiction. Harlequin-type novels were now widely published in true pocketbook format, at very low prices (approximately 5000 roubles in Moscow in the second half of 1996). However, readers were still encouraged not to throw them out: some shops operated a system whereby the reader was paid to return the book, after which it was resold at a lower price.

One of several doom-laden assertions commonly made about publishing in the 1990s is that Russian writers have been totally displaced by second-rate Western authors of indifferent crime novels.[30] There is, of course, a lot of truth in this: in 1991 Russian literature provided only 54.3 per cent of the titles published, and only 40.6 per cent of the overall print-run; in 1992 these figures fell further to 36.9 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. In Soviet times the ratio had been three or four Russian titles to every translation. The lowest point of the post-Soviet dip in 'domestic production' was the fourth quarter of 1992, when Russian works accounted for only 15.1 per cent of the overall *tirazh*. There was not such an imbalance in the numbers of titles: in 1992–4, around 50 per cent of Russian literature titles had circulations of less than 10 000; translated fiction, on the other hand, had print-runs on average well above 50 000. By the mid-1990s, however, there were signs of stabilization: Russian fiction was regaining some of the ground lost to translations. Print-runs were becoming more moderate: the middle range (50 000 to 100 000) was filling out.[31] This is a sign of

the growing maturity of the Russian book market. The shortages had now long been liquidated, and it was no longer sufficient to publish any old Western thriller to make money: the differentiation of the reading public had to be recognized. In 1993 there was accordingly a record high in the number of fiction titles (nearly 6000), while the overall print-run was lower than in 1991 and 1992.

The move away from foreign novels to home produce was in part motivated by financial considerations: in 1973 the Soviet Union joined the Universal Copyright Convention, and so a Russian publishing house (if it did not indulge in the common practice of book piracy) had to pay for the rights to any foreign work written since then or still protected by copyright. However, there were also signs of Russian authors mastering formula genres such as the thriller. Novels such as Viktor Pronin's *Banda* series (thrillers detailing a detective's struggle with the Mafia in a provincial Russian city) and Viktor Dotsenko's *Komanda beshenogo* (similar to Pronin, only with a more international focus) regularly appeared at the top of the bestseller lists published in the weekly newspaper *Knizhnoe obozrenie*.[32] Yet it is not clear that the Western notion of bestseller is applicable to Russian publishing in the 1990s. The claims of Russian 'bestsellers' are based on a minute sample of retail outlets: the post-Soviet Russian system of book promotion and distribution is not developed enough for any novel to reach a truly mass audience. In the absence of a comfortably-off middle class, there is no prospect of a national mass book market in the immediate future. However, these considerations are unlikely to deter writers in Russia. There may well be no internationally applicable blueprint for a best-seller, but the search for a specifically Russian model is certainly under way:[33] writing popular fiction is a potentially lucrative activity in a country where over 100 000 people attend an International Book Fair which in the West would attract few outside the publishing business.[34] It seems highly probable that the Russian bestseller, when it arrives, will neglect the 'accursed questions' of Russian intellectual history while in some way exuding confidence in what tomorrow may bring (*uverennost' v zavtrashnem dne*). Writers have thus far had more trouble meeting the latter requirement: many of them have achieved an abrupt break with the spiritual concerns of the Russian literary tradition, but have discovered that to replace *dukhovnost'* with violence, cynicism, and *chernukha* (verismo) is insufficient for commercial success. What post-Soviet citizens appear to want is reading matter that does not remind them of the malaise of their own society and at the same time projects a fundamentally stable moral universe. This hypothesis

perhaps goes some way towards explaining the quite spectacular success of South American soaps on Russian television in recent years. It may also shed some light on why, of all contemporary, non-'popular' Russian writers, the anecdotal émigré Sergei Dovlatov appeared in the mid-1990s to be most in demand.

The above general reflections can be fleshed out by examining the content of the mass entertainment genres of this period. The post-Soviet thriller borrowed extensively from Western formulas, but it none the less retained some traces of Soviet culture. The plot was almost invariably political, and its seriousness was almost never relieved by light moments. Heroes were never endowed with fantastic or improbable powers to extricate themselved from difficult situations (unlike, for example, the James Bond novels).[35] Russian thrillers of the 1990s tended to show a self-willed loner (often an orphan) acting on his own initiative. Boris Dubin has suggested that these novels offer an insight into contemporary Russian society, as they reflect a general striving for a new structure of authority that might provide transcendental legitimation for and explanation of actions.[36] Post-Soviet crime novels showed an unexpected resemblance to their Soviet predecessors: the focus was very much on crimes committed against the state; Western thrillers, on the other hand, are more concerned with crimes against individuals (with the slight exception of the distinctive subgenre of spy fiction).[37] Not only are contemporary Russian thrillers 'political' in the sense that they relate to problems that loom large in post-Soviet society (notably the struggle with organized crime), they are also highly journalistic in their style and content. Some writers have gone so far as to present fictionalized accounts of recent crimes: for example, the assassination of the TV presenter Vladislav List'ev was soon turned into a book.[38] One of the best-selling thriller writers of the 1990s, Danil Koretskii, drew heavily on his career in the state procuracy when constructing his Mafia-centred novels.[39] As a further subgenre of fictionalized documentary there emerged the *chechenskii detektiv* in the mid-1990s.[40]

In the 1990s several other forms of fiction began to rival the popularity of the *detektiv* and the *ostrosiuzhetnyi roman* (thriller). In 1993–4 the genre of historical fiction enjoyed a resurgence and recaptured some of the ground it had lost to sex and violence. Valentin Pikul' had been extremely popular for many years: in 1991 alone the combined print run of his novels came to nearly eight million. But in post-Soviet times Pikul' was joined by other writers who had an opinion to offer on the lives of the Russian tsars, the history of the nobility, or Eurasianist

interpretations of Russia's origins. Publishers tested the waters in 1990–1 by bringing out new editions of Soviet historical fiction: for example, works by Aleksei Iugov, Arkadii Perventsev, and even the highly ideologized Georgii Markov. These were soon joined on the book market by some historical fiction of the late nineteenth century: Vsevolod Solov'ev's epic *Khronika chetyrekh pokolenii* and *Iunyi imperator* (on Peter II) and Vsevolod Krestovskii's mildly racy 'novels of everyday life' (*bytovye romany*) all saw the light of day. By 1995 publishers were confident enough in their analysis of popular taste to commission works of historical fiction from contemporary writers. The publishing house Armada put out a series entitled 'The Romanovs. A Dynasty in Novels' consisting of nearly a dozen volumes, each with a print-run of over 100 000. This seems to suggest that history, and especially historical fiction, has a significant role to play in articulating a post-Soviet national identity.[41]

The post-Soviet book market rediscovered one important category of consumer that had been neglected even more than the others: women. This new commercial orientation was particularly noticeable in the bookstalls of the mid-1990s where romantic fiction became much more in evidence. Publishers put out series in pocketbook format with titles such as 'Novels about love', (Romany o liubvi), 'Romantic novels' (Liubovnyi roman), 'Temptation' (Iskushenie), 'Romantic bliss', (Schastlivaia liubov').[42] Russian familiarity with this genre was reflected in the frequent occurrence of words such as *kheppi-end* and *eskepizm* in articles of the mid-1990s. Back in the 1970s writers such as Dumas and the Golons had been adopted as 'ladies' literature' (*damskaia literatura*) by many readers. Now Russians had the genuine article: Mills & Boon-type novels written according to all the rules of the genre. By all accounts, these novels have been a considerable commercial success.[43] Just as in other countries, these books found an eager readership among middle-aged women; if anything, Russian women had a particularly strong need for this brand of escapism as the trying conditions of post-Soviet society plunged many of them into an acute mid-life crisis. Romantic fiction had enormously broad appeal: it was read by women of very different educational levels.[44]

The most significant development in post-Soviet publishing was surely the long-overdue differentiation of book production. The growth of the number of titles was finally outstripping that of *tirazh*. Publishers began to research and take account of the requirements of several different groups of readers. We can find evidence of this from 1992 onwards: in 1992 there were already forty various series of

adventure novels, sixty series of detective novels and thrillers, and forty of science fiction (as well as wide selections of romantic novels and *melodramy*). By 1993 it seems that demand for these types of literature was being met.[45]

But this is not the full story. Thus far our discussion has been limited to *belles-lettres*, but one can in fact find evidence of a weakening of demand for imaginative literature (*khudozhestvennaia literatura*) in the mid-1990s. The number of fiction titles published each year, taken as a proportion of total book production, was abnormally high in the Soviet Union. Even in 1993 the proportion of fiction titles in the total publishing output in Russia was 19.8 per cent (as compared to 9.7 per cent in Britain, 11.5 per cent in the USA, and 13.6 per cent in France).[46] If, however, we take a different indicator – the total print-run – we find that fiction publishing was in steady decline between 1991 and 1993. It appears that by 1992 there was a distinct fall-away in the demand for this kind of reading matter. According to one survey, 81.1 per cent of respondents expressed a particular interest in fiction, while by 1992 that figure had gone down to 54.7 per cent. There was a corresponding rise in demand for specialist literature (24.1 to 32 per cent).[47] When people speak of the cultural crisis of the 1990s, and point to the decline in reading as one symptom of that crisis, they often forget that the undeniable loss of interest in the literary culture of the 1980s was to some extent compensated for by an increase in *delovoe chtenie* (work-related reading).[48] It was, for example the thirst for self-education that caused library attendance to pick up in 1995–6 as young people (those under 40) searched for the information they needed to requalify and find new jobs. It is worth noting that, if we examine the Russians' self-image as the best-read people in the world, it is the reading of imaginative literature that confers on them this distinction. Reading is an activity that is supposed to be pursued for spiritual self-improvement, and not for professional or social advancement. For this reason the more practical uses of reading in the 1990s are often overlooked or played down.

Even as early as 1992 it became apparent that a demand existed for types of reading matter other than fiction, but was not being met. According to one representative of Kniga, about 1000 titles had become shortage items in the previous year and a half. The publishing houses Detskaia literatura, Malysh and Meditsina were particularly unreliable in responding to the orders of Kniga.[49] The boom in self-help manuals and reference books is the most notable phenomenon in

the life of the post-Soviet reader. The Soviet reader all too often had nowhere to look for advice on medical questions, family problems, or legal issues. These subjects were not covered in manuals geared to the needs of the general reader. The problem was recognized by Goskomizdat in the late 1980s,[50] but works of popular medicine and family encyclopedias remained shortage items in the 1990s. In the post-Soviet period publishers were not always able to make the investment required to bring out weightier works of reference, but they moved quickly to meet the demand for handbooks on marketing, management and the law.[51] Women, gardeners and church-goers were among the groups more explicitly targeted by post-Soviet publishers.[52] A further significant form of self-help literature was the etiquette manual. In this highly 'transitional' period, where socio-cultural norms were extremely ill-defined, many post-Soviet readers were concerned to guard against *durnoi ton*.[53] For those people – and they were many – who required guidance and reassurance on more fundamental aspects of life, there existed a flourishing market in books on fortune-telling, faith healing and assorted paranormal activities.[54]

Some sections of the reading public, however, found that their requirements could not be met by the new book market: academic and highly specialized literature suffered, as did school textbooks. The story of post-Soviet textbooks provides a poignant illustration of the problems facing many areas of cultural production notionally supported by a state that is too economically weak, too incompetent or too unprincipled to fulfil its obligations. The greater part of Soviet textbooks used to be printed in a large factory in Saratov, but in the 1980s a large portion of textbook orders were transferred to a factory in the town of Pesnik in the GDR. The Soviet policy of spreading industrial interests around several of the Warsaw Pact countries backfired when the Soviet empire collapsed. In the case of textbooks, the printing concern in Pesnik was taken over by Bertelsmann after the reunification of Germany. This company instantly became the beneficiary of highly lucrative Soviet contracts. In 1991–2 the Prosveshchenie publishing house actually increased its order of textbooks from Germany, even though the printing capacities of Soviet plants were still considerable. In April 1993 the Russian Ministry of Information dithered as it decided whether Russia could afford to pay for orders from Germany.[55] As a result of these blundering policies, several post-Soviet academic years have begun with many children deprived of essential learning materials.

The post-Soviet book reader

What conclusions, however tentative, can be drawn about reading since the transformation of the Soviet system of publishing and book distribution?

(i) Fiction (*khudozhestvennaia literatura*) is still an important part of the book market, but it has lost its dominant position in Russian print culture. It is now rivalled by *delovoe chtenie* – the books Russians turn to for self-improvement and practical help with everyday problems. A dissertation on the state of the Russian book market in the mid-1990s found that the two main tendencies in readers' tastes were: (i) an interest in children's literature, in adventure novels, romantic fiction and science fiction; (ii) a boom in 'specialist' (that is, self-education) works.[56] An even more recent assessment of the book market billed 1997 as the 'year of non-fiction' (*god nekhudozhestvennoi literatury*).[57]

(ii) Sex and age (and, to a lesser extent, education) are the major factors determining reading of fiction. Everyday consumption of *belletristika* is most characteristic of women up to the age of 25 (40 per cent, compared to under 20 per cent of men in the same age group). Amongst the elderly, educated women are the greatest readers of *belletristika*. Three distinct 'complexes' of genres can be distinguished in the reading patterns of Russians in the mid-1990s: first, adventure novels, science fiction and thrillers (these are the genres generally preferred by men, especially young men); second, romantic novels, the classics and contemporary Russian prose and poetry (these are read largely by women, romantic novels especially by young women); and third, historical works and memoir writing (these forms are preferred by older people with a higher level of education). As women are now significantly more active readers than men, it is currently the second 'complex' that is enjoying greatest popularity; the market for thrillers and adventure novels is in decline, while romantic fiction and the classics are experiencing something of a boom.[58]

(iii) A futher important variable is geographical location. Although the information we have on this subject is far from exhaustive, it seems that readers outside Moscow (and, presumably, a handful of other major cities) read more 'classic' and more translated fiction. In other words, their reading habits are more conservative. They also have access to a much more limited range of self-help literature.[59] Despite the growing number of publishing centres outside

the capital (for example in Kazan', Samara and Cheliabinsk), in 1998 over 50 per cent of titles and 70 per cent of *tirazh* was being published in Moscow – and 80 per cent of books published in Moscow were distributed in the Moscow area.[60] It would seem therefore that cultural 'provincialism' – defined by a lack of access to the more extensive and dynamic range of cultural material that is to be found in the 'capital' – has made real strides in the post-Soviet period.

(iv) It is not necessarily true that Russians currently read less than they did before the collapse of the Soviet Union. A comparison of reading patterns in 1990 and 1994 revealed that newspaper consumption had during this period fallen by over 40 per cent, and journal and magazine consumption by about 70 per cent; against this, people had started to read books more often – over 20 per cent more often.[61] It seem reasonable to offer the following explanations for these figures: first, the decline in consumption of periodicals was caused by the economic crisis of most newspapers and journals, and by Russians' increasing reliance on television as a source of information; second, books were read more widely in 1994 because of the boom of self-help manuals and *delovoe chtenie*, and thanks to women's increased consumption of novels, especially romantic fiction.

Reading of periodicals, 1992–6

Ogonek and other magazines

In Chapter 5 we saw how, after the momentum of perestroika ran out, *Ogonek* was faced with the considerable task of redefining itself for a smaller, less politicized audience, while at the same time remaining economically viable. This was not a task that Vitalii Korotich was prepared to take upon himself. By 1991 he was finding the American lecture circuit more appealing than the intense political struggle taking place within the Soviet media. Korotich was in fact in America in August 1991, and decided to step aside symbolically as main editor immediately after the coup.[62] He was replaced by his younger deputy Lev Gushchin. From the beginning of his editorship, Gushchin had a sense of the new orientation he wanted to give the magazine, but over the next three years (1992–4) he was engaged in a search to discover how these aims might best be realized in practice. The magazine struggled with the constant possiblity of financial collapse. Here the crucial development came between the political signpost of the Minsk

communiqué and the economic signpost of the reforms introduced in January 1992. In mid-December 1991, the Ministry of Communications revealed that the cost of shipment and postage (including printed matter) would increase by up to 300 per cent from January 1992. The immediate effect of this announcement on *Ogonek* was near-disastrous. The magazine had already completed its subscription campaign for 1992, and while it had raised the price, the increase was not remotely sufficient to take account of the new cost of paper, minimum wages, and postage and shipment. As a result, *Ogonek* had to resort to fortnightly publication for several periods in 1992–3. In 1992 the magazine was selling for 15–22 roubles in kiosks, while the cost for subscribers was a derisory 60 kopecks per issue. This disparity persisted throughout 1993, even if not quite to the same extent.[63]

Gushchin stepped forward with his new programme in the first issue of 1992. He promised a highly professional, informative and entertaining magazine without the former didacticism. *Ogonek*'s political stance was becoming more challenging and independent of the triumphant 'democrats'. Political correspondent Leonid Radzikhovskii stated incisively the problem facing Boris Yeltsin: 'Up to this point Yeltsin has been a man making talented use of a pre-existing ideology. Now, whether he likes it or not, he has to become an ideologist – to create and reinforce a completely new ideology of Russian rebirth.' In the same issue, the philosopher Grigorii Pomerants referred disdainfully to Russian liberals as 'yesterday's Marxists'.

Yet *Ogonek*'s attempts to redefine itself went well beyond its political line. Culture was henceforth to receive very different treatment. Instead of reading about writers deemed to be great and morally authoritative, subscribers were now offered more eclectic selections in the new rubric 'Bookcase' (*knizhnyi shkaf*).[64] In the second half of 1992 a 'literary supplement' was introduced: the old serialized detective novels no longer met readers' requirements – such novels were now freely available on any street corner; the new inserted supplement would aim instead to help readers to avoid being swept away by the current deluge of printed material.[65] Benedikt Sarnov, who was one of *Ogonek*'s most prominent and passionate literary critics in 1988, had in 1992 the more modest task of providing a newspaper digest (see 1992, no. 12–13). A range of intellectuals gave their assessments of the first year of the post-Korotich *Ogonek*.[66] These readers generally agreed that the magazine had become more professional and more entertaining. However, they also sensed that old mobilizatory habits were dying hard. Natal'ia Ivanova noted that 'You don't need to win over readers,

you already have won them over. You need to carry them along with you.'[67]

The struggle to find a new readership continued against a background of crisis in the post-Soviet press. We saw in the previous chapter how demand for periodicals, after peaking in 1990, began to collapse in 1991. In 1993, the number of publications had in fact gone up slightly relative to 1991, but the number of copies was further slashed from 1 483 674 000 to 290 427 000.[68] The destabilization and decentralization of print culture noted in Chapter 5 continued into the post-Soviet era. The 1990s spawned a large number of new independent publications, but these had very limited readerships. Post-Soviet readers, with so many new claims being made on their time, attention, and money, were much less interested in the periodical press. A further interesting statistic from the same booklet is periodicity: the number of journals hovered around 1300 during 1991–3; of these the number of weeklies was six in the first two years, and went up to seven in 1993. In 1992 and 1993 over half of the journals came out less often than once a month. From this we can gain some idea of the fluctuations in the journal market in these years: journals had not had time to settle down to the stable and regular representation of their particular readership.

Ogonek was painfully aware of these problems as it continued its reorientation. By 1993, the magazine's circulation was down to 300 000, a mere 7 per cent of the 1990 figure.[69] Periodicity also suffered: as already mentioned, for some of this time *Ogonek* was not a weekly, but a semi-monthly. As *Ogonek* was a magazine which always aimed for broad appeal, it was especially vulnerable to the diversification of the press. In 1993, the magazine's first step towards addressing these problems was to acquire a contents page. This came as an implicit recognition that readers might not devour the magazine from cover to cover indiscriminately, but might read selectively on subjects that interested them. Readers were no longer offered a worldview to which they could commit themselves wholeheartedly, but rather a range of interesting materials from which they could pick and choose.

The pattern of the magazine's rubrics in 1993–4 reflects this new eclecticism. Each issue had a special set of materials on a particular theme; subjects covered varied from politics to personalities; in 1994 Rostropovich, Sakharov, Stalin, Steven Spielberg and the disreputable entrepreneur Sergei Mavrodi were all featured. Politics was no longer a pervasive element of the magazine; it was restricted to analytical articles near the beginning of each issue. Domestic problems and popular

culture were increasingly well represented. One example is the rubric 'Mixed Bag of the Humanities' (*Gumanitarnyi salat*) which began with an article on the imported soap operas taking Russia by storm.[70] Efforts were also made to change the style of visual presentation. Photographs were increasingly used, not just to heighten the impact of reports of war or social problems, but also to show social conditions or public figures in a poignant or ironic light.[71]

From April 1993 the date of the magazine's founding was symbolically given as 1899 rather than 1923 (the year it was revived as a Soviet publication).[72] However, a break with the immediate Soviet past was not always apparent in *Ogonek*'s treatment of one of its sacred themes – the great Russian writer. Vadim Letov, arriving in Siberia on a mission to interview Viktor Astaf'ev, decides not to ask direct questions of the writer. Instead, he accompanies him on a wander around his native village of Ovsianka, and presents the reader with snatches of Astaf'ev's conversation almost without comment. The style of presentation is rather different from Medvedev's interview of 1986 (on which, see Chapter 5), but the attitude is just as reverential and unquestioning.[73]

In fact, despite the magazine's best efforts, the ambiguity of its profile was never more pronounced than in 1993–4. Although the style and range of its articles reflected its striving to attract an audience in the competitive post-Soviet cultural market, *Ogonek* was still recognizably a Soviet cultural artefact. Articles on political and cultural themes still tended to be lengthy ruminations rather than informative, punchily-delivered opinions. Even more fundamentally, the magazine still *looked* as it always had done: it retained its bulky size and its small print. A further sign of cultural continuity from the Soviet period was the poor-quality reproductions of art works that continued to find a home on the inside covers. Pull-out pictures were perhaps the magazine's main attraction in the 1970s: any visitor to the Soviet Union in the late 1980s or before will be able to confirm that people cut out pages from illustrated magazines to decorate their rooms. As late as the last issue of 1994, *Ogonek* included on its inside cover a calendar for the new year, presumably intending it to be displayed above people's sinks. The magazine seemed to be ignoring the fact that readers now had free access to much better quality visual material.

As the circulation of *Ogonek* continued to shrink in 1993–4, the editorial team decided that the magazine was doomed in its old format; while it still looked – and, to some extent, read – like the Gorbachevite organ of the late 1980s, it had no hope of extending its readership beyond the hardiest of habitual subscribers. The democratic wing of

the glasnost press – *Argumenty i fakty* and *Moskovskie novosti* are good examples – was forced to go downmarket into the realm of the 'yellow press' to attract a reading public increasingly indifferent to political and social debate. Just how critical the situation in the periodicals market had become is shown by the fate of one publication which in 1992 might have been assumed to have a bright future. The weekly *Stolitsa* makes for a significant parallel with *Ogonek*. In 1990–4 the magazine was assertively anti-Communist and even anti-*shestidesiatnik* – in this respect it went further than *Ogonek*. It also tended to be racier in its reporting and more provocative in its opinions. These qualities were not sufficient to guarantee success, as readers' interests were changing so rapidly. With advertising revenue declining in mid-1994, it was decided that the time had come to rekindle public interest in the magazine by radical means. In August 1994 *Stolitsa* accordingly transferred its printing operations to Finland and began to be published in full colour. In November 1994 it was taken over by the publishing company *Kommersant*. Andrei Mal'gin, the editor of *Stolitsa*, claimed to have received offers from other potential backers, but he felt that Vladimir Iakovlev, head of *Kommersant*, would be able to provide much-needed financial stability without cutting across his own plans. However, under the influence of *Kommersant*, the magazine became increasingly focused on the social life and other concerns of the Moscow elite. Mal'gin soon found it impossible to work under the new regime, and in 1995 *Stolitsa* shut down temporarily.[74] Vladimir Iakovlev later reasserted his control over the magazine's destiny: he resumed publication of *Stolitsa* with a view to making it a vehicle for a 'new type of journalism', one that would be 'less informational, less dry' than other periodicals under the control of *Kommersant*.[75]

All sections of the Russian press that had their heyday in 1990 were beset by a crisis of self-definition only three or four years later. *Ogonek* was faced by exactly the same kinds of problem that would later bring down *Stolitsa*: mounting costs and an unstable (and practically unknowable) readership. During 1994 the magazine entered into negotiations with various potential backers, and eventually found sponsors who, in the expectation of future profits, were prepared to shoulder the burden of high-quality printing in Helsinki and rapid distribution around Russia.[76] Anatolii Orlov, brought in as artistic director, was able to say with justifiable pride that the print quality of the new *Ogonek* was better than that of *Time* magazine.[77] Besides financial negotiations, *Ogonek* had also been engaged in a thorough study of its potential reader and the periodicals market. It was decided on the basis of the

material gathered that *Ogonek* could strive to be the magazine of the emerging Russian middle class; this is the aspiration that Lev Gushchin expressed in the first of his editorial columns. He launched the search for the middle class 'which forms the foundation of any civilised society and which is so haltingly and with such opposition from all sides beginning to develop in our homeland'. Gushchin also announced the magazine's intention to speak to readers 'in all corners of our enormous country over and above parties, movements, and barricades'.[78]

In January 1995, *Ogonek* finally lost its bulk: from a cumbersome Soviet magazine it trimmed down to Western proportions. But, although the change of size was the most striking feature of the new *Ogonek*, the magazine broke with its past in most other respects as well. Little more than the logo and the crossword remained of its former self.

The novelty of the revamped *Ogonek* began on the first page, with Gushchin's editorial column. This was unusual in its presentation: punchy, often short, paragraphs accompanied by a photograph of the editor. As far as I can tell, no single portrait of Gushchin was ever repeated, and he wore a new tie in each shot. His column broke with the past in its content as well. Gushchin presented himself as a commentator committed to pluralism and civil society, one who based his analyses on real knowledge of society rather than on dogma. His independent stance on most issues was evident in the provocative headings he chose: 'There are some things more important than democracy' (no. 27); 'We are all threatened by freedom' (no. 13); on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of Victory Day Gushchin reminded readers that 'The War is Over' (no. 15).

After the editorial and the full-colour contents page there normally followed a few pages of news in the 'Panorama' section. This rubric provides an extreme illustration of the changed pace of *Ogonek* since January 1995: informative snippets replaced leisurely contemplative essays. On the pages of 'Panorama' pieces of information from very different cultural realms were crowded together. In the first issue of the new *Ogonek*, there were reflections on the Pushkin bicentenary in 1999 alongside a mention of the fifth anniversary of McDonald's in Russia.

Where the magazine did touch on familiar cultural subjects, it treated them much less ceremoniously than it ever used to. An interview with Viktor Astaf'ev (the third I have mentioned in this book) was characterized by a cool, objective tone; the interviewer did not hold back from a tricky question about the circumstances of the writer's

return from Vologda to the Enisei, mentioning a rumour that he received preferential treatment in the allocation of housing.[79] A profile of Gorbachev ten years on from the start of perestroika stated calmly that Russian society's love–hate relationship with the former General Secretary had been replaced by one of total indifference (1995, no. 11). A journalist profiling Il'ia Glazunov, formerly a *bête noire* of *Ogonek* and its allies in the radical press, was able to state his own lack of interest in Glazunov's works (no. 20).

The old department of literature was replaced by a new team working in the department of culture. Expansive essays on literary politics were abandoned in order to accommodate short book reviews and reports on plays, films, and exhibitions. A typical issue might throw together Picasso, 'Forrest Gump', a postmodernist, and a *shestidesiatnik* critic (no. 13). The new *Ogonek* abandoned serialized novels and literary supplements altogether. Dmitrii Stakhov, head of the Department of Publications, presented a wide selection of materials including fiction, memoirs and documentary. For the first issue he offered readers Norman Mailer's interview with Madonna.[80]

The magazine showed its ambition to become a family magazine in its sections on health and leisure. The health section combined practical advice on how to cure illnesses, with pieces on the philosophy of medicine. Similarly, the economics section included analyses of economic reform alongside advice on how to manage the family budget (see the rubric 'A Housewife's Diary' (*Dnevnik khoziaiki*)). This combination of materials suggests that *Ogonek* was not blindly mimicking Western periodicals, but rather keeping in mind the particularities of the Russian reader. The expansion of 'lifestyle' sections came at the expense of politics, which now occupied only a few pages near the front of each issue. In the words of Aleksandr Shcherbakov of the Department of Private Life, 'there should be no more politics in the magazine than there is in people's everyday lives'.[81]

How successful was *Ogonek* in finding new readers? Some indication is given by its ability to attract advertisers. The magazine recognized the importance of advertising in 1995 when it set up an assertive advertising department (*otdel*) to replace the agency that had formerly existed.[82] In the first weeks of its existence, the new *Ogonek* had to offer discounts to its advertisers; by the summer, however, there was a steady demand. The magazine tried to avoid annoying its readers by advertising products well out of their price range; moreover, the proportion of space devoted over to advertising was considerably less than in similar magazines in the West. The magazine targeted the age range

21–35, which very obviously reflected the orientation of the advertising department itself, where no one was over 33. It would appear, though, that older readers had not yet been alienated: 62 000 subscribers remained for the second half of 1995 out of a total circulation of 100 000.[83] *Ogonek* had abandoned thoughts of the enormous print-runs of the past, but it still saw scope for improvement, especially since, with the demise of *Stolitsa*, it had cornered the market for weeklies. Anatolii Orlov put its optimum circulation at 300 000–400 000; he believed this was attainable if the magazine were to strive for a truly national audience. According to Gushchin, 12 000 subscribers were added for the second half of 1995: this was the first time since 1990 that subscription figures had shown any increase (no. 26). The subscription campaign for 1996 was launched in earnest in September with the announcement that the price of six months' subscription would remain constant at 57 210 roubles (no. 37). A study of the profile of the new *Ogonek*'s readership revealed that the magazine's public continued to be located in the major cities and to be educated significantly better than the average. Gushchin suggested that *Ogonek* had not succeeded in taking readers away from other publications, but rather had attracted people who had lost interest in periodicals generally. The single most striking development was the youth of the new readership.[84] It seems that, just as in 1986, *Ogonek*'s readership was in transition; it is undoubtedly true that some of the magazine's trustiest subscribers reacted with horror to what they saw as its vulgarization.[85]

Such harsh criticism came as a reminder that *Ogonek* was to a large extent stepping out into the unknown. There was no absolute guarantee that this kind of magazine could be successful in post-Soviet Russia, however encouraging the signs had been in the first few months. During my visit to the editorial offices in September 1995, I heard from journalists a wide range of assessments of *Ogonek*'s future prospects: some feared that *Ogonek* might become too lowbrow to appeal to the middle-class audience it targets; others declined to see evidence of a middle class developing in Russia at all.[86] The nearest to a layer of middle-income people in post-Soviet society was that hangover from Soviet times, the badly-off *massovaia intelligentsiia* (as defined at the beginning of Chapter 4). There was no guarantee that this stratum would spend its none-too-plentiful money on *Ogonek* when it already had newspapers and television. The 'wealthy middle class' of new Russians, while it certainly had money, did not have the stable instincts of a Western middle class; if it read at all, it was most likely to opt for glossy lifestyle magazines such as *Domovoi* and *Liza*.

The phenomenon of the glossy magazine in Russia deserves separate consideration. These publications came on the scene in 1993, and in 1994 they began to proliferate rapidly. Both specialized and general lifestyle magazines became highly differentiated in their target audiences. Readers with an interest in fashion, for example, could choose between such publications as *Shit' legko i bystro* (Sewing Made Simple and Fast), *Moda dlia polnykh* (Fashion for the Full Figure), *Supermodel'*, *Mezhdunarodnaia moda* (International Fashion), and a host of women's magazines. The doings of Western and Russian celebrities were recorded in magazines such as *Stas* and *Matador*.[87] As advertising revenue increased, many of the new magazines were able to find themselves a niche in the post-Soviet periodicals market.[88] To achieve this, they sometimes had to reinvent the techniques they had initially borrowed wholesale from the West. Women's magazines, even if Western-owned, became distinctly 'Russified' as detailed market research revealed that they would not be successful if they kept to their original format.[89] The periodical culture of the mid-1990s offered a telling reminder of the importance of magazines as a site for negotiation of cultural identities in periods of social instability.

Of all post-Soviet periodicals, *Ogonek* is an especially worthy object of study because the evolution (or mutation) it has been forced to undergo reflects so clearly the much wider cultural changes since 1986. The magazine's development under glasnost was driven by its striving to be a 'magazine for everyone'. This aspiration – however understandable and even admirable – made the journal contradictory in its aims. Intellectualization and popularization were compatible only briefly and for highly specific historical reasons. It so happened that in the late 1980s *Ogonek* had a large captive audience of fairly well-educated people with an intense interest in the sort of information the magazine was able to provide. The enormous success of these years led *Ogonek* to believe that it could provide a cultural product to maintain a readership of several million. In fact, given the loss of Soviet cultural monophony, the diversification of means of cultural diffusion and reception, and the changed economic situation, such an aim was completely unrealistic. In 1991–4 *Ogonek*, along with so many other institutions of culture, experienced crisis and self-doubt in the post-Soviet free-market jungle.[90] However, in 1995, *Ogonek* took steps to overcome the crisis of its own genre. It repackaged itself in order to appeal to the nascent Russian middle class, a section of society that it no longer expected to number more than a few hundred thousand. One of *Ogonek*'s senior editors remarked of its change of image in the 1990s

that 'it wasn't the magazine that betrayed its readers, but the readers that betrayed their magazine'.[91] The first few years of the new *Ogonek* suggested strongly that a reconciliation between the magazine and the reading public had been achieved.

Newspapers and their readers

The glasnost years certainly encouraged the freer expression of opinion in newspapers and journals; but the early 1990s did much more to change the relationship between periodicals and their readers. Economic pressures, competition from the other mass media, and the diversification of the print market transformed Russians' consumption of periodicals. If in the 1980s a typical Soviet family might have subscribed to half a dozen newspapers and journals,[92] in the 1990s it had to be more selective as prices went up and there became so much more to choose from. The collapse in demand following price liberalization in 1992 affected the whole of the print market:[93] the *tolstye zhurnaly* instantly plunged into crisis; the politically engaged glasnost publications were suddenly no longer so interesting to a population that had so many other sources of information and entertainment (and so many other things to pay for); even publications that broke with the past and tried to offer a fundamentally new product had to fight for survival. The local press was also very hard hit, as government subsidies were withdrawn and the Party network collapsed.[94] In 1995 the head of the analysis department of Goskompechat' estimated that only 15 per cent of the country's 10 500 publications were financially self-sufficient.[95] There were fears that Russians would lose the reading habit altogether; newspapers certainly no longer seemed to fulfil their function of the reader's 'partner in conversation' (*sobesednik*).

One striking example of the instability of the press in this period is the steep decline of *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, which from 1990 set new standards for searching and objective reporting in Russia. In 1995 this newspaper suspended publication and seemed on the brink of closure. In August it was reduced to being published in *Obshchaia gazeta*, whose editor Egor Iakovlev had generously offered a few pages to keep it alive. The independence so jealously guarded by the editor of *Nezavisimaia*, Vitalii Tret'iakov, proved a poor guarantee of financial stability. Tret'iakov was widely blamed for the crisis: he was more inclined to reduce or withhold his staff's wages than to countenance any kind of deal with investors.[96] When chronic debts forced the newspaper to suspend publication in May 1995, monthly salaries began to sink as low as 20–50 000 roubles (approximately US$4–10). Over the summer,

Tret'iakov himself conducted all negotiations about the newspaper's financial future, and was perceived to be drawing out the process much longer than necessary. All the while the staff became increasingly desperate to be paid. When a general meeting was called on 30 August, Tret'iakov was voted out of office, to be replaced by Igor' Kuz'min (up to then Tret'iakov's economic director, and a man with little journalistic background). A number of senior *Nezavisimaia* journalists were incensed by this decision and published an angry letter of protest. It was claimed that the voting that ousted Tret'iakov went against the paper's regulations in that it included all the technical staff rather than just the editorial team. Kuz'min was well-attuned to harsh economic realities; under his leadership *Nezavisimaia* seemed likely to survive, although in the process it would lose what had made it unique – its independence.[97] However, little more than a week after Kuz'min was installed there was yet another twist in the complex story of *Nezavisimaia*: on 11 September, Tret'iakov dramatically reclaimed his position as main editor.[98] By early October, the position of *Nezavisimaia* had been secured by a new backer (the Ob"edinennyi bank, part of the Logovaz industrial and financial group), and the newspaper was able to reclaim a position among the most important post-Soviet broadsheets, although to some observers its claims to independence now rang hollow.[99]

The post-Soviet press had certainly experienced – and was still experiencing – a period of great instability. The collapse of the single-Party state had transformed the relationship between readers and the periodical press. Newspapers and journals were confronted by a rapidly changing and diversifying audience on whose support their continued existence suddenly depended. Most publications, moreover, lacked the know-how and the means to conduct sophisticated audience research. As a result, many had closed or been on the brink of extinction. Nevertheless, the situation in the mid-1990s was not catastrophic, as some commentators have implied. The Moscow reading public was able to support a remarkable number of daily and weekly newspapers.[100] But the importance of post-Soviet newspapers extended well beyond the major cities. Many commentators were struck by the growing demand for the local press, which was cheaper than its national counterpart and focused more closely on people's real social concerns. In a survey conducted in 1995, well over half of the experts interviewed on the prospects of the provincial press believed that its importance would continue to grow.[101] Local newspapers had been left in a critical state after the economic liberalization of 1992, but by the

mid-1990s they were generating higher advertising revenues.[102] The regional press still urgently needed help with distribution and marketing, but it was finding ways to attract readers through a retail rather than subscription system: many local papers became weeklies rather than dailies and increased their volume. The most successful type of newspaper in the provinces was that given over to advertising and business information: this *reklamno-informatsionnaia pressa* was commonly distributed free of charge.

In the major cities, the 'traditional' political newspapers had managed to survive and even, in some cases (notably that of *Izvestiia*), to flourish. A distinct category of successful newspaper was the entertainment-orientated tabloid (for which *Moskovskii komsomolets* was the trail-blazer).[103] Of course, there were other types of publication that experienced considerable hardship: the very small-scale local newspapers – *mnogotirazhnye gazety*, *raionnye gazety* – had really suffered; more worryingly, non-commercial specialized publications of the kind that were spawned by the *neformaly* movement in the late 1980s were under threat; researchers argued that the state should introduce an openly protectionist policy to help save them.[104]

Protectionism, however, always has political consequences. In the mid-1990s there was ample evidence that the government and other political interest groups were bringing their influence to bear on some of the major publications.[105] Although independent television companies were perhaps subject to more intense government intimidation than the print media, editors and journalists were also liable to receive such treatment: the murder of the investigative journalist Dmitrii Kholodov (of *Moskovskii komsomolets*) in October 1994 was merely the most gruesome of several violent incidents (the staff of regional newspapers were particularly at risk).[106] Suspicions of political bias in the post-Soviet media seem certain to persist, given the murkiness of issues such as ownership and financing.[107]

All this concerns the commercial and political profile of the post-Soviet press. What, though, of the reader? As we have seen, the Soviet system of print communication was geared towards the 'mass', 'average' reader. Post-Soviet researchers had to assimilate very rapidly conclusions drawn by Western sociology about the nature of the mass public: not only was there no such thing as a single mass viewer, listener or reader, it was not even possible to break down the mass audience by class indicators. The intelligentsia/workers distinction was no longer particularly useful. Factors such as 'lifestyle' and 'value systems' might prove more significant than profession or level of earnings.[108]

Let us now look more closely at the behaviour of the provincial reader in the early 1990s. The newspaper boom of the glasnost years created an extremely dynamic periodicals market until early 1991. In January 1991, for example, around sixty national newspapers were coming out (even if only about a tenth of them could be regarded as truly successful). By mid-1991 readers in the major cities were starting to return to the 'traditional' national newspapers, while those in the provinces were tending to look to their local publications. The hyper-politicized newspaper-reading public of glasnost was giving way to a more differentiated and 'normalized' audience. It was no longer possible, or desirable, for 'everyone to read everything'. As readers began to exercise choice in their consumption of print culture, 'interest groups' began to form. Magazines and newspapers were often reluctant to lower their sights to cater for these smaller groups: intoxicated by the success of the glasnost period, many of them continued to try to do too much – to combine the attributes of the 'quality' and the 'popular' press. Even the age-old distinction between town and village was not as useful in post-Soviet Russia as it had been for most of the Soviet period. Certainly, village-dwellers were less politicized than their urban counterparts, and more interested in the practical help the press could offer them; they also reacted with greater hostility to the phrase 'private property' and to other terms relating to economic liberalization. But the town–country divide was not much of a guide to the periodicals market: the number of potential audiences was far greater than this schema might imply. On the whole, provincial readers expressed a desire to see a greater variety of regional publications; at the same time, a limited number of national newspapers (notably *Argumenty i fakty*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* and *Trud*)[109] continued to attract a wide readership outside the major cities.[110] Education was a more significant variable: the better-educated tended to seek out a wider range of sources of information, and to make more active use of this information. But perhaps the best indicator was readers' socio-cultural 'orientations': in other words, their consumption of newspapers and other periodicals was most likely to be determined by their system of values. This is a promising line of enquiry, but also a very complicated one. One researcher heuristically devised three categories of political orientation – 'democrats', 'centrists' and 'conservatives' – but found that, in reality, only just over 10 per cent of readers in her sample conformed straightforwardly to one or other of these types.[111]

These conclusions are certainly compatible with those suggested by Resnianskaia's study: provincial readers' requirements will be met by

the further diversification of the regional press; the central press, with a few prominent exceptions, will have to wait several years before it becomes truly 'national' again.

Diversification has been accompanied by differentiation. To take an obvious example, if in the Soviet period readers of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* differed little, now these newspapers attract quite distinct audiences (in terms not only of political orientation, but also of age and educational level). However, it is one thing to identify the diversification of the audience, quite another to pin it down according to the various interest groups seeking representation. As the periodicals market in Russia has by no means stabilized, it is not yet possible to locate the social catchment area of each newspaper (as it is possible to do, for example, with the *Sun* and *The Daily Telegraph* in this country). Thematic interests will be catered for by weekly magazines rather than by thick daily newspapers. No one has yet determined into what socio-cultural groups the post-Soviet reading public breaks up.[112]

Conclusion: The normalization of reading?

The glasnost period represented an attempt to get round the abnormality of Soviet print culture – to publish the books people wanted to read, to produce newspapers and magazines that would attract an enthusiastic mass audience – without, however, transforming the fundamental principles of cultural production. Print culture was to remain focused on production rather than on reception and consumption. In the 1990s Russian publishing houses and periodicals went much further: they tried to gain a new sense of normality, to establish a new kind of relationship with their readerships. The system of publishing and distribution that made the Soviet case so profoundly 'abnormal' underwent extensive transformation. By the mid-1990s the book market was well established and was showing systemic features such as stable pricing and balancing of supply and demand. The shortages that conditioned the reflexes of the Soviet book-buyer had by and large been liquidated. Against that, Russians were beginning to read more nonfiction in order to adapt to the new social system and job market. As a parallel development, newspapers, magazines and journals – even (or especially) those that had made their name under glasnost – faced up to life under unforgiving market conditions and were forced to rethink their role fundamentally. Almost all of them had to settle for a smaller, less politicized readership. A further change of focus was caused by the changing position of print culture relative to the other mass media.

The printed word now has to compete with other sources of information (notably television), and, when up-to-the-minute information is sought, it tends to lose out.

It might therefore seem that Russian print culture is now developing according to a Western model. There are, however, problems with this interpretation. Western models always take a rather distinctive form when adopted in Russia.[113] First of all, no market that succeeds Soviet-style state socialism can ever be remotely as 'fair' as that of mature capitalism. Certain groups and individuals will always be able to exploit their privileges in order to monopolize whole areas of production and trade – and, crucially, as they do this they are largely untrammelled by such political and legal controls as exist in the West. This was certainly true of post-Soviet Russia's publishing millionaires. A further set of problems concerns not the producers of print culture, but its consumers. The Russian reader of the mid-1990s was still in a sense a cultural neophyte: he (and she) was absorbing new imported cultural models and behavioural norms (for example, individualism and the operation of the market), but was not doing this in a 'value vacuum', as some might assert. While the old symbols of cultural authority had been seriously undermined and in some cases emptied of meaning, long-standing cultural values (for example, those pertaining to literary genres or to the visual presentation of books) continue to influence the behaviour of post-Soviet readers. A further important consideration is the social structure of post-Soviet book and periodical consumption. The intelligentsia may have died, but it was certainly not replaced by a middle class in the standard Western sense of this term. This combination of factors made it problematic to speak of stable interest groups and mechanisms for the crystallization of social values, and difficult to identify stable readerships. The decentralization of print production which represented such a welcome break with the Soviet legacy did not, moreover, solve the problems of instituting a 'democratic' culture. While Russian print culture has certainly become much more differentiated in the past few years, there are still large groups of the population (mostly located outside the major cities) that either do not have representation or are denied access to culture. For the time being, for reasons to be explained in more detail in the Conclusion to this book, it is much better to regard the period 1986–95 as a historical coda than as a guide to the future. In the field of print culture, as elsewhere, we still do not know where Russia's 'transition' has led.

Conclusion

Reading is an activity rich in cultural symbolism. This tends to be especially true of societies where a mass reading public is just emerging. In such cases, the educated classes, and those who aspire to join them, are concerned to construct a hierarchy of genres, publications, and even reading strategies. It is at this time, as we have seen, that the notion of 'high' culture becomes firmly established. All areas of socio-cultural activity and consumption become heavily 'marked', and reading is certainly no exception. The social significance of reading is further heightened by the relationship between culture and the market. Before the emergence of a mass public of consumers, the mechanisms that define the economic value of a cultural artefact are carefully controlled. When the mass public arrives, 'high' culture is constantly aware of the threat that the more profitable 'mass culture' will drive it out of business.

In Soviet Russia, the symbolic importance attached to reading was unusually great. The reason lay in Soviet culture's unusual resolution of the two problems outlined above: the expansion of the reading public, and the commodification of culture. In the Soviet period the rise of the mass public was, by the standards of this historical phenomenon, extremely sudden, and it coincided with the seizure of power by an elite which possessed an extreme missionary vision of culture. The impetus for the fetishization of reading thus came from above and below simultaneously: the ruling regime saw print culture as an instrument of 'cultural revolution', while the new classes of readers – particularly the newborn Soviet intelligentsia – regarded reading as an activity both prestigious and socially advantageous. These various pressures hastened into being the model of a particular *kul'tura chteniia*, a 'lectorial myth' to rival de Certeau's 'scriptorial myth'.[1] The homogenization implied by this model of reading was further reinforced by the Soviet

hostility to the market: economic exchange was never under any circumstances to be allowed to become the arbiter of cultural value.

The Soviet syndrome of late and accelerated modernization thus had identifiable effects on print culture. Just as the Bolsheviks aimed to leapfrog the socio-economic phase of mature capitalism, so they resolved to do without the bourgeois stage of socio-cultural development. Soviet society was to combine all the desirable features of bourgeois and mass culture: to create a culture capable of communicating the highest social and moral values, while at the same time avoiding the cultural exclusivity of bourgeois society.

The mobilizatory cultural model of the first half of the Soviet period could not straightforwardly be preserved in the post-Stalin era, as Khrushchev discovered to his disappointment and to his cost. The consumers of Soviet culture were by now rather too diverse to respond to the rhetoric of cultural revolution. But the homogeneity of Soviet print culture was preserved by the system of publishing and book distribution, which steadfastly declined to take a sustained interest in popular tastes. Print culture had to do without pluralism (without, in other words, institutions that recognized and expressed social differentiation). Those books that did attract a wide public instantly became shortage items and entered the black market. The Soviet anti-market ethos only raised the prestige of culture: culture was accorded a high value but not the price to match. The mobilizatory model of the Stalin period was replaced by the shortage-based model of the post-Stalin era, which continued to restrict the diversification of print culture: shortage proved to be a powerful force for cultural conservatism. A study of reading thus gives us an insight into the mechanisms of Soviet culture – in particular, it reveals how cultural conservatism and conformity could be maintained in the face of social change that would seem to imply cultural diversification.

Culture – with reading one of its more important elements – *was* remarkably successful in binding Soviet society together. Throughout the imperial period, there had been a distinct lack of shared symbols that could successfully create a common identity for the whole of the empire (or even for 'Russia'). The Bolsheviks would probably have agreed with one recent historian that literature was the most promising nation-building force available to Russia.[2] The success of the Soviet cultural project in general and its reading component in particular can be shown by the history of Soviet reading myths: the image of the newly-cultured Soviet reader, disseminated from above from the late 1920s onwards, became a shared cultural myth of the *samyi chitaiushchii*

narod. In the 1950s, the surest way for members of a foreign delegation to any Soviet city to delight their hosts was to comment on the lengthy queues inside (or, even better, outside) bookshops. Soviet sociological surveys of the 1960s and 1970s consistently showed a striking gulf between people's real and perceived reading of 'serious' literature: consciously or subconsciously, Soviet citizens were keen to share in the cultural prestige conferred by such literature.[3] The belief in the uniqueness of Soviet readers persisted into the post-Soviet period: in a survey conducted as late as 1996, over 70 per cent of respondents in various Russian cities believed that Russia either still was or had been the best-read country in the world.[4]

This Soviet reading boast may even be justified, if we judge by the amount of leisure time Soviet citizens spent staring at printed matter, but this is not really the point: it is not the fact of reading but rather *what* and *how* you read that is significant (especially in modern societies). Similarly, the possession of literacy does not by itself prove too much about a person: the crucial thing is the uses to which that literacy is put. The great strength of the Soviet system of publishing was that it was able by and large to ignore the various 'uses' consumers had for the books and periodicals it produced.

However, this great strength proved to be a horrendous weakness when the relationship between cultural producers and consumers began to change in the late 1980s. In the years 1986–95 there were two major developments which, in my opinion, justify the 'revolution' tag I have attached to this period. First, the figure of the Russian reader became thoroughly demythologized for the first time in 130 years, if not longer. By 1992 the reader was no longer a subject of impassioned debate, a rhetorical weapon, a myth, or a mystery; rather, he or she became 'simply' a socio-economic reality. Second, the whole system of Soviet cultural production was exposed to the market. This is traumatic for any culture, but as it happened so late and so suddenly in the Russian case, it was perceived a nothing short of a catastrophe by those who had the greatest stake in the cultural status quo. The Soviet intelligentsia had had time to become much vaster than the literary elites that railed against the imposition of cultural commodification in Western European countries (for example, in Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century) and so its sense of alienation had much greater reverberations. For most of the Soviet period, the protean term 'intelligentsia' had been a godsend. It magically integrated culture and society, and concealed overlapping systems of social and economic stratification. It implied both a real stratum in society and a model

level of culturedness. However, the years of perestroika brought the realization that Soviet society and the proposed cultural model did not match up. When culture began to reflect its audience, Soviet society proved to be not united and homogeneous, but complex and diverse – not to say alienated and divided.

Notes and References

1 Introduction: Russia's reading myth

1. See A. Manguel, *A History of Reading*, London, 1997, pp. 27–39.
2. For a sample of literary theoretical writings in this vein, see Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (eds), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, Princeton, NJ, 1980. For a penetrating critique which shows that the reader, although invoked constantly, is granted very little room for manoeuvre in literary reception theory, see David Shepherd, 'Bakhtin and the Reader', in Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (eds), *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, Manchester and New York, 1989.
3. Thus, for example, Ernest Gellner identifies the rapid development of the mass print media as one of the main causes of nineteenth-century European nationalism (*Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983).
4. Here I borrow a phrase from another theorist of nationalism, Benedict Anderson.
5. A conceptually very useful (if already quite old) bibliographical map of the territory is L. Gudkov, B. Dubin and A. Reitblat (comps), *Kniga, chtenie, biblioteka: Zarubezhnye issledovaniia po sotsiologii literatury*, Moscow, 1982. For a thorough, discursive and Marxist treatment of these questions, see Arnold Hauser, *The Sociology of Art*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott, London, 1982.
6. Recent trends in the historiography of the Stalin period are considered in more detail in Chapter 2.
7. On the importance – and the dangers – of such broad comparison in historical analysis, see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 22–8.
8. See for example M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 131–2.
9. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 1980, p. 704. For a complementary account of one part of early modern Europe, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, Stanford, 1975. Davis *does* look at the interaction of popular culture and the emergent print culture in the sixteenth century, and concludes that the latter in fact strengthened the vitality of the former.
10. See Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, Cambridge, 1988, esp. ch. 1. Also helpful is Chartier's 'Texts, Printings, Readings', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley, Calif., 1989. For several applications of Chartier's ideas, see James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (eds), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, Cambridge, 1996.
11. R. Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800*, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, p. 1. This volume contains an excellent manifesto for 'book history'.

12. Ronald J. Zboray has, however, warned of the dangers of seeing too straightforward a relationship between social and industrial modernization and reading patterns: see his 'Antebellum Reading and the Ironies of Technological Change', in Cathy N. Davidson (ed.), *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, Baltimore, Md and London, 1989.
13. See Carla L. Peterson, *The Determined Reader: Gender and Culture in the Novel from Napoleon to Victoria*, New Brunswick, NJ, 1986.
14. See R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, New York and London, 1995.
15. For an excellent account of the rapidly diversifying print culture of eighteenth-century England, see James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750–1800*, Oxford, 1992.
16. America is in many respects a similar case: it too acquired a broad middle-class reading public in the nineteenth century. I am not going to examine it here because its publishers were not exposed to the conflicting demands of social class, commerce and religion in the same way as their English counterparts. Popular literature and the mass press took root in America much faster and more straightforwardly than in Western Europe (see Davidson (ed.), *Reading in America*).
17. The following account of the nineteenth-century English reading public is based on Richard D. Altick's study *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900*, Chicago, 1957.
18. Carlo M. Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West*, London, 1969, p. 78.
19. Altick, *The English Common Reader*, p. 1.
20. See Henri-Jean Martin, 'The French Revolution and Books: Cultural Break, Cultural Continuity', in Carol Armbruster (ed.), *Publishing and Readership in Revolutionary France and America*, Westport, CT and London, 1993.
21. Henri-Jean Martin, *The History and Power of Writing*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Chicago and London, 1994, p. 453.
22. James Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-Century Libraries', in Raven *et al.* (eds), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 177.
23. For a survey of the reading matter of the Victorian middle class, see Amy Cruse, *The Victorians and Their Books*, London, 1935.
24. Ronald Barker and Robert Escarpit (eds), *The Book Hunger*, Paris and London, 1973.
25. See J. McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914–1950*, Oxford, 1992. The examples presented in this book include Mills & Boon and D. C. Thomson & Co.
26. Here I am thinking in particular of the huge debate surrounding Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*.
27. See Patrick Brantlinger, *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay*, Ithaca, NY, and London, 1983.
28. See Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552–1917*, London, 1997, pp. 138–42, 233–4. For an important comparative example, see Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, London, 1993.
29. J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, Princeton, NJ, 1985.
30. J. Brooks, 'Official Xenophobia and Popular Cosmopolitanism in Early Soviet Russia', *American Historical Review*, vol. 97, no. 5, 1992. A similar

point is made by the film historian Denise Youngblood in her *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s*, Cambridge, 1992: see esp. the chapter on *inostranshchina*.

31. L. McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press*, Princeton, NJ, 1991, p. 282. See also D. Brower, 'The Penny Press and its Readers', in S. P. Frank and M. D. Steinberg (eds), *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, Princeton, NJ, 1994: Brower draws attention to the 'ethical code' implicit in the human-interest stories published in newspapers such as Pastukhov's *Moskovskii listok*.
32. The surveys of the common reader of the late imperial period varied a great deal in scale and thoroughness. Among the most frequently cited are: Kh. Alchevskaia, *Chto chitat' narodu*, vol. 1, Khar'kov, 1884 (the later volumes followed in 1889 and 1906); A. Prugavin, *Zaprosy naroda i obiazannosti intelligentsii v oblasti prosveshcheniia i vospitaniia*, St Petersburg, 1895; N. Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike*, St Petersburg, 1895; S. A. Anskii (pseud.), *Narod i kniga*, Moscow, 1913.
33. The main Soviet researcher of this topic, B. V. Bank, gives prominent liberals some credit for their pioneering efforts, but he usually ends up deriding them as *kul'turniki* who unquestioningly tried to impose their own high culture on the people. He fails to notice, of course, that the radicals he so admires had equally inflexible notions of what should constitute *narodnaia literatura* (see *Izuchenie chitatelei v Rossii (XIX v.)*, Moscow, 1969).
34. The Tolstoyan publishing venture *Posrednik* was an unusual attempt to fuse commercial and educative motives. However, although *Posrednik* was successful in the first years after it was set up in 1884, its subsequent history illustrates the tensions that existed between the intelligentsia and the entrepreneurial class. See C. Ruud, *Russian Entrepreneur: Publisher Ivan Sytin of Moscow 1851–1934*, Montreal and Kingston, 1990, esp. pp. 30–8.
35. From the 1890s onwards it becomes much harder to generalize about the intelligentsia's political affiliations: see, for example, the impressive argument made by Michael Confino in 'Idéologies et mentalités: intelligentsia et intellectuels en Russie aux XVIIIe-XIXe siècles', in his *Société et mentalités collectives en Russie sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, 1991.
36. On the tensions within the middle strata of late imperial Russian society, see E. Clowes, S. Kassow and J. West (eds), *Between Tsar and People*, Princeton, NJ, 1991.
37. V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 33, Moscow, 1950, p. 55.
38. H. J. Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth-Century City*, New York, 1979.
39. This is argued by Robert Pattison in *On Literacy*, Oxford, 1982.
40. See Brian Stock, 'Afterword', in Jonathan Boyarin (ed.), *The Ethnography of Reading*, Berkeley, Calif., 1993.
41. Note that peasants in the 1920s appealed for self-help books on handicrafts, trades, popular science, laws, taxes and insurance, but this demand was not met. See J. Brooks, 'The Breakdown in Production and Distribution of Printed Material, 1917–1927', in A. Gleason *et al.* (eds), *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, Bloomington, Ind. 1985, p. 159.

42. R. Pethybridge, *The Social Prelude to Stalinism*, London, 1974, p. 179.
43. L. Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*, New Haven, Conn. and London, 1983. Marx's account of man's alienation through economic exchange is laid out in vol. 1 of *Capital*.
44. See, for example, Bogdanov's articles 'Vozmozhno li proletarskoe iskusstvo?' (1914) and 'Proletariat i iskusstvo' (1920) in Bogdanov, *Voprosy sotsializma: Raboty raznykh let*, Moscow, 1990.
45. A. Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, London, 1985, p. 124.
46. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley, Calif., 1995.
47. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London, 1984, pp. 13–18.
48. See esp. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Cambridge, 1993. Perhaps the clearest illustrations of Bourdieu's ideas are the diagrams he draws of these various fields and their relative positions (see, for example, pp. 38 and 49).
49. One such critique is Richard Jenkins' *Pierre Bourdieu*, London and New York, 1992. For an analysis that focuses on Bourdieu's use of the concept of 'class', see J. Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, Oxford, 1995, esp. ch. 1. Bourdieu quite often seems to draw perilously close to the determinism that he so criticizes in the work of other social theorists. Take, for example, the following formulation: 'The principle of practices has to be sought [...] in the relationship between external constraints which leave a very variable margin for choice, and dispositions which are the product of economic and social processes that are more or less completely reducible to these contraints, as defined at a particular moment' (*The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 50).
50. In fact, I would argue that this framework needs to be reassessed and refitted every time an attempt is made to apply it to a society outside France: although Bourdieu claims that his 'field'-based analysis is universally valid, it does often appear to depend on a specifically French notion of 'culture' (a word which, as we shall see, had very particular connotations in Russia).
51. See Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, New Haven, Conn. and London, 1992.
52. *Obshchestvennost'* is well glossed by Catriona Kelly and Vadim Volkov in C. Kelly and D. Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881–1940*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 26–7.
53. The idea of the Soviet intelligentsia as the regime's socio-cultural base in the 1930s owes a great deal to the work of Sheila Fitzpatrick: see her *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934*, Cambridge, 1979; and *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca, NY and London, 1992. Several writers have, following the prophetic lead of Jan Waclaw Machajski (and using a rather different definition of 'intelligentsia'), commented on East European intellectuals' march to 'class power' under the conditions of state socialism. The best-known examples are G. Konrád and I. Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, London, 1979, and M. Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism*, London, 1988. In a more literary vein, see the writings of Czeslaw Milosz and Milan Kundera.

54. David Chaney, *The Cultural Turn: Scene-Setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural History*, London, 1994, p. 49.
55. This is not so much of a problem in the post-Soviet period, as the rise of Russian cultural studies testifies: see, for example, L. Ionin, *Sotsiologiia kul'tury: Uchebnoe posobie*, Moscow, 1996.
56. In the 1920s a few books on the sociology of culture did appear, but these sometimes quite sophisticated attempts to construct a social theory of cultural history were not developed by other Soviet researchers: see I. Ioffe, *Kul'tura i stil': Sistema i printsipy sotsiologii iskusstv*, Leningrad, 1927; and L. Schücking, *Sotsiologiia literaturnogo vkusa*, Leningrad, 1928 (this book appeared in Russian before it came out in German).
57. The following opinion is typical: 'It is well known that by the phrase "mass culture" we mean quite specific phenomena within bourgeois culture which are produced for the undiscriminating mass reader in capitalist countries' (Iu. Andreev, 'Pochemu ne umiraiut skazki?', *LG*, 12 May 1982, p. 3).
58. Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "The Popular"', in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, London, 1981, p. 232.
59. The appropriation of folklore in the Stalin era shows how this problem might be resolved in practice: see Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era*, Armonk, NY, 1990.
60. P. DiMaggio, 'Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America', in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (eds), *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, Berkeley, Calif., 1991.
61. See Iu. M. Lotman, 'Massovaia literatura kak istoriko-kul'turnaia problema', in *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, vol. 3, Tallinn, 1993.
62. Note the anthology *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington, Ind., 1995), whose editors, Richard Stites and James von Geldern, seem to use the terms 'mass culture' and 'popular culture' interchangeably. They include in their selection a range of material from Stalinist 'mass song' to the kind of political *anekdoty* which, told in the wrong company, could result in Gulag sentences or worse. In fact, it may be argued that this lack of sociological discrimination is a more general failing of the relatively new discipline of cultural studies. To quote one thoughtful critique, cultural studies 'tries to appropriate the tools of sociology while preserving for itself the interpretive scope of literary study' (Chaney, *The Cultural Turn*, p. 24).
63. This point has been made in the only book that offers general coverage of twentieth-century Russian popular culture: Richard Stites' *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*, Cambridge, 1992.
64. In a much less popular form – in the guise of Marxist-Leninist cultural theory – these beliefs can be reduced to the following two propositions: (i) 'reading is a growing social requirement conditioned in all its manifestations by socio-economic factors'; (ii) 'reading is an extensive system of social communication which has an active influence on the formation of social consciousness and on socio-economic progress' (quoted from O. S. Chubar'ian, 'Issledovanie chteniia i chitatelei v sisteme sotsial'nykh nauk', in E. G. Khrastetskii (ed.), *Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniia*, Moscow, 1975, p. 13).

65. See A. Khalatov (then head of Gosizdat), *Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia i massovaia kniga*, Moscow, 1928.
66. *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 125.

2 The creation of the Soviet reader

1. M. Gor'kii, 'O proze' (1933), in *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, Moscow, 1947–53, vol. 26, p. 392. Note also Gorky's story 'Chitatel'' (1898; ibid., vol. 2), where the author comes face to face with a highly demanding, even pitiless reader.
2. A. I. Nazarov, *Oktiabr' i kniga: Sozdanie sovetskikh izdatel'stv i formirovanie massovogo chitatelia 1917–1923*, Moscow, 1968, p. 121.
3. The trade in pre-revolutionary books continued relatively freely until 1920, when book supplies all over the country were nationalized.
4. Nazarov, *Oktiabr' i kniga*, p. 81. Aleksandr Blok went so far as to insist that the old style of orthography be preserved.
5. Figures cited in Evgenii Dobrenko, *Formovka sovetskogo chitatelia: Sotsial'nye i esteticheskie predposylki retseptsii sovetskoi literatury*, St Petersburg, 1997, p. 153. On publishing of the classics during the civil war and later in the Soviet period, see N. Dobrynina, *Cherty dukhovnoi obshchnosti: Russkaia khudozhestvennaia literatura v chtenii mnogonatsional'nogo sovetskogo chitatelia*, Moscow, 1983, esp. ch. 1.
6. V. Volkov, 'The Limits of Propaganda: Soviet Power and the Peasant Reader in Early Soviet Russia', in J. Raven (ed.), *Non-Commercial Uses of Print*, University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming, p. 329.
7. The sources for this and the previous paragraph include: M. Arbuzov, *Knizhnaia torgovlia v SSSR*, Moscow, 1976; Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929*, Cambridge, 1985 , esp. ch. 5; Nazarov, *Oktiabr' i kniga*. Documents related to publishing in the early Soviet period are collected in the two volumes *Izdatel'skoe delo v pervye gody sovetskoi vlasti* (Moscow, 1972) and *Izdatel'skoe delo v SSSR (1923–1931)* (Moscow, 1978).
8. Iu. Gorshkov, 'Budushchnost' kooperativnykh izdatel'stv: logika nastoiashchego plius opyt proshlogo', *KIM*, vol. 61, 1990, p. 69. Gorshkov adopts Glavlit's categorization of private publishers into *chastnokooperativnye*, *chastnoobshchestvennye*, *chastnokhoziaistvennye* and *avtorskie*. He finds that the proportion of co-operatives proper rose steadily: in 1930 thirty of the remaining fifty-two non-state publishers had this form of organization.
9. The relationship between literature, publishing and the market in the 1920s has not been researched sufficiently. The importance of this topic is readily apparent in two recent bibliographical volumes edited by V. I. Kharlamov: *Moskovskie i leningradskie knizhnye magaziny dvadtsatykh godov*, St Petersburg, 1996, and *Moskovskie i leningradskie izdateli i izdatel'stva dvadtsatykh godov*, St Petersburg, 1997. A very revealing case-study is offered by D. M. Fel'dman in his dissertation '"Nikitinskie subbotniki" kak pisatel'skoe ob"edinenie i kooperativnoe izdatel'stvo v kontekste sovetskoi izdatel'skoi politiki i literaturnogo protsessa 1920–30-kh gg.', Moscow, 1996.
10. A general statement of this position is provided by Katerina Clark in 'The "Quiet Revolution" in Soviet Intellectual Life', in S. Fitzpatrick *et al.* (eds),

Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture, Bloomington, Ind., 1991.

11. For a revealing account of the Soviet censorship in its first years, see A. Blium, *Za kulisami 'ministerstva pravdy': Tainaia istoriia sovetskoi tsenzury*, St Petersburg, 1994. Michael S. Fox has looked specifically at Glavlit and its interaction with other institutions: see his 'Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural Affairs, 1922–28', in *Soviet Studies*, vol. 44, no. 6, 1992, Note also M. V. Zelenov and M. Dewhirst's, 'Selected Bibliography of Recent Works on Russian and Soviet Censorship' in *Solanus*, vol. 11, 1997.
12. By the time of the First Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union, while *lubki* remained in ill repute, *skazki* had been accorded a place of sorts in the Soviet Marxist theory of literary history. Indeed, socialist realism, as presented in the most ambitiously historical speech at the Congress (Gorky's), may be regarded as a dialectical synthesis of the fairy tale (an authentically popular, pre-modern form) and critical realism (an impeccably anti-capitalist mode of literature found in modern societies).
13. On library policy in the 1920s, see Blium, *Za kulisami*, ch. 3, and Dobrenko, *Formovka sovetskogo chitatelia*, ch. 6. Debates on the subsequent history of the *spetskhran* (restricted access collection) are laid out in Dennis Kimmage (ed.), *Russian Libraries in Transition: An Anthology of Glasnost Literature*, Jefferson, Miss., 1992.
14. Fox, 'Glavlit', p. 1047.
15. For the full breakdown, see K. D. Muratova, *Periodika po literature i iskusstvu za gody revoliutsii*, Leningrad, 1933, pp. 32–3.
16. See esp. E. G. Elina's excellent account of what she terms the 'massovaia kritika' of the 1920s in *Literaturnaia kritika i obshchestvennoe soznanie v sovetskoi Rossii 1920–kh godov*, Saratov, 1994.
17. Note, for example, A. Beletskii, 'Ob odnoi iz ocherednykh zadach istoriko-literaturnoi nauki (izuchenie istorii chitatelia)' (1922), in his *Izbrannye trudy po teorii literatury*, Moscow, 1964. This article raises several issues that are still current in literary theory. For example, Beletskii reflects on canonicity in the light of fluctuating taste, and adds that 'all attempts to establish the aesthetic value of a literary work without reference to the ways in which it is perceived have so far proved unsuccessful' (p. 29). In addition, the formalists took a great interest in mass literature, because they believed it expressed the underlying norms of a particular literary culture – and because, in their view, the 'new' forms of literature are secreted in the old. Shklovskii and Eikhenbaum also investigated the relationship between the market and the evolution of literary genres: see V. Shklovskii, *Tret'ia fabrika*, Moscow, 1926; and T. Grits, V. Trenin and M. Nikitin (under the editorial supervision of B. Eikhenbaum and V. Shklovskii), *Slovesnost' i kommertsiia (knizhnaia lavka A. F. Smirdina)*, Moscow, 1929. This interest in literature and the market was clearly stimulated by the conditions of cultural life in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, when literature and publishing had an extraordinarily close and intense relationship. The revised sociology of literature in post-Soviet Russia explicitly takes the legacy of the formalists as its starting point: see S. Kozlov's introduction to *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 25, 1997.

18. For contemporary guides to this work, see M. A. Smushkova, *Pervye itogi izucheniia chitatelia: Obzor literatury*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1926, and the bibliography in M. I. Slukhovskii, *Kniga i derevnia*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1928. Evgenii Dobrenko's recent book on the 'making of the state reader' (*Formovka sovetskogo chitatelia*) contains a valuable and very comprehensive bibliography of Soviet articles on reading from the 1920s to the early 1950s.
19. See J. Brooks, 'Studies of the Reader in the 1920s', *Russian History*, vol. 9, no. 2–3, 1982.
20. See for example ch. 3, 'Rasprostranenie osobennostei rechi deiatelei revoliutsionnoi epokhi v usloviiakh obshcheniia', in A. M. Selishchev, *Iazyk revoliutsionnoi epokhi: Iz nabliudenii nad russkim iazykom poslednikh let*, Moscow, 1928.
21. For examples of this genre by the writers mentioned, see A. Blium (ed.), *Knizhnye strasti: Satiricheskie proizvedeniia russkikh i sovetskikh pisatelei o knigakh i knizhnikakh*, Moscow, 1987.
22. See R. Robin, 'Popular Literature of the 1920s: Russian Peasants as Readers', in Fitzpatrick *et al.* (eds), *Russia in the Era of NEP*.
23. See for example J. Brooks, 'The Breakdown in Production and Distribution of Printed Material, 1917–1927', in Abbott Gleason *et al.* (eds), *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, Bloomington, 1985, and 'Official Xenophobia and Popular Cosmopolitanism in Early Soviet Russia', *American Historical Review*, vol. 97, no. 5, 1992.
24. See Volkov, 'The Limits of Propaganda'.
25. A. Bek and L. Toom, *Litso rabochego chitatelia*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1927.
26. G. Brylov *et al.* (comps), *Golos rabochego cheloveka: Sovremennaia sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia literatura v svete massovoi rabochei kritiki*, Leningrad, 1929.
27. *Vechera rabochei kritiki*, Moscow, 1927, p. 22.
28. See Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, Princeton, NJ, 1997, esp. ch. 7. Naiman's productive approach is to see the perceived malaise of NEP culturally encoded in anxieties about sexuality and the body; his source-base includes a suitably wide range of texts (from literary works to medical textbooks). For more on the socio-cultural context, see S. Fitzpatrick, 'Sex and Revolution', in her *The Cultural Front*, Ithaca, NY and London, 1992.
29. For more on the problems facing the early Soviet literacy campaign, see S. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921–1934*, Cambridge, 1979, esp. pp. 168–76.
30. Typical of this point of view is 'Litso chitatelia', *Chitatel' i pisatel'*, vol. 27, 1928, p. 1.
31. This assumption that literary critics were in some way 'giving voice' to the opinion of the mass reader (even before the mass reader had had the opportunity to read the work in question) persisted well into the post-Stalin era. It was only in the 1970s that Soviet literary journals (notably *Literaturnoe obozrenie*) began to reflect on the cultural cleavage between the professional literary elite and other readers.
32. The difficulties facing cultural construction in the villages had already been registered in a number of accounts: see, for example, E. Evgen'ev and A. Mandel'shtam, 'Krasnyi knigonosha', in G. Porshnev and N. Nakoriakov

(eds), *Kniga i ee rabotniki*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1926. The radical novelty of Toporov's book was that it actually *gave a voice* to the peasant reader.

33. This point is further developed in Evgenii Dobrenko's close reading of the peasants' interpretations of a number of texts, notably another story from *Konarmiia*: 'Zhizneopisanie Pavlichenki, Matveia Rodionycha' (*Formovka sovetskogo chitatelia*, pp. 96–106). Dobrenko observes further that the congruence between the 'Maiskoe utro' aesthetic and socialist realism is even more pronounced in the peasants' responses to Pushkin, which were published in the second edition of *Krest'iane o pisateliakh* (Novosibirsk, 1963; there were three subsequent editions, the most recent in 1982). Apparently, the hagiographic section on Russia's national poet was omitted from the 1930 edition because Pushkin was not deemed to be 'proletarian' enough (V. Gusel'nikov, *Schast'e Adriana Toporova*, Barnaul, 1965, p. 71). However, it is interesting to note that the section on Babel' was left out of the book in the 1960s. The precise reasons for this omission are unknown, but I would speculate that the peasants' maverick readings of Babel''s stark and violent stories were considered too unsettling even thirty years after their first publication.
34. The campaign against 'Toporovitis' was led by M. Bekker in 'Protiv toporovshchiny: O knige *Krest'iane o pisateliakh*', *Na literaturnom postu*, no. 23–24, 1930. Toporov tried to defend himself in 'Vopros ostaetsia otkrytym (Po povodu kritiki moei knigi *Krest'iane o pisateliakh*)', *Zemlia sovetskaia*, no. 9, 1932, but in vain. He was hounded into leaving the Altai in 1932, and in May 1937 was arrested. Full rehabilitation eventually came with the republication of Toporov's work in the 1960s.
35. The 'normalization' of reading in the 1930s can be traced conveniently in the workings of the publishing system. The successive editions of Sholokhov's *Tikhii Don*, for example, were marked not only by censorship on political grounds, but also by the purging of regionalisms and obscenities (see H. Ermolaev, *Mikhail Sholokhov and His Art*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, pp. 18–46.)
36. Contrast Toporov's work with S. L. Val'dgard's *Ocherki psikhologii chteniia* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1931), which, while it frames its argument in psychological terms, advances a normative social typology of readers.
37. V. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, enlarged and updated edn, Durham and London, 1990.
38. This sketch portrait is drawn from a general reading of self-education manuals of the mid-1920s and articles on reading from later in the decade. One of the earliest and best-known of the former was P. M. Kerzhentsev's *Kak chitat' knigu*, Khar'kov, 1924 (and several subsequent reprints and expanded editions). A bibliographical guide to this kind of advice literature is to be found in Z. A. Bogomazova, *Literatura po samoobrazovaniiu: Ukazatel' v pomoshch' rabotnikam samoobrazovaniia*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1927. The advice literature of the first half of the Soviet period is treated more exhaustively in Catriona Kelly's forthcoming *Refining Russia: Gender and the Regulation of Behaviour from Catherine to Yeltsin*.
39. See, for example, O. Shmidt, 'Iubilei sovetskoi knigi', in *Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo za piat' let*, Moscow, 1924, esp. p. 20.

40. The most voluble defence of private publishers and critique of Gosizdat in the Civil War period is P. Vitiazev, *Chastnye izdatel'stva v Sovetskoi Rossii*, Petrograd, 1921. A more restrained commentary on Gosizdat's activities under the limited market conditions of NEP is B. Udintsev, 'Knizhnyi rynok i kooperatsiia', *Soiuz potrebitelei*, no. 13–14, 1923. The publishing crisis of the 1920s is diagnosed by G. I. Porshnev in *Krizisy i zatovarennost' v knizhnom dele*, Moscow, 1929. Porshnev shows very clearly that the crisis was triggered in 1924–5 by publishers who were too enthusiastic in increasing print-runs, lowering prices and reducing the number of titles, without making any serious attempt to find out which titles were likely to be popular.
41. This, for example, is the conclusion drawn by G. Porshnev (see *Krizisy i zatovarennost'*, esp. ch. 6). Note also the recommendations of A. Khalatov (then head of Gosizdat) in *Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia i massovaia kniga*, Moscow, 1928.
42. See, for example, L. E. Volkov, 'Izdatel'stva SSSR v svete samokritiki', *Krasnaia pechat'*, no. 8, 1928. A useful bibliography of contemporary articles on this and related subjects is T. A. Podmazova (comp.), *Kniga i knizhnoe delo v SSSR 1922–1931 gg.: Ukazatel' literatury*, Moscow, 1979.
43. For more detail, see E. A. Dinershtein, 'Soviet Publishing: Some Historical Landmarks in Soviet Russia', *Publishing History*, vol. 35, 1994.
44. Quoted in L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, *Intelligentsiia: Zametki o literaturno-politicheskikh illiuziiakh*, Moscow and Khar'kov, 1995, p. 16. Similar is M. B. Vol'fson, *Puti sovetskoi knigi*, Moscow, 1929.
45. For more on library policy in the 1930s and before, see Dobrenko, *Formovka sovetskogo chitatelia*, pp. 168–257.
46. See B. Bank and A. Vilenkin, *Rabochii pokupatel' knigi*, Leningrad, 1930.
47. Note the articles 'Eshche o kul'turnosti prodavtsa' and 'Protiv ogul'nogo obvineniia knizhnikov', in *Na knizhnom fronte*, no. 1–2, 1929.
48. G. A. Brylov, *Oblozhka knigi*, Leningrad, 1929.
49. See V. N. Liakhov, 'Puti oformleniia sovetskoi knigi za minuvshie sorok let', *KIM*, vol. 1, 1959; and Iu. Gerchuk, *Sovetskaia knizhnaia grafika*, Moscow, 1986. Although both these accounts suggest that the officially promoted change of style in book design was not effected immediately (at the beginning of the 1930s), the overall trend – in the direction of 'realism' and 'monumentalism' – was clear enough. The orthodoxy of mature Stalinism is clearly stated in M. Smelianov, *V pomoshch' khudozhestvennomu redaktoru*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1947.
50. See M. Friedberg, *Russian Classics in Soviet Jackets*, New York and London, 1962. For more detail on the fate of the classics under the censorship regime of the 1920s, see Blium, *Za kulisami*, ch. 3. Note also the discussions of the classics in *Chitatel' i pisatel'*, nos. 3, 9 and 21, 1928.
51. See Laure Idir-Spindler, 'La Résolution de 1925 a l'épreuve de la pratique: Littérature soviétique et lutte contre l'opposition d'après la *Pravda* de 1927', *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, vol. 21, no. 3–4, 1980.
52. I. Shomrakova, 'Massovyi chitatel' pervoi poloviny 30-kh gg. XX v.', in I. Barenbaum (ed.), *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, Leningrad, 1982, p. 82.
53. I. Shomrakova, 'Izuchenie massovogo chitatelia v 1920–1930-e gg. Problema istochnika', in I. Barenbaum (ed.), *Sovetskii chitatel' (1920–1980-e gody)*, St Petersburg, 1992, p. 17.

54. J. Barber, 'Working-Class Culture and Political Culture in the 1930s', in H. Günther (ed.), *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, Basingstoke, 1990.
55. These labels are used very much as ideal types: in practice, few historians have all the vices and/or virtues held to be characteristic of one or other of these schools. A more rewarding approach – the one employed here – is to look at what Sovietology and revisionism have in common.
56. R. Robin, 'Stalinism and Popular Culture', in Günther (ed.), *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, p. 31. Robin's formulation is perhaps unsatisfactory in that it suggests that 'genuine' popular creation was, by the mid-1930s, possible outside the terms of Communist discourse.
57. S. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley, Calif., 1995, p. 23.
58. See esp. J. Hellbeck, 'Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931–1939)', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1996.
59. O. Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Soviet Russia: A Study of Background Practices*, Berkeley, Calif., forthcoming.
60. V. Garros, N. Korenevskaya and T. Lahusen (eds), *Intimacy and Terror*, New York, 1995, p. 271. It is scarcely surprising that Potemkin met the addressee of this letter in a library.
61. Potemkin's diary entries are not always dated precisely.
62. Ibid., p. 281.
63. The social constituency of *kul'turnost'* in the 1930s has been the subject of some reflection. It seems highly probable that young upwardly-mobile men were the main 'ideal readers' of the 1930s. This group may well have overlapped considerably with the new Soviet 'intelligentsia' (as defined by Sheila Fitzpatrick in, for example, *The Cultural Front*).
64. C. Kelly and V. Volkov, 'Directed Desires: *Kul'turnost'* and Consumption', in C. Kelly and D. Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881–1940*, Oxford, 1998, p. 303.
65. For the last pre-revolutionary generation of Russian 'conscious workers', writing was just as important a use of literacy as reading: see M. D. Steinberg, 'Worker-Authors and the Cult of the Person', in S. P. Frank and M. D. Steinberg (eds), *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, Princeton, NJ, 1994. This independent, productive use of language lived on in worker resistance of the 1920s: see J. J. Rossman, 'Weaver of Rebellion and Poet of Resistance: Kapiton Klepikov (1880–1933) and Shop-Floor Opposition to Bolshevik Rule', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1996. The *chitatel'skaia kritika* of the 1920s likewise placed a premium on worker self-expression.
66. The most sustained account of a single instance of such 'negotiation' is Régine Robin's *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, Stanford, Calif., 1992. By focusing on the 'cacophonous' First Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union, Robin interprets socialist realism as the outcome of intense collaboration between 'the base of Soviet intellectual society' and 'the summit of the Communist Party' (p. 48). For further interesting reflections on the origins and cultural content of socialist realism, see P. Kenez and D. Shepherd, '"Revolutionary" Models for High Literature: Resisting

Poetics', in C. Kelly and D. Shepherd (eds), *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, Oxford, 1998, esp. pp. 43–52.

67. Dobrenko, *Formovka sovetskogo chitatelia*, p. 258. At the start of his excellent study, Dobrenko is careful to emphasize that he is *not* writing a social history of the Soviet reader. Rather, he is concerned with the discursive appropriation of the reader by Soviet culture – or, to put it another way, with the creation of a culturally hegemonic (in the Gramscian sense) model of reading. Of course, this epistemological caution should be applied more generally than just to the study of Soviet culture: as was argued at the start of Chapter 1, reading as an object of social analysis is always intertwined with the ways people in a given society think and talk about 'the reader' and readership.
68. The following information on the readers of Azhaev's novel is taken from T. Lahusen, *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia*, Ithaca, NY and London, 1997, ch. 11. The reception of particular literary works in the Soviet period is in general hugely difficult to research. Lahusen's sophisticated account was made possible by his access to Azhaev's personal archive, a remarkable cache of stenographic reports, readers' letters, newspaper cuttings, and numerous other documents.
69. Iu. Tynianov, 'Zhurnal, kritik, chitatel' i pisatel'' (1924), in his *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, Moscow, 1977, pp. 147–8.
70. V. Volkov, 'Glasnost' kak praktika: K istorii politicheskoi kommunikatsii v SSSR', *Chelovek*, no. 1, 1994, p. 125.

3 The arrival of the new reader: the post-Stalin period

1. L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, *Literatura kak sotsial'nyi institut*, Moscow, 1994, p. 295.
2. Details on decrees in this and the preceding paragraph are taken from *O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati, radioveshchanii i televidenii: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Moscow, 1972.
3. T. Zueva, 'Byt' sovetchikom, pomoshchnikom millionov chitatelei', *Chto chitat'*, 1958, 1. Compare the similarly anthropomorphic relations English people are supposed (in the normative sense) to have with their pets.
4. In her innovative account of the social psychology of post-Stalin Russia, Elena Zubkova draws heavily on letters to *Novyi mir*, *Oktiabr'* and other publications. She observes that the authors of these letters tend increasingly to construct themselves as individuals (*lichnosti*): see E. Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy 1945–1964*, Moscow, 1993. Contrast Zubkova's conclusions with those of Sheila Fitzpatrick on letter-writers of the 1930s in 'Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s', *Slavic Review*, vol. 55, no. 1, 1996. Fitzpatrick finds that authors of letters to public institutions in the 1930s, although their writings were 'essentially a form of individual, private communication with the authorities on topics both private and public' (p. 80), generally 'tailored their self-representation to a conventional social stereotype' (p. 81); letter-writing was thus often a form of social 'role-playing' (see p. 95). For more on letter-writing in the post-Stalin and glasnost periods, see Chapter 5.
5. RGALI, f. 1702, op. 9c, ed. khr. 135, l. 5

6. RGALI, f. 1702, op. 9c, ed. khr. 165, l. 56.
7. There were innumerable Soviet practical handbooks (*metodichki*) on readers' conferences: see, for example, E. Diadchenko, *Chitatel'skie konferentsii po proizvedeniiam khudozhestvennoi literatury*, Frunze, 1982; and *Chitatel'skii spros i ego formirovanie v biblioteke*, Riga, 1982. It should be noted that readers' conferences made a brief comeback in the glasnost period: their mobilizing ethos fitted in very well with that of perestroika itself.
8. See M. Kim (ed.), *Kul'turnaia revoliutsiia 1917–1965 gg.*, Moscow, 1967.
9. From the late 1960s anxiety was expressed in some quarters that social modernization might be accompanied by cultural degradation, as was claimed to have been the case in the West: for a survey of these opinions, see ch. 9, 'Is the Soviet Union Really Immune?', in K. Mehnert, *Moscow and the New Left*, Berkeley, Calif., 1975.
10. For more on the time-budget surveys and exhortations of this period, see J. Brine, 'Reading as a Leisure Pursuit in the USSR', in J. Brine, M. Perrie and A. Sutton (eds), *Home, School and Leisure in the Soviet Union*, London, 1980. An example of Soviet time-budget research is L. A. Gordon and E. V. Klopov, *Chelovek posle raboty: Sotsial'nye problemy byta i vnerabochego vremeni*, Moscow, 1972.
11. The main research programmes of the 1960s and 1970s are summarized in O. S. Chubar'ian, *Chelovek i kniga: Sotsial'nye problemy chteniia*, Moscow, 1978, pp. 24–9; and in Gregory Walker, 'Readerships in the USSR: Some Evidence from Post-War Studies', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, vol. 19, 1986, pp. 159–62.
12. Note, for example, Chubar'ian's account of his research objectives: 'to reveal the spiritual profile of the Soviet reader – a reader of a new type, born of socialist society – and the breadth and variety of his interests' (*Chelovek i kniga*, p. 24).
13. See A. Reitblat, 'Pravo na vnimanie', *LO*, no. 3, 1981.
14. See, for example, *Sovetskii chitatel': Opyt konkretno-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia*, Moscow, 1968; *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov*, Moscow, 1973; *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni sovetskogo sela*, Moscow, 1978; M. Afanas'ev, *Za knigoi: Mesto chteniia v zhizni sovetskogo rabochego*, Moscow, 1987. For more on the sociological surveys of the glasnost period, see later chapters.
15. For an example of these questionnaires, see Afanas'ev, *Za knigoi*, pp. 107–15.
16. *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov*, p. 74. The authors of this book draw particular attention to the reading of fiction because this makes for an especially advantageous comparison with the West, where only '3–5 per cent of the reading public' match the 'constancy' of their Soviet counterparts.
17. The Soviet debate on television dates from the early 1960s: see E. Efimov, 'Kino- i telekritika: ot krizisa k perestroike', in A. Zis' (ed.), *Khudozhestvennaia kritika i obshchestvennoe mnenie*, Moscow, 1992. Note also B. Firsov (ed.), *Massovaia kommunikatsiia v usloviiakh nauchno-tekhnicheskoi revoliutsii*, Leningrad, 1981.
18. For a useful treatment of this subject which focuses on one collection of essays by prominent Soviet literary scholars, see W. M. Todd, 'Recent Soviet

Studies in Sociology of Literature: Confronting a Disenchanted World', *Stanford Slavic Studies*, vol. 1, 1987.

19. V. Asmus, 'Chtenie kak trud i tvorchestvo', *Voprosy literatury*, no. 2, 1961.
20. See S. Rassadin, *Kniga pro chitatelia*, Moscow, 1965; similar is V. Kantorovich, *Literatura i chitatel'*, Moscow, 1976.
21. Note, for example, V. Prozorov (ed.), *Literaturnoe proizvedenie i chitatel'skoe vospriiatie*, Kalinin, 1982; G. Ishchuk (ed.), *Chitatel' v tvorcheskom soznanii russkikh pisatelei*, Kalinin, 1986; O. Soloukhina, 'Chitatel' i literaturnyi protsess', in Iu. Borev (ed.), *Metodologiia analiza literaturnogo protsessa*, Moscow, 1989.
22. See L. Kogan and L. Ivan'ko, 'Vychisliat', chtoby sporit'', *LO*, no. 4, 1974, for a pathbreaking, if somewhat reductionist application of literary content-analysis; note also the critical response this article met in V. Kovskii, 'Sotsiologiia literatury ili sotsiologiia protiv literatury?', *LO*, no. 8, 1974.
23. Note, for example, B. Dubin, 'Kak zainteresovannye partnery', *LO*, no. 4, 1975.
24. The importance of such letters in reinforcing a typology of readership is mentioned by Vera Dunham (*In Stalin's Time*, p. 26). It should be noted that this controlled forum for the expression of the Soviet reader's views survived until much later in the Soviet period: note the rubrics 'Fakul'tet chitatel'skogo masterstva' and 'Vash literaturnyi geroi' in *Literaturnoe obozrenie* in the 1970s. For a good example of the genre, see 'Folkner. Istoki slozhnosti', *LO*, no. 9, 1974: in this article readers express their frustration and bewilderment at the 'difficulty' of Faulkner.
25. Analysis of these results is to be found in Iu. Davydov, 'I edinomyshlenniki i opponenty', *LO*, no. 5, 1978, pp. 100–7.
26. These are the words of A. Bocharov, quoted in Iu. Dayvdov, 'Zachem kritik?...', *LO*, no. 3, 1980, pp. 98–109.
27. For more detail on this question, see M. Friedberg, *A Decade of Euphoria: Western Literature in Post-Stalin Russia, 1954–64*, Bloomington, Ind., 1977. On the ideologically correct adventure novels of the early Soviet period, see R. Russell, 'Red Pinkertonism: An Aspect of Soviet Literature of the 1920s', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1982.
28. See N. Khrenov, 'Publika i kritika v kontekste otnoshenii kul'tury i gosudarstva', in A. Zis' (ed.), *Khudozhestvennaia kritika i obshchestvennoe mnenie*, Moscow, 1992, p. 127.
29. See N. Naumova, 'Detektiv trebuet vnimaniia', *Neva*, no. 7, 1971; V. Revich, 'Zapretit' ili ob"iasnit'?', *Sem'ia i shkola*, no. 7, 1972; Iu. Sobolevskaia, 'Podrostok i prikliuchencheskaia kniga', *Bibliotekar'*, no. 8, 1971; S. Filiushkina, 'Detektiv: Nemnogo o zhanre', *Pod"em*, no. 3, 1972; V. Kovskii, 'Bez skidok na zhanr', *LO*, no. 2, 1973; M. Druzina, 'Detektiv: igra ili iskusstvo?', *LO*, no. 1, 1975. Note also the rubric 'Detektiv: i sotsial'nost' i khudozhestvennost' in *LG*, 1971–2.
30. The official Soviet abhorrence of *ostrosiuzhetnye zhanry* was further motivated by a number of more complex considerations. Literature of this kind broke a Soviet taboo by depicting active *individuals* (rather than positive heroes) taking decisions in unpredictable (rather than historically and socially determined) situations. For an interesting treatment of these

questions, see B. Dubin, 'Ispytanie na sostoiatel'nost': K sotsiologicheskoi poetike russkogo romana-boevika', *NLO*, no. 22, 1996, esp. pp. 270–1.

31. For a good overview, see Leonid Geller, *Vselennaia za predelom dogmy: Razmyshleniia o sovetskoi fantastike*, London, 1985. This book has a useful bibliography of Soviet articles on science fiction.
32. See A. Kobzeva, 'Liubiteli fantastiki v zerkale sotsiologicheskikh issledovanii', in S. Khanzhin (ed.), *Kniga. Obshchestvo. Perestroika*, Moscow, 1990.
33. For further details on this survey, see two articles by I. Gol'denberg: 'Anatomiia knizhnogo defitsita', *SI*, no. 6, 1987; and 'Chitatel'skie strasti 60-kh godov', *SI*, no. 6, 1989.
34. See *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov*, pp. 73–98.
35. S. Shvedov, 'Knigi, kotorye my vybirali', *Pogruzhenie v triasinu*, Moscow, 1991. Similar conclusions can be drawn from K. Mehnert, *The Russians and Their Favorite Books*, Stanford, Calif., 1983.
36. See V. D. Stel'makh, 'Kakaia kniga u vas v rukakh', *LO*, no. 5, 1973, p. 103. Stel'makh's conclusions are based on the study of reading patterns in small towns that was written up in *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov*.
37. This and the previous paragraph rely heavily on chapter drafts from Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Gender, Manners and Morals from Catherine to Yeltsin* (forthcoming).
38. These developments are summarized in A. Reitblat, 'Osnovnye tendentsii razvitiia massovogo chteniia v SSSR', in V. Stel'makh (ed.), *Tendentsii razvitiia chteniia v sotsialisticheskikh stranakh*, Moscow, 1983.
39. Note especially the following articles by Vladimir Shlapentokh: 'Nekotorye metodologicheskie i metodicheskie problemy sotsiologii pechati', *Problemy sotsiologii pechati*, vol. 1, Novosibirsk, 1969; 'K voprosu ob izuchenii esteticheskikh vkusov chitatelia gazety', *Problemy sotsiologii pechati*, vol. 2, Novosibirsk, 1970; 'Rost urovnia obrazovaniia i otnoshenie k sredstvam massovoi informatsii', *Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniia*, Moscow, 1975.
40. On the systematic non-recognition of readers' tastes, see L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Literaturnaia kul'tura: Protsess i ratsion', *Druzhba narodov*, no. 2, 1988.
41. Friedberg, *Russian Classics*, p. x. In 1912–13 Russian publishing actually compared very favourably with the West.
42. Boris I. Gorokhoff, *Publishing in the U.S.S.R.*, Bloomington, Ind., 1959, p. 4.
43. Note the 55-volume edition of Lenin in Vietnamese announced in 1973, the publication and export to Vietnam of 450 000 books in 1975, and the 50-volume edition of Marx and Engels in English announced in 1975: see, respectively, *KO*, no. 20, 1973; no. 17, 1976; and no. 2, 1975.
44. G. Walker, *Soviet Book Publishing*, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 6–9.
45. On pricing, see ibid., pp. 9–11.
46. The most thorough indictment of the 'catastrophic' state of the centralized publishing system is L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Paralich gosudarstvennogo knigoizdaniia: ideologiia i praktika' (1989) in their *Literatura kak sotsial'nyi institut*, Moscow, 1994. The extreme institutionalized conservatism within Soviet publishing houses is explained in Gregory Walker, 'Personnel Policy in the Control of Soviet Book Publishing', in Marianna Tax Choldin (ed.),

Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Slavic Librarians and Information Specialists, New York, 1986.

47. For more detail on the operation of Kniga – pochtoi and of the book trade in general, see Gorokhoff, *Publishing in the U.S.S.R.*, ch. 9; and M. Arbuzov, *Knizhnaia torgovlia v SSSR*, Moscow, 1976.
48. For a case-study in the problems of cultural construction through the book trade, see G. Ambernadi, 'Sem' siuzhetov iz Navoi', *LO*, no. 2, 1973.
49. See B. Bank and A. Vilenkin, *Rabochii pokupatel' knigi*, Leningrad, 1930. For a post-Stalin equivalent, see B. Reznikov, *Rabota prodavtsa v knizhnom magazine*, Moscow, 1957.
50. See O. Orlova, 'Izdaniia proshlykh let mogut byt' realizovany', and M. Gorshkov, 'Mezhmagazinnyi obmen', *KT*, no. 1, 1964; N. Grekhovodov, 'Tovarnye ostatki i mery predotvrashcheniiia ikh rosta', *KT*, no. 7, 1964.
51. A. Burlaenko and V. Revitskii, 'Chto daet khoroshaia vitrina', *KT*, no. 2, 1964; N. Kamianov, 'Prodolzhaem rasskaz o vitrine', *KT*, no. 12, 1964.
52. N. Voronenko, 'Kommissionnaia torgovlia bukinisticheskimi izdaniiami', *KT*, no. 2, 1964.
53. P. Ivanov, 'V bor'be za snizhenie ostatkov', *KT*, no. 7, 1964.
54. An exception is the very upbeat *BAM – knizhnyi*, Khabarovsk, 1986. The cultural colonization of far-flung outposts of the Soviet empire retained its *pafos* to the very end.
55. See A. White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture*, London, 1990.
56. For a clear account of the situation, see M. Smorodinskaia, 'Domashniaia biblioteka serediny 80-kh godov'; and A. Reitblat, 'Biblioteka lichnaia i biblioteka obshchestvennaia: problemy spetsifiki', both articles in *Analiz-prognoz: Informatsionno-analiticheskii biulleten' 'Kniga'*, no. 2, 1990.
57. T. Gurtovenko, '"Bibliotechnaia seriia": voprosy vypuska i raspredeleniia', *KIM*, vol. 54, 1987, p. 30.
58. A sure sign of Dumas's adoption by the Soviet reading public is the fact that his name began to decline grammatically in Russia, as in the question asked at the back of a queue, 'Kto za Diumoi krainii?' (see A. Arkanov's sketch, 'Eruditsiia s shin'onom', *V mire knig*, no. 4, 1978).
59. On book-exchange, see B. Kats and S. Makarenkov, 'Rynok "svobodnogo knigoobmena" v 1986 godu: Analiz situatsii', *SI*, no. 2, 1987; and L. Borusiak, 'Tselevoi knigoobmen: kharakternoe cherty segodnia', *KIM*, vol. 57, 1989.
60. The head of Goskomizdat in 1982 responded to such misgivings in an account of the first attempts to regulate book exchange: see the interview with G. P. Safronov, 'Schitaias' s mneniem knigoliubov', *V mire knig*, no. 4, 1982, pp. 44–6.
61. Note the handbook for librarians, *Ispol'zovanie seriinykh izdanii istoricheskoi tematiki v rabote bibliotek*, Moscow, 1991.
62. See V. Shchepotkin, 'Dinamika populiarnosti serii khudozhestvenno-dokumental'nykh povestei "Plamennye revoliutsionery"', *Kniga. Obshchestvo. Perestroika*, Moscow, 1990.
63. Boris Dubin has offered an interesting theoretical analysis of book-collecting as a means and symbol of socialization: see his 'Kniga i dom (K sotsiologii knigosobiratel'stva)', in N. Efimova (ed.), *Chto my chitaem? Kakie my?*, St Petersburg, 1993.

64. The pioneers here were the satirical journals of the mid-1920s: see O. Ia. Goikhman, 'Knizhnoe prilozhenie kak tip izdaniia (na primere bibliotek satiry i iumora 1920–kh godov)', unpublished *kandidatskaia dissertatsiia*, Moscow, 1975.
65. For more on how and why *Roman-gazeta* was set up, see *Chitatel' i pisatel'*, no. 40, 1928, p. 2. For an early survey of its readership, see E. Levitskaia, 'Opyt izucheniia chitatel'skikh interesov (Po dannym ankety Roman-gazety)', *Na literaturnom postu*, no. 2, 1929. For details on its importance as a provider of literature to a mass provincial audience, see *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov*, pp. 75–7.
66. See the minutes of the general editorial meetings in, for example, RGALI, f. 613 (Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury), op. 9, ed. khr. 2259. A satirical assessment of *Roman-gazeta* is made in Nataliia Il'ina's 'Literatura i massovyi tirazh: O nekotorykh vypuskakh *Roman-gazety*' (1969), in her *Belogorskaia krepost': Satiricheskaia proza 1955–1985*, Moscow, 1989.
67. See A. Levinson, 'Makulatura i knigi: Analiz sprosa i predlozheniia v odnoi iz sfer sovremennoi knigotorgovli', in V. Stel'makh (ed.), *Chtenie: Problemy i razrabotki*, Moscow, 1985; and the same author's 'Starye knigi, novye chitateli', *SI*, no. 3, 1987.
68. Viacheslav Baskov, 'Magazin 100-bis', *V mire knig*, no. 12, 1988.
69. See A. Belikova and A. Shokhin, 'Chernyi rynok: liudi, veshchi, fakty', *Og*, no. 36, 1987, p. 7.
70. G. Iakimov, 'Chernyi rynok v defitsitarnoi situatsii', in V. Stel'makh (ed.), *Kniga i chtenie v zerkale sotsiologii*, Moscow, 1990, p. 139.
71. For more detail on the black market in books, see (besides Iakimov) John and Carol Garrard, 'Soviet Book Hunger', *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 5, 1985.
72. This is not to suggest that books had not been integrated into the economy of shortage earlier in the Soviet period: V. Lebedev-Kumach's article 'O knigakh i prochem' (*Krokodil*, no. 34, 1931, p. 5) shows that there was some kind of black market in books as early as the 1930s.
73. L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Literature and Social Process: Soviet Scene', unpublished paper presented at IFLA General Conference and Council Meeting, Moscow, 1991, p. 11.
74. This is the estimate of O. Vostokov in 'Mozhno li povliiat' na "chernyi rynok"?', *Ekslibris*, no. 1, 1989, p. 23.
75. *Bukinisticheskaia torgovlia* is in fact quite a useful barometer of Soviet cultural life: note Tamara Sokolova, 'Razvitie sovetskoi bukinisticheskoi torgovli v Moskve v period stroitel'stva osnov sotsializma (1917–1941)', unpublished *kandidatskaia dissertatsiia*, Moscow, 1988. For an overview of the Soviet period, see A. Govorov and A. Doroshevich (eds), *Bukinisticheskaia torgovlia: Uchebnik dlia studentov vuzov*, Moscow, 1990. A campaign was launched against book collecting in the late 1920s; in the 1930s the state actually bought old books from the population with the aim of redistributing them; price guidelines for the second-hand book trade were only established in the 1940s.
76. On the fate of *bibliofil'stvo* in the immediate post-revolutionary period, see O. Lasunskii, 'Stanovlenie sovetskogo bibliofil'stva', in A. Sidorov (ed.),

Kniga i kul'tura, Moscow, 1979. Book-collectors in the modern world have often had to struggle to legitimize their hobby, since their professed intellectual/aesthetic motivations can very easily be impugned by accusations of vulgar acquisitiveness. See, for example, the 'unexplanatory introduction' to P. Jordan-Smith, *For the Love of Books: The Adventures of an Impecunious Collector*, New York, 1934; or, in the early Soviet context, M. N. Kufaev's painstaking argument in *Bibliofiliia i bibliomaniia (psikhofiziologiia bibliofil'stva)*, Leningrad, 1927.

77. P. Berkov, *Istoriia sovetskogo bibliofil'stva (1917–1967)*, Moscow, 1971, p. 207.
78. Svetlana Boym has analyzed these interiors from the position of an unusually well-informed social anthropologist: see her *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*, Cambridge, Mass., 1994, esp. pp. 155–7.
79. I. Bestuzhev-Lada, 'Nekotorye perspektivy razvitiia knizhnogo dela v problematike sotsial'nogo prognozirovaniia', *KIM*, vol. 55, 1987. A less sardonic analysis is provided in V. F. Rozhankovskii, 'Printsipy ansamblevosti v slozhenii sovremennogo sovetskogo zhilogo inter'era', in *Kul'tura zhilogo inter'era*, Moscow, 1966, p. 74.
80. Typical of this attitude is V. Osipov, *Kniga v vashem dome*, Moscow, 1967.
81. See A. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, Moscow, 1991, p. 103.
82. For more on this particular point of comparison, see Iurii Gerchuk, 'Kul'tura massovoi knigi', in *Kniga. Obshchestvo. Perestroika*, Moscow, 1990. Russian books sometimes send out conflicting signs to the reader: for example, they might combine the brightly-coloured, glossy cover of a mass-circulation paperback with the high-quality paper and circulation of a work of specialist literature.
83. *KO*, no. 24, 1986, p. 6.
84. See L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Obraz knigi i ee sotsial'naia adresatsiia', in V. Stel'makh (ed.), *Biblioteka i chtenie: problemy i issledovaniia*, St Petersburg, 1995, esp. pp. 79–82.
85. A typical example is Iu. Andreev, 'Pochemu ne umiraiut skazki?' (introducing a new rubric, 'Kul'tura: narodnost' i massovost'), *LG*, 12 May 1982.
86. For more on this idea, see M. Iampol'skii, 'Rossiia: kul'tura i subkul'tury', in N. Azhgikhina (ed.), *Novaia volna: Russkaia kul'tura i subkul'tury na rubezhe 80–90 gg.*, Moscow, 1994.
87. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (revised version, 1907), ed. David Frisby, London and New York, 1990, p. 72. The virtue of Simmel's analysis is precisely that he begins by considering the relationship between value and exchange in general, and only then proceeds to monetary forms of the latter.

4 Reading revitalized? The perestroika project and its aftermath

1. This shift of emphasis can be illustrated by referring to the history of Soviet sociological research, which in the 1960s and 1970s was concerned above all with the 'extent' of reading (*rasprostranennost' chteniia*) and in the 1980s with readers' 'interests' (*chitatel'skii interes*): compare N. Dobrynina and S. Smirnova, 'Problematika i metodika v issledovanii rasprostranennosti chteniia', in E. Khrastetskii (ed.), *Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniia*, Moscow, 1975, with N. Dobrynina, 'O nekotorykh metodologicheskikh i

metodicheskikh voprosakh issledovaniia problem chteniia', in S. Khanzhin (ed.), *Kniga. Obshchestvo. Perestroika*, Moscow, 1990.

2. For a good account of Soviet debates on the intelligentsia, see M. Yanowitch, *Social and Economic Inequality in the Soviet Union*, London, 1977, esp. pp. 14–20.
3. N. Berberova, *Kursiv moi: Avtobiografiia*, Moscow, 1996, p. 621. Note also the selection of letters received by Berberova from samizdat readers of the book (pp. 606–11).
4. Here I employ a broad definition of samizdat which includes much material that not even Soviet ideologues would consider politically seditious. The main function of samizdat was to disseminate knowledge and ideas within the educated elite. By the early 1980s samizdat had quite a stable and 'systemic' existence, as can be seen from the number of samizdat *periodicals* (as opposed to single editions) that emerged in the 1970s. For more detail on the reading habits of members of the intelligentsia subculture, see D. Ravinskii, 'Chtenie v kontekste vremeni', in N. Efimova (ed.), *Chto my chitaem? Kakie my?*, St Petersburg, 1993. Aleksandr Suetnov's bibliographical guide, *Samizdat* (Moscow, 1992), gives a good indication of the range and scale of samizdat 'publishing' in the 1970s and 1980s.
5. Valeriia Stel'makh estimates that there were between 2 million and 2.5 million Soviet people with access to samizdat in this period: see her 'Reading in the Context of Censorship', *Solanus*, vol. 10, 1996, p. 41.
6. In 1988 S. Shvedov estimated the number of 'active readers' (that is, those who visited a bookshop no less often than once a week) at no more than 20 million: see the unpublished *referat Kniga v sovremennom obshchestve*, Moscow, 1988, p. 51. Stel'makh puts the figure somewhat higher, at 40–50 million (see 'Reading in the Context of Censorship', p. 41).
7. On this point, note the opinion of Harold Perkin, who has made a wide-ranging study of 'professional society' in the modern world. Perkin claims that the Soviet Union was 'in some ways the first professional society. If that society is defined as the rise to dominance of the professional elites and the displacement of their landed and capitalist rivals, then the bureaucratic state and command economy that Lenin and Stalin built between the 1917 Revolution and the Second World War must qualify as the pioneer of one extreme, admittedly pathological, species of professional society' (*The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World*, London and New York, 1996, p. 123).
8. On which, see S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca, NY, 1992.
9. For more detail on the real conditions of life for the Soviet intelligentsia in the post-Stalin period, see V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, London, 1990. A contrasting but complementary account of the culture of the 1960s generation can be found in P. Vail' and A. Genis, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka*, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1988.
10. A good example is the guitar poetry of Vysotskii and others: see 'Magnitizdat', ch. 4, in G. S. Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings: Russian Guitar Poetry and Soviet 'Mass Song'*, Bloomington, Ind., 1984.
11. Aleksandr Iakovlev, quoted in S. Cohen and K. vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev's Reformers*, New York, 1989, p. 64.

12. The inability of the intelligentsia's *neformaly* and other political groupings to build a broad popular base has been analyzed in Judith Devlin's *The Rise of the Russian Democrats: The Causes and Consequences of the Elite Revolution*, Aldershot, 1995.
13. See J. Graffy, 'The Literary Press', in J. Graffy and G. Hosking (eds), *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, London, 1989.
14. The Soviet reading public's predilection for *belletristika* from the 1920s onwards is analyzed in A. Reitblat, 'Osnovnye tendentsii razvitiia massovogo chteniia v SSSR', in N. Kartashov (ed.), *Tendentsii razvitiia chteniia v sotsialisticheskikh stranakh*, Moscow, 1983.
15. Note K. Mehnert, *The Russians and Their Favorite Books*, Stanford, Calif., 1983.
16. See A. Blium, 'Zakat Glavlita: Kak razrushalas' sistema sovetskoi tsenzury. Dokumental'naia khronika 1985–1991 gg.', *KIM*, vol. 71, 1995.
17. See T. Kuznetsova (ed.), *V pomoshch' bukinistu: Rekomendatel'nyi bibliograficheskii spisok*, Moscow, 1986, which contains bibliographies of articles on the second-hand book trade (pp. 10–14) and book exchange (pp. 15–16); note also A. Govorov (ed.), *Kniga i sotsial'nyi progress. Piataia Vsesoiuznaia nauchnaia konferentsiia po problemam knigovedeniia: Sektsiia knizhnoi torgovli*, Moscow, 1984.
18. My main source base for the following account is *Knizhnoe obozrenie*. This weekly newspaper was the organ jointly of Goskomizdat and of the Society of Book-lovers and is the best place to look for this kind of discussion. A self-justificatory overview of the measures taken to revitalize the book trade is provided by Iu. Sapozhnikov (director of Soiuzkniga) in 'Perestroika v knizhnoi torgovle', in S. Khanzhin (ed.), *Kniga. Obshchestvo. Perestroika*, Moscow, 1990.
19. 'Po veleniiu serdtsa', *KO*, no. 2, 1986, p. 4. The establishment of a school library using a private collection was one of the finest cultural deeds possible for a Soviet *intelligent*: perhaps the best-known example is Kornei Chukovskii, who opened a children's library at his dacha in Peredelkino.
20. See 'Prodlit' zhizn' knigi', *KO*, no. 12, 1986, p. 14 and *KO*, no. 13, 1986.
21. See 'Kul'tura knizhnogo sobiratel'stva', *KO*, no. 34, 1986, p. 14; and V. Torchilin, 'Chitateli i sobirateli – gde granitsa?', *KO*, no. 48, 1986. The unsophisticated Soviet book-collector is satirized in a cartoon in *KO*, no. 19, 1987, p. 5, which has the caption 'Give me something classic, about eight roubles' worth' (*Mne chto-nibud' iz klassikov, rublei na vosem'*). On the Soviet intelligentsia's suspicion of the cultural *nouveaux riches* who supposedly bought books as wallpaper, see M. Smorodinskaia, 'Domashniaia biblioteka serediny 80-kh godov', *Analiz-prognoz: Informatsionno-analiticheskii biulleten' 'Kniga'*, no. 2, 1990, p. 6.
22. An interesting source on the symbolic cultural values attached to reading as they varied through the Soviet period is N. Baburina, B. Kanevskii and V. Turchin (eds), *Kniga v russkoi i sovetskoi zhivopisi*, Moscow, 1989. Pictures from the 1920s and 1930s emphasize the dynamism and collectivism of reading: books are shown on the move, in collective use. By the 1960s and 1970s readers are more often than not still and solitary, or at least in a domestic rather than a public setting.

23. On this, see also I. Koval'chenko, 'Komu i zachem nuzhen Solov'ev?', *KO*, no. 8, 1987, p. 3. This article makes the very reasonable argument that it is not a wise use of stretched resources for millions of Soviet families to have multi-volume academic editions of Kliuchevskii and Solov'ev.
24. See, for example, A. Govorov, 'Programmirovannoe tsenoobrazovanie: bukinisticheskaia redkost'', *KO*, no. 4, 1986, p. 10. Besides pricing, the methods devised to stimulate the second-hand trade included 'competitions', with desirable books as rewards for readers who brought in the greatest quantity of old books: see L. Gol'denberg and I. Kirillova, 'Konkursy na luchshego sdatchika, ili uzakonennyi variant "chernogo rynka"', *KO*, no. 20, 1986, p. 15.
25. See L. Vladimirova, 'Estafeta priniata', *KO*, no. 28, 1986, p. 10. The new system had been pioneered in Minsk and was dubbed the *belorusskii variant*.
26. See the resolution of 29 September 1988, 'O sovershenstvovanii organizatsii bukinisticheskoi torgovli', in *Razvitie demokratizatsii v knigoizdanii: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Moscow, 1989.
27. See P. Rozhkov, 'Shtamp "pogasheniia"', *KO*, no. 42, 1988, p. 2. The subsequent history of the second-hand book trade under glasnost is assessed in *Bukinisticheskaia torgovlia v 1989–1990 gg.*, Moscow, 1991.
28. V. Zaitsev, O. Iazev, 'Tri mushketera protiv ... Vinni-pukha: Novye formy knigoobmena', *KO*, no. 6, 1986, p. 15.
29. See 'Eshche raz o knigoobmene', *KO*, no. 31, 1986, p. 14; and V. Ogryzko, 'Knigoobmen: millionnaia pribyl'', *KO*, no. 41, 1986, p. 14.
30. N. Kizub, 'Kak likvidirovat' knizhnyi defitsit', *KO*, no. 16, 1987, p. 2.
31. The rubric first appeared under a different name ('Chitatel'skii knigoobmen') in *KO*, no. 33, 1968. It is noteworthy that as late as 1991 the suggestion was heard to gauge the demand for books by a *reiting knigoobmena* (book exchange ratings): see B. Kats, 'Naturoobmen kak instrument poznaniia', *KO*, no. 7, 1991, p. 6.
32. For a description of this practice, see 'Soiuz: kniga i "Soiuzkniga"', *KO*, no. 28, 1989, p. 2. Books were also 'rented out' at *bibliotechno-prokatnye punkty*, a system first noted in Dnepropetrovsk in 1988. Like so many of these forms of book circulation, this was a camouflaged market mechanism: in many cases, the deposit was set lower than the real market value of the book, so readers often did not bother to return their books.
33. See 'Auktsion? Auktsion!', *KO*, no. 6, 1987, p. 15, 'Auktsion sostoialsia', *KO*, no. 16, 1987, p. 16; and I. Zinurov, 'Eksperimental'nyi knizhnyi auktsion', *KO*, no. 27, 1987, p. 14.
34. G. Nekhoroshev, 'Proigryvaiut vse', *KO*, no. 37, 1987, p. 5. Booksellers were allowed to hold auctions for second-hand as well as strictly antiquarian books from 1 October 1987: see 'Prikhodite na auktsion', *KO*, no. 40, 1987, p. 2. For a later – positive – assessment of the auctions, see E. Komrat, 'Po dogovornym tsenam', *KO*, no. 33, 1988, p. 2.
35. O. Lasunskii, 'O staroi knige i ee poklonnikakh', *KO*, no. 3, 1990, p. 14.
36. On the history of the Soviet unofficial book trade, see M. Belgorodskii, 'Razmyshleniia chitatelia o knizhnom defitsite', *KO*, no. 46, 1988, p. 5. Shvedov found in his survey of 1988 that, while bookshops remained the most common source of books, 19 per cent of readers obtained books

through the organization where they worked. A further 11 per cent had recourse to the black market (see *Kniga v sovremennom obshchestve*, p. 52).

37. See A. Khoroshev, 'Detektivy ... Detektivy', *KO*, no. 18, 1988. For more on the channels through which books reached the black market, see 'Golos knizhnykh "zhuchkov"', *KO*, no. 21, 1989, p. 6.
38. See A. Khoroshev, 'Torgovlia s ruk: spekuliant i tolkuchka', *KO*, no. 1, 1989, p. 10.
39. Note A. Petrovskii, 'Svetlye mysli o chernom rynke', *KO*, no. 48, 1987, p. 4; and the letters page in *KO*, no. 38, 1987, p. 5, where readers were invited to ponder the questions 'Is it necessary to buy up books just in case [*zakupat' knigi vprok*]? Are black marketeers the benefactors or the enemies of book-lovers? How are we to achieve an abundance of books?'
40. See the reader's letter in *KO*, no. 8, 1986, p. 10, and the following subsequent articles: 'Kogda ischeznet "nagruzka"?', *KO*, no. 15, 1986, p. 14; 'Chto pokazal reid', *KO*, no. 26, 1986, p. 10; V. Ogryzko, 'Tochku stavit' rano', *KO*, no. 41, 1986, p. 14. The practice of *nagruzka* was mentioned by Maurice Friedberg's Odessan informants in his *How Things Were Done in Odessa: Cultural and Intellectual Pursuits in a Soviet City*, Boulder, Col., 1991, pp. 115–17. It was also reported sporadically in the Soviet press of the 1970s: see, for example, V. Aleksandrov, 'Nu kak, organizuem', *Krokodil*, no. 11, 1973, p. 12. This article is accompanied by a cartoon where a clearly offended author sees that a tin of instant coffee has been attached with a bright pink ribbon to a copy of his book. As the bookseller explains to him: 'Otherwise your book would be, in the first instance, unsellable, and in the second, unreadable.'
41. T. Zhuchkova, 'Tirazhi i spros: Mnenie spetsialista', *KO*, no. 9, 1990, p. 6.
42. See, for example, L. Vladimirova, 'Tysiacha i odna noch' zakazooborota', *KO*, no. 5, 1986, p. 5; 'Ot pozhelanii – k delu', *KO*, no. 12, 1986, p. 4; '"Da" i "net" ne govorite ... "Kniga – pochtoi" i ee snabzhenie literaturoi', *KO*, no. 23, 1986; N. Dukina, 'U menia, u kioskera, nabolelo', *KO*, no. 19–22, 1988.
43. See *KO*, no. 28, 1987, p. 14.
44. Nenashev has published an account of his time at Goskomizdat, as well as of his earlier career: see M. Nenashev, *An Ideal Betrayed: Testimonies of a Prominent and Loyal Member of the Soviet Establishment*, London, 1995. Typical of the many interviews Nenashev gave in the late 1980s is 'Kak reshaetsia problema knizhnogo defitsita', *Argumenty i fakty*, no. 16, 1988, p. 2.
45. For other measures taken to encourage editorial initiative and democratization in the publishing houses, note the Goskomizdat resolutions 'O merakh po povysheniiu roli redaktora v redaktsionno-izdatel'skom protsesse' (21 January 1988) and 'O tipovom polozhenii o redaktsionnom sovete izdatel'stva' (21 July 1988), both in *Razvitie demokratizatsii v knigoizdanii*. Some observers objected that editors were operating in much the same way as before; for a summary of these complaints, see M. Remizova, 'Norma ili iskliuchenie? Razmyshlenie o redaktore', *KO*, no. 1, 1989.
46. See Nenashev, *An Ideal Betrayed*, pp. 65–78.
47. Namely, a three-volume edition of Pushkin in 1986 with a print-run of 10 070 000 copies; a 1987 Maiakovskii collection in 6 million copies; and

14 million copies of a two-volume edition of Lermontov in 1988. All these editions were open to unlimited subscription. In 1988–9 some smaller publishing houses put out two-volume editions of Pushkin, whereupon in transpired that demand for Russian classics was not a bottomless pit and that even Russia's national poet could be transformed into *nagruzka*: see the reader's letter in *KO*, no. 7, 1989, p. 5.

48. I. Korovkin in 'V interesakh chitatelei', *KO*, no. 2, 1987, p. 3.
49. See, for example, M. Nenashev in *KO*, no. 44, 1987, p. 2; and A. Seregin, 'Nekotorye mysli po povodu izdatel'skikh kooperativov', S. Khanzhin (ed.), *Kniga. Obshchestvo. Perestroika*, Moscow, 1990.
50. These problems are discussed in the round-table 'Chto izdavat'? Skol'ko izdavat'? Ot chego otkazat'sia?', *KO*, no. 27, 1987.
51. See A. Chernyshova and V. Kossov, 'Chto nuzhno pokupateliu? (Assortimentnyi obzor neudovletvorennogo sprosa)', *Knizhnaia torgovlia*, vol. 20, 1988. Soiuzkniga had for many years carried out an annual inventory of titles published in the previous three years that remained unsold in the book trade network: see M. Arbuzov, *Knizhnaia torgovlia v SSSR*, Moscow, 1976, p. 66.
52. The Institute of the Book may be considered only a very qualified success. It suffered from difficult working conditions and limited independence from its masters in the state publishing system. See the assessment made by the Director, A. Solov'ev, in 'Institut knigi i "narkomaniia" chteniia', *KO*, no. 10, 1989, p. 7. For a later report on the institute's activities, see A. Solov'ev, 'Pliuralizm sovremennoi knizhnoi kul'tury: analiz chitatel'skikh interesov, puti udovletvoreniia potrebnostei v knige', *KIM*, vol. 60, 1990.
53. See, for example, 'Perestroika v otrasli: trudnye shagi', *KO*, no. 31, 1987, p. 2.
54. He received 10 000 suggestions: see '*Roman-gazeta* – chitateliam', *KO*, no. 33, 1986, p. 7.
55. See the interview with Ganichev, 'Mozhet li byt' obshchedostupnoi *Roman-gazeta*', *V mire knig*, no. 10, 1989.
56. See *KO*, no. 28, 1988, p. 5.
57. See the letters in *KO*, no. 40, 1989, pp. 3–4; and the commentaries in *KO*, no. 50 , 1989, p. 5 and no. 12, 1990, p. 4.
58. For more detail on the questionnaire results, see S. Shvedov, 'Istoriia odnoi ankety', *LO*, no. 3, 1988, pp. 87–90. For more on the importance of the 'best books' format in 'valorizing the literary', see N. N. Feltes, *Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel*, Madison, Wisc., 1993, esp. ch. 2.
59. The conditioned mindset of the Soviet consumer was epitomized strikingly in a reader's letter of 1990: 'What could be simpler – to saturate the market with a single book that would be interesting for everyone' (*KO*, no. 3, 1990, p. 5). The black market in books (and attendant *defitsit*) still existed as late as March 1991: see V. Kats, 'Knizhnye korobeiniki i statistika', *KO*, no. 24, 1991.
60. The postbag resulting from this list is analyzed by Neia Zorkaia in 'Reverans vpolvorota. Kak po "primernomu spisku" sudit' o real'nom sprose?', *V mire knig*, no. 3, 1988.
61. Shvedov found in his survey that fewer than 2 per cent of readers were in favour of general price increases for books: see *Kniga v sovremennom obshchestve*, p. 53.

62. See O. Latsis, 'Tsena ravnovesiia', *Znamia*, no. 2, 1988. It is interesting that the book trade tended to be in the vanguard of Soviet experiments in economic liberalization. For example, book sales were boosted in Saratov in the mid-1960s using an experiment in self-management: see P. Iachmenev, *Knizhnaia khozraschetnaia firma: peredovoi opyt v potrebitel'skoi kooperatsii Saratovskoi oblasti*, Saratov, 1967.
63. Note, in particular, M. Nenashev, 'Put' k chitateliu – khozraschet i demokratizatsiia', *V mire knig*, no. 5, 1989.
64. On the anomalies of the pricing system in publishing, see P. Karp, 'Chto pochem?', *KO*, no. 14, 1988, pp. 2–3; and I. Stoliarov, 'Knigi i tseny', *KO*, no. 29, 1988, p. 2.
65. For a good overview of the price reforms, see V. Solonenko, 'K tsene ravnovesiia: kak my shli k svobodnym tsenam', *KD*, no. 2, 1992.
66. See A. Govorov, T. Sokratova and N. Chulanova, 'Otkuda berutsia i kuda vozvrashchaiutsia den'gi. O bukinisticheskoi torgovle, "chernom rynke" i dogovornykh tsenakh', *KO*, no. 20, 1989, p. 4.
67. See the interview with E. Kucherova, 'Tseny tronulis'', *KO*, no. 4, 1991, p. 5.
68. In September 1996 the school year began, as is now customary, with a desperate shortage of teaching materials. Of course, there is no lack of textbooks published commercially, but, while they have a substantial market, they are not affordable for large sections of the population. The state has capped pricing on certain types of textbook, but it is unable to provide the necessary subsidies. The debate on state support for socially important areas of publishing has been carried on throughout the 1990s. For reflections on the inadequacy of state policy in this area, see S. Kondratov, 'Komu nuzhny "nemetskie" uchebniki?', *KO*, no. 39, 1993.
69. Note that the number of titles published in the Soviet Union fell between 1978 and 1988 for this very reason: publishers knew that the system would take anything they produced, and so tended not to expend resources on small editions. See Iu. Gorshkov, 'Budushchnost' kooperativnykh izdatel'stv: logika nastoiashchego plius opyt proshlogo', *KIM*, vol. 61, 1990.
70. See B. Kats, 'Knizhnye korobeiniki i statistika', *KO*, no. 24, 1991.
71. See the Goskomizdat resolution 'O vypuske proizvedenii za schet sredstv avtora', *KO*, no. 10, 1989.
72. There were, for example, 262 in the second quarter of 1991: see *KO*, no. 28, 1991, p. 1.
73. See the quarterly publishing statistics that appeared in *KO*: these give the exact number of new 'small state enterprises', 'publishing organizations', joint ventures and fully-fledged private publishing houses (*KO*, no. 28, 1991; no. 2, 1992; no. 14, 1992).
74. See Iu. Sapozhnikov and N. Timofeeva, 'Chto izdaetsia i ne prodaetsia, i naoborot', *KO*, no. 12, 1992, p. 8.
75. For signs of a new, business-orientated approach to publishing, see the specialist journals *Izdatel'-kommersant* (St Petersburg) and *Knizhnoe delo* (Moscow), both of which were set up in 1992; they were later followed by *Knizhnyi biznes* (Moscow).
76. For more detail on the publishing world of 1991–2, see D. Lowe, 'The Book Business in Postcommunist Russia: Moscow, Year One (1992)', *Harriman Institute Forum*, vol. 6, no. 5, 1993, esp. pp. 2–4.

77. Combined print-run fell from 1.76 billion to 1.63 billion in 1988, and 1.31 billion in 1992; the number of titles fell from 46 023 in 1989 to 34 050 in 1991, and 28 716 in 1992 (figures taken from *Sem'ia v Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Moscow, 1994, p. 392).
78. See V. Eremenko, 'Knige ugrozhaet ... rynok', *KO*, no. 41, 1990, (this article describes the Founding Conference of book distributors) and 'Rynok dlia kul'tury – ne blago', *KO*, no. 42, 1990, (an interview with M. Shishigin, the President of the Association of Book-Publishers (ASKI), on the need for state protectionism). ASKI was founded in 1990; its constitution was published in *Knigoizdanie v SSSR: Spravochnik knizhnykh izdatel'stv, izdaiushchikh organizatsii i predpriiatii*, Moscow, 1991.
79. See, for example, O. Proskurin, '"Sovetskii pisatel'" kak zerkalo sovetskoi literatury. Zametki na poliakh tematicheskogo plana', *NG*, 10 January 1992.
80. See *KO*, no. 10, 1992.
81. More detail on this sea-change in the book market is to be found in N. Condee and V. Padunov, 'Perestroika Suicide: Not By *Bred* Alone', *Russian Culture in Transition: Selected Papers of the Working Group for the Study of Contemporary Russian Culture, 1990–1991*, *Stanford Slavic Studies*, vol. 7, 1993, esp. pp. 95–111. The same authors updated their account in 'Proigrannyi rai. Ruletka sotsializma. Rynochnyi determinizm i postmodernizm po obiazatel'noi programme', in N. Azhgikhina (ed.), *Novaia volna: Russkaia kul'tura i subkul'tury na rubezhe 80–90–kh godov*, Moscow, 1994; and 'The ABC of Russian Consumer Culture. Readings, Ratings, and Real Estate', in N. Condee (ed.), *Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia*, Bloomington, Ind. and London, 1995.
82. Quite apart from years of state neglect, libraries were hit particularly hard by *khozraschet* and the following stages of liberalization: see E. Ponomareva, 'Na trudnom puti peremen', *Bibliotekar'*, no. 1, 1990.
83. See V. Stel'makh, 'Na kakom fundamente stroit'? Vzgliad sotsiologa na stereotipy bibliotechnoi ideologii', *Bibliotekar'*, no. 7, 1990.
84. See V. Stel'makh, 'Biblioteka – khram ili masterskaia?', in V. Stel'makh (ed.), *Biblioteka i chtenie: problemy i issledovaniia*, St Petersburg, 1995.
85. For more detail on these questions, see L. Gudkov, B. Dubin and A. Reitblat, 'Preobrazovanie – ne usovershenstvovanie', *Bibliotekar'*, no. 8, 1990.
86. B. Dubin, 'Esli net deneg – daite svobodu', *Bibliotekar'*, no. 10, 1990, p. 7. A striking comparison can be made with 1940, when only 38 per cent of holdings were of the 'mass' type (the proportion of technical literature was then much greater).
87. S. Shvedov, *Kniga v sovremennom obshchestve*, unpublished *referat*, Moscow, 1988, section 2.11, appendix.
88. See V. Chudinova, 'Domashniaia biblioteka i iunyi chitatel' 1980-kh gg.', in N. Efimova (ed.), *Chto my chitaem? Kakie my?*, St Petersburg, 1993.
89. L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, *Literatura kak sotsial'nyi institut*, Moscow, 1994, p. 265.
90. This analysis of the composition of book collections was carried out as part of the research project *Kniga v sovremennom obshchestve*: see section 2.11, appendix.

91. One of the effects of the *defitsit* had been to blur the distinction between readers with secondary and higher education: the threshold of cultural sophistication was located somewhere within the higher education group and separated the cultural elite from the mass intelligentsia (see the earlier remarks on this group in the first section of the chapter).
92. See the articles by M. Smorodinskaia in *Analiz-prognoz*, no. 2, 1990, esp. pp. 13–14, 16, 22.
93. A. Reitblat, 'Biblioteka "dlia sebia" i biblioteka "dlia vsekh": skhodstva i razlichiia', in N. Efimova (ed.), *Chto my chitaem? Kakie my?*, St Petersburg, 1993, p. 50.
94. See Iu. Levada (ed.), *Est' mnenie!*, Moscow, 1990, pp. 131–2.
95. P. Rozhkov, 'Po abonementam za sdannuiu makulaturu', *KO*, no. 2, 1991, p. 14. The works selected for 1991 offered a typical mix of foreign and Soviet classics (Lewis Carroll, Kipling, Babel') along with more recent favourites (Margaret Mitchell, Agatha Christie, Serge and Anne Golon, Dale Carnegie). Even as late as the second half of 1992, some readers were reluctant to accept that the *makulatura* series was doomed: see T. Blazhnova, 'Nasha dama bita. Poluchite li vy "makulaturnye" knigi', *KO*, no. 36, 1992, p. 4.
96. See 'Kul'tura na sotsial'nom perelome', 1992. I am grateful to Boris Dubin for making available to me these unpublished findings of the VTsIOM research programme 'Kul'tura'. Note also the list of the '100 best books' for 1990, published in *KO*, no. 23, 1991, which is dominated by Dumas, Pikul' and other long-standing favourites of the Soviet reading public.
97. For more on the cultural context of Bulgakov's reception in post-Stalin Russia, see S. Lovell, 'Bulgakov as Soviet Culture', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 76, no. 1, 1998.
98. See V. Ialysheva, 'Chitatel'skie interesy v rossiiskoi provintsii: Belgorod', in Efimova (ed.), *Chto my chitaem?*.
99. G. Iakimov, 'Chitatel'skoe povedenie vremen "perestroika"', in V. Stel'makh (ed.), *Biblioteka i chtenie: problemy i issledovaniia*, St Petersburg, 1995, p. 104.
100. For a postitive assessment of Pikul's role as a great popularizer, see N. Khrenov, 'Pravo na zhanr', *KO*, no. 11, 1986, p. 9. V. Oskotskii (the author of more than one scholarly work on Soviet historical fiction) was hostile in 'Stalinizm i natsional'nyi vopros, ili "Solenoe slovtso" Valentina Pikulia', *KO*, no. 23, 1989. Note also the interview with Pikul' in *Nash sovremennik*, no. 2, 1989.
101. The over-ideologized Soviet *detektiv* could not really hope to compete, even though attempts were made to boost it by publishing a thirty-volume series of the classics of the genre: see 'Vnimanie: "Sovetskii detektiv"!', *KO*, no. 38, 1989, p. 6; and 'Net – detektivu?', *KO*, no. 48, 1989, p. 3. Soviet exponents of the genre formed their own 'creative union', whose president, A. Bezuglov, was interviewed in *KO*, no. 28, 1991, p. 3.
102. Readers regularly wrote in to *Knizhnoe obozrenie* to give vent to their frustrations. These letters were subjected to sociological analysis in "Illiuzii i deistvitel'nost'", *LO*, no. 6, 1988, pp. 87–93.
103. See Iakimov, 'Chitatel'skoe povedenie', p. 110.

104. Several such examples are noted by Andrei Nemzer in 'Ob izdatel'skikh delakh: Pis'mo neizvestnomu adresatu', *NG*, 10 October 1992. For evidence of readers' predilection for the multi-volume edition, see M. Smorodinskaia, 'Zhelaemoe i real'noe priobretenie literatury dlia semeinykh sobranii v 1985–1986 gg', *Analiz-prognoz*, no. 2, 1990.
105. The unsatisfied demand for material other than *belletristika* in many regions of the Soviet Union is one of the main 'problems' identified in *Sovremennoe sovetskoe knigoizdanie: Opyt, problemy*, Moscow, 1985.
106. For details of the programme for publication of reference literature and encyclopedias in 1989–90, see *KO*, no. 4, 1988, pp. 8–9. Several of the Goskomizdat resolutions concerning these programmes are listed in *Razvitie demokratizatsii v knigoizdanii*.
107. See the Goskomizdat resolution published in *KO*, no. 36, 1987, 2.
108. It was, for example, in 1990 that sex manuals were first advertised and reviewed approvingly in the central press: see the review of *Seksual'naia udovletvorennost' muzhchin* (Moscow: Meditsina), no. 18, 1990, p. 9. Note also the review of V. Shakhdzhanian's *1001 vopros pro eto* in *KO*, no. 11, 1992, p. 3.
109. See, for example, E. Averin, 'My', *KO*, no. 11, 1991, p. 3.
110. See E. Bakhanov, 'Chto budem chitat'?', *KO*, no. 2, 1991, p. 2.
111. For details of the English 'consumer revolution', see N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, Bloomington, Ind., 1982.
112. See, for example, P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge, 1993, esp. diagram on p. 38.

5 The periodical press: background and case-studies

1. Perhaps the clearest examples of genres that perform this function are fairy tales and children's literature: these are orientated not towards short-term social knowledge but rather towards moral norms and values which need to be deeply internalized.
2. In Soviet times it was, of course, quite common (especially in the glasnost period) for readers to chase after a particular issue of a particular journal because they wanted to gain access to a novel published in it. But this simply shows that Soviet *tolstye zhurnaly* of the late 1980s were losing their primary function and turning into something resembling almanacs.
3. See P. Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929*, Cambridge, 1985.
4. See J. Brooks, 'The Press and Its Message: Images of America in the 1920s and 1930s', in S. Fitzpatrick *et al.* (eds), *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, Bloomington, Ind. and Indianapolis, 1991.
5. J. Brooks, 'Public and Private Values in the Soviet Press, 1921–1928', *Slavic Review*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1989, p. 19.
6. See J. Brooks, 'Competing Modes of Popular Discourse: Individualism and Class Consciousness in the Russian Print Media 1880–1928', in Marc Ferro *et al.* (eds), *Culture et Révolution*, Paris, 1989.

7. Just how and when these foundations were laid is, of course, one of the big questions facing scholarship on the early Soviet period. Caryl Emerson provides a thoughtful statement of the problem in 'New Words, New Epochs, Old Thoughts', *Russian Review*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1996.
8. S. Fitzpatrick, 'Newspapers and Journals', in S. Fitzpatrick and L. Viola (eds), *A Researcher's Guide to Sources on Soviet Social History in the 1930s*, London and New York, 1990.
9. For this reason the profession of journalism had a much lower status in the Soviet Union than it did (and still does) in the West. Working conditions were poor, prospects limited, and the qualifications of matriculants to journalism schools declined steadily. In fact, it is open to debate whether Soviet journalism should be considered a 'profession' at all. For more detail, see T. Remington, 'Politics and Professionalism in Soviet Journalism', *Slavic Review*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1985. The 'professional' credentials of journalism are examined in Morris Janowitz, 'The Journalistic Profession and the Mass Media', in J. Ben-David and T. Nichols Clark (eds), *Culture and its Creators: Essays in honor of Edward Shils*, Chicago, 1975.
10. 'Zhurnalist i chitatel'', *Sovetskaia pechat'*, no. 6, 1956, p. 1.
11. For more on the Soviet press as a means of mass information and propaganda, see B. McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, London, 1991; and J. Murray, *The Russian Press From Brezhnev to Yeltsin*, Aldershot, 1994, esp. ch. 1.
12. See A. Verkhovskaia, *Pis'mo v redaktsiiu i chitatel'*, Moscow, 1972.
13. The seriousness of this discussion was lightened somewhat by the social satire found in the highly successful humour section (on the back page): see A. Vishevsky, *Soviet Literary Culture in the 1970s: The Politics of Irony*, Gainesville, Fla, 1993, esp. pp. 67–70.
14. See I. Fomicheva (gen. ed.), *'Literaturnaia gazeta' i ee auditoriia*, Moscow, 1978. A survey of the late 1960s found that it was precisely the sections on literature that readers found least satisfactory: see *Problemy sotsiologii pechati*, 1970, p. 125. The 'specialist' articles cohabited with rubrics that implied an audience more *massovaia intelligentsiia* than literary elite: for the telling example of the section on *kul'tura rechi*, see D. Christians, *Die Sprachrubrik der Literaturnaja Gazeta von 1964 bis 1978*, Munich, 1983.
15. Lenin himself encouraged this kind of feedback; perhaps this is connected to the fact that his sister worked in the letters department of *Pravda*. Mikhail Nenashev relates that during his editorship at *Sovetskaia Rossiia* a sociological service was set up to monitor readers' letters; 30 000 of these were received in 1978, rising to 200 000 in 1986 (see M. Nenashev, *An Ideal Betrayed: Testimonies of a Prominent and Loyal Member of the Soviet Establishment*, London, 1995, p. 54).
16. For a good account of one part of the Soviet 'system' of journalism, see *Raionnaia gazeta v sisteme zhurnalistiki*, Moscow, 1977. This study concludes that more vigorous efforts must be made to stimulate active contact between the local newspaper and its readers. For a detailed description of the 'attentive' approach to readers' letters required of Soviet journalists, see, for example, N. Bogdanov and V. Viazemskii, *Spravochnik zhurnalista*, Leningrad, 1965, pp. 266–81.

17. For more on this, see M. Mommsen, *Hilf mir, mein Recht zu finden: Russische Bittschriften Von Iwan dem Schrecklichen bis Gorbatschow*, Frankfurt am Main, 1987.
18. For more on *obshchestvennye korrespondenty*, see *Raionnaia gazeta*, pp. 202–17. This study found that over a third of articles on local life were written by *neshtatnye avtory*; the authors argued that greater prominence should be given to 'ordinary readers'.
19. For an analysis of the *rabsel'kor* movement as an attempt to bridge the communication gap between intelligentsia and *narod*, see Michael S. Gorham, 'Tongue-tied Writers: The *Rabsel'kor* Movement and the Voice of the "New Intelligentsia" in Early Soviet Russia', *Russian Review*, vol. 55, no. 3, 1996. One very interesting source on readers' letters in the same period is the archive of *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, which actively encouraged readers to write in with their memories of the Revolution and civil war as part of a general campaign in the mid-1920s to form and mobilize a collective past. For a sample of the letters to *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, see *Golos naroda: Pis'ma i otkliki riadovykh sovetskikh grazhdan o sobytiiakh 1918–1932 gg.*, Moscow, 1998. The *rabsel'kor* movement experienced a renaissance in the climate of civic activism in the 1960s: these 'worker'-journalists (who were often in reality *intelligenty*) would arrive in a particular organization without warning and carry out a spot-check (*reid*).
20. See A. I. Verkhovskaia, 'Osobennosti redaktsionnoi pochty mestnykh izdanii', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta, seriia 10, Zhurnalistika*, no. 5, 1985.
21. See *Massovaia informatsiia v sovetskom promyshlennom gorode*, Moscow, 1980.
22. Note also the findings by sociologists in the Belorus' SSR in the 1980s which showed that 12 per cent of the population of the republic had written to the press, television or radio: see *Effektivnost' sredstv massovoi informatsii*, Minsk, 1986, p. 73.
23. See A. I. Verkhovskaia, 'Obshchestvennye sviazi zhurnalistiki v usloviiakh preobrazovaniia obshchestva', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta, seriia 10, Zhurnalistika*, no. 2, 1991. Similar conclusions may be drawn from J. Riordan and S. Bridger, *Dear Comrade Editor*, Bloomington, Ind., 1992.
24. L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Zhurnal'naia struktura i sotsial'nye protsessy' (1988), in their *Literatura kak sotsial'nyi institut*, Moscow, 1994, p. 297. Much of the subsequent information on Soviet magazines before glasnost is taken from this article, which was the first thorough piece of research on the subject.
25. Note, for example, the memoirs of Konstantin Simonov, who describes how much attention Stalin gave to the literary journals in the late 1940s (when Simonov was editor of *Novyi mir*): see 'Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia', *Znamia*, no. 3, 1988, esp. pp. 53–66. Also highly revealing is Denis Babichenko's collection of documents, *'Literaturnyi front': Istoriia politicheskoi tsenzury v SSSR. 1932–1946 gg.*, Moscow, 1994.
26. The best-known example is *Novyi mir*: see E. R. Frankel, *Novy Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature 1952–58*, Cambridge, 1981; and D. R. Spechler, *Permitted Dissent in the USSR.* Novy mir *and the Soviet Regime*, New York, 1982; a good overview of the journals and their institutional context is provided by Geoffrey Hosking in 'The Institutionalisation of Soviet Literature', in G. A. Hosking and G. F. Cushing (eds), *Perspectives on Literature and Society in Eastern and Western Europe*, London, 1989.

27. For a more detailed account of these changes, see I. D. Fomicheva, *Pechat', televidenie i radio v zhizni sovetskogo cheloveka*, Moscow, 1987, esp. pp. 75–95.
28. Note especially the Novosibirsk project run by Vladimir Shlapentokh in the late 1960s.
29. See E. Mickiewicz, *Media and the Russian Public*, New York, 1981, esp. pp. 58–67; and E. Mickiewicz, 'Political Communication and the Soviet Mass Media', in J. L. Nogee (ed.), *Soviet Politics: Russia after Brezhnev*, New York and London, 1985.
30. On the pioneering *Krasnaia nov'*, see R. Maguire, Red Virgin Soil: *Soviet Literature in the 1920's*, Princeton, NJ, 1968.
31. This is the approach taken by Vail' and Genis in their *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka*, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1988.
32. On the cultural importance of this form of periodical in the late 1980s, see A. Marchenko, 'Al'manakhi i vokrug', *Znamia*, no. 2, 1990.
33. E. Starikova, 'Kniga o dobre i zle, ili Smert' Ivana Il'icha', *NM*, no. 12, 1987, p. 216.
34. For more on this, see R. Marsh, 'The Death of Soviet Literature: Can Russian Literature Survive?', *Europe–Asia Studies*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1993, esp. pp. 130–2.
35. See L. Gudkov, 'Konets zhurnal'nogo buma. Popytka diagnoza', *LG*, no. 1, 1991.
36. Alla Latynina commented perceptively on the polemical blindness of some sections of the intelligentsia: see her articles 'Kolokol'nyi zvon – ne molitva', *NM*, no. 8, 1988; and 'Vremia razbirat' barrikady', *NM*, no. 1, 1992.
37. On the intelligentsia's discourse of crisis, see two articles by Katerina Clark: 'Not for Sale. The Russian/Soviet Intelligentsia, Prostitution, and the Paradox of Internal Colonization', *Stanford Slavic Studies*, vol. 7, 1993; and 'Granitsy, perestanovki i perelitsovki: Russkaia intelligentsiia v "postperestroechnyi period"', in N. Azhgikhina (ed.), *Novaia volna: Russkaia kul'tura i subkul'tury na rubezhe 80–90-kh godov*, Moscow, 1994.
38. Gudkov and Dubin estimate that there were over seventy articles on the intelligentsia just in the central press from Spring 1992 to Spring 1993: see their 'Konets kharizmaticheskoi epokhi. Pechat' i izmeneniia v sistemakh tsennostei obshchestva' in *Svobodnaia mysl'*, no. 5, March 1993, p. 41.
39. See, for example, 'Est' li u *Znameni* budushchee?', *Znamia*, no. 1, 1997.
40. See L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Parallel'nye literatury. Popytka sotsiologicheskogo opisaniia', *Rodnik*, no. 12, 1989.
41. B. Dubin. 'Zhurnal'naia kul'tura postsovetskoi epokhi', *NLO*, no. 4, 1993.
42. See A. Chernyshev, 'La Réflexion mythologique en Union Soviétique 1985–1991: La Perestroika comme "Travail sur le mythe"', *Revue des Etudes slaves*, vol. 65, 1993.
43. M. Iampol'skii, 'Vina – pokaian'e – donos', *Stanford Slavic Studies*, vol. 7, 1993.
44. Note also Aleksandr Genis's remark, 'Are we not confusing the death of our culture with the Day of Judgment?' in 'Vzgliad iz tupika', *Og*, no. 52, 1990. Similar is S. Dovlatov, 'Literatura v opasnosti – eto normal'no', *LG*, no. 33, 1990.
45. L. Gudkov and B. Dubin. 'Bez napriazheniia... Zametki o kul'ture perekhodnogo perioda', *NM*, no. 2, 1993.

46. L. Gudkov and B. Dubin. 'Ideologiia besstrukturnosti (Intelligentsiia i konets sovetskoi epokhi)', *Znamia*, no. 11, 1994.
47. A further meaningful comparison can be made with the post-Stalin Thaw: the years 1955–6 saw the establishment of *Iunost'*, *Molodaia gvardiia* and *Neva*.
48. See L. Gudkov and B. Dubin, 'Zhurnal'naia struktura i sotsial'nye protsessy', in their *Literatura kak sotsial'nyi institut*, Moscow, 1994.
49. This definition is adapted from A. Suetnov's in *Samizdat*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1992, p. 6.
50. For a good description and interpretation of these developments, see 'Regime and Opposition in the Pre-political Period', ch. 2, in M. Urban with V. Igrunov and S. Mitrokhin, *The Rebirth of Politics in Russia*, Cambridge, 1997.
51. Quoted in M. Meerson-Aksenov, B. Shragin (eds), *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian 'Samizdat' – An Anthology*, Belmont, Mass., 1977, pp. 37–8.
52. In 1989 the bibliographer Aleksandr Suetnov was able to list 1500 periodicals belonging to the 'informal press': see A. Suetnov, 'Samizdat. Novyi istochnik bibliografirovaniia', *Sovetskaia bibliografiia*, no. 2, 1989. Note also Elena Zhemkova's detailed catalogue of the Bremen-based samizdat collection: *Novaia periodika i samizdat na territorii sovetskogo soiuza 1987–1991*, Bremen, 1992.
53. Suetnov, *Samizdat*, p. 10.
54. On Siberia, see M. Bogdanova, *Samizdat i politicheskie organizatsii Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka*, Moscow, 1991.
55. This is a translation of *zhurnaly* in Russian: it really means both magazines and journals.
56. All statistics taken from the booklet *Pechat' Rossiiskoi Federatsii* for 1991 and 1992.
57. Here it is worth mentioning in particular the small literary journals and almanacs whose number increased greatly in 1991–2: see for example the rubric 'Novye zhurnaly' in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, where reviews of the new journals have appeared from 1993.
58. A collection of articles from this period came out in English: V. Korotich and C. Porter (eds), *The Best of Ogonyok*, London, 1990. Korotich was also widely interviewed at this time: for example, in *The Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1989, pp. 357–62. John Garrard gives a slightly later account of *Ogonek*'s vigorous social involvement in 'The Challenge of Glasnost: *Ogonek*'s Handling of Russian Antisemitism', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1991, pp. 228–50.
59. Feliks Medvedev, *Tsena prozreniia*, Moscow, 1990, p. 4.
60. B. Dubin, 'Zhurnal'naia kul'tura postsovetskoi epokhi', p. 305.
61. George Vachnadze goes so far as to say that magazines such as *Ogonek* 'in any normal society would simply not be able to exist ... *Ogonyok* is a lightweight black-and-white magazine ... Exposes of the excesses of Stalin's days have won it millions of readers. Eventually they started criticizing the whole of the pre-Gorbachev era. But the general details of such events are well-known, and all these discoveries and goings-on belong to the past. Given the lack of normal school textbooks in the country, *Ogonyok* makes ideal reading for students (and teachers) of history, sociology and litera-

ture'; see his *Secrets of Journalism in Russia: Mass Media Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*, New York, 1992, p. 114.

62. 'Ia dobren'kim byt' ne mogu', *Og*, no. 31, 1986.
63. See A. Arkhangel'skii, 'Mezhdu svobodoi i ravenstvom', *NM*, no. 2, 1991, pp. 225–41.
64. Cathy Porter declares that 'it is this haphazardness which makes *Ogonyok* so exciting, as though pieces were simply pouring in, unable to wait for the "right" time to be printed' (*The Best of Ogonyok*, p. 3). Irina Murav'eva, writing about the *Ogonek* of 1988, chose rather to point out its bittiness, inconsistency and unwillingness to take ideas to their logical conclusions ('Chad obnovlennogo *Ogon'ka*', *Kontinent*, vol. 59, 1989, pp. 415–30).
65. Korotich gave details on his letter-publishing policy in an interview with John Murray in September 1988: 'we have two aims: first of all we make a point of publishing purely controversial, problematic letters; secondly, we print letters from Stalinists, from people whom we consider dangerous'. He also confessed that 'At the moment we rely on letters we receive to tell us who our public is ... we get a lot of mail' (John Murray, *The Russian Press from Brezhnev to Yeltsin*, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 176–7).
66. See I. Commeau Rufin (ed.), *Lettres des Profondeurs de l'U.R.S.S. Le Courrier de Lecteurs d'Ogoniok (1987–89)*, Paris, 1989.
67. See 'Pis'ma na kontrole', *Og*, no. 32, 1986.
68. The number of letters received annually rose steadily from 15 372 in 1986 to 153 894 in 1989. Subscriptions shot up from 561 415 in 1987 to 4 454 573 at the start of 1990 (restrictions on subscription had been removed in 1989). (All statistics taken from *Ogonek*, no. 1, 1990, p. 4.)
69. Vitalii Korotich quoted in Murray, *The Russian Press*, p. 176.
70. Viktor Perel'man, giving (by émigré standards) a sympathetic account of the new *Ogonek*, drew attention to the conflict he saw about to emerge in Soviet society (see 'Esse o govoriashchei Rossii', *Vremia i my*, vol. 99, 1987, pp. 152–62). Even the insider Feliks Medvedev had to admit (in 1990) that 'perestroika has not only consolidated society but also in some way broken it up and created divisions' (*Tsena prozreniia*, p. 17).
71. See Arkhangel'skii, 'Mezhdu svobodoi i ravenstvom', p. 228.
72. See, for example; N. Il'ina, 'Zdravstvui, plemia mladoe, neznakomoe ...' (no. 2, 1988); S. Rassadin, '... Vse razresheno?' (no. 13, 1988) and 'Vse podelit'?' (no. 20, 1988); B. Sarnov, 'Kakogo rosta byl Maiakovskii' (no. 19, 1988) and 'O "molchal'nikakh" i "pervykh uchenikakh"' (no. 16, 1989).
73. See the articles 'Chem pakhnet tormoznaia zhidkost'?' (no. 11, 1988) and 'Perekhod cherez boloto' (no. 25, 1988). It should be noted that Ivanova sensed the imminent crisis of *shestidesiatnichestvo* earlier than most; she threw her weight behind the radical cause in *Ogonek* while the polemics were at their most intense, and then, in the 1990s, withdrew to the *tolstye zhurnaly* (she is currently an editor of *Znamia*).
74. Examples include: 'Verit' samim sebe' (no. 45, 1986), 'Peredai dal'she' (no. 7, 1987), 'Nuzhnee vsego – garantii' (no. 21, 1987), 'Otkrovennost' za otkrovennost'' (no. 46, 1987); and 'Na ch'ei storone uspekh' (no. 8, 1988).
75. W. B. Lerg, M. Ravenstein and S. Schiller-Lerg, *Sowjetische Publizistik zwischen Öffnung und Umgestaltung. Die Medien im Zeichen von Glasnost und Perestroika*, Munster, 1991, pp. 150–71.

76. The name echoes Nina Andreeva, author of the infamous 'Ne mogu postupat'sia printsipami', *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 13 March 1988.
77. The harm done by the state monopoly on paper and printing is analyzed by Lev Gudkov in 'Krepostnaia pechat'', *Og*, no. 19, 1990.
78. An editorial averred that 'just like during the anti-alcohol campaign, when the people started drinking surrogates, it will now start reading surrogates. And the harm done will be greater' (no. 33, 1990, p. 7).
79. See J. Murray, *The Russian Press*, p. 75.
80. See no. 36, 1990, p. 3.
81. See no. 37, 1990, p. 5.
82. 'Korotich govoria: *Ogonek* – ek?', *Stolitsa*, no. 41–2, 1991, pp. 67–74.
83. A number of materials in *Ogonek* over 1992–3 were to discuss the intelligentsia's loss of cultural hegemony. Note, in particular, L. Anninskii, 'Bez nas, bez nas!', no. 11, 1993; N. Azhgikhina, 'Kul'tura v smutnoe vremia', no. 29–30, 1992; and the same writer's 'Sumerki zhanra', no. 19–20, 1993.
84. B. Dubin, 'Dinamika pechati i transformatsiia obshchestva', *Voprosy literatury*, no. 5, 1991, p. 93.
85. Murray, *The Russian Press*, p. 76.
86. Ibid.
87. Despite the state support it was receiving, *Pravda* faced ruin in 1992, but was rescued in truly remarkable fashion. In September 1992 the editor of the newspaper, Gennadii Seleznev (subsequently President of the State Duma and prominent member of the Russian Communist Party) sold *Pravda* to a family of Greek businessmen. The agreement he signed remained secret until July 1996, when the Greeks began to exercise their rights, as owners, to dictate editorial policy. The result was a messy conflict that went to arbitration in the Palace of Justice (see A. Politkovskaia, 'Delo o *Pravde* obrastaet sensatsionnymi podrobnostiami', *Obshchaia gazeta*, no. 37, 1996.)
88. For a good summary of developments across the journal press, see B. Dubin, 'Zhurnal'naia kul'tura postsovetskoi epokhi', *NLO*, no. 4, 1993.
89. One of Starkov's particularly astute ideas was to bring out several monthly or bimonthly 'supplements' with advice on practical questions such as family life, management of personal finances, taxes and etiquette.
90. See B. Dubin, 'Dinamika pechati'.
91. The complexity of audiences has been noted by F. A. Biocca: 'what is occurring is the breakdown of the *referent* for the word audience in communication research from both the humanities and the social sciences' (quoted in D. McQuail, *Audience Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, Calif. and London, 1997, p. 2). For an account of the problematic relationship between cultural studies and audience analysis, see N. Stevenson, *Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and Mass Communication*, London, 1995, ch. 3. For more on the practical difficulties associated with readership research, see B. Allt, 'Reading and "Readership" – Can the Correlation Be Improved?', in H. Henry (ed.), *Readership Research: Theory and Practice*, London, 1982; and G. Consterdine, *Readership Research and the Planning of Press Schedules*, Aldershot, 1988.
92. Typical of this effort to mobilize the reading public was the public discussion of legislative change that was orchestrated in many Soviet newspapers: see *Kampaniia po vsenarodnomu obsuzhdeniiu v pechati zakonoproektov: Opyt primeneniia kontent-analiza*, Moscow, 1990.

93. I. Fomicheva, *Pechat', televidenie i radio v zhizni sovetskogo cheloveka*, Moscow, 1987, p. 89.
94. For an instructive application of the concept of 'structure' to the Soviet system, see Urban, *The Rebirth of Politics in Russia*, esp. ch. 1.

6 Reading in Post-Soviet Russia

1. Printing costs, taken as a proportion of retail prices, were unusually high in Russia at this time (typically in the range 40–60 per cent): see D. Lowe, 'The Book Business in Postcommunist Russia: Moscow, Year One (1992)', *Harriman Institute Forum*, vol. 6, no. 5, 1993, p. 1.
2. See the round-table for representatives of the publishing business, 'Kniga i rynok', *KO*, no. 20, 1992, pp. 2–3.
3. These difficulties were faced even by one of the most successful private publishers: see '*Terra* – ne inkognito', *KO*, no. 26, 1995, p. 11.
4. See *KD*, no. 21, 1993, p. 9.
5. See M. Morozovskii, 'Rynok khudozhestvennoi literatury', *KD*, no. 6, 1994, p. 10.
6. See Iu. Sapozhnikov and N. Timofeeva, 'Tseny – vyshe, knig – men'she', *KO*, no. 23, 1992. The same authors subsequently reported that, as of 1 July 1992, state publishers had delivered less than 10 per cent of the books included in their *templany* for 1992: see 'Rost tsen – ugroza chteniiu. Kon"iunkturnyi obzor knizhnogo rynka', *KO*, no. 35, 1992.
7. See, for example, the interviews with Iurii Sapozhnikov in *KD*, no. 2, 1992 and no. 2, 1993.
8. For a case in point, see I. Lazarev, 'Proiden put' ot lotka do uvazhaemogo izdatel'stva', *KO*, no. 44, 1992, p. 5.
9. Typical is 'Chto kupit'? Gde prodat'? Knizhnyi rynok v Rossii', *KO*, no. 8, 1993, p. 5.
10. L. Kazarinova, 'Knigoizdanie v rossiiskoi provintsii (na primere Sibiri)', *KD*, no. 2, 1992.
11. M. Morozovskii, 'Roznichnaia knizhnaia torgovlia: Popytka klassifikatsii', *KD*, no. 2, 1993.
12. See A. Gorbunov, 'Poslednii direktor "Mosknigi"', *KD*, no. 1, 1993.
13. See the decree of 1 October 1994, 'O privatizatsii izdatel'stv, poligraficheskikh predpriiatii i predpriiatii optovoi knizhnoi torgovli komiteta Rossiiskoi Federatsii po pechati' (full text in *Federal'nye zakony Rossiiskoi Federatsii, normativnye akty i dokumenty, reglamentiruiushchie deiatel'nost' sredstv massovoi informatsii v Rossii*, Moscow, 1996).
14. Iu. Kostylev, 'Seminar knigotorgovtsev: Budut li prodavat' knigi v knizhnykh magazinakh?', *KD*, no. 2, 1993.
15. See P. Kaufman and G. Uspenskii, 'Knizhnoe piratstvo v Rossii: vzgliad izvne', *KO*, no. 8, 1993. Note also A. Korzhenevskii, 'Vorovstvo v izdatel'skom dome', *KO*, no. 13, 1993. On copyright, see E. Gavrilov, *Izdatel'stvo i avtor: Voprosy i otvety po avtorskomu pravu*, Moscow, 1991; and A. Sergeev, *Avtorskoe pravo Rossii*, St Petersburg, 1994.
16. See A. Reitblat, 'Optovye tseny na knigi v Moskve na knizhnoi iarmarke v sportkomplekse "Olimpiiskii"', *KD*, no. 21, 1993.
17. Compare, for example, *KO*, no. 29, 1992 with *KO*, no. 46, 1992.

18. V. Gorbacheva, 'Knizhnyi rynok i chitatel'skie interesy v Rossii 90-kh gg.', unpublished *kandidatskaia dissertatsiia* (*avtoreferat*), Moscow, 1995, p. 1.
19. These are, for example, the findings of a survey of customers in the bookshop Moskva on Tverskaia Street in Moscow: for 77 per cent of respondents the publisher was not a factor when selecting a book; 61 per cent derived their information from the shop itself (results presented at Conference 'Rossiiskaia pressa '96', Moscow, 1 November 1996).
20. *KD*, no. 1, 1992, p. 10.
21. In 1992, Margaret Mitchell's novel and the sequel to it written by Alexandra Ripley proved the greatest success story of post-Soviet publishing. The key to the broad appeal of *Gone with the Wind* was that it cut across accepted generic boundaries – it had something of the *zhenskii roman*, the *prikliuchencheskii roman*, and the historical epic. It could therefore be read by men *and* women, the educated elite *and* the lower strata of the *massovaia intelligentsiia* (see Iu. Maisuradze, 'Cheiz na noch'. Analiticheskii obzor rynka khudozhestvennoi literatury', *KO*, no. 30 1993, 30; and S. Plotnikov, 'Chtenie v Rossii', *KO*, no. 40, 1993.)
22. See, for example, the 'khit-parad izdavaemosti' in *KO*, no. 34, 1992, p. 2.
23. See B. Lenskii, 'Knigoizdanie v sisteme knizhnogo dela', *KIM*, vol. 71, 1995, p. 8. In October 1998, K. M. Sukhorukov of the Russian Book Chamber stated that over 10 000 publishers were now registered in Moscow, but that only around 3000 of them were active (Paper presented at 'Seminar on the Russian Book Scene', State Public Historical Library, Moscow, 1–5 October 1998; I am indebted to Gregory Walker for details of Sukhorukov's presentation).
24. A recent dissertation on post-Soviet book advertising found that books are generally marketed by genre rather than by author or by any other more specific criterion. Thus, for many publishers the prime task was to establish a *seriia* that would be regarded by readers as a reliable source of romantic fiction, detective novels, or some other category of reading matter (see O. G. Kozhakhmetova, 'Sovremennaia knigoizdatel'skaia reklama v Rossii', Moscow, 1996). The bestseller lists in *Knizhnyi biznes* in the mid-1990s suggest that this strategy often paid off: many of the leading fiction titles were published as part of *serii*.
25. This series was advertised in *KO*, no. 21, 1995, p. 16. For many other examples, consult the section 'Signal'nye ekzempliary' in *KO*.
26. See *KO*, no. 29, 1992, p. 1. Similar is Iu. Riurikov, 'Vselennaia liubvi (Izdatel'skii proekt biblioteki mirovoi liubovnoi literatury)': this series aimed to restore civilized norms of behaviour between the sexes (*kul'tura liubvi*).
27. See *KO*, no. 44, 1992, p. 10. Note also 'Ot detektiva do klassiki', *KO*, no. 3, 1993.
28. See *KO*, no. 50, 1992, p. 1.
29. *KO*, no. 45, 1992, p. 5.
30. At the end of 1992 the association (*tovarishchestvo*) 'Otechestvo' tried to redress the balance by announcing a 20-volume series 'Russkii syshchik', and an 18-volume 'Russkie prikliucheniia': see *KO*, no. 52, 1992, p. 1.
31. See M. Morozovskii, 'Rynok khudozhestvennoi literatury', *KD*, no. 6, 1994.

32. For a review of Dotsenko's novel which also contains interesting reflections on the specificity of Russian popular fiction, see Iu. Latynina, 'Ot Ivana-duraka k Saveliiu Govorkovu', *KO*, no. 23, 1995. Dotsenko was in fact the only Russian writer whose works attained a print-run of one million in 1995 (Dumas remained the overall 'chempion izdavaemosti' with 1 920 000 copies): see *KO*, no. 2, 1996, p. 3.
33. See D. Stakhov, 'Kakim ty budesh', miloe ditia?', *NM*, no. 7, 1995.
34. The reference is to the Ninth Moscow International Book Fair held in September 1995.
35. The peculiarity (to a Western European or North American sensibility) of Russians' response to mass culture may further be illustrated by research into the reception of a James Bond *film*. A group of students in Barnaul, having recently viewed *Goldeneye*, were found to value the 'purposefulness' (*tseleustremlennost'*), 'single-mindedness' (*tselenapravlennost'*), and above all the 'professionalism' of the film's heroes (see S. A. Ushakin and L. G. Blednova, 'Dzheims Bond kak Pavka Korchagin', *SI*, no. 12, 1997).
36. See B. Dubin, 'Ispytanie na sostoiatel'nost': K sotsiologicheskoi poetike russkogo romana-boevika', *NLO*, no. 22, 1996. Anthony Olcott has similarly identified in the post-Soviet *detektiv* a 'lingering conviction that a good person serves some entity larger than himself' ('Crime and Punishment for a New Russia', *Transitions*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1998, p. 63.
37. R. Arbitman, 'Terapiia doktora Khichkoka. Rasskaziki ne dlia slabonervnykh', *NG*, 29 July 1992. Arbitman has written extensively on the genres of popular fiction. In this analysis of the crime novel he concludes wittily that 'crimes "by the Hitchcock book" are only possible in a prosperous, well-arranged world which has no knowedge of our idiotic problems'. This is a world, he adds, where you can murder your spouse safe in the knowledge that the state will not then expropriate your savings, dacha or living space. Arbitman later analyzed the Russian reception of the novels of Harold Robbins after their first Russian publication in 1992 (see *NG*, 14 November 1992). For his lengthier reflections on the post-Soviet thriller, see 'Dolgoe proshchanie s serzhantom militsii (Sovremennyi rossiiskii detektiv: izdatel' protiv chitatelia)', *Znamia*, no. 7, 1995.
38. The author, one V. Kulikov, was featured in *KO*, no. 21, 1995, p. 22. His book was entitled *Ubiistvo List'eva* and published by Prometei with an initial print run of 30 000.
39. See 'Formula uspekha', *KO*, no. 4, 1996, p. 6. For more on the crime-writing genre, see Iu. Nikonychev, 'Kriminal'nyi realizm, ili Novye "avtoritety" sovremennoi literatury', *NKO*, no. 15, 1996. Another highly successful exponent of the post-Soviet crime novel is Alexandra Marinina, who has sold 6 million copies since 1991: see the profile of Marinina in *the Guardian*, 14 November 1997, section 2, p. 25.
40. See B. Sokolov, 'Chechenskii skvernyi detektiv', *NKO*, no. 15, 1996.
41. For more detail on this question, see Aleksandr Arkhangel'skii, 'Gei, slaviane!', *NM*, no. 7, 1995, pp. 213–24.
42. Russian publishers certainly understood the importance of presentation (bright covers, large print, standard short length): see T. Mikhailova, 'Rokovye strasti Sandry Braun', *KO*, no. 3, 1996, p. 23.

43. The demand for this type of literature can be surmised from the high prices attached to the genre of '*sentimental'nyi roman*': see, for example, the rubric 'Na lotkakh Moskvy' in *KO*, first half of 1993.
44. See Oksana Bocharova, 'Formula zhenskogo schast'ia: Zametki o zhenskom liubovnom romane', *NLO*, no. 22, 1996. For more general treatments of the social significance and function of romantic function, see J. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1984; and T. Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance: Mass-produced Fantasies for Women*, New York, 1992.
45. See A. Reitblat, 'Dvizhenie v pravil'nom napravlenii uzhe nachalos' ...', *KD*, no. 1, 1994.
46. M. Morozovskii, 'Rynok khudozhestvennoi literatury', *KD*, no. 6, 1994.
47. See *KD*, no. 4, 1993, p. 7.
48. Note also the conclusions of Gorbacheva, who considers the most important categories of books in the mid-1990s to be reference works and encyclopedias, books offering professional training (*delovaia literatura*) and children's/educational books.
49. Nina Timofeeva, 'Knizhnyi rynok: sostoianie, otsenki, prognoz', *KD*, no. 2, 1992.
50. See, for example, the resolution of 28 September 1989 'O Vsesoiuznoi programme vypuska iuridicheskoi literatury po obespecheniiu pravovogo vseobucha v strane (1990–1995 gg.)' (text in *Knigoizdanie: Praktika khoziaistvovaniia. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, Moscow, 1990).
51. In late 1992, for example, *Knizhnoe obozrenie* published a list of nearly a hundred new titles on marketing and management that had appeared in the previous year and a half.
52. Note, for example, the rouble billionaire Sergei Fedorov, whose publications (all based in Samara) had a total monthly circulation of 2 million in 1996: see A. Nivat, 'A Publishing Empire in Russia's Heartland', *Transition*, 18 October 1996, p. 68.
53. For more detail, see Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Gender, Manners and Morals from Catherine to Yeltsin* (forthcoming).
54. See F. Wigzell, *Reading Russian Fortunes: Print Culture, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765*, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 175–83. The category of philosophy/religion/occult topped the Moscow non-fiction lists in 1996.
55. See S. Kondratov, 'Komu nuzhny "nemetskie" uchebniki?', *KO*, no. 39, 1993.
56. See V. Gorbacheva, *Knizhnyi rynok i chitatel'skie interesy v Rossii 90-kh gg.*, Moscow, 1995.
57. M. Morozovskii, 'Lidery i autsaidery: analiz kotirovok 1996 goda', *Knizhnyi biznes*, no. 1, 1997, p. 22.
58. Boris Dubin, 'Massovye kommunikatsii: sdvigi v obshchestvennykh predpochteniiakh', *Informatsionnyi biulleten' monitoringa*, no. 5, 1994, pp. 26–8. Dubin's findings are based on surveys carried out by VTsIOM between October 1993 and May 1994. These surveys seek to establish the attitude of Russians to the mass media. Dubin's conclusions on genre preferences are stated more elaborately (with graphs) in 'Chto chitaiut rossiiane?', *KO*, no. 11, 1994.
59. These are the conclusions drawn by Jacob Kaltenbach in his case study of Tula, 'The Regionalisation of Literary Life: Contemporary Reading, Writing

and Publishing in a Russian Province', paper presented at the BASEES conference, Cambridge, April 1998.

60. See K. M. Sukhorukov, paper presented at 'Seminar on the Russian Book Scene'.
61. See E. Dzhaginova, 'Povsednevnaia zhizn' Rossii: 1990–1994 gg.', *Informatsionnyi biulleten' monitoringa*, no. 5, 1994, p. 29. These results are based on the survey 'Sotsial'naia aktivnost' i potreblenie' carried out by VTsIOM in 1990 and 1994.
62. Vachnadze reports that Korotich faxed a letter of resignation from New York, giving his reasons as 'failing health and his intention to devote himself to lecturing in US universities' (*Secrets of Journalism in Russia*, p. 125).
63. On *Ogonek*'s financial crisis and the effects of the 'New Economic Policy' of 1992 on post-Soviet culture, see N. Condee and V. Padunov, 'The ABC of Russian Consumer Culture', in N. Condee (ed.), *Soviet Hieroglyphics*, pp. 130–72.
64. This rubric first appeared in no. 6, 1992 (the theme of the first column was, significantly, 'Bestsellers Soviet style') and was still going strong in 1995.
65. See 'K nashei vkladke', no. 38–9, 1992, p. 1 of inserted section.
66. See 'Chitateliu – chitatelevo', nos. 38–9 and 42–3, 1992.
67. 1992, no. 38–9, p. 3.
68. All statistics taken from the statistical booklet *Pechat' Rossiiskoi Federatsii*. The figures need to be qualified – by 1993 there were surely hundreds of periodicals that did not make their existence known to the Russian Book Chamber, which put out the booklets – but they are nevertheless acceptably representative of general trends.
69. See Dubin, 'Zhurnal'naia kul'tura', p. 305.
70. See Boris Minaev, 'Prosto Ma, ili Kak zakalialas' Madam de Stal'', no. 17–18, 1994, p. 28.
71. One example is a picture in the rubric 'Stop-kadr' which shows an effusive Rostropovich rushing to embrace a bemused Gaidar (no. 1993, 2).
72. On the eve of the First World War *Ogonek* was the popular weekly with the highest circulation in Russia (see Jeffrey Brooks, 'Popular Philistinism and the Course of Russian Modernism', in G. S. Morson (ed.), *Literature and History. Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*, Stanford, 1986, p. 106).
73. 'S Astaf'evym v Ovsianke – i ne tol'ko tam', no. 25–6, 1993, pp. 20–1. In this issue Astaf'ev is featured as the special theme: a whole seven pages are devoted to him.
74. For more detail on the demise of *Stolitsa*, see V. Matizen, 'Gazetnye istorii', *Ogonek*, no. 25, 1995 Andrei Mal'gin was granted the right of reply in no. 31, 1995.
75. See the interview with the reclusive Iakovlev in *Litsa*, March 1996, p. 11.
76. Interview with D. Stakhov, Moscow, 1 September 1995. *Ogonek*'s backers prefer to remain anonymous.
77. Interview with A. Orlov, Moscow, 1 September 1995.
78. L. Gushchin, 'Takaia strana, kak Rossiia, dolzhna imet' takoi zhurnal, kak *Ogonek*', no. 4, 1995.
79. See 'Nepodsudnyi Astaf'ev', no. 18, 1995, pp. 30–2.

80. Stakhov assured me that this interview had been selected because of Mailer's, rather than Madonna's, participation.
81. Interview, Moscow, 6 September 1995.
82. *Ogonek* began to run adverts on the back cover from 1991. But this advertising was apparently not directed at the mass reader: it was rather concerned with 'self-promotion to the esoteric networks of the new post-Soviet entrepreneurs and their peculiar systems of prestige and hierarchy' (Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*, Cambridge Mass., 1994, p. 278).
83. Details provided by Ol'ga Pavlova, Manager of the Advertising Department, Moscow, 7 September 1995.
84. See Lev Gushchin, 'Peremeny, kotorye raduiut', no. 26, 1995.
85. See, for example, the letters column of no. 19, 1995, p. 8.
86. Arguments on the middle class in post-Soviet Russia are laid out in the articles of Ol'ga Kryshtanovskaia (head of department of Elite Studies at the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences); for example, 'Is There a Middle Class?', *The Moscow Times*, 15 August 1995, p. 10.
87. The *Biulleten' gil'dii rasprostranitelei pechatnoi produktsii v Rossii* is a good source on the newly-appearing magazines (for example, the first issue published in *KO*, no. 5, 1995). The yearbook produced by Soiuzpechat', *Annotirovannyi katalog rossiiskikh periodicheskikh izdanii*, while far from complete, is also useful. A witty and informative commentary on the new magazine culture is to be found in V. Kuritsyn, 'Novye tolstye: K fenomenu gliantsevykh oblozhek', *NG*, 5 December 1996.
88. The purpose and efficacy of post-Soviet advertising is a fascinating subject. It seems that its prime function is to project a way of life rather than necessarily to stimulate consumer activism. Advertising begins to set new norms, even if the values it promotes are not held by the vast majority of the population. For a provocative analysis which takes this view, see A. Levinson, 'Zametki po sotsiologii i antropologii reklamy', *NLO*, no. 22, 1996.
89. Natasha Bogdanova, personal communication, Moscow, December 1996. It would appear that some such magazines were highly successful in identifying a suitable market niche for themselves: see, for example, the 'hit-parades' published in *Knizhnyi biznes* in 1996–7, which consistently place several women's magazines in the top twenty.
90. The conflict between 'utilitarian' (that is, survival-orientated) and 'normative' goals was experienced very widely in the press of this period: see E. A. Atwood, *Negotiating Systems of Control: The Operations of Four Russian Newspapers in 1993*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland College Park, 1994.
91. Interview with Aleksandr Shcherbakov, Moscow, 6 September 1995.
92. As late as 1991, research in Yaroslavl *oblast'* showed that over half of families subscribed to between 4 and 10 publications (see M. Smirnova, 'Provintsial'nyi chitatel' – v profil' i anfas', *Pressa na rynke informatsii*, vol. 2, Moscow, 1992, p. 5).
93. According to Victor Davidoff (chairman of the Globe Press Syndicate in Moscow), 'starting in 1992, the costs of production became too high for 90 per cent of the newspapers' ('Regional Press Fights Political Control', *Transition*, 6 October 1995, p. 64).

94. The situation continued to worsen in the mid-1990s: in 1995, the State Duma allocated only 89 billion roubles to press subsidies instead of the 237 billion that the State Committee on the Press had sought to obtain (see *Post-Soviet Media Law & Policy Newsletter*, 30 April 1995, p. 1. State subsidies were in any case unduly weighted in favour of government organs (in particular, *Rossiiskie vesti* and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*); see L. Belin, 'Wrestling Political and Financial Repression', *Transition*, 6 October 1995, pp. 60–1.
95. Cited in Belin, 'Wrestling Political and Financial Repression', p. 88.
96. Tret'iakov gave his side of the story when interviewed by Egor Iakovlev (his old colleague from *Moscow News*) in *Obshchaia gazeta*, no. 33, 1995, p. 12. He did not disguise his nostalgia for the ideal conditions for journalism of 1990–1, when freedom of speech was more or less total, and prices were still at Soviet levels.
97. These, and other, details on the fate of *Nezavisimaia* are to be found in Alla Politkovskaia, '*Nezavisimoi gazety* bol'she net', *Obshchaia gazeta*, no. 36, 1995, p. 12.
98. A statement issued on 11 September by Tret'iakov's four deputies gave an account of the day's events: Tret'iakov arrived back at the editorial offices, took possession of his old office, and held a meeting of all *Nezavisimaia* journalists who happened to be present. Precautions were taken: the newspaper's security department (*otdel okhrany*) was reinforced by 'members of a private security organization'. Kuz'min was invited to the meeting, but by that time he had disappeared. Tret'iakov cancelled all the instructions that had been issued by Kuz'min and took charge of operations once again. A full meeting of the staff of *Nezavisimaia* was announced for the following week, but in the meantime there were 'no objections' from those present to the restoration of the 'administrative setup stipulated in the constitution of *Nezavisimaia gazeta*'.
99. Note, for example, the paper's spat in July 1998 with *Kommersant-Daily*, which accused *Nezavisimaia* of providing a mouthpiece for a programme of political takeover formulated by the billionaire Boris Berezovskii. These charges met an outraged rebuttal from Tret'iakov. This episode proves very little about the involvement of these newspapers' backers in editorial policy, but it does illustrate the atmosphere of suspicion and mutual recrimination that was inescapable in post-Soviet journalism, given the extensive yet ill-defined relations that existed between the media and powerful financial and political interests.
100. For a good survey of the state of the newspaper market in the mid-1990s, see Juliane Besters-Dilger, 'Die russische Presse im Wandel', *Osteuropa*, no. 2, 1996.
101. L. Resnianskaia *et al.*, 'Perspektivy razvitiia regional'noi pressy', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta, seriia 10, Zhurnalistika*, no. 3, 1996, p. 11. Similar conclusions are reached in *Zhurnalist i zhurnalistika rossiiskoi provintsii (Opyt issledovaniia)*, Moscow, 1995: this study, carried out from September to December 1994 in eight different regions (excluding Eastern Siberia and the Far East), found that local papers were consistently given higher ratings than 'national' publications (of which *Argumenty i fakty* and *Komsomol'skaia pravda* were comfortably the most popular). Note also A. Nivat, 'The Vibrant Regional Media', *Transition*, 18 October 1996, pp. 66–9.

102. See Davidoff, 'Regional Press Fights Control', pp. 64–7.
103. By 1995, *Izvestiia* and *Moskovskii komsomolets* claimed to be entirely self-supporting (*Izvestiia* obtained 90 per cent of its revenue from advertising): see D. W. Benn, 'The Russian Media in Post-Soviet Conditions', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 48, no. 3, 1996, p. 473.
104. See Resnianskaia, 'Perspektivy razvitiia'.
105. Witness the noisy resignation of Aleksandr Minkin, a prominent columnist and reporter at *Moskovskii komsomolets*, in the aftermath of the 1996 elections. Minkin objected to the newspaper's blatantly pro-Yeltsin (and anti-Iavlinskii) line; see 'The Press Has Lost the Trust of Readers', *Transition*, 6 September 1996. For more on the bullying of newspapers and the other media in 1996, see L. Belin, 'Private Media Come Full Circle', *Transition*, 18 October 1996, pp. 62–3.
106. On this, see J. Wishnevsky, 'Manipulation, Mayhem and Murder', *Transition*, 15 February 1995, esp. p. 37.
107. For example, the state subsidy received by *Izvestiia* in 1992 was variously estimated at 55 million and 858 million roubles: see J. Downing, *Internationalizing Media Theory: Transition, Power, Culture. Reflections on Media in Russia, Poland and Hungary 1980–95*, London, 1996, p. 130. A further important example is the mass-circulation *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, which, given its relatively favourable treatment of the government in 1995, was rumoured to be receiving heavy undeclared subsidies. Even the most proudly independent publications have had to learn to cohabit with new backers: for the example of *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, see above. The daily *Segodnia* (which originally arose as a breakaway venture from *Nezavisimaia*) was taken under the wing of Vladimir Gusinskii's Most group, since when it has been forced to make a few rather significant changes to its profile – for example, to sacrifice its well-respected culture page in the autumn of 1996 (to the considerable dismay of the Moscow intelligentsia).
108. This is very much the approach of Marina Smirnova in her 'Provintsial'nyi chitatel''. The following information on the provincial reader is taken from her article.
109. It is surely significant that the first two of these papers are weeklies: they leave the business of intensively monitoring political developments to dailies and the other media, and instead offer readers a judicious blend of down-to-earth social and political comment, sensationalism, and pure entertainment.
110. Smirnova, 'Provintsial'nyi chitatel'', p. 29.
111. Ibid., pp. 38–49.
112. That is not to say that no attempts are being made to work this out; but the more sophisticated pieces of research are inaccessible to academics, as they are carried out to commercial orders. The difficulties of audience identification even in conditions of relative socio-cultural stability are registered by Denis McQuail in *Audience Analysis*, Thousand Oaks and London, 1997; see, for example, the 'integrated model of the process of media choice' (p. 77), which maps out the complex relationship between the receiver's social background and cultural values and the media's structure and strategies. The importance of 'positioning' in the post-Soviet

periodicals market is explained in V. V. Voroshilov, *Zhurnalistika i rynok: Problemy marketinga i menedzhmenta*, St Petersburg, 1997.

113. The first sustained attempt to develop a branch of media theory to cover the old socialist bloc (as opposed to stable, usually Protestant democracies) is John Downing's *Internationalizing Media Theory*. Downing emphasizes that a 'fierce conflictual brew of state power, communications, social movements, cultural change, economic dislocation and all the rest, is far more characteristic of planetary society than is the relative stability of Britain and the United States' (p. 229). He also underlines the limitations of mainstream media theory when applied to Russia and other countries emerging from state socialism (ch. 7).

Conclusion

1. On de Certeau and the place of writing in Western culture, see ch. 1, nt. 8.
2. G. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, London, 1997, pp. 286–311.
3. See, for example, *Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov*, Moscow, 1973, pp. 17–18.
4. Data provided by V. D. Stel'makh in a paper presented at 'Rubakinskie chteniia', Moscow, 24 December 1996.

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Note: This list of sources does not include articles published in newspapers, magazines or non-academic journals. For full details of the periodical sources used, see the endnotes to each chapter.

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