

## “*Shestidesiatniki*”

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### Abstract

Zubok's *Zhivago's Children* examines the rebirth of the Russian intelligentsia during the decades following Stalin's death. Zubok devotes particular attention to de-Stalinization and greater openness to the outside world that characterized the Khrushchev era. Leaders of the artistic as well as scientific intelligentsia sought to achieve a freer public life as well as greater autonomy and public influence for themselves. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 brought hopes for such an emancipated public life to an end until the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s. Zubok argues that the intelligentsia advisers that Gorbachev brought to power contributed to the demise of the Soviet Union.

### Keywords

Intelligentsia, Pasternak, generation of the sixties, Khrushchev, de-Stalinization, Twentieth Party Congress, Solzhenitsyn, dissent, Russian nationalism, Gorbachev, perestroika

Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia*. Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. 453 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-03344-3.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, there was a relative decline in the output of Western scholarly literature on the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. No longer at the center of current events or grist for political scientists' mills, they were not yet widely regarded as genuinely “historical” periods. Meanwhile, historians of the Soviet period were preoccupied with the Stalin era; political scientists, Sovietologists, and members of the educated public were transfixed by the unfolding dramas of *glasnost*, *perestroika*, and the wrenching beginnings of the post-Soviet period. At the dawn of twenty-first century, however, one can sense an upsurge in scholarly interest in the history of these earlier periods. The available source materials make them more inviting than ever for historians.

An abundant supply of memoirs now provides a more textured appreciation of the Khrushchev era in particular. In addition, even the partial opening of the archives has made it possible to provide a much richer portrait of these eras than was imaginable prior to 1991.

Two pioneers in this upsurge of scholarly interest are historians who experienced the Khrushchev era themselves. William Taubman's biography of Khrushchev has provided Western readers with a detailed account of Khrushchev's life, career and the broader history of the Soviet Union during the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Equally important, one could argue, has been the work of Nikita Khrushchev's son Sergei Nikitich Khrushchev, whose accounts illuminate the nature of Soviet politics after Stalin.<sup>2</sup> Sergei Nikitich's publication of accurate Russian and English texts of his father's reminiscences has given historians ready access to accurate versions of an indispensable source.<sup>3</sup> The burgeoning number of recent scholarly works in English suggests the significant extent to which historians are currently engaged in studying the Khrushchev era.<sup>4</sup>

Vladislav Zubok's *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* is a superb addition to this literature that will be indispensable to scholars and students alike. Zubok, a native of Moscow now living in the United States,

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<sup>1</sup> William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2003); and William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, et al., *Nikita Khrushchev* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev – An Inside Account of the Man and His Era, by His Son, Sergei Khrushchev*, ed. and trans. by William Taubman (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990); and Sergei N. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Commissar (1918-1945)*, ed. Sergei Khrushchev, trans. George Shriver and Stephen Shenfield; Nikita S. Khrushchev and Sergei N. Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Reformer, 1945-1964*, trans. George Shriver and Stephen Shenfield; and Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Statesman, 1953-1964* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2005-2007).

<sup>4</sup> The following is but a sampling of this recent scholarly literature: Polly Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Melanie Ilic, ed., *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2009); Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2008); Dmitrii Shepilov, *The Kremlin's Scholar: A Memoir of Soviet Politics under Stalin and Khrushchev*, ed. Stephen V. Bittner, trans. Anthony Austin (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2007); and Georgi M. Derluguian's remarkable study *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), particularly chaps. 3-5.

writes with great affection as well as understanding about a world in which, to some extent, he grew up. The result is an absorbing account of the intelligentsia in Russia from the early 1950s until the early 1990s. Zubok weaves political, intellectual, and cultural history together in admirable fashion, and the book illuminates many vital aspects of the entire late twentieth century in Russia. It might seem that any scholar undertaking a broad survey of such recent and generally familiar material would find it difficult to present anything terribly new, or even to enhance our understanding of this era in any significant way. But Zubok succeeds in both of these tasks.

### **“Zhivago’s Children” as metaphor**

The title “Zhivago’s children” serves as a felicitous organizing metaphor for the entire book. For Zubok, the figure of Pasternak’s Yurii Zhivago embodies the liberal and humane intelligentsia that became a prominent and autonomous force in Russian life beginning in the 1860s. This intelligentsia, although contentiously divided on political and aesthetic questions, shared a dedication to high culture, a concern for human dignity and rights, and a vision of itself as the moral conscience of the nation. Equally vital to its very existence, according to Zubok and Pasternak alike, was the environment in which Yurii Zhivago lived. Despite the arbitrary and often brutal character of the tsarist regime’s rule and the frustrating limits that it imposed upon the intelligentsia’s activities, the overall environment in Russia under tsarist rule was nonetheless one in which independent thought and expression could flourish. It was an environment which included the freedom to stand at some remove from more narrowly defined political questions, although doing so risked the censure of highly politicized elements of the intelligentsia.

Latitude for the public expression of this kind of aesthetic and moral autonomy vanished in the late 1920s, replaced by an unprecedented regimentation of intellectual and cultural life under Stalin’s rule. In practice, all citizens of the Soviet state in the Stalin era were either mobilized or silenced. Thus for Pasternak, Yurii Zhivago’s death in 1928 symbolized the death of this older liberal intelligentsia as a group with any place in public life. Like Pasternak himself, some individual members of this older intelligentsia managed to survive physically, even as thousands of their most gifted colleagues were killed during the purges, perished in concentration camps, or died during the war. But no longer could they play the autonomous critical role that was a defining trait of the earlier intelligentsia.

The central argument of Zubok's book is that a new generation of intelligentsia – which he refers to as “Zhivago's children” – emerged during the years following Stalin's death. The author explores the activities in which the members of this generation engaged, the dilemmas they faced, the evolving nature of their aspirations and overall consciousness, and finally their increasingly fragmented identity as a group. The book is principally concerned with the intelligentsia generation that emerged in the capitals, Moscow in particular. This was where the leading educational and cultural institutions of the country were located, and it was here that one encountered the greatest concentration of influential writers, artists, scientists, and scholars. Most important, it was in these cities – and more precisely in individual neighborhoods such as Moscow's Arbat, specific institutes, and student dormitories – where this new intelligentsia first took shape as a social phenomenon. One should note that Zubok leavens this emphasis upon Moscow and Leningrad with discussions of the intellectual as well as civic role at the scientific institutes in Dubna, or the concentration of brainpower at the newly-created Akademgorodok in Novosibirsk. Much of the new intelligentsia that emerged during the Thaw was also young, and Zubok rightly emphasizes both the demographic prominence of youth during the 1950s and the unprecedented numbers of young people who were in programs of higher education at that time.

In the immediate wake of Stalin's death, a variety of state actions suggested the arrival of a new political reality. Official acknowledgement that the Doctor's Plot had been a fabrication and the absence of Stalin's name in the media were important departures that suggested change was in the offing. The lifting of the ban on jazz set a new tone in the realm of popular culture. The cultural “thaw” that emerged followed Stalin's death, however limited by today's standards, was crucial in allowing the kinds of gatherings in which intellectual and social ties could develop. Here Zubok emphasizes the role played by groups of friends known as “*kompanii*” whose gatherings took place mostly in the apartments of those few fortunate enough to have individual rather than communal apartments. These “*kompanii*” resemble the *kruzhki* that were so central in the lives of the nineteenth-century intelligentsia. Such smaller circles fostered discussion, debate, and the development of the friendships and personal bonds that any developing subculture requires. Members of the youthful intelligentsia that gradually emerged in these early years felt an intuitive desire to create a more humane society than that which had existed under Stalin: in particular, they sought a greater creative and personal autonomy for themselves. The barren and repressive nature of Stalin's last years help to account for the intensity of this youthful yearning for greater autonomy.

Literature, poetry in particular, was a vital spiritual resource in the early life of this young and emerging intelligentsia. Zubok provides a penetrating discussion of the dramatic role played in this early period by a host of talented young poets, ranging from the older war veterans Boris Slutskii and Bulat Okudzhava to charismatic younger poets such as Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Bella Akhmadulina, Andrei Voznesenskii, and others. One should note the emergence, only slightly later, of the remarkable poet Joseph Brodsky and the poet and bard Vladimir Vysotskii. Why poetry (including the songs of Okudzhava, Vysotskii, and Alexander Galich) should have been so influential at this moment is worth pondering. First, poetry and songs, whether sanctioned or underground, had deep roots in Russian popular culture. As a genre, poetry allowed for the quick communication of attitude, tone of voice, and beauty. It also had the advantages of brevity, easy memorization and sharing, and the potential for public declamation. The concerns and very language of these young poets differed markedly from that of their predecessors. They sought to free themselves from the aesthetic clichés and enforced political line of the Stalin era so as to write in an honest and personal fashion; their audiences hungered for this candor and sincerity of individual expression. Whether in books and stadiums, or in samizdat and unofficial recordings, these poets reached a broad audience, particularly in urban Russia.

Prose also held a vital and often contentious place in the lives of this resurrected intelligentsia: here one has only to think of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Matryona's House*, Vasilii Aksenov's *A Ticket to the Stars*, the gradual emergence of what came to be known as "village prose," or finally the remarkable novels of Yurii Trifonov, themselves a chronicle of the everyday lives and compromises of Zubok's intelligentsia.

*Samizdat*, whose appearance Zubok dates to the late 1950s, was an innovation that vastly expanded communication and debate within this emerging intelligentsia. The first example of *samizdat*, he suggests, was in fact Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, but it quickly mushroomed into a vital mechanism for conveying unofficial literature. *Samizdat*, as Zubok rightly points out, dealt a crucial blow to the state's monopoly on the shaping of public opinion. In his words, "samizdat destroyed the Stalinist boundary between the private thinking and the public social sphere. What could only be whispered or written in a secret diary was now part of the informal yet public culture that growing numbers of people shared." (p. 188)

The very term "Zhivago's children" suggests a familial relationship between the intelligentsia that emerged in the wake of Stalin's death and the older,

pre-Stalinist intelligentsia. Here Zubok endorses Joseph Brodsky's observation that this generation "came into the world, it appears, in order to continue what was interrupted in those [Hitler's] crematoria and in the anonymous common graves of Stalin's archipelago." (p. 22)<sup>5</sup> As students and others sought to resurrect links with this older humane culture, they turned to the work of poets such as Pasternak, Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Osip Mandel'shtam, whose lives and work embodied a rare degree of moral independence as well as aesthetic beauty. Individual members of this younger generation frequently sought out surviving members of the older, pre-revolutionary (or at least pre-Stalinist) intelligentsia for inspiration and guidance. There are numerous well-known examples of this: Brodsky and his Leningrad poetic contemporaries Evgenii Rein, Anatolii Neiman, and Dmitrii Bobyshev were drawn to Anna Akhmatova not only by her poetic stature, but no less because of her overall bearing, culture, and taste; many younger Moscow poets sought out Boris Pasternak for the same kind of inspiration.<sup>6</sup> Young scholars in Leningrad looked up to the literary scholar Dmitrii Likhachev in similar fashion. These older artists and intellectuals, Zubok stresses, embodied a humanism that was rare as a result of Stalin's rule. In meetings with their younger counterparts, he rightly notes that they "could not help passing on to their students their manners, habits, ethical standards, and aesthetic attitudes." (p. 26)<sup>7</sup>

Writers and artists clearly played a leading role in the activities of this post-Stalinist intelligentsia, as did the directors and actors in the Sovremennik, Taganka, and other theaters, which were vital institutions in the life of the intelligentsia. But the intelligentsia generation that interests Zubok included many other groups as well. He devotes particular attention to the activities of scientists. The prestige of scientists in Russia was enormous in the 1950s and

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Zubok from Joseph Brodsky's 1987 Nobel Lecture.

<sup>6</sup> The importance that these encounters ultimately acquired was not always something participants anticipated or immediately appreciated. For Brodsky's recollection of the way in which the initially superficial impressions he derived from meeting Anna Akhmatova were transformed into his first real understanding and appreciation of her poetry, see his interview at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dI\\_LiF9NxOk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dI_LiF9NxOk).

<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the invitations for such meetings came from members of the older generation. Anna Akhmatova, for example, repeatedly invited Bulat Okudzhava to visit her. Initially, he was too shy to respond to her invitations. After finally meeting her in Komarovo in 1964, he recalled, he was unable to remember anything that she had said, since her very presence put him into a "polu-obmorocnoe sostoianie." M. P. Gizatulin and V. Sh. Iurovskii, comps., "Khronika zhizni i tvorchestva," in Galina Kornilova and Iakov Groisman, eds., *Vstrechi v zale ozhidaniia: Vospominaniia o Bulate* (Nizhnii Novgorod: Dekom, 2003).

1960s, as was the public fascination with science. Here one has only to recall the pioneering successes of the Soviet space program, which seemed proof that the country was well on its way to modernity, and indeed to world leadership. Here Zubok understandably dwells at length upon Andrei Sakharov, whose independence of mind, civic concerns, and sense of moral responsibility were clearly reflected in his 1968 *samizdat* essay “Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom.” Finally, at various points Zubok mentions economists and the dilemmas of economic reform. He cites the exemplary roles played by established figures such as Vasilii Nemchinov and Leonid Kantorovich, but he also mentions the support they provided to a younger generation of economists and sociologists, particularly those led by Abel’ Aganbegian in Novosibirsk.

### **Khrushchev’s transforming role**

Nikita Khrushchev was obviously the most crucial figure in the early history of this intelligentsia. His denunciation of Stalin’s “cult of the personality” and crimes against the party at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 administered a profound shock to all of Soviet society and transformed political discourse in irreversible fashion. Zubok compares the impact of the speech on the younger generation of educated Russians with that of the German invasion in 1941: “Just as then, a world of certainties came to an end, now that core beliefs and commonly accepted wisdom had turned to dust.” (p. 61) In the West, then as now, the speech appeared as an act of liberation from a dreadful past, something that was assumed to be a source of rejoicing to every thinking person. However, as Zubok points out, its impact within the Soviet Union was initially confusing and disorienting. The speech itself was not published at the time, and thus not available for scrutiny. Its contents were read to many groups across the country, but these readings were not accompanied by the kinds of explanations and guidance usual in such circumstances, something that heightened the confusion accompanying the speech. For the many true believers in Stalin’s greatness and virtual infallibility, Khrushchev’s denunciation was a shattering event. As an exercise in historical revisionism, the speech raised as many questions as it answered, so one of the principle civic and intellectual concerns of the new intelligentsia would be to challenge the party’s monopoly on historical investigation and interpretation. With time, as Zubok makes clear, members of this intelligentsia would begin to “question the existing regime in the name of universal ideals of justice and human rights.” (p. 66)

Khrushchev does not seem to have comprehended fully the varied impacts that his speech would have. In Moscow, student protests of cafeteria food and more general student activism during the late spring and early summer of 1956 shocked the country's leaders. In Eastern Europe Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin undermined the legitimacy of Soviet domination and political control. The result in the fall of 1956 was the Hungarian Revolution, which was ultimately put down by Soviet military force. The Hungarian Revolution made Khrushchev and the party leadership aware of just how explosive the Pandora's box he had opened could be. In Moscow there were student protests of the Soviet response in Hungary, and the crackdown that followed slowed but did not halt movement in the direction of a more open cultural environment. Those who actively opposed the Soviet response found themselves isolated within the broader society. As Zubok demonstrates, public sympathy for the Hungarians vanished once the shooting started.

The Hungarian experience gave Khrushchev pause in his cultural liberalization. It did not halt it entirely, but it tempered his enthusiasm for radical reform and helped reinforce the inconsistency that was the hallmark of his cultural policies in general. Zubok, who comes to this work as a historian of the Cold War, is particularly attuned to the ways in which cultural developments inside the Soviet Union interacted with the unfolding chapters of the Cold War conflict.

The Soviet response to the Hungarian Revolution and numerous later events made it clear that Khrushchev's program of liberalization, whatever its promise, had real limits. One of the most dramatic of these events was the so-called Pasternak affair of 1958, in which the regime displayed a pronounced opposition to the kind of cultural autonomy that so many within the intelligentsia cherished. Pasternak, known within Russia primarily as an incomparably gifted poet, had sought to capture the early experience of his generation in the novel *Doctor Zhivago*, which he completed in 1956. When all hopes for publication in Russia faded, he agreed to the publication of the novel in Italy, in direct defiance of demands from Soviet authorities that he retrieve his manuscript. In 1958, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The response of the Soviet authorities and of established writers alike was furious: Pasternak was compelled to decline the prize; the Writer's Union voted unanimously to expel him from its ranks. The Pasternak affair was a cause célèbre of the first order in which some writers came to Pasternak's defense. But Zubok demonstrates that the response among Russian intellectuals was in fact divided. Some writers doubtless refused to support Pasternak out of fear, but Zubok stresses that many were genuinely unsympathetic to his position in this case. As he

reminds us, few had actually read the novel. Of those who had, most did not sympathize with (or perhaps fully understand) either its Christian underpinnings or its critique of the revolution. All knew that he had broken the rules, so to speak, thus potentially placing them all at risk. So to many intellectuals his action appeared as “arrogance”.

The most exciting and illuminating chapter in the book for this reviewer is one that Zubok entitles the “rediscovery of the world.” Here he addresses one of the most crucial dimensions of the post-Stalin era, namely Khrushchev’s decision to embark upon a greater engagement with the outside world. The intelligentsia Zubok describes here was marked by a widespread yearning to learn more about other societies, especially the popular and material culture of the West. Zubok surveys the various ways in which examples of this culture had made their way into Russia in the post-war period even before Khrushchev’s initiatives. The state allowed the showing of some Western trophy films, from Deanna Durbin’s musicals to Tarzan’s adventures, without fully realizing the extent to which such films would fuel a greater curiosity about the West. The *stiliagi* or “style-apers” of the early 1950s replicated the dress and cultural style of Western hipsters as they understood them. Jazz, though officially banned, had won a broad and enthusiastic following. Partly because access to contemporary Western culture had been difficult if not impossible under Stalin, youthful fascination with the West in the 1950s was in part an understandable attraction to “forbidden fruit”. This fascination with the West, which would remain a central question for most within the Russian intelligentsia throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, is a central theme throughout Zubok’s book. At its zenith during the 1950s and early 1960s, this fascination would ultimately become a source of contention between those who saw the secular, legal order of the West as a model for the Soviet Union and the neo-Slavophile nationalist writers who began to emerge in the 1960s.

Khrushchev’s decision to expand Russian contacts with the rest of the world derived in part from his belief that such a course was strategically advantageous for the Soviet Union in the Cold War. It also grew out of his naïve confidence that Soviet society, which Stalin’s policies had long isolated from the world, would be more than able to hold its own in competition with the West. The state’s sponsorship of this “rediscovery of the world” took many forms. Not least were Khrushchev’s own travels, which gave him and his entourage insights into a world of real people, institutions, and cultures beyond their own borders. While foreign travel, particularly to the West, was a privilege enjoyed by only a select few, the numbers nevertheless grew as the Soviet Union conducted exchanges of orchestras, dance groups, and other

student exchanges. Khrushchev also pushed to develop the tourist industry, thus opening the Soviet Union to increasing numbers of foreign visitors. Equally important were the visits to the Soviet Union by Western artists and musicians, particularly jazz artists such as Benny Goodman and, later, Ella Fitzgerald. Finally, “rediscovering the world” did not in itself require travel: the state also sponsored more extensive translations of Western and other literatures, making a broader selection of modern prose and poetry available to Russian readers.

There were numerous landmark events in the Soviet “rediscovery of the world” during the 1950s, and Zubok describes them quite brilliantly. The exhibition of Picasso’s paintings in Moscow in 1956 was a transforming experience for those who saw it. Zubok argues that “many young Soviet artists considered the exhibition to be the most important single event of their artistic lives.” (p. 95) Another landmark event was the concert that Yves Montand gave in Luzhniki stadium in December 1956, only two months after the Red Army crushed the Hungarian Revolution. Montand met with Khrushchev during his visit, and Zubok records that his concert elicited a hysterical response. He cites a Leningrad art student’s recollection that Montand’s songs “generated immense anxiety among us young people for a beautiful life.” (p. 99) Van Cliburn’s participation in the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in April 1958, generated a comparable level of enthusiasm. (It’s fascinating if hardly surprising to learn that the Ministry of Culture had to obtain Khrushchev’s permission to award the first prize to Cliburn). Zubok’s description of these events recalls the wellspring of good feelings as well as naïve enthusiasm that was a widespread trait in the Russian youth of this era.

By far the most momentous undertaking in Khrushchev’s opening to the outside world was the decision to sponsor an International Youth Festival in Moscow in July and August 1957. More than anything else, perhaps, this festival testifies to Khrushchev’s faith in the stability and competitiveness of his own society, and in the loyalty of youth to the Soviet system. I can’t do justice here to Zubok’s portrayal of the preparation and conduct of the festival. It’s clearly an event that is made to order for an entire book. Suffice it to say that, in a society obsessively concerned with control, it was a daring leap to invite thirty-four thousand foreign visitors from 130 countries. At the festival itself there was an atmosphere of liberation, as if all traditional controls had been removed. American jazz musicians had a particularly profound impact not only on the mass audiences but on their Russian jazz counterparts. Since unmediated contacts between American and Soviet youth were an unprecedented phenomenon at this stage of the Cold War, many party authorities

were deeply distrustful of them, but the festival's immediate results fully justified Khrushchev's optimism. Zubok emphasizes that encounters with Americans and West Europeans were by no means the only ones that were important to Russians: informal meetings with young people from Eastern Europe as well as developing countries were no less important in expanding young Russians' awareness of the world outside the Soviet Union.

To those who lived through the Cold War (whether in Russia or the United States), there was perhaps no greater symbolic cultural confrontation between the two countries than that of the American exhibit in Sokol'niki park in Moscow in June 1959. Thousands of Soviet citizens lined up for a chance to see the display of American household and consumer goods. Zubok reports that a phenomenal 2.7 million Soviet citizens visited this exhibit over a period of only forty-two days, testifying in dramatic fashion to the intense level of popular curiosity about everyday living standards in the United States. The political resonance of the exhibit was heightened by the "kitchen debate" that occurred there between Khrushchev and then Vice-President Richard Nixon. Khrushchev recognized that exchanging visits of this sort would spark a genuine competition with the United States, and he believed that the Soviet Union would fare well in that competition. Zubok points out that in embracing this kind of competition, which propaganda phrases such as "catch up and surpass America" implicitly encouraged, Khrushchev "unwittingly provided Soviet society with an explicit frame of comparison." (p. 116) This competitive standard would obviously prove problematic for the Soviets in the future.

The late 1950s and early 1960s were a time of growing tensions in the Cold War, ranging from the U-2 incident in 1959 through the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis in late 1962. But they also marked the high point in the general optimism that urban youth in the Soviet Union felt about their country's future. Zubok recounts the multiple sources of this overall optimism: the greater freedom and predictability in everyday existence; the conviction that the availability of consumer goods and housing stock would grow; and more generally the hopes that a young generation nourished for a more stable and prosperous life. The regime's popularity and legitimacy drew strength from the many impressive feats of the Soviet space program in the late 1950s, achievements that produced genuinely heroic figures as well as promise of great future scientific potential. The fascination with science and belief in its transforming power was widely shared within Soviet society, and the status of the intelligentsia – scientists in particular – was thus extraordinarily high.

Because of Khrushchev's demonstrated openness to change, members of the intelligentsia had what seemed a justified confidence that their status and

influence would continue to grow. By 1968, a variety of developments dashed the intelligentsia's hopes for greater autonomy, freedom, and influence. There was never a return to Stalin's terror, but beginning in 1962 the party would reassert its authority and control over the cultural realm.

Khrushchev's policies in many spheres were notoriously unpredictable and dramatic, but nowhere more than in the realm of culture. On the one hand he not only dismantled the machinery of Stalin's terror, but personally sponsored the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962, thus allowing the experience of the concentration camps to enter public discussion for the first time. But he could also be explosive, crude, and intimidating in public confrontations with artists and intellectuals, as he was during his tour of the Manezh art exhibit and his subsequent meeting with Soviet artists and intellectuals in late 1962. In these high-profile meetings with artists and intellectuals, Khrushchev's speech and overall demeanor were genuinely threatening, and in the context terrifying. At the latter gathering, for example, he shouted at the petrified Andrei Voznesenskii that "the Thaw is over. This is not even a light morning frost. For you and your likes it will be the *arctic* frost [long applause]." (p. 214) (Later, in his memoirs, Khrushchev expressed regret for his conduct on these occasions.) Zubok concludes that Khrushchev's threats, together with his contradictory statements and policies on cultural matters, left writers and artists "amused and humiliated at once. His power over writers and culture, now desacralized, began to resemble oppression, but also nonsense." (p. 82)

Khrushchev's verbal assaults on the intelligentsia in 1962 were in part a response to growing fears within the party apparatus that the intelligentsia's influence had begun to challenge party control over cultural matters. His militant and dramatic reassertion of this control, Zubok argues, was also a response to the personal defeat he had sustained in the Cuban missile crisis. His highly publicized criticism of the intelligentsia in 1962 emboldened conservatives at the local level to undertake similar attacks. In 1964, Leningrad authorities arrested and tried the Leningrad poet Joseph Brodsky, charging him under the "social parasite" law. The Brodsky case has often been either overlooked or accorded little importance in the larger drama of the post-Stalin intelligentsia. Zubok rightly attaches great significance to the fact that in the Brodsky case, unlike that of Pasternak, the intelligentsia "did not remain silent and passive." Instead, many young writers (joined by such prominent cultural figures as Dmitrii Shostakovich, Anna Akhmatova, and Kornei Chukovskii) wrote letters to the authorities on Brodsky's behalf. The unofficial transcript of the trial made by the Moscow writer Frida Vigdorova, once distributed through

*samizdat*, made it accessible both to Russians and ultimately to the outside world.<sup>8</sup> These efforts to defend Brodsky, Zubok argues, “produced the first documents in the emerging democratic movement.” (p. 222)

### **Tensions within the intelligentsia: Westerners and Slavophiles in the 1960s**

Following the overthrow of Khrushchev in 1964, the Brezhnev regime moved to shore up the *nomenklatura*'s authority and privilege. The result was a general retrenchment in the cultural sphere as the party sought to temper the de-Stalinization that had gained such momentum under Khrushchev's rule. Certainly it reaffirmed the party's control over the cultural sphere. While there was no concerted attack upon the intelligentsia as a whole, the 1966 trial of the writers Andrei Siniavskii and Yulii Daniel, who were charged with publishing their works abroad under pseudonyms, made it clear that violations of official limits would be severely punished.

Zubok's discussion of the 1960s focuses upon the gradual division of the literary intelligentsia into a Western, reform, “left” faction, on the one hand, and a body of writers who began to challenge this Western, reform, or “left” vision with one that was more conservative and nationalistic. These writers, whose nationalism, interest in the peasantry, and concern to preserve and explore Russia's native peasant culture made them heirs to earlier Slavophiles, became an important element in an emerging conservative vision of the late Soviet years.

Zubok places great emphasis upon this new division between Westerners and neo-Slavophiles. It involved issues that were fraught with great emotion, as he makes clear, in part because of the central place that questions of Jewish ethnic identity played in the way in which these factions saw themselves. To Western, “leftist” reformers, the central crime of the Stalin period had been the purges and the concentration camps. To the nationalists, it had been the assault upon the Russian peasantry and peasant culture that had occurred during collectivization. Among the Western “leftist” reformers were many persons of Jewish ethnic identity. Within this Western reform faction, Jews and non-Jews alike were aware both of the Holocaust and of the legacy of anti-Semitism in Russia, and they shared the earlier Russian intelligentsia's hostility to anti-Semitism. Among the nationalist writers, however, there were many

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<sup>8</sup> An English translation of Frida Vigdorova's transcript of the Brodsky trial was published in *The New Leader* on August 31, 1964.

who found it difficult to regard persons of Jewish origin as integral parts of the Russian past. The emergence of the state of Israel made it all the easier to portray Soviet Jewish intellectuals as outsiders. Overall, Zubok argues, anti-Semitism acquired an ever greater currency during this era.

At the heart of Zubok's chapter on the emerging tension between Westerners and Slavophiles is the figure of Alexander Tvardovskii. Here he portrays Tvardovskii as someone who, from his position as editor of the establishment liberal journal *Novyi Mir*, struggled to hold the intelligentsia generation of the 1960s together. Tvardovskii himself was an ethnic Russian of peasant origin who sympathized with many of the basic concerns of nationalist or Slavophile writers, particularly their outrage at the ravages collectivization had inflicted upon the peasantry. But he was also a reformer who was hostile to anti-Semitism and saw it as a characteristic feature of the bureaucracy under Stalin. Ultimately, the breach between the two factions could not be bridged, a fact that Zubok clearly views as tragic for the intelligentsia as well as Russia.

During the 1970s and 1980s the popularity and influence of Russian nationalist writers and their themes increased. Conservatives within the *nomenklatura* embraced this nationalism as a replacement for the Marxism whose formulas, despite their constant repetition in the public arena, could no longer mobilize enthusiasm or confer legitimacy.<sup>9</sup> Russian nationalism took various forms, beginning with the literary movement known as "village prose". By the 1980s, a nationalist organization such as *Pamiat'*, which was initially devoted to the restoration and preservation of churches and other historical monuments in Russia, began to enjoy a large if diverse following. The emigration tended to reinforce the arguments of ethnic Russian nationalists that the philo-Semitic intelligentsia of the "left" – and its secular Jewish members in particular – were not really "ours".

### **The intelligentsia in decline after 1968: Dissent, emigration, and accommodation**

Following the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Zubok argues, the intelligentsia's collective influence went into a decline that lasted through the 1970s and most of the 1980s. He cites numerous causes for this.

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<sup>9</sup> For an extended treatment of this question, see Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998).

The intelligentsia after 1968 was an increasingly fragmented group that lacked a cohesive vision of its own identity. The invasion shattered long-held hopes for the development of a humane socialism within the Soviet Union or the Eastern bloc. The notion of some revolutionary renewal no longer seemed achievable, or even desirable. The optimism of the 1950s and early 1960s concerning both the nature of Soviet society and the role that an intelligentsia might play within it was gone.

Members of the intelligentsia responded to these new circumstances in a variety of ways. Some became more actively involved in political dissent: the dissident movement really acquired organized form in the late 1960s. Finding a common political platform within the dissident movement was never simple for many reasons, chief of which were the widely differing visions that the various participant groups had on goals as well as tactics. Eventually, however, the platform of human rights allowed many critics to coalesce in a genuine opposition to the regime's arbitrary and oppressive acts. Zubok emphasizes that the dissident movement was never something that the entire intelligentsia embraced. Indeed, for most within the intelligentsia that had emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, participation in the dissident movement was, for a variety of reasons, not a realistic choice. To the extent that leading dissidents had to rely upon the support of the foreign press, or enjoyed the support of foreign governments, of course, they left themselves open to charges of being a fifth column movement.

Zubok does not pretend here to write a history of the dissident movement in its entirety. He does provide an insightful discussion of the evolving phases of its development and principal concerns. Many dissidents, as he acknowledges, considered themselves to be the "true intelligentsia," and the honesty of their expression stood in stark contrast to official propaganda. Yet even within the dissident movement one finds echoes of the split between the Westerners and Slavophiles of the literary world. The classic "Westerner" in this regard was Andrei Sakharov, without whom it is difficult to imagine the Soviet human rights movement. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose works probably did more to undermine the Stalinist legacy than those of any other writer, gradually emerged as a profoundly nationalistic Russian thinker who regarded the intelligentsia, in Zubok's words, as "the intrinsic enemy of the Russian people." (p. 309) The anti-Semitic overtones that were prominent in much of Solzhenitsyn's publicistic writing, Zubok argues, would eventually cause most of the Western-oriented intelligentsia to turn away from him.

Another factor that served to erode any notion of solidarity within the intelligentsia was the possibility of emigration from the country, which first

arose during the 1970s. For most Soviets emigration was not an option, since in practice legal emigration was really possible only for Jews (or those able to demonstrate some Jewish family tie) or particular non-Russian groups such as Volga Germans. Since the proportion of Jews was much higher within the intelligentsia than it was within the broader population, the emigration cut particularly sharply into the intelligentsia's ranks. The severing of close personal bonds implicit in emigration was painful, and those left behind often experienced a sense of profound personal loss as well as a intellectual and spiritual isolation. The choice of exit was also the ultimate statement of pessimism about the possibility of developing a free and prosperous society within the Soviet Union itself.

For most within the intelligentsia neither dissent (with which they may have quietly sympathized) nor emigration were attractive choices: the main options were retreat into a circle of family and friends and a more intense professional commitment. In this regard, Zubok emphasizes the considerable opportunities that the Brezhnev regime afforded to those who were not in outright opposition. Indeed, many of those he describes as Zhivago's children held positions of either great or at least relative privilege within the overall society. They had better incomes, housing, and access to consumer goods. They had freer work schedules, and the nature of their work allowed them potential satisfaction from professional achievements. They had greater opportunities to travel abroad than most Russians, a privilege that they cherished dearly. Zubok also describes a variety of institutes that served as "oases of relatively unhindered intellectual and cultural life" (p. 324) for many "reform-minded intellectuals."

But sustained disparity between one's public statements and one's genuine beliefs exacts a price. At the very least, Soviet people had to acquiesce and participate in a variety of mendacious and theatrical public rituals that were humiliating and corrupting. Zubok traces the intensity of the outrage and vehemence with which the intelligentsia denounced so much of Soviet reality during the *perestroika* era to an understandable yearning to transcend their earlier humiliation and restore their sense of self-respect. Zubok is careful here to exempt dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov from charges of such collaboration, and there is no doubt that the courage and bluntness with which dissidents sought to speak the truth in a dishonest age comported far better with the historical traditions of the intelligentsia in Russia than did the kinds of accommodations that most *shestidesiatniki* made during this era.

### The intelligentsia during *glasnost* and *perestroika*

With the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, Zubok argues, Zhivago's children – the intelligentsia generation that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s – suddenly acquired the influence and public authority that they had lost during the Brezhnev years. Zubok describes Gorbachev as “the first Soviet leader since Lenin who was friendly to intellectuals.” (p. 336) Whether Lenin was “friendly to intellectuals” one can dispute, but Gorbachev certainly brought significant numbers of intellectuals into his government and sought their advice and counsel. Zubok cites the particularly important role played by Aleksandr Yakovlev and Anatolii Cherniaev, both of whom were part of the intelligentsia generation of the 1950s and 1960s. Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, which his intellectual advisors favored as a means of introducing a new degree of honesty into public life, led by 1988 to the de facto abolition of censorship. Gorbachev's major goal in abolishing the censorship, which his intelligentsia advisors enthusiastically encouraged, was to cultivate public support for his reform agenda that could offset the increasing resistance to reform within the conservative party apparatus. The resulting freedom of information produced a literal explosion in the publication of previously banned authors and secret government documents together with an ever more aggressive muckraking journalism. Such openness, in Zubok's words, “inevitably and predictably led to the questioning of the entire foundation of Soviet socialism, including its revolutionary and patriotic myths.” (p. 343)

Zubok's verdict on the role that the intelligentsia played under Gorbachev is a severe one. On the one hand, he writes, they pushed a willing Gorbachev down a path of democratization and radical *glasnost* that undermined the very legitimacy of the party. Here he emphasizes that, in advocating such radical openness and political transformation, they “sought to compensate for the decades of past moral humiliation and doublethinking” during which they themselves “had behaved like conformists and cultural escapists.” (p. 346) Although they were able to describe the economic and social problems that the country faced, he argues, they really had no intellectual or political program for the solution of these problems. One should add, perhaps, that neither this intelligentsia nor most of the *nomenklatura* in the late Soviet period had the kinds of roots in the broader population that might have made them more effective in defining or implementing reforms. As the economy began to collapse between 1989 and 1991, many within this intelligentsia proceeded to turn on Gorbachev himself.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 would have a devastating impact upon the broader ranks of the intelligentsia. The advent of a market society in the 1990s, Zubok argues, destroyed the historical environment in which the Russian intelligentsia had existed. In his overall evaluation of the generation of Zhivago's children, Zubok is quite unsparing:

Zhivago's children rarely lived up to the ethos and ideals of the old Russian intelligentsia. Their behavior, with a few exceptions among the principled dissidents, was checkered by conformism, cowardice, mutual denunciations, cynicism, and hypocrisy. Quite a few of them were unable to resist pressures from the secret police, let alone the temptations of self-aggrandizement, vanity, and profiteering. The artistic and literary legacy of the Thaw and the succeeding period does not bear comparison with the classical cultural legacy created by their predecessors, not to mention the great writers and thinkers of nineteenth-century Russia. (pp. 360-361)

This indictment, however justified as a historical verdict, is a jarring one for which the book's preceding chapters have done little to prepare the reader. There is a serious dissonance between the positive portrayal of the aspirations and activities of this intelligentsia that dominates the book's introduction and overall structure, and this really harsh concluding judgment. Zubok softens this overall verdict by pointing out that this generation "was a crucial part of the evolution of Soviet society away from its revolutionary myths and totalitarian legacy." (p. 361) This, he concludes, was its signal achievement.

### **Vladislav Zubok's *Zhivago's Children*: Some critical observations**

Overall, *Zhivago's Children* is an unusually good book. Zubok writes in clear and compelling prose, weaving large and small events together with a sure touch. The resulting patterns, if familiar, are nonetheless fresh in his hands. He draws upon and gives credit to a significant body of recent Russian as well as Western scholarship on the period, making excellent use of the insights that have emerged there. His experience as a historian of the Cold War gives him a sure sense of the interplay between foreign and domestic policy throughout the period he covers. Finally, he is sensitive to the ways in which the attitudes and activities of intelligentsia changed over time, citing the multiple sources and registers of that change. The clarity and apparent simplicity with which he traces this intelligentsia's evolution (including its eventual demise) mask the extent of his achievement in mapping out the contours of his material.

That being said, I would like to register several caveats. The first has to do with Zubok's decision to cast his book as a history of the intelligentsia. In fact, what he has written here could (in my view) be described more precisely as the history of a particular subset of a generation. In his earlier study of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, Zubok himself offers just this kind of definition, clearly describing this subset (without using the term "intelligentsia" at all) as consisting of:

. . . the elite groups and networks that emerged in the late 1950s and moved to the center of political and cultural life thirty years later, during the final stage of the Cold War drama. These elites were "enlightened" party *apparatchiks*, intellectuals, artists, and writers of Moscow and other major urban centers who called themselves *shestidesiatniki*, or "men and women of the sixties," and who were determined to reform and liberalize their country. Their collective efforts would provide the essential background for the dramatic shift in Soviet international behavior under Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 to 1989.<sup>10</sup>

This earlier formulation emphasizes multiple factors: generation, elite status, a dedication to liberalizing reform, and the fact that his subjects ranged from intellectuals and artists to members of the *nomenklatura*. The term "intelligentsia" is perhaps a useful shorthand term here, and Zubok provides more than enough qualifying remarks in the present volume to make the general thrust of his inquiry clear. But the specificity of his earlier formulation has the advantage of clarity.

Second, the disjuncture between Zubok's positive tone of voice throughout most of the book and the severe indictment of this intelligentsia that he ultimately registers is something that derives from a notable imbalance in the book's very structure. *Zhivago's Children* is the story of a generation, and Zubok seeks to portray this generation from its origins down through the end of Soviet power. The heart of his book, however, focuses upon this intelligentsia during the Thaw, from Stalin's death to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. This early period, which occupies fully three-quarters of the book's entire text, presents a vivid and detailed narrative account of the appearance and early character of this intelligentsia.

Zubok's discussion of the intelligentsia during the 1970s and 1980s, though illuminating, functions as something of a coda to his more detailed account of the dramatic transformations that occurred during the 1950s and 1960s.

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<sup>10</sup> Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 164-65.

His text thus tends to assume more than illustrate the “conformism, cowardice, mutual denunciations, cynicism, and hypocrisy” that he cites in his final assessment of this intelligentsia’s compromises and accommodations during this period of decline. A more extensive treatment of these themes might well include insights into the problems of aging, health, family responsibilities, and the dilemmas as well as opportunities that go with increasingly responsible professional positions: in short, Yuri Trifonov’s terrain. Compromise and accommodation may not be as inspiring as the awakening hope of the earlier Thaw, but they are no less interesting. For Zubok, this period of decline is primarily a bridge to his conclusions on the intelligentsia’s role during *glasnost* and *perestroika*. His analysis of the role that Zhivago’s children played under Gorbachev is also something of a schematic essay, no matter how informed or compelling. I wish very much that Zubok had been able to devote the same detail to these latter portions of his book that he did to his treatment of the Thaw.

Zubok gets the politics of the broader intelligentsia pretty much right: the dissident movement was only a small fraction of the overall intelligentsia in Russia, and most within this intelligentsia retained some degree of commitment to socialism. But I think he tends to underestimate the intensity of political criticism and alienation that began to emerge in the 1960s even prior to the Czech invasion. It’s true that criticism during the 1950s and early 1960s was rarely if ever directed toward the overall Soviet system. Likewise, dissidents were only a small part of the broader intelligentsia. But the criticism privately voiced by the late 1960s could embody a visceral rejection of the authority and competence not simply of party leaders, but also of the older “liberal” generation, particularly among writers. Here younger writers often regarded the “benevolent mentoring” on the part of more established seniors as efforts to frustrate their access to publication.<sup>11</sup> In Zubok’s discussion of the intelligentsia’s political ideas, I was puzzled by the absence in the book of any reference to the late Andrei Amal’rik, an important early critical voice. Perhaps it was an oversight: one can’t mention every figure in a generation. But Amal’rik’s ornery originality, intellectual independence and extraordinary inner strength and courage should guarantee him a place in any discussion of this generation of intelligentsia.

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<sup>11</sup>) For an insightful discussion of this phenomenon as well as the entire Brodsky case, see Iakov Gordin, *Rytsar i smert’, ili Zhizn’ kak zamysel: O sud’be Iosifa Brodskogo* (Moscow: Vremia, 2010), pp. 107-11 and *passim*.

In a broad survey such as *Zhivago's Children*, the question of how much to emphasize a particular event or writer is obviously debatable. Nonetheless, it strikes me that Zubok's portrayal of Solzhenitsyn does not really capture his place in the overall history of the time. While certainly recognizing his importance, Zubok's almost exclusive emphasis upon the increasingly vocal and anti-Western nationalism of his publicistic writings doesn't adequately acknowledge his literary achievement, the nature of his civic contributions, or his overall stature. Solzhenitsyn's work transformed the overall literary landscape in Russia overnight. His novels, and even more so the *Gulag Archipelago*, challenged not simply the Soviet regime's vision of Russia's history, but the compromises and half-truths in which too many of Zhivago's children had taken refuge. Solzhenitsyn was and remains a monumental figure. The very writing of the *Gulag Archipelago* must rank as one of the great feats of modern literature, and certainly of the literature of witness. In the 1960s, at least, more than a few of Zhivago's children hung his picture in their apartments in gratitude. Somehow, perhaps inadvertently, Zubok's account fails to convey this.

Similar criticism applies to Zubok's treatment of Vasilii Grossman, and particularly his novel *Life and Fate*, which he describes as an epic book in which Grossman "focused on the Jewish tragedy in the era of totalitarian regimes." (p. 229) It was this, certainly, but it was much more as well: an account of the Second World War on the Eastern front, an early comparison of totalitarianism under Stalin and Hitler, and a fervent endorsement of humanistic values.<sup>12</sup> In their writing, Grossman and Solzhenitsyn alike spoke with a clear moral voice, and it was in large part this honesty and moral clarity that caused them to fall afoul of the authorities. In this respect, they acted not as dissidents, but rather the heirs of Russia's best literary traditions.

Tvardovskii had considered publishing *Life and Fate* in *Novyi Mir* prior to the KGB's seizure of the manuscript, but had not been inclined to do so. Zubok writes that the KGB's action was "a terrible loss for Russian literature, yet not for Tvardovskii, who refused to accept the centrality of the Holocaust theme." (p. 247) Both Tvardovskii and Solzhenitsyn, he argues, "shared an instinctive mistrust of cosmopolitan intellectuals, indifferent to the fate of traditional Russian culture and the peasantry." (p. 247) Here, Zubok surely

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<sup>12</sup> On the humanism of Grossman's literary legacy and the clarity of his assault upon totalitarianism in general, see Tzvetan Todorov's remarkable essay "The Achievement of Vasily Grossman," in *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, trans. David Bellos (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003), pp. 48-74.

meant to insert the phrase “whom they perceived as indifferent. . . .” Failure to do so suggests that “cosmopolitan intellectuals” were indeed “indifferent” to the fate of traditional Russian culture and the peasantry. As a universal generalization, this is simply false, and nowhere more so than in the case of Grossman’s *Life and Fate*, which is in part a moving indictment of the suffering and tragedy of collectivization.

Given Zubok’s focus upon the literary intelligentsia during this period, it would have been worthwhile to devote greater attention to the nefarious role that the Writer’s Union played on so many occasions. Zubok cites the union’s expulsion of Boris Pasternak and credits the sixty-seven writers who signed a petition urging the government to pardon Siniavskii and Daniel. But there is no discussion of high-profile expulsion of Solzhenitsyn (or of Lidia Chukovskaia). The leading role in these cases was often played by minor figures who were quasi-Stalinists, and we might agree that either by age or by temperament they were not among “Zhivago’s children”. But a lot of Zhivago’s children held their tongues in these proceedings. The fulsome (and thus grotesque) praise that writers heaped upon Leonid Brezhnev in 1979 after awarding him the Lenin Prize for Literature has to mark one of the real low points of the later Soviet period. By this time, of course, one had entered a theater of the absurd.

One of Zubok’s harshest judgments of this intelligentsia is that, having gained positions of power and influence under Gorbachev, both their ideas and their understanding of power proved inadequate to the unfolding dilemmas of the time. It’s a fair judgment, I think, but one which we should temper with understanding. It’s worth noting that most of this intelligentsia’s collective goals urged the state to reduce the degree of its overall control, granting citizens greater personal freedom and professional autonomy, and more generally allowing for greater openness and honesty in public life. But asking the state to reduce its censorship, monitoring, tutelage, and overall control does not require any clear and specific notion of just how a society should arrange its economy, or provide for a just and democratic form of government, or finally how these goals might be achieved in practice. It’s hardly surprising that Zhivago’s children devoted little attention to these problems during the period under study. Given the party’s monopoly on all serious public discussion of such matters and the central role that ideology played in the party’s very *raison d’être*, no serious public discussion of other forms of political or economic organization was really possible.

When the Soviet Union ultimately collapsed in 1991, the members of this intelligentsia had wide-ranging notions of what kind of society they hoped to

build, but almost no idea of how one could get from deeply entrenched Soviet patterns to some new framework of social, political, and economic life. The sudden collapse of these earlier institutional patterns meant that the quest for a new set of arrangements would involve a vigorous and determined struggle. Those who hoped that the transition would necessarily lead in serene fashion to a just and prosperous democratic republic with a strong legal foundation would be sorely disappointed. The end of Soviet power and party rule may have been good things, but the price that Russian society – including the intelligentsia – paid in the aftermath was (and remains) a steep one.