

NEOTRADITIONALISM AS THE IDEOLOGICAL PROGRAM OF THE  
WELL-EDUCATED IN RUSSIAN SOCIETY

**Lev Gudkov**

## Crisis in Russia: Nature of Reactions.

The financial and political crisis that broke out in Russia late this summer was not accompanied either by panic or by any particular increase in social tension or menace of mass actions of protest, to say nothing of revolts. The data of the opinion polls conducted by VCIOM (which I am going to use for further analysis as well) show, on the one hand, that the state that the majority of the population is in can be described as relative composure and detached non-involvement in the sphere of politics and the life of those in power, and on the other hand, restoration on almost the reflex level of almost-forgotten soviet-times consumer habits.

It is only at first glance that this behavior seems to be in conflict with the observed indifference. The specifics of the political culture of the post-soviet, post-totalitarian society consist in the fact that with total lack of any forms and structures of self-organization of the society and mechanisms of real influence on the authorities, the masses react to the aggravation of the situation and growth of tension in the most passive way possible, trying to adapt to the situation, using their own resources and means of survival. Since they do not believe in any consolidated political or social actions of protest, they do not resort to mass actions, etc. This self-adapting strategy of private existence supplements very strong paternalistic ideological attitudes, which on the whole may be expressed by the formula of “the Russian sufferance”. It is mainly this sufferance that accounts for the fact that there are no social cataclysms, which are constantly predicted for every season by foreign analysts and leaders of the Communist opposition in Russia.

The hasty change of governments, the flow of political accusations in this connection, the marked fluctuations of the ruble/dollar exchange rate, etc., are perceived by the majority of the population as a continuation of the disorganization that came with Perestroika as a result of the “under-the-carpet” struggle of political cliques for control over the resources, influence, etc. This attitude may be seen in the following statements: “Nothing much or drastically new has happened”, “It doesn’t concern us much”, “The authorities will sort it out somehow”. The majority of the population does not see any menace in the former Communists coming into power. At the same time, they do not have any hopes in connection with the Primakov government. 62% of the respondents (end of September, N= 2400) approved of his appointment to the post of head of the government Cabinet (the attitude of 15% was negative). However, 45% do not believe in the ability of the new government to improve the situation in the country at all (17% of the respondents take an optimistic view, the others are in doubt or do not know).

The psychological state of the well-educated part of the population, who see themselves as a “society” due to the advantages they have, i.e. politically and culturally capable groups, was characterized in these weeks by exasperation of deep depression and general anxiety, which sometimes took the form of outbursts of hysterical black humor, self-destructive irony and buffoonery, particularly discordant against the background of general apathy. Over-anxiously perplexed and disoriented was, and still is, the attitude of the press and television, and mass media in general. They have been busy looking for the begetters of the crisis, full of catastrophic predictions and denunciations of the democrats and reformers. The latter, however, practically never appeared on the public scene (which is quite noteworthy!). In the weeks from the beginning of the crisis up to the time this

report was being written there was practically not a single important key-note public address of any of the leaders of the liberal intelligentsia, influential intellectuals or publicists known to be the ideologists or supporters of the reforms with any analysis, assessment or explanation of what was happening and its causes

The deep paralysis that seized the social, political and intellectual elite of Russia makes the chances of partial reanimation of the new “reds” quite high - not because the Communists have power or support of the masses behind them, but because they do not meet with any resistance – either moral, intellectual, or political. (Here I mean “partial” probability, not complete restoration of the Soviet system because the projects of selective nationalization and introduction of elements of the state-distributive economy, censorship, etc, are going to be most inefficient and unrealizable. Nevertheless, they are going to be introduced by all means.)

Exit of the last, nominally reformist, government headed by Kiriienko and entrance of the Primakov government gathered from the survivals of the disintegrated Soviet and Communist Party nomenclature symbolized an end of the 10-year period of attempts to reform the Soviet system. The state of chronic disorganization and incomplete transition to market economy (with all the ensuing consequences) is going to last indefinitely long under such a regime because the weakness and break-up of the civil society is fixed institutionally, in the very structure of the power, first of all, in the character of the politically irresponsible parliament.

The current crisis made the specific characteristics of the life of Russian society (which have been accumulated beginning with late eighties) only more obvious. Leaving aside other circumstances, let us look at what seems to me especially important – internal

degradation of the well-educated stratum which predetermined both the collapse of the Soviet system and the state of chronic indefiniteness, inefficiency and disorganization of the social and economic policy pursued over the last years.

### The intelligentsia and collapse.

The collapse of the Soviet system was first and foremost connected with the degradation of the top echelon of the society caused by the general incapacity of the Russian elite, its inability to ensure a continuous process of development or stable adaptation to the world processes. It is the social disability of these groups, and not the general discontent of the masses or the severe economic crisis in the USSR, that turned the failures and defects of the reproductive systems (training and change of personnel in various spheres including political and social recruitment, establishing innovational sectors and institutions of civil society) into a chronic institutional conflict, which, with the beginning of Perestroika, resulted in abrupt acceleration of the disintegration of the whole Soviet totalitarian system. I'll emphasize it again: depletion of the cultural, ideological and human resources of maintaining the regime of a mobilizable society is the main reason of the downfall of the Soviet system. However, the destruction of the social organization of the well-educated stratum, "the Soviet intelligentsia", as such does not amount to change or deep transformation of the cultural and social values and views that consolidated it or that ensured gratification of its activity.

The short period from 1988-1991, which was marked by mobilization of heterogeneous groups of the intelligentsia (from pro-western and liberal to patriotically-fundamentalist and semi-democratic) in the struggle against the USSR nomenclature, as

well as extensive, though superficial and primitive, criticism of communism seen as “Stalinism” (this criticism did not actually go beyond “socialism with a human face” ideas of the liberal wing of Soviet bureaucracy) did not have any impact on either the basic structures of the mass thinking or the thinking of the well-educated stratum. The influence of this criticism of the Soviet past was quite considerable. Thus in 1991, 57% of the respondents (representative national poll, N= 2000) agreed that as a result of the communist revolution the country found itself on the wayside of history, that this overthrow brought only misery, suffering and mass terror to the people. However, the effect of this media propaganda was very short-lived and ambivalent: having brought in the former taboo subjects and appraisals of the past for the public discussion, this criticism freed the broad masses from the fear of repression, but at the same time it “aroused” the most passive and conservative groups. Already in 1991, the polls showed the growth of defense reactions in the social and cultural periphery, more and more respondents said that the press “devote to much attention to the subject of Stalin repression” (62%; “too small attention” – 16%); that it “clouds the heroic past”, etc. Anti-Stalinism ceased to be a novelty for the people, they were tired of and bored with it, because it did not have anything positive which could have a bearing on the daily interests and views of the people.

Unlike the practice of denazification in Germany (which through control over access to state power as well as reproduction and mass communication institutions aimed at strengthening the new political forces and social institutions), anticommunist criticism in Russia was mainly aimed at discrediting the legitimate legend of the ex-authorities but it did not deal with the institutional system of totalitarianism itself. It was not

accompanied by a deep reappraisal of the past either. As a result, after several years the figure of Stalin began to gain authority again (because of the logic of counteraction as well as due to delay in reforms and growth of general discontent with the authorities for not showing any positive results). In 1994 polls, Stalin again was mentioned among the most important and authoritative figures of Russian history (from 9 to 20% of respondents mentioned him in this context). This effect can be partly accounted for by the weakness of the institutional structure that takes care of the reproduction of collective memory: the negative historical knowledge turned out to be limited to only individual, personal experience, difficult to be passed on to other generations. People of the 1960-ies generation who were the bearers of the historical knowledge of Stalinism did not manage either to rationalize it themselves or to share it in a generalized and analytical form with the young. But it is not the Stalin phenomenon that is important but the tendency for change in the values perspective – from the future to the past, the general retro-orientation, that is marked by his name.

The mass thinking, finding itself with no means of interpreting the past, with no guidelines for the future, with no means to articulate their own practical interests, was for some time in a state of mass disorientation and masochism, derogation, a very low collective self-estimation caused by the collapse of a great power whose symbols were an essential part of the identification constituent. As was to be expected, soon the mass thinking tried to get rid of the traumatic circumstances driving them out of the relevant range of involvement. Already two-three years later, i.e. after Gaidar's resignation and the government's giving up large-scale consistent reforms, the overwhelming majority of the Russian population (50%-60% of respondents) believed that the Soviet system as

such had not been so bad, it is the people in power that had been no good because they had only been concerned with their selfish interests of staying in power and their own well-being. The latest polls concerning the old and the new people in power (1997, N= 1500) gave the following picture: Soviet power was characterized by the respondents as “close to the people” – 36%, “ours, what we are used to” – 32%, “legitimate” – 32%, “bureaucratic” – 30%, “just” – 16%; the present power was described as “far from the people, not ours” - 41%, “ bureaucratic” – 22%, with only 12% calling it “legitimate”. These differences are not to be accounted for by the level of education received by the respondents or the level of urbanization. The main factor here is age (the younger the respondent, the lower the positive assessments of Soviet times).<sup>1</sup>

The weakness of the well-educated community in Russia, the inability of the elite to come up with an explanation of what is happening acceptable for the masses and to work out any convincing models of development and guidelines for the future make it necessary to take a closer look at what this community is like, why it turns out to be functionally inefficient, to see what are the peculiarities of its formation and functioning that could be the reason for the social, cultural and political paralysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Levada Yu. The Phenomenon of Power in Public Opinion: Paradoxes and Stereotypes of Perception. // The Russian Public Opinion Monitor. Moscow, 1998, September-October, N.5, p.10.



## Soviet and Post-Soviet Intelligentsia: Character of Formation and Functions.

So, what is the present-day well-educated community in Russia like? The ideological character of the issue of “Russian intelligentsia” makes it necessary to differentiate between the functions and the self-perception of this group.

Soviet “intelligentsia’ (the part of the well-educated stratum of Russian society that is involved in intellectual activity, in the reproduction of cultural norms and values) began to take shape towards mid-fifties, after the years of mass terror were over, and it is practically unchanged now (since the institutional structure of its reproduction and employment has not changed much since then). This layer is rather lax in social composition (origin), for having practically no internal mechanisms of corporate solidarity and its own authorities, it is determined only by the pragmatic interests of those in power (and not by the society or the market). The officialdom decides who is to be professionally educated and trained, in what capacity, how well and for what purpose. I have to note here that only a third of people with university degrees have parents with the same level of education.

The specific task of the “intelligentsia” was to make the system legitimate and to ensure support of the regime by the masses. This task required a minimal level of mass instruction and education, necessary for the functioning of the system and realization of the tasks of forced militarized industrialization, social and informational control.

The functional role of the mass reproductive bureaucracy was characterized by a typical dualism: on the one hand, ensuring the ideological legitimization of the regime by appealing to “Russian culture”, traditions and conservative national values, it constantly

censored the influence of the world community, minimized and restricted cultural, value and informational variety, and on the other hand, it tried to cushion the most repressive acts of the party nomenclature in the interests of retaining the whole though it took a critical view of the especially tough manifestations of the system. It is in this capacity that it purported to be the “society” as such, the mouthpiece of the public interests as a whole, which were different from “private” interests (meaning “philistine”, “selfish”, “consumer” or “corporate” – “departmental”, “ministerial”, etc.). It is clear that nominating itself for this role; the intelligentsia (mainly literary journalists) maintained the balance of servility and a very moderate, cautious and dosed criticism. The latter is often overestimated in the analyses of the intelligentsia when it is seen as the main opponent of totalitarian power.

Usually, when Soviet or Russian intelligentsia is spoken of, people with a high level of education who are conservators of national culture, protectors of the socially weak, people who are sort of bearers of “consciousness” and “morality” of the community (it is usually writers, philologists, historians, etc.), are meant. The like notions are based on the opposition of such values as “the authority” and “the people” which are mediated by “the intelligencia”. This is not an exact picture of reality but an idealized structure of notions held by educated groups in a very bureaucratic and paternalistic society which is characterized by weak civil self-organization consisting in “horizontal” structure of interaction. Although such an ideologized model of relations has originated from the times of “narodnichestvo” i.e. from the final period of shaping Russian national consciousness, it continued to exist in a plenty of later works during Russia’s modern and contemporary history (even skeptical V. Nabokov in his “Speak

memory” defined Russian history as a mix of the “exaggerated secret police” and the “amazing and freedom-loving culture” which was held by the intelligentsia and stood in opposition to the former). In the post-revolution period such ideas became almost extinct under the pressure of resentment of the emerging new groups, but after World War II, already in the fifties, they were reanimated again and accepted by the Soviet bureaucracy. It was a period when the initial phase of Soviet industrialization was over and a new task was set – that of consistent technological modernization which required that the authorities realize a large-scale program of training the country’s own qualified personnel, primarily for the defense industry and its scientific basis.

This pattern of self-qualification was boosted by the ethics of the dissident opposition to the Communist regime and conceit of a definite part of the party-economic bureaucracy that tried to find new grounds for the legitimacy of the system (especially in the years of Brezhnev’s power, when the Communist ideology was already dead and its place was gradually being taken by a combination of technocratic views and Russian imperial nationalism together with more liberal and populist ideas). This point of view was also accepted abroad (cp. W.Shlapentokh, D.Beyrau and others<sup>2</sup>). It was a most popular self-understanding of the best-educated part of the bureaucracy who were quite willing to use these clichés emphasizing the functions of education, beholders of culture, erudition, knowledge, as well as ethic values - humanism, representation of the interests of the socially weak in dealing with the authorities, values of social justice. I will stress

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<sup>2</sup>. Beyrau D. *Intelligenz und Dissens. Die russischen Bildungsschichten in der Sowjetunion, 1917-1985.* Goettingen, 1993; Shlapentokh W. *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power. The post-Stalin Era.* Princeton, 1990.

here that such notions are nothing more than a matrix of self-identification of the Russian bureaucracy, an ideological phantom, an idealized projection.

If we compare the structure of the well-educated stratum in Russia and in developed western countries, we will see at once that in the former two professional groups dominate: white-collar workers (engineers, technologists, etc.) and teachers or university professors. Beginning with late forties it is these two categories that constitute about 70% of people with university degrees (in different periods of time there were from 38% to 45% of engineers and from 25% to 33% of teachers). The planned system trained specialists that could ensure functioning of a civil society (first of all, lawyers, economists, managers, social and cultural workers, etc.) in quite a limited number, orienting them mostly to protecting the system itself, i.e. to satisfying the needs of the state and bureaucracy instead of the civil society. The specific weight of lawyers, economists and managers constituted only 8-9% on the whole (in countries of the West – from 38% to over 50%).<sup>3</sup> In other words, this system limited the possibility of expressing not state but group interests thus restricting the formation and development of civil society institutions – law, economics (in the system of distributional economy those were mainly specialists in accounting and records management – accountants and goods managers rather than economists and managers), social sciences in the broad sense of the word (from sociology and social work to individual psychology), which led to lack of specialists who could deal with the problems of a complex and developed society. It is only in recent years that this area of higher education began to develop rapidly.

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<sup>3</sup> Gudkov L. Crisis of Higher Education in Russia: Decline of the Soviet Model //The Russian Public Opinion Monitor. Moscow, 1998, July-August, N.4, p.40-41.

It is a cheap engineer that is a model figure for Soviet intelligentsia (as a rule, those were women in offices and departments who were the backbone of Soviet bureaucracy and, consequently, of distributional economy). Their voluminous number was to make up for the declining efficiency of the system of management. This type is characterized by a superficial technical rationalism and determinism, a very weak cultural layer and limited informational horizons, passivity, conformity, weakness of aspirations and career ambitions, conservatism – to put it in a nutshell, everything that is typical of the period of stagnation and shortage. The introduction of “engineerization” of mass management, implementation of primitively rational, technological methods in dealing with social issues was the starting point of the process of accelerated sclerotization of Soviet bureaucracy that ended in loss of the system’s ability for innovation and adaptation. The hypertrophy of engineers in Russian society is a sign of suppression of the market as a system of universal exchange and communication.

This structure of education testifies to the fact that we are still dealing with conservation of the initial stage of the primitive policy of industrialization.

Analysis of education got by Soviet (pre-perestroika) nomenclature and the post-soviet elite shows the similar tendency - predominance in the high government posts of persons with technical diploma (28%), followed by economics (18%), natural sciences (9%), humanities (12%), party education, more exactly marxism-leninism (9%), but in the highest nomenclature they were even more - 21%. The rest usually had military, diplomatic or- rarely - law education.<sup>4</sup> Continued or second education of the

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<sup>4</sup> Golovachev B., Khakhulina L., Kosova L. Transformation of the ruling Elite in Russia. //The Economic and Social Change: The Monitor of Public Opinion. Moscow, 1995, N.6, p.20; 1996., N.1, p.32-37.

nomenclature was mainly either party-ideological (for party functionaries) or that in economics and management (for state functionaries). In general, party functionaries have obtained their degrees in special party institutes, like The Academy of Social Sciences etc., which was instrumental for their party or state career. We can see similar distribution in the state office workers: 47% have diploma of technical sciences, 37% - economics, humanities, social sciences, 4%- natural sciences etc. In other words, among them there were practically no people with wide cultural horizon or scholars. Educational characteristics of the post-Soviet elite haven't really changed.

The quality of education on the whole was not too high if we do not consider a few closed-type elite universities. More than a third of respondents with university degrees (or degrees from educational institutions of the university level) believe that the knowledge they received at the university is by far not sufficient for their professional activities. They are not satisfied with the quality of education (there are almost half of such respondents among the top managerial staff – 45%). The uniform system of Soviet higher education provided the production of specifically mass education. It was mass in two respects: in terms of volume - in the number of graduates, and in terms of orientation to an average student, when the potential of too active personal performance and above-average abilities was restrained. In other words, it was a process of purely extensive reproduction of the main contingent of specialists that were to provide first and foremost for a) the needs and interests of the management and b) the military complex, its production sphere and its research and development field. It is these areas that elite young people went to. Though competition to enter such educational institutions was very severe and the study load was extremely high with a high percentage of dropouts,

upon graduation the young people were sure to get a guaranteed prestigious job, a good salary, etc. The main line of orientation of this type of education consists not in formation of motivation for self-cultivation, competition, intention to raise the qualification, but to exploitation of “someone else” as one’s own or corporate resource. The result is relative decrease of its value, going down to the general or implied average.

Restraining possibilities of individual diversity, variation, competition and personal achievement, the system exhausted all its cultural resources within the life span of just one generation. Its potential was just enough for the primary and extremely one-sided military modernization. That is why Russia was not ready to enter a new informational and technological era. The human basis of socio-cultural dynamics itself and innovation potential were undermined. The educational and training structures, not allowing the formation of elite and their values, did not only fail to stimulate innovational development, on the contrary, it stifled it in every possible way, molding it to fit an averaged-out mediocre template. In other words, the education system in Russia is oriented to reproduction of the most well established and generally accepted information and knowledge. At some point of time it enabled the USSR to make a breakthrough with a quick catching-up industrialization but the inability to change this structure resulted in the growing isolation and provincialization. The very nature of the structure of the well-educated society, the system of its formation, its ideology and social organization predetermine its considerable lag behind world science.

It is noteworthy that the largest corps of researchers in the USSR (by late eighties - about 1.5 million people) produced relatively few fundamental projects and theories. In all the years of Soviet power Soviet scientists were awarded the Nobel prize only six

times, however, 5 of them were awarded the prize for the research done back in the thirties (i.e. at the time of professional socialization, the roots of which go back to the pre-Revolutionary or foreign forms of education with the corresponding ethics of research and gratification). The sixth was given for research conducted in the late forties–early fifties. This fact could be accounted for by bias on the part of the jury, but the reason was different: over 2/3ds of researchers in the USSR (and in Russia – over 4/5ths – 83%) were employed in industrial sector/departmental research institutes which worked mainly for the military industrial complex, not at universities or science academies. The share of social, economic and liberal arts research in the late 80-ies constituted only 3% of the overall research done (6.5% with the research conducted by university professors). It has grown a little lately, but not due to increase in the funding of these areas but because of the reduction in research for the defense sector of the economy.

This trend in creating the well-educated stratum – training mainly engineers, other technical staff and pedagogues – was bound to result not only in very restricted, specifically technocratic and didactic thinking (including the views on the nature of social and economic issues), limited cultural and informational horizons, but also in its extreme rigidity, commitment to the state-oriented bureaucratic forms of the social organization of life, and a tendency to isolationism. Irrespective of concrete jobs (be it a chief engineer, a university professor or a journalist, a lawyer or a researcher), each representative of this stratum was a public servant, one of the army of specifically educated, qualified office bearers who could not and cannot imagine any other activity or freedom other than the activity and freedom within the framework of a state organization, institute or enterprise. Consequently, all the interests, views and models of reality of this



well-educated stratum were connected with the preservation of that very system of the state bureaucratic organization of the society because it is only with this system that their standing, their functional role and authority were significant and meaningful. That is why identification was based not on professional values and authority but on declarative loyalty to the “whole” – a great power with a national culture and a heroic past, with the corresponding selection of ideological views and values. Typical for this kind of public servants is lack of specific professional-corporate mentality or the feeling of their social superiority, better financial situation and more guarantees in life, or an exceptional or privileged position. On the contrary, they feel more dependant and restrained than other groups in the society, at any rate, it is not the mentality of the “middle class” that in societies of another type see themselves as the center of the universe, the natural foundation of society, and whose frame of reference becomes the norm for others. This is a typical mentality of “employees”, of “civil servants”.

#### **Collapse of the system and Neoconservatism.**

Collapse of the system deprived the intelligentsia of its former role and, consequently, of support – both of the state power structures and of the mass strata of the society. Disintegration of the former social organization of the system of science, culture and education made the very activity of the intelligentsia meaningless. Their group views and corporate interests lost their significance, no longer determining the constructions of reality.

To illustrate the motives of those feelings, I will cite certain data from a survey among researchers representing all the areas and sectors of Russian science – academic,

university, sectoral, etc. 48% of the scientific researchers interviewed spoke of discontinuation of research projects or narrowing of the scope of scientific studies; 80% of the respondents working in research organizations or universities stated that “foreign science is well ahead of ours and the gap is widening fast”. 69% described the situation as “bad” or “critical” (only 26% of the respondents refer to the situation as “good”, and these are mostly researchers of social and medical sciences). The worst situation is to be observed in the spheres which used to work for the military industrial complex, in technical and physical sciences, irrespective of their departmental status – the Academy of Sciences’ Institutes or the industrial sector research institutes. The main causes of the crisis are ‘insufficient budgeting from the state’ (71%), “outdated research equipment and undeveloped infrastructure” (41%), “low prestige of research work” (35%), “no demand for scientific studies” (32%), “overbureaucratization, pressure of management apparatus, lack of interest on the part of management structures in scientific results” (24%), etc.<sup>5</sup>

Similar things could be said by educators and writers, as well as other categories of the well-educated part of the population. That is why it is quite understandable that the “best time” in domestic history is considered to be Brezhnev’s “stagnation” period – an idealized idea of the epoch of social stability and well-being, with enough to eat and not much to worry about (this is what more than half of the respondents believe, and the answers of well- and poorly educated are not too different).

The well-educated society today shows much more anxiety, frustration, depression and disorientation than any other group of Russian society. Of course, not all

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<sup>5</sup> Golov A. Science and Scientists in Today's Russia. //The Economic and Social Change: The Monitor

the categories of the well-educated happen to be overwhelmed by such feelings, but this stratum is characterized by a much greater degree of polarization of both the mood and social and political evaluations than any other group. It is possible to single out two mutually supplementing and mutually supporting attitudes that characterize the perception and reflection upon what is happening on the part of the well-educated strata of the population. On the one hand, it is value relativism, cynicism (moral and cultural kitsch, demonstrative distancing from the conventional, “soviet type”, views and norms, which is mainly typical of those employed in mass media systems and engineering). On the other hand, it is what seems to be dramatically different from the former – neotraditionalism, enhanced mythology of the past, national conservatism, symbols of organic unity of the people, their roots, “moral bedrock”, “sobornost” (respect of tradition and collective views), etc. The latter is more typical of the intelligentsia working in humanitarian areas, civil servants, management apparatus, etc. Such attitudes, though proceeding from different ideological trends, are an expression of typical dual thinking, a combination of demonstrative state paternalism and etatism, on the one hand, and real distrust of the state power, a contradictory combination of collective mobilization mechanisms and their neutralization, on the other.

It would be oversimplifying things to try to account for the described situation by the worsening of the financial situation of the intelligentsia. The data of sociological research show that this stratum is but little different from other, more numerous social groups in its principal characteristics (incomes, status self-assessment, political preferences, value orientations, character of perception of what is happening, assessment

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of Public Opinion. Moscow, 1996, January-February, N.1, p.21-23.

of the past and the present) /see Tables 1,2,3/. Average per capita incomes in the families of respondents with university degrees are about 35-45% higher than the average figures in Russia (which, with the generally low standard of living, does not change the picture of consumption or life style much). As for the status self-assessment, they position themselves only a step or two higher (on a 10-position hierarchical “ladder” of social status and prestige) than other educational or occupational groups (seeing themselves rather among those who occupy the “low intermediate” position).

Today we witness a situation when social elite (people with university degrees occupying a higher social position) are only a little different from the majority of the population both in their needs (concerning incomes, informational requirements, standards of life style) and in their understanding of what is happening (nature of political and ethical views, social and political competence). <sup>6</sup>This inability to reform compensated in a purely extensive way by an ever increasing production of uniform specialists (which actually results in their social “devaluation”), on the one hand, and incompetence with regard to the new requirements of post-Soviet Russia and the civil society that is taking shape, on the other hand, account for both the low prestige and authority of the well-educated stratum in the society and the growing nostalgic feeling about the past, when the state needed these people, as well as growth of retro-orientation and ressentimental neotraditionalism. But this is also a source of extreme social pessimism about the would-be Russian society of people with no cultural and value perspective.

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1. <sup>6</sup> Levada Yu. Reverting to the Problem of Social elite. The Russian Public Opinion Monitor, 1998, N.1, p.18.

The point is not that we are witnessing mass pauperization (there is none, at least compared with Soviet times), the point is that the fundamental intention and matrix of human relations is retained: it turns out that basic social institutions are oriented not to growth and achievement but to their conservation by systematic decrease in human potential. This is the reason for the crisis that the well-educated strata are going through, for the unproductiveness and the growing disadaptation of the elite and at the same time – lack of prospects for the society as such, its still not being ready, or rather its unwillingness, to change.

There is practically nothing left from the image of the intelligentsia as advisers of the leaders. They are not in demand because they lack the necessary competence, education and expertise. They are not capable of working out a consolidating liberal ideology.

We can also say that one of the most manifestly expressed specific features of deterioration of the well-educated strata is, on the one hand, rapid growth of quasi-traditionalist, nostalgic tendencies of idealizing the past and, on the other, strengthening of mechanisms of psychological resistance to changes in any sphere. In a phantom civil society, the ideology of the “whole” (a surrogate of “society”) can only be the conservative-organic ideology of the national.

The core idea that is in the center of various ideological programs of the post-soviet intelligentsia is the idea of a “great Russia” and its rebirth (or preservation). Using the phrase “ideological program”, I do not mean working out any new guidelines or political aims. It is rather an expression of routine amorphous lower social groups’ ideas

and clichés. Addressing them, presenting them in a systematic form, the intelligentsia tries to regain its lost importance, its former role.

“Rebirth of a great power” has become the only symbolic thesis that unites both the pro-western liberals, and the communist patriots, and advocates of a “holy Orthodox Russia”. The components of what this national “mightiness” is may differ considerably, as well as the proposed ways of achieving the cherished goal, but the general composition of the program is the same. While the pro-western advocates of the market see market formation and development as a condition of the future prosperity and might of a new democratic state, a world power, as well economically developed as the other members of the “Big Seven”, the communists nostalgically remember the military power and the state system, the social life in the USSR; the Orthodox neophytes speak of the traditional components of the past - sobornost (respect of tradition and collective views) combining “spirituality” (the Orthodox religion) and social collectivism (patriotism) as the essentials of national life, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Actually, this shift towards the masses on the part of the well-educated elite who used to claim to be maintaining a certain level of humanity, moral decency, “scrupulousness” and “responsibility” of bearers of culture for everything that happens in the country has to be qualified as deterioration. It results in growth of primitive populism and the increasing appeal to the “people”, their tastes and needs. The differences in

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<sup>7</sup> See: Gudkov L. Russian Neotraditionalism. // The Russian Public Opinion Monitor. Moscow, 1997, N.2, p.25-32; Gudkov L. Victory in War: Towards of a National Symbol. // The Russian Public Opinion Monitor. Moscow, 1997, September-October, N.5, p.12-19; see also: Gudkov L. Ambitions and resentment of provincial ideology. On I.Esaurov's book “‘Sobornost’ category in the Russian literature” // The New Literature Review. 1998, '31, №.353-371. As examples of compositions of this kind see, e.g.: E. Belozertsev. ‘Sobornost’ as the way toward new school. Issue 1. Moscow, 1993; A.Kazin. The last kingdom: The Russian Orthodox Civilization. St.Petersburg, 1998.

assessment, guidelines and views of the well- and poorly educated people are disappearing. The direct result of this degradation is the “extrusion” from the public mind of everything “unpleasant” in the past of the country, everything “painful” and “humiliating” for national dignity. Not only everything connected with the Stalin terror and repression, but also any evidence of violence, poverty and misery, ethnic discrimination, etc., are extruded from the sphere of public discussion. As a result, the common person is deprived of what can help him understand what is happening and has to rely on the most primitive models of interpretation of the political and social changes. In the socio-cultural sphere, it results in orientation to the most routine everyday models, in diminishing the area of social values, and trust in only the closest people (hence the growing importance of family values and greater influence of the simplified examples of mass culture). These gaps in the structures of the political or symbolic sphere, on the one hand, and routine daily life, on the other, bring about a stable state of internal hypocrisy and growing primitivization of public life.

#### **Neotraditionalism and manifestations of corporate-status defense**

The main intellectual efforts of the well-educated stratum (to be more precise, the intelligentsia, mass reproductive bureaucracy) are not aimed at rationalization of private and group interests (which would be a clear indication of transformation of the social role of the well-educated, their transforming into specialists, experts, the middle class that lives “in the marketplace” and offers its private competence), at analyzing the up-to-date reality and its pragmatic changes. It is aimed at preserving and protecting its former corporate status and position. The most vivid manifestation of this phenomenon is the

noticeable growth of ideological xenophobia among the well educated, especially among the civil servants.

With a certain decrease of xenophobia in the Russian society observed lately, the only group that demonstrates not only maintaining ethnic negativism with regard to the non-Russians at the same level, but even the growing complex of derogation, hurt and scare of the “sell-off of the national wealth of the country”, and eagerness to restrict access to important social positions of “strangers” is the group of respondents with university degrees. In the seven years of research (from 1990 to 1997), the share of such answers in the sociological surveys almost doubled – from 39% to 69%. In this group of respondents, the view that at present “non-Russians”, people belonging to ethnic communities other than Russian, have excessively great influence on social life and Russian culture, and this influence is most often seen as negative. /see Tables 4,5,8/ We should also point out that it is people in this group that believe that the state administration should see to it that the “aliens”, “non-Russians” could not hold key positions in the government, mass media, in the army or in the militia.

In all these answers, the maximum of the “restricting” reactions belongs to mature and elderly people (over 40) with university degrees (in p. 1 - by 4 % above average, in p. 2 – by 21%, in p.3 - by 5%, in p.4 - by 8%, in p.5 - by 4-5%). It is noteworthy that respondents holding high or important positions in social hierarchy (top managers, specialists, white-collar workers) give such answers more often than any other social-status groups. The least frequently expressed desire to “ban” is typical of the group of young respondents.



The most prominent category among those who are for “keeping a close watch and restricting” is top managers, executives of different levels. We must emphasize that in the past 5 years the ratio of these opinions in the management corps has changed radically: in 1992, the ratio of those who were against any forms of ethnic discrimination and those who were for this policy was 27%: 54% (1: 2), while in 1997, it was 68% : 32% (2 :1). As for all the other categories, the ratio of these views did not change much.<sup>8</sup> (See Tables 4-6)

This phenomenon of quasi-traditionalism can be interpreted as the negative of particularism, of lost, misfortunate and disoriented consciousness, having no value imperatives and universalistic norms. “We possess our grandfathers’ experience and we have to follow it” - 65% of respondents agree with this statement (20% - against), and there is no big difference between the educated ones and other categories (only pensioners look even more sharply divided 82%-8%).

The type of individuals that actualize this side of collective experience and culture at present is characterized by the aggression complex and envy (“They didn’t pay me in full”), crying poverty, constant complains; they are prepared to support such slogans as “Russia is for Russians!”, “Caucasians go home!” or “the Democrats have robbed and sold out the great country!”, etc.

With all the diffusion and as yet inarticulate expression, such ideological “moods” have a most negative impact on the political climate in Russia. Aggravating the atmosphere of collapse of national culture, education, science, the state itself, etc., the bearers of these tendencies create conditions making it easier for the conservative

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<sup>8</sup> Gudkov L. Parameters of Anti-Semitism: Attitude toward Jews in Russia, 1990-97. //The Russian

opposition to block the reform and reduction of the army as well as the reduction of the military industrial complex expenditures. They strengthen the positions of isolationism (i.e. blocking the financial markets for foreign banks and investors), provoke economic populism with all the ensuing consequences that we are facing at present. These include the approval of an unbalanced state budget, slowdown of industry restructuring and passing of the bill on land, restrictions on competition (demand to support the domestic producers at any cost), as well as emphasis on measures for strengthening the state apparatus (fight with corruption), etc.

#### Principal provincialism of the intelligentsia.

Strengthening of ideological conservatism or neotraditionalism, which is mostly protective-compensatory in character, can be accounted for both by the specifics of the organization and mentality and by the nature of the functions of Russian intelligentsia – ensuring maintenance and preservation of the whole. This may be possible only if the political and cultural life is systematically “provincialized” – by drawing to the center people with provincial mentality and actions who reproduce the cultural models of earlier stages (including the symbolic resources) and thus limit the semantic field, who have control over the resources of other groups (among other things, appealing to the lower classes, the most culturally and socially deprived groups). It is not the classical “conquering of Paris by a young provincial”, which was often the occasion for the introduction of new meanings and cultural models (the case that was typical of the world capitals at the end of last century and the first third of this century). On the contrary, it is

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Public Opinion Monitor. Moscow, 1998, March-April, N.2, p.41.

limitation and defeat, necrosis of the central symbolic structures responsible for innovation and value universalization.

Provincialization was typical of Soviet times as well, when each of the groupings (beginning with Stalin and ending with Brezhnev and Yeltsin) competing in their fight for power were connected with that or other provincial environment and introduced their own ideas and views they had worked on before in the cultural or political program.

In this sense, the complex of ideological neotraditionalist views that are being referred to nowadays is a mixture of fragments of the ideology of the Russian national culture of the time when it started taking shape, i.e. the resources of the so-called Silver Age: superficially and uncritically understood Berdyayev, Ilyin, Florensky, Bulgakov and other conservative men of letters and social-organicistic philosophers; scholastic Marx and Russian mystics (E. Blavatskaya or D. Andreyev, etc.), on the one hand, and epigone western post-modernism, on the other. Neotraditionalism in this sense means not so much a program of the development of Russia, but rather opposition to modernization (negative sanction of the basic values of liberalism – individualism, ethic rationalism, i.e. ethics of responsibility and blocking of the possibilities of their institutionalization). However, at present, this is the only way of preserving the historical and political thinking in Russia as one whole as the ideologists cannot suggest anything more comprehensible and consistent except the search for a conservative “national idea”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Russia in search of Idea. Press Analysis. Issue 1. Moscow, 1997. Papers on different aspects of organizational and political origin of the most chauvinistic groups in: Nationalism and xenophobia in Russian Society. Moscow anti-fascist Center, “Panorama”, 1998. The major nationalistic organizations in Russia and their mass media. Moscow, ‘Antifascist’ Public Foundation, 1997, Informational Bulletin '3.

Table 1

Under the present circumstances, would you approve in

(in % to the number of respondents without those who found it difficult to answer to the question, N=1600, September 1998)

	Education		
	Higher	Secondary	basic
<b>Banks</b>			
yes	45	53	51
no	41	24	17
<b>Big enterprises</b>			
yes	55	61	58
no	34	20	16

Education and social-political commitments

(in % to the number of respondents without those who found it difficult to answer to the question, N=1600, September 1998)

	Education		
Sympathize to:	Higher	secondary	basic
communists	11	22	33
democrats	20	14	8
patriots	3	3	3
the party in power	3	1	3
nobody	45	42	35

Table2

How do you think, was the Russian Empire a state based on voluntary unification of nationalities, or was it established as a result of conquests and forcible annexations of different nationalities by Moscow?

(N=1602; in % to the number of respondents, September 1998)

	voluntary unification	forcible annexation
TOTAL:	51	28
Age		
16-24	46	28
25-39	49	28
40-54	48	32
55 and older	58	25
Education		
Higher	42	42
Secondary	50	29
Basic	56	21
Social status		
Enterprise owner, businessman	42	42
Company or department manager	53	15
Specialist	46	37
Skilled worker	51	28
Student	27	39
Pensioner	58	24
In the last elections voted for ...		
Eltsin	49	34
Communists (Zyuganov)	71	17
LDPR (Zhirinovskiy)	53	31
RNPR (Lebed)	51	37
“Yabloko” (Yavlinsky)	39	46

Table 3

In the past Russia was in conflict with a lot of countries. If we take into account only the period after 1917, which of the following statements is closer to your own opinion?

(N=1599, September 1998)

	Almost always Russia was the aggressor and guilty for conflicts with other countries	Russia never was an aggressor but always a victim in such conflicts
education		
higher	30	59
secondary	22	64
basic	11	70
age		
16-24	28	55
25-39	25	58
40-54	18	69
55 and older	10	73
social status:		
enterprise owner, businessman	42	50
manager of company, department	41	55
Specialist with higher education in ...		
humanities	25	63
economics	21	62
engineering	34	52
skilled worker	21	61
student	36	49
pensioner	9	73
in the last elections voted for:		
Eltsin	19	55
communists (Zyuganov)	13	72
LDPR (Zhirinovsky)	17	71
RNPR (Lebed)	21	70
“Yabloko” (Yavlinsky)	21	69

Table 4

Is the nationality of a person important for him being accepted ...?

(in % to the number of respondents except “difficult to answer”, N=1500 November1997)

	yes	no
1. as a students of higher educational institutes	9	75
2. as a teachers at higher educational institutes and schools	19	75
3. for work at mass-media	21	72
4. for work at top positions in “force-managing” bodies (federal security, police, army etc.)	43	50
5. to key-posts in the government	53	40

Table 5

How do you think, is this important to know how many key-posts are occupied by not-Russians and control and limit their number, or nothing of the kind should be done? (1992 , N=1700; 1997, N=1500;

in %)

	1992	1997
A. yes, the control and limitations are needed	29	34
B. nothing of the kind should be done	40	43
C. difficult to answer	31	23

	A	B	C
1. director, main specialist, department manager	60	36	4
2. specialist (higher education)	33	48	19
3. skilled worker	29	54	17
4. pensioner	35	40	25

Correlation between cultural level (home-library scope) and discrimination statements

(1992 N=1700, 1997 N=1500; percentage to the number of respondents)

	1992		1997	
	A	B	A	B
don't have library at home	30	33	32	36
500-1000 books	36	32	44	39
more than 1000 books	19	73	21	64



Table 6.

Do you agree that now Russia is treated with the sale out of national resources?

	1990	1993	1996
agree	48	73	60
disagree	49	26	20
difficult to answer	3	1	20

Do you agree that the sale of national resources treatens Russia?

	Agree			Disagree		
	1990	1993	1996	1990	1993	1996
men	50	73	60	47	26	20
women	47	76	60	50	25	19
AGE						
Under 25 years old	55	70	54	45	27	21
25-40	53	80	60	46	18	21
40-54	52	74	65	46	26	21
55 and older	46	76	59	48	23	19
EDUCATION						
higher education	39	68	69*	60	31	21
Secondary	50	72	59	48	27	21
Basic	50	77	58	44	23	18
TYPE OF SETTLEMENT						
big cities	45	75	63	51	24	20
small towns	47	72	58	52	28	21
villages	68	74	58	29	26	20

Table 7

What can help to resurrect Russian national spirit?

powerful Russian state	46
decrease of bureaucracy's power, freedom to life and act to one's own discretion	16
the orthodox church	7
decrease of foreign influence	7
a powerful Russian party	4
repentance of the Soviet period crimes	2

Table 8

Do you agree that now "not-Russians" are getting too much power (influence) in Russia?

	1990	1993	1996
agree	40	54	40
disagree	56	44	33
difficult to answer	4	2	27

Table 9.

How do you think, is it possible that communists will come to power in the nearest future? (N=1600, September 1998)

	Possible		impossible	Difficult to answer
	I'll be happy if it happens	I fear that it happens		
education				
higher	17	23	46	14
secondary	23	22	36	19
Basic	39	14	26	21
social status				
enterprise owner, businessman	15	29	39	17
manager of firm, department	21	18	44	17
specialist (high graduated)	16	24	43	17
skilled worker	26	17	38	19
student	30	21	23	26
pensioner	43	11	25	21
in the last elections voted for				
Eltsin	15	27	41	17
communists (Zyuganov)	68	5	17	10
LDPR (Zhirinovsky)	17	18	41	24
RNPR (Lebed)	19	19	40	22
“Yabloko” (Yavlinsky)	13	26	51	10