

ADULT READERS IN THE SOVIET UNION

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## SYNOPSIS

This thesis is a study of ordinary adult readers and their reading preferences in the USSR in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Chapter One provides background information on Soviet policies towards reading and on the changes in Soviet society which have influenced reading habits over the last 30 years. This is followed by a description of the reader surveys used for the research and a discussion of some methodological problems. Chapter Two is concerned with all aspects of political control over reading, as it affects the writer, the publishing process, the book trade, libraries and ultimately the reader. Chapters Three and Four consider problems of the supply of reading matter through the retail trade and through mass (public) libraries. Chapter Five is an analysis of how various socio-demographic factors affect reading, and of the effect of television on reading. Chapter Six considers the relative importance of books, newspapers and journals, and the balance between fiction and non-fiction in readers' preferences. Chapter Seven is concerned with the reading of non-fiction, whether in books, journals or newspapers, and Chapter Eight provides an analysis of readers' preferences in novels, poetry and plays. The thesis concludes that the many, often contradictory, stereotypes of reading in the USSR all have some foundation in reality.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to explain the realities behind the often contradictory images of readers and reading in the USSR. There is the official picture of the USSR as a 'nation of readers', as 'the largest readership in the world', as Brezhnev boasted at the 24th Party Congress in 1971. Many visitors to the USSR would confirm this, commenting on how Soviet people always seem to be reading on buses, in the parks, in the metro, even while standing on the escalators. Crowded bookshops, people thronging round stalls selling books in the streets and subways, busy libraries open long hours and always full of people studying, are all part of the accepted image of the Soviet reader. Visitors mention the lorry driver they met who quoted Shakespeare to them, the middle-aged chambermaid reciting Pushkin, farmers who are keenly interested in American or English novels in Russian translation. Poetry reading attracts the kind of audiences only pop stars enjoy in Britain. And the USSR can claim one of the top places in the world in terms of number of books, newspapers and journals published per head of population.

And yet, on the other hand, many Soviet readers complain that there really is nothing at all worth reading. The USSR has a reputation as a country where all the good writers have been driven underground or are abroad, where the authors who are able to publish mainly produce dull, hack books which no-one wants to read. There are stories about the all-pervading censorship, about how independent thought is stifled before it can reach the average reader. And then there is the impression of bookshops with very little fiction or poetry, but generously stocked with the works of Lenin and the current political leadership, and with pamphlets supporting the current political campaign, be it the struggle against alcoholism or

the drive to improve labour discipline. Soviet newspapers appear dull and monotonous, with no real news in them, unappealing to the reader.

As is so often the case with stereotypes, there is some truth in all these impressions of Soviet readers and the material available to them, but none give the whole truth. It is the aim of this research to make a more detailed study of the Soviet reader in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s and to provide a more balanced picture of how ideological constraints do affect the provision of reading matter, what the book supply position is like, both for book-buyers and library users, who the readers are and what kind of material they read and would like to read.

Although this is not a comparative study, at some points the Soviet situation will be compared with that in Britain and the West generally. A full comparison of readers in the USSR with their counterparts in Britain or the USA would be interesting, but is beyond the scope of this thesis, although some tentative comparisons are made in the conclusions. At this stage, the research has concentrated on the modern Soviet Union; it is hoped that in future it will be possible to explore the history of the Soviet reader and of libraries and the book-trade in the USSR. Comparisons across time would be illuminating, but are not possible at present.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE READER IN THE SOVIET CONTEXT

Soviet readers must be studied in the context of official policies towards reading and libraries. Many aspects of these policies are explored in later chapters, but this introductory chapter provides a very brief account of official views on the importance of reading, the nature of 'partiinost' as applied to the printed word and of the functions of reading and libraries in Soviet society. This is followed by a summary of recent Soviet views on the nature of free time, and an account of the broader changes in Soviet society which have affected how people use their leisure. This provides a background for discussions later in the thesis of who the readers are and what they prefer to read. After this, the time budget studies and sociological studies of reading which have been the main source for this thesis are described and the difficulties which arise in interpreting them are summarised.

It should be stressed that this thesis is primarily concerned with ordinary readers, not with the reading habits or information needs of specialist groups such as doctors or scientists, or the literary tastes of the intelligentsia in the large cities. This research has concentrated on workers and farmers as readers, and on ordinary mass libraries, not research or university libraries.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

Soviet policies on newspapers, books, reading and libraries are based on the conviction that what people read matters not only to the individual reader, but to the country as a whole. Reading is believed to

influence people's tastes and opinions, to form their view of the world and their level of political awareness, and hence partly determine how they live and work. As well as being a means of political socialisation, reading also plays an important role in educating and informing readers, in raising their qualifications and in providing relaxation and entertainment. This conviction of the importance of reading, that, as Lenin said, 'The book is a great force'<sup>1</sup> is accompanied by an awareness that what people read can influence them in negative ways as well as positive. As Krupskaya put it, 'The book is a two-edged weapon'.<sup>2</sup>

The belief in the power of the printed word underlies all aspects of Soviet policies towards writers, publishing, newspapers and libraries, both, on the one hand, censorship and political control and, on the other, subsidies to publishers, substantial investment in libraries and a constant concern about the availability of publications. Current Soviet policies on reading were largely formed in the early years of Soviet power.

### History

The significance which the first Bolshevik leaders, particularly Lenin and Krupskaya, gave books, reading and libraries had its origins both in their intellectual traditions, which attached great importance to books and ideas as vehicles for social change, political enlightenment and social justice, and in their long periods in exile, when books and newspapers became intensely important to them, both as channels for receiving information and ideas, and as the chief means of communicating with other intellectuals and with the workers and peasants inside Russia.<sup>3</sup> In addition a number of revolutionary activists, notably Krupskaya,

had experience of teaching the workers and running illegal libraries in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Their library work and teaching experience convinced them that workers' consciousness could be raised by reading the right books and that it was essential to guide readers towards books appropriate for their interests and stage of development.<sup>4</sup> Experience of illegal libraries and study circles influenced the early Soviet emphasis on small collections of well-chosen books and on *directed* and purposeful reading.

At the very beginning of Soviet rule, in the early hours of the morning after the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917, Lenin briefed Lunacharskii, just appointed Commissar for Education, on his new tasks:

Try to pay attention to libraries in the first instance. We must borrow from progressive bourgeois countries all those methods they have developed for making library books widely available. We must make books accessible to the masses as soon as possible. We must try to make our books available all over Russia, in as large a quantity as possible.<sup>1</sup>

A little later, Lenin and Lunacharskii met by chance in a corridor in the Smol'nii. Lenin spoke briefly about the work of Narkompros in general, and then went on:

I attach great importance to libraries. You must work on this matter yourself. Call the library specialists together. In America they are doing a great deal of good in this area. The book is a great force. As a result of the Revolution, the hunger for it is growing rapidly. We must provide for the readers both through large reading rooms and by making the book mobile, so it can reach the reader. We must use the post for this, set up all sorts of mobiles. We probably won't have enough books for our huge population, in which the number of literate people will grow. We must give the book wings and increase its circulation many times over, otherwise we shall have a book famine.<sup>6</sup>

These two quotations from Lenin hint at the major themes in Soviet publishing, librarianship and reader studies in the first decades of Soviet power. These included briefly (1) the importance of books and

libraries in educating the Soviet people; (2) the expansion of the reading public after the Revolution; (3) the relationship between literacy and the supply of reading matter; (4) the need to direct and control the availability of reading matter; (5) the relevance of foreign approaches to reading and libraries, and the development of new types of publications & new forms of library service, appropriate to the needs of the Soviet people and the Soviet state.<sup>7</sup>

These issues, and decisions taken about them in the early years of Soviet power, are still relevant to Soviet policies on the printed word today.

### Partiinost'

The basic principle underlying Soviet theory and practice towards the printed word is 'partiinost'', a term which can be translated as 'party-minded', 'party-spirited' or (slightly ambiguously) 'partisan'. The principle of 'partiinost' was first set out by Lenin in his 1905 article 'Party organization and party literature',<sup>8</sup> and after the Revolution was extended to cover all aspects of literary creativity, publishing, the media and educational work in the broadest sense. Briefly, in relation to newspapers, books and libraries, it means that they can not be apolitical or neutral, but must conform to principles laid down by the Communist Party, must operate in conformity with its policies and come under the supervision of the Party. The principle of 'partiinost' is applied to all the mass media and to all types of publications and libraries. However, in practice, it has the greatest impact on television, radio, films, newspapers, popular magazines, novels and plays and mass libraries. Scientific and technical publications and libraries serving scholars and specialists are less closely supervised, although, as will be shown in chapter two, they are still subject to political control.

Newspapers, for instance, are seen primarily not as purveyors of information and news, but as a means of propagandizing party decisions and policies, of organising and mobilizing the population in support of the party. Freedom of information in the press exists within the confines of what the Party determines as being in the interests of the Soviet people, not as an absolute value. Fiction and poetry, including literature for children, are expected to inculcate ideas and values consonant with Soviet policy, or, at least, not inimical to it. They are not judged by aesthetic or literary qualities alone, but by the degree of *partiinnost'*.

How *partiinnost'* affects ideas and publications at all stages of their communication from writer to reader is explored more fully in the following chapter.

#### READING

The act of reading as such is the meeting of an individual reader with a particular written text, and the study of this interaction is the concern of reading psychology. However, to Soviet policy-makers, reading is basically a social phenomenon. Its social functions are expressed in the formation of the reader's level of consciousness, political awareness, aesthetic tastes and moral qualities, in improving the reader's professional qualifications and skills and in encouraging an active and creative approach to work and life.

Officially, reading is valued as a powerful means of political socialisation. It is an essential element in creating the 'all-round harmoniously developed personality' which is an important characteristic of the 'new Soviet person', who is an essential prerequisite for the

building of full communism. Reading is also an important means of building up a skilled labour force, able to adapt to new technology and to introduce new ideas. A well-educated population is essential to the future development of the USSR as an industrial power, and reading is a vital element in post-school education. As a form of entertainment and relaxation, reading is comparatively cheap to provide, not requiring the capital investment needed for many leisure activities such as sports centres. A well-read Soviet people, the 'samyi chitayushchii narod v mire' of which Brezhnev boasted at the 24th CPSU Congress in 1971<sup>9</sup> is seen as genuine proof of the advantages of a socialist system.

For Soviet policy-makers and librarians, it is not sufficient that a high proportion of the population read daily newspapers or books, or that they read them regularly. The ideal reader should read purposefully, not simply choosing interesting books and articles at random. The reader should also read widely, not restricting his or her reading to novels and the newspapers, but reading non-fiction books and journals too. As well as reading fiction, readers should develop balanced interests by reading social science material, books and periodicals on natural history, science and technology, literary criticism and material on the arts, as well as devoting some of their time to reading books and articles which will help them to do their jobs better. Model readers turn to books and journals at work, at home and to pass their leisure time. The extent to which Soviet readers match up to this model is discussed in later chapters.

People who enjoy reading do so for a variety of individual reasons, but some generalisations can be made. First, compared to radio, television and the cinema, books and journals offer a far wider choice of entertainment



and information, more varied in style, content and intellectual level. Second, the reader can choose which parts of a book or journal are worth reading, and can skim other sections or ignore them completely; this is not possible with the audio-visual media. Third, reading is more demanding than watching television, but it can also be more rewarding. Fourth, reading is an essentially individual act. It may therefore provide a refuge from pressures to become involved in collective activities, and become an area of refuge in a crowded flat or hostel. Fifth, reading can be apolitical and escapist, offering, as Hollander put it, 'an irreproachably legitimate escape from the realities of life.'<sup>10</sup> Thus, the public's enjoyment of reading coincides with official support for the printed word, albeit with different motives and goals.

#### Reading and the media

In Soviet usage, reading is an important part of the group of activities referred to as 'cultural consumption'. This term embraces listening to the radio, watching television, reading books, journals and newspapers, going to the cinema, the theatre, the circus or concerts and visiting museums and exhibitions. Part-time study is sometimes also included.

The media differ in their functions, and in the demands they make of the participants. Some simply provide rest, recreation and entertainment, others satisfy the need for aesthetic experience, for current information or more profound knowledge. Some forms of 'cultural consumption' are primarily aural, such as radio, some are primarily visual, while others combine the two. Some, such as television, the circus and variety shows, are immediately accessible to everyone, as they are presented in

a natural way. However, the printed text is organized in a more complex way, and to comprehend it requires special training, quite different from the natural submersion in radio and television.<sup>11</sup> Where radio and television and, to a lesser extent, newspapers have an integrative effect, in that they direct the same message at the same time to all participants, books and periodicals are more differentiated, addressing a number of different audiences with more specialized messages. Radio and television assume a homogeneous audience, whereas the printed word operates at a number of different levels, from specialist scientific journals to magazines for leisure reading.<sup>12</sup>

Some forms of 'cultural consumption' are basically home-oriented (eg television), while others take people out of their homes into the wider society and give opportunities for social contact as well as entertainment and information. Some activities are particularly suited to those whose leisure is perforce largely spent at home, whether through age and infirmity or family responsibilities. Some activities are more solitary than others. Television, the cinema and the circus can be shared with other people and can be enjoyed collectively, whereas reading is an essentially solitary act which does not involve other people. Some activities can be slotted into a convenient hour or half hour in a busy life, whereas others require one to be in a given place at a set time. Listening to the radio or watching TV can successfully be combined with other activities. Reading tends to require more attention, and while one can dip into the newspaper or a popular magazine, reading a book tends to require a longer stretch of time to be worth-while. Some activities can be more easily postponed than others. A favourite TV programme has to be watched when it is broadcast (the video has yet to reach the USSR), whereas reading a novel can be postponed. A newspaper

very rapidly becomes stale, whereas popular magazines are current for a month or more.

Thus, although radio and television can take on some of the functions of reading, particularly in providing entertainment and current affairs information, reading still has a special role, both in official media policy and in popular estimation.

#### THE LIBRARY

The principle function of the Soviet mass library is to act as an ideological agency of the CPSU. The role of the library as an instrument of Party policy and as a means of political propaganda was hotly contested in the 1920s, but since then the role of the library as an ideological agency has not been questioned publicly. The 1974 CPSU Resolution on libraries gives priority to their work in 'carrying out active propaganda of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, providing extensive assistance to Party organizations in the communist upbringing of the Soviet people...'<sup>13</sup> The 1984 Library Law reaffirms this principle.<sup>14</sup>

The other functions of the mass library are, first, to raise people's standard of general education; second to promote the literature people need to work more effectively; third to aid their general culture and aesthetic development; and fourth to provide books for entertainment and relaxation. The emphasis placed on these functions has varied over the post-War period. During the 1970s and early 1980s, for instance, mass libraries have been encouraged to play a larger role in providing scientific and technical information to the ordinary worker. Earlier,

when a larger proportion of the work-force lacked secondary education, the role of libraries in promoting self-education was stressed.

In Soviet librarianship, the principle of *partiinost'* is accompanied by the belief that the librarian must be an active agent in the community, go out and publicise books, not just passively issue books to readers who come to the library. Librarians are expected to organise all sorts of book displays, conferences about books, meetings with authors, to take books out into the fields and onto production lines to ensure that farmers and industrial workers have every opportunity to use the library.

#### Reading guidance

As well as attracting people to use the library, Soviet librarians have always been expected to influence the content and level of what people read. Reading guidance has been authoritatively defined as:

A pedagogical process of systematically and purposefully influencing the content and character of reading, the choice of literature and the comprehension of what has been read(..) The aim of reading guidance is to develop in the reader independent thought, to inculcate reading skills and a cultured approach to reading and the ability to critically evaluate, select and assimilate information (..) In the process of reading guidance the reader's world view is expanded, he or she develops new and socially valuable reading interests and new spiritual needs, which facilitate the development of the socialist type of personality.<sup>15</sup>

In practice, reading guidance has three main elements. First, it is intended to develop the habit of systematic reading and to broaden the readers' interests. Second, the librarian is expected to encourage the reader to read material which will promote attitudes and actions which conform to current official policies. Third, it is the duty of the librarian to ensure that readers borrow material appropriate to their educational standard. Librarians should achieve this without being

patronising and without forcing readers to borrow books which they do not want. The librarian is expected to pick up one of the subjects in which the reader expresses interest, and use this as a bridge towards widening his or her interests, channelling them in the desired direction. Peter Burnett gives two typical examples, one of how a librarian broadened the horizons of a reader who only borrowed books on the history and architecture of Leningrad by suggesting a book giving short biographies of the people after whom the streets and squares of Leningrad are named. This led her on to reading in more detail about the lives of outstanding members of the Communist Party and then to reading Party history. The other example was of a reader who was primarily interested in science fiction who was encouraged to borrow a popular book on outer space and interplanetary science, in the hope that this would stimulate an interest in Soviet achievements in science and technology.<sup>16</sup>

Reading guidance can sometimes deteriorate into forcing onto readers whatever is being promoted in connection with current political campaigns. This was particularly prevalent in the Stalinist period. Reading guidance could be practised most easily in the closed access libraries which predominated until the early 1960s. Readers had to ask the librarian for a particular work they required, or else specify the subject about which they wanted to read. Many readers would simply ask for 'something interesting'. In open access collections, however, readers can browse at the shelves and select something appropriate from the books available on a topic, or choose an appealing novel for themselves. In the 1970s and 1980s, there is evidence that readers are less willing to accept guidance from the librarian. People are better educated, more independent and dislike petty tutelage. They prefer to choose books for themselves, or to follow the advice of friends and colleagues, rather than seek guidance from the librarian.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, it remains a basic principle of Soviet librarianship that libraries must not simply respond to readers' expressed demands, but must seek to provide the material appropriate to their real needs.

## FREE TIME

### Theory

Reading in the USSR has to be considered in the context of changes in the amount of leisure at people's disposal and in the functions of leisure, and the alternative ways of using it over the post-War period.

In traditional Soviet ideology (as in the Puritan ethic), work is considered to occupy the central place in people's lives. In this approach the primary function of free time is seen as that of regenerating the workers' strength for another day's work, through eating, sleeping and resting. It also emphasises free-time activities which directly benefit productive work, such as part-time study and work-related reading. Work-oriented views of leisure may tend to put a high value on passive, regenerative forms of leisure activity, rather than more active ones which make more demands on people's energies.<sup>18</sup>

Work-oriented views of free time generally define it as time free of obligations, when people have some choice over their activities.

However, as Petrosyan observes:

'Free time' is not empty time. Rather, it is called 'free' because it is free of work; because the worker is free to determine its distribution; because it is free of the need to satisfy basic physical needs; and because the worker is free to postpone or change leisure activities, unlike those directly necessary for regenerating working capacity.<sup>19</sup>

Unlike many Western writers, Soviet sociologists reject the notion of leisure (free time) activities being only those without utilitarian

or ideological ends. Prudenskii, for instance, defines free time as that part of non-working time

which is spent on study, self-education, voluntary social work, leisure, physical culture and sport, hobbies, creative activities etc. i.e. that time which workers use at their own discretion for their all-round development.<sup>20</sup>

In this approach, free time activities are clearly intended to contribute to the building of Communism and to personal development; pleasure has a low priority. It is a 'work ethic', not a 'leisure ethic'.

Soviet society is deeply concerned about how people spend their free time. Brezhnev said 'a person's behaviour in everyday life is not his personal affair. Free time is not time free of responsibilities to society'.<sup>21</sup> The 'improving' aspect of Soviet leisure policy is well expressed by Zemtsov:

Every person in socialist society must consider not only his personal desires and wishes, but also the interests of society. Such anti-social phenomena as emptily passing the time, drunkenness, playing cards and other vices are alien to socialist society. They all impoverish people both morally and spiritually, lead to their degradation.<sup>22</sup>

This sort of statement suggests that free time and leisure can be seen as another area for social control, rather than an area of relative personal autonomy. On the other hand, since the 1960s the role of free-time activities in promoting the all-round development of the personality has been emphasized. It emerged from the debate at that time about the nature of the future communist society and the concept of the 'New Soviet Person'. The all-round, harmoniously developed individual is seen as both the goal and as the ultimate value of communist culture, the most important condition for the further development of socialist society as a whole.<sup>23</sup> Free-time activities are still recognised as having a major role to play in improving labour

productivity, but greater stress is laid on raising cultural standards, sports and outdoor activities, and relaxation. Writers such as Grushin advocated paying far more attention to the quality and variety of people's leisure activities and to what they get out of them. He attacked the view that leisure activities were useful only insofar as they contributed to making people's work more effective, seeing in this a manifestation of the value system which insisted that individuals devoted all their strength to society, but paid little attention to what society gave in return.<sup>24</sup> From the mid-1960s, Soviet writers (notably Patrushev) began to cite passages from Marx supporting the concept of free time as a self-centred category contributing to the development of human potential. One frequently-used passage is:

Free time, disposable time, is wealth itself, partly for the enjoyment of the product, partly for free activity, which - unlike labour - is not dominated by the pressure of an extraneous purpose which must be fulfilled, and the fulfilment of which is regarded as a natural necessity or a social duty, according to one's inclination.<sup>25</sup>

The concept of 'socially required free time' was introduced as a parallel and counterpart to the Marxist notion of 'socially required work time'.<sup>26</sup> This realisation of the intrinsic importance of leisure and free time activities led several writers to look more closely at the definition of free time and, in particular, at the nature of leisure. The debate about what activities properly constitute part of 'free time' has continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

On a linguistic point, it should be noted that in Russian, the word for leisure (*dosug*) tends to have slightly derogatory overtones of 'doing nothing' or to be rather limited in the kind of activities it covers. Thus the authoritative review of Soviet sociology published in the 1960s defines it as 'one of the parts of free time, connected



with the restoration of people's psychic and physical energies'.<sup>27</sup>

'Free time' was understood by Marx to be a wider concept than leisure, for he wrote of 'free time' providing time both for leisure and for more elevated activities.<sup>28</sup> In the majority of Soviet writings, 'dosug' is equated with passive rest and relaxation. However, in this thesis 'leisure' is used in the broader sense of 'discretionary time'.

#### Free time: underlying changes

Over the last thirty years, there have been a number of major changes in the economic, political and social life of the USSR which have affected how much free time people have and how they use it, and account for the increased interest in free time activities shown by sociologists and policy-makers.

First among these have been reductions in the length of the working week and the transfer from a six-day to a five-day week. Precise definitions of what activities form part of the working day have varied, but the general pattern is clear. The working day was longest during World War II but in 1959 Soviet workers were still spending some 51-53 hours a week at work.<sup>29</sup> In 1960, the seven-hour working day was reintroduced and hours of work began to fall. According to the Pskov survey in 1965, male factory workers spent 46 hours a week at work and women 44 hours. Other studies in the 1960s show a working week of 42-44 hours.<sup>30</sup> By 1980, the average working week for industrial workers was reported to be down to 40.6 hours, 7.2 hours less than in 1955.<sup>31</sup>

Calculating working hours in agriculture and changes over time is difficult, but Zuzanek concluded that the year-round workload of male agricultural workers was in fact greater than in the 1960s than in the

1920s or 1930s. Their year-round workload was some 400-500 hours more than that of industrial workers and employees in the mid-1960s.<sup>32</sup> There are, of course, considerable variations between summer and winter working hours, and between different rural occupational groups.<sup>33</sup>

Official figures for working time do not take into account unpaid voluntary work (subbotniki) or, to some extent, overtime. Time spent on second jobs or on 'black economy' work is also underreported.<sup>34</sup> Average figures for the working week also conceal considerable variations. For instance, many people who do not work fixed hours (eg teachers, doctors, managers) work far longer hours than average.

In 1966-67 most Soviet factories and offices switched from a six-day to a five-day working week. The working week remained the same, so the working day was extended and every 8th Saturday made a working day. A study in Taganrog showed that this change meant that people save 15% of the time spent on travelling to work, changing etc, and also led to a number of changes in the use of non-working time, particularly a fall in the number of hours spent on household chores. Free time increased by about one fifth and, further, was concentrated into two days of the week, rather than being available in small quantities over 6 days and one free day.<sup>35</sup> This change made it easier for people to engage in activities requiring a longer period of free time. In a short period of leisure one can, for instance, read a bit of a book or snatch a few minutes of a TV programme, but not go out in the country or go to a concert.

Second, the amount of free time available has gradually increased over the post-War period, although not directly in proportion to the

reduction in working hours. Non-working time has to be used for household chores, work on the private plot and child-care, as well as eating and sleeping. Most of the burden of child-care and household chores falls on women, who tend to use part of any increase in non-working time to spend more time on these activities rather than on leisure pursuits. The amount of leisure time people have also varies with age, family commitments, material position and the type of work they do.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, most people do have more leisure time than in the 1940s and 1950s.

Third, the proportion of the population living in urban areas has increased considerably. Urbanisation has a number of implications for people's free time use, including changes in living conditions, the structured working day, the removal of traditional constraints and familiar pursuits, and a far wider choice of leisure activities.

Fourth, the standard of housing has improved enormously throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This encourages the development of home and family based leisure activities. People living in crowded communal flats or workers hostels are more likely to go to a library to read or study, to a club or bar to socialise and to go to the cinema rather than stay at home and watch television.

Fifth, the disposable income of Soviet citizens has risen rapidly. As well as household equipment, which eases the burden of house-work, Soviet families are now much more likely to own televisions, tape-recorders and sports equipment. Although the level of private car ownership is still far below that of Western countries, many families do have the opportunity to go out together as a group into the country,

rather than rely on public transport or on organised group excursions, often provided by the trade union. These developments are viewed positively by Soviet sociologists and policy-makers, as evidence of the rising living standards of the population. They are also seen as increasing the family's influence over how children and young people in particular spend their free time, and strengthening the family by encouraging husbands and wives to spend their free time together and with their children.

Sixth, the level of education in the USSR has increased enormously over the last 30 years. The proportion of people with a higher education has grown sharply, while at the same time the generation which received only a few years' schooling is gradually dying out. Officially virtually the whole adult population is literate.<sup>37</sup> As will be shown in chapter 5, educational level has a very significant effect on media use, especially reading. Conversely, part-time study, including work-related reading, has played a very important role in raising the educational level and providing a skilled work-force.

Seventh, there is growing official concern about the poor, even anti-social, use of leisure time. Crime and vandalism, drunkenness and alcoholism, are often blamed on the poor provision of leisure facilities and individuals' own 'inadequate culture of leisure'. The amount of free time at people's disposal may well have increased more rapidly than the provision of leisure facilities.<sup>38</sup>

Eighth, partly as a result of better housing and more consumer goods, leisure is becoming more privatised, more often based in the home or spent with friends. Thus, there is a tendency for people's expenditure

of time to shift from the public realm, including work and places of collective entertainment, to the private, where it is less easily controlled and directed.<sup>39</sup>

Last - but not least - there has been in the post-Stalin period a rejection of coercion as the predominant means of social control.<sup>40</sup> People have acquired more opportunities to express their individuality, to make choices about their lives, including how they spend their leisure time. Although there is still a heavy puritanical residue in the official ideology and a great emphasis on the work ethic, many people - especially younger people - are taking a far more hedonistic view of life. Hollander stresses the tension between 'the official intention to make (leisure) functional and the popular pressures to make it private and apolitical'.<sup>41</sup> There are parallels between the diminishing centrality of the church and religion in the USA and Western Europe and the declining influence of ideological convictions in the USSR in their implications for the development of a 'leisure ethic'.<sup>42</sup>

It is against this background that time budget studies and sociological studies of reading have been carried out.

#### TIME BUDGETS

Soviet time budget studies date back to the early 1920s. Strumilin's pioneering studies of factory workers and their families, employees and farmers in 1922-24 made use of time-budget techniques to explore broad social and economic problems and provide the base for policy recommendations and for longer-term forecasts of the development of Soviet society. In the later 1920s, time-budget studies tended to

concentrate on narrower socio-economic groups of particular importance to the state, and were mainly concerned with making more rational use of their working time. In the early 1930s, interest in large-scale time-budget studies revived. These early Soviet time budgets were particularly concerned with problems of labour planning and social welfare. Time-budget studies could also provide some measures of social and economic changes over the previous decade. These pre-war studies - particularly Strumilin's - still provide valuable data for comparisons over time. However, as Zuzanek observes:

In the increasingly dogmatic atmosphere of the 1930s, when only positive trends were expected to take place, it often became tempting to substitute desirable trends for the actual ones, even at the expense of suppressing information or manipulating the data.<sup>43</sup>

In 1936, all work on time-budgets was stopped.

During the period of post-war reconstruction, little attention was paid to problems of free time and leisure activities. In view of the enormous efforts required to rebuild the country, this is hardly surprising. People worked very long hours. Housework and shopping were very demanding, and living conditions of course generally poor. In addition, many people had to follow evening classes in order to catch up on basic education lost during the war. Attention was focussed on the task of reconstruction and increasing labour productivity, rather than on longer-term and less concrete objectives such as creating 'the new Soviet man' or discussions of the nature of a future Communist society. And, as Hollander rightly observes:

The overwhelmingly coercive relationship between the state and citizen made concern with more subtle aspects of regulating and controlling leisure time seem superfluous: there was far less willingness to grant the right to choose among competing possibilities for the utilization of leisure time.<sup>44</sup>

Time-budget studies were one of the first areas of sociological research to emerge in the USSR after the Thaw. The first study took place in a Moscow textile factory in December 1957, and time-budget studies rapidly became widespread. Initially, the main focus of attention was working time, as time budgets were seen as a way of increasing labour productivity and solving labour problems. Non-working time was studied in relation to work, with particular emphasis on its role in regenerating people's strength for the next day's work and on part-time study and training. However, from the early 1960s, increasing significance was attached to the role of free time in promoting the all-round development of a member of socialist society,<sup>45</sup> and time budget studies began to pay far more attention to the quality of people's lives outside work. Numerous studies drew attention to the amount of time working women in particular spent on household chores. From the mid-1960s, there were a number of studies of media use (including reading), which show the impact of television on people's leisure behaviour. Since the early 1970s, there has been less use of time budget studies alone as a research method. In the 1970s and early 1980s there has been a tendency to carry out deeper studies of particular problems or aspects of people's lives and to use time-budget studies alongside other methods of analysis. For instance, a number of studies of media use, including reading, have made use of time budget studies in their attempt to build up a fuller picture of the place of reading in people's lives.

## THE STUDY OF READERS AND READING

### History

The study of readers and reading in Russia has a long history, going back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Educators, often influenced

by populist thinking, wanted to establish how literacy affected the peasants, how it changed their attitudes and way of life. They read books aloud to the peasants, discussed books with literate peasants, ran small libraries in schools, and noted the peasants' comments and preferences. With the development of marxist study circles from the 1890s, workers' preferences were studied too. As Jeffrey Brooks has observed:

Participants in the nineteenth century reader studies were motivated by a widely held belief in the power of the printed word to form the life of the individual and society. They studied the common readers' tastes and reactions to literature in order to understand and to influence the social changes taking place in Russia.<sup>46</sup>

Pre-revolutionary studies of workers and peasants as readers assembled a great deal of valuable information for liberal educators and revolutionary activists alike, which was used to improve newspapers, books and pamphlets published for the masses, to make teaching methods more effective and so accelerate the creation of an educated population.<sup>47</sup>

After the Revolution, studies of readers drew heavily on the pre-Revolutionary tradition, while at the same time criticising many of the researchers involved for their liberal approach. Large-scale studies of readers first took place in the Red Army, and spread to trade union, town and rural mass libraries and reading huts. By 1926, Smushkova, Head of the Library Section of Glavpolitprosvet, had identified 187 published studies of the Soviet reader.<sup>48</sup> The studies vary considerably in scope, purpose and methods. Many consist of simple reports by librarians of their impressions of readers' tastes and needs;<sup>49</sup> others are far more sophisticated surveys based on questionnaires and the study of library issue records.<sup>50</sup> Two interesting studies were based on letters to Krest'yanskaya gazeta from readers



asking for books, and from librarians and peasant reporters describing local reactions to books and newspapers.<sup>51</sup> Other studies concentrated on workers' comments on literature, particularly when collected at readers' conferences.<sup>52</sup> In addition, there were several studies of newspaper audiences.<sup>53</sup>

Taken together, these studies provide an enormous amount of data about reading in the 1920s and, to a much smaller extent, in the 1930s, but interpreting it is difficult. First, the studies had varying goals: some collected data to help newspaper and mass book publishers improve the acceptability of their publications, while others were intended to improve reading guidance or report on cultural advance. Second, many are based on very small populations and rely heavily on open questions in questionnaires and on librarians' or teachers' impressions of readers' reactions and interests. Third, the definition of social groups varies considerably between studies. Nevertheless, they do provide a reasonably reliable general picture.

Throughout the 1920s the nature and methods of reading studies were actively discussed, with the debate centring on Rubakin's ideas on bibliopsychology, on the concept of reading interests, and the relative weight to be attached to readers as individuals or as representatives of a social class. However, sociological and psychological studies of the reader ended in 1931, alongside other work in sociology, and were replaced by articles about exemplary individual readers, often Stakhanovites, and about the well-organised reading programmes being followed by readers of some model library.

## THE PRESENT

With the gradual revival of sociological theory and methods after the death of Stalin, reader studies again became possible. The first post-War survey was carried out in Leningrad libraries in 1956-1957 by staff and students from the Leningrad State Library Institute under the direction of B V Bank, who had organised a number of interesting reading studies in the 1920s.<sup>54</sup> In 1959, the Lenin Library first set up a study of readers' interests, which involved mass libraries in Moscow, Ivanovo, Astrakhan, Kursk and Novosibirsk. This included analysing loan records, collecting readers' comments on the books they returned to the library, and carrying out a survey of library members.<sup>55</sup> This was followed by the first large-scale study of readers, which was carried out in 1963-65 and focussed on young urban workers (age group 16-28).<sup>56</sup> The study was based in mass libraries in Moscow, Leningrad and 52 other cities throughout the RSFSR. Readers' loan records and unsatisfied requests were analysed and many thousands of young people asked to complete questionnaires about how much they read, what they liked to read and why they read. Nearly 15,000 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of between 25 and 50%. There was a higher response from older workers within this age group, and the more skilled. The questionnaires were distributed and collected in most cases by Komsomol activities, which may have had some effect on the findings of the survey in that respondents were presumably not assured of confidentiality. Although there were also some problems with the design of the survey, it nevertheless yielded some useful information about reading preferences and library use.

The Lenin Library's next major study was the 'Sovetskii chitatel' survey of 1965-1967.<sup>57</sup> This too was based on libraries, but included

eight republics outside the RSFSR. The study covered a number of different social groups - industrial workers and engineering and technical personnel (ITR), farmers (sovkhoz employees and active kolkhoz members), teachers, students and secondary school pupils. The methods used included a detailed analysis over some months of selected library users' loans and their comments on what they had read. This was supplemented by asking readers to complete questionnaires or to write 'readers' autobiographies' - an essay describing what books had meant to them at different stages in their lives, and what they meant to them now. In rural areas, the researchers also interviewed readers. In all, the researchers collected nearly 7,000 questionnaires, 400 readers' autobiographies and over 1,000 detailed reading analyses, plus summary reports on loans and readers from 54 libraries and material from 83 readers' conferences. While this survey provides a detailed picture of library use, it takes little account of the extent to which readers used non-library sources. The researchers also found that it was mainly the most active and committed readers who agreed to complete questionnaires or give detailed comments on books, which tended to distort the study's findings. The questions were often designed to elicit a positive response - for instance, if people are asked directly if they read the Russian classics or Lenin's works, they will feel under considerable pressure to say yes. Because of the heavy reliance on library data, and the drawbacks in the design of the questionnaires, the 'Sovietskii chitatel'' survey does tend to draw a more glowing picture of Soviet readers than do some of the later surveys, which used different methods.

The Lenin Library's next major project was a study of reading in small towns in the RSFSR, defined as towns with a population of under

50,000.<sup>58</sup> Unlike preceding studies, this study was concerned with the population as a whole, not just library members and not just the economically active. It also differed in that it paid considerable attention to the reading of newspapers and journals as well as books, and studied reading in relationship to the other media, particularly television, using time budget analysis. Another innovation was the attention given to the supply of books and journals - library and bookshop stocks were analysed and readers invited to comment on material they had been unable to obtain. The study used as its main base the town of Ostrogozhsk in Voronezh oblast', and carried out less detailed sociological surveys and analyses of library services and loans in another 7 towns. In a further 16 towns, the researchers just analysed library statistics. The methods used in this survey were more sophisticated than in previous ones, and questions were carefully designed to reduce people's tendency to give the answers which would 'look good'. An important element in their surveys were questions about what the respondent was actually reading at the time of the survey, and what book or journal or newspaper had been read just before the interviewer's visit. This approach gives a more realistic view of what people are actually reading, although it does not take into account what they would have chosen to read had the book supply been better. Because of its coverage of readers who do not use libraries, and of those who do not read books, the 'small towns' survey usually gives a less positive view of Soviet readers than do previous studies.

The small towns study was followed in 1973-75 by a study of villages in all republics of the USSR.<sup>59</sup> This study too was concerned with all types of reading, and with people who read little or not at all, as well as active readers and library members. The researchers carried out

sample surveys in order to establish how widespread reading was, how much people read and how they obtained their reading matter. Subscriptions to newspapers and journals as well as book purchases were recorded. This was followed by detailed studies of the 'reading atmosphere' in 5,000 families and by a full analysis of the reading preferences of 7,500 working adults. This was supplemented by an analysis of the loan records of 25,000 library users, and interviews with village librarians on their views of reading habits in the villages and the supply of books. This study provides a great deal of information on the non-Russian population and their reading preferences, as well as a detailed picture of reading in Russian villages.

The Lenin Library's most recent study was concerned with the industrial worker as reader.<sup>60</sup> So far, only snippets of information about its findings appear to have been published. It was carried out in 1980-82 in Moscow and six other major industrial centres in the RSFSR, and involved workers in heavy and light industry. Surveys were backed up by studies in 25 mass (Ministry of Culture and Trade Union) libraries in the survey towns. The researchers seem to have paid particular attention to the role of fellow-workers in encouraging people to read, and to non-library sources of advice about what to read as well as the exchange of privately-owned books. It is hoped that the full results of this survey can be incorporated into any published work based on this thesis.

From 1985, the Lenin Library is reported to be embarking on a study of Soviet readers' private libraries, of their activity as book buyers as well as book borrowers.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to these large-scale studies, there have been a number of other important surveys dealing with specific subject areas or groups of readers. These include the State Public History Library's study of the reading of socio-political literature, particularly history, Dobrynina's study of the attitude of young non-Russians in the minority republics to reading Russian literature, and studies of the information needs of various professional groups.<sup>62</sup> There have also been a number of surveys of reading in the national republics.<sup>63</sup> This thesis concentrates on ordinary readers and on leisure reading, and so a number of these surveys have not been analysed. Although some material from the union republics has been included, most of the material presented has been drawn from the RSFSR.

#### Aims and functions

The major studies of reading in the 1960s and 1970s have had a number of differing purposes. First, reading is seen as a measure of the general cultural level of the population, an indicator of, for instance, differences between the urban and peasant outlook or of the reduction in variations between the nationalities of the USSR. Wide-ranging reading tastes contribute to the formation of the 'all round developed personality' of the ideal Soviet citizen. Second, reading can shed light on social and individual psychology; the psychology of reading is not discussed at all in this thesis. Third, studies of reading contribute to the general understanding of how the media operate in the USSR, and thus of the effectiveness of the various agencies entrusted with ideological control, especially newspapers, journals, books and libraries. Fourth, studies of reading are also intended to improve the operation of all the organisations involved

in the production and dissemination of the printed word. They can provide publishers with information on the demand for certain types of book and the need for reprints, and how many copies of a particular book might be needed. For libraries, they are a source for information on unsatisfied needs and on deficiencies in library stocks. Reader studies are also essential if librarians are to be able to guide reading, as they can provide a sound basis for differentiating readers. Reader studies can give a reliable and detailed picture of the reading interests of different groups in the population which is most valuable both in building up library stocks and in reading guidance.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, some reading studies are mainly propagandist in intent, designed to show how well-read the Soviet people are, both in comparison to the West and to their pre-Revolutionary counterparts. Some studies clearly aim to demonstrate how well reader guidance is organised in a particular library, claiming very high performance in, for instance, loans of political books and pamphlets or describing individual model readers. Little use has been made of such material in this research. However, other surveys attempt to give a much more balanced picture, including, for instance, data on the extent of television viewing compared to reading or criticisms of the average reader's taste in novels. These studies are often based on extensive sociological research and generally seem to be reasonably reliable. Such studies, especially those carried out by Lenin Library researchers or leading sociologists, have been used heavily for this thesis.

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

When using time budget studies, surveys of media use (including reading) and other sociological studies, one has to be aware of the drawbacks and limitations of the various methods. First, in all surveys, people may not be convinced that their responses will be kept confidential. They may be intimidated by having people in some position of authority (such as librarians, komsomol or Party activists) distributing questionnaires or collecting data.

Second, respondents may feel pressurised to give the 'right' answers, ie those which conform most closely to what they perceive to be the official ideal, rather than be truthful. Reading is generally a high prestige activity in the USSR, and so this problem of normative bias may be worse in studies devoted primarily to reading and media use than in time budgets. As Hollander observes 'Since the ideal citizen is supposed to be cultured and well-informed, a high consumption of reading matter is almost a political virtue',<sup>65</sup> and some over-reporting seems inevitable. However, time budget studies may be more accurate in this respect than studies concentrating on the media or on reading. As two Soviet sociologists have observed, people may be willing to state that they have done little reading during the survey period, but be unwilling to admit their inadequacies by stating that in general they do not read books, or read very little.<sup>66</sup>

Third, surveys can be distorted by errors of memory on the part of the respondents, and by poorly designed and defined questions. For instance, people may be asked if they read books 'regularly', without defining whether this means every week or once a month. People given a check-list of particular genres of novel may tick all or most because



they have read, say, the occasional science fiction novel, but would not volunteer science fiction if asked to state, without prompting, what they prefer. Readers may omit to mention the light or frivolous books they enjoy, mentioning only the more 'improving' works they have read, unless asked about what they are actually reading at the time of the survey. People asked for their favourite authors may unthinkingly list writers studied at school.

Fourth, many surveys concentrate on quantitative indicators, such as the duration of an activity and the choice of activity, or the motivation of the participant. As Rogers observes:

The problem is that the same amount of time spent on an activity by different people may simply mean different things. Fifteen minutes of time spent on reading a newspaper by a highly educated and purposive reader may mean coverage of a much larger amount and wider range of material than the same amount of time spent by a reader with less *edu*cation and reading skill.<sup>67</sup>

A further drawback of quantitative measurement is that a person who reads five light novels appears to be a more active reader than one who, in the same period of time, reads War and Peace.

Fifth, time budget studies tend to enquire only into primary activities. Not recording secondary activities does lead to under-reporting of the amount of time people spend in media exposure. Reading while travelling to work, for example, would be coded as travelling time, although many people do a lot of reading in transit. Studies of media exposure, on the other hand, would take into account time spent reading while travelling to work, and this may account for some inconsistencies between the different studies.

Sixth, there are also important differences in the way in which different studies classify different activities. Reading in particular can present numerous problems in the classification of time use.

As a Western theorist points out, for a teacher

reading at home may be a complement to work, sheer escape, general 'keeping up with the world' and an intense and engrossing immersion with the literature at various times, depending on what is read, her mood and orientations.<sup>68</sup>

Trufanov makes a similar point, observing that reading can be self-education, but also simply a pleasant way of passing the time.<sup>69</sup>

The treatment of reading varies considerably in the different classification schemes. For instance, many of the early surveys included all reading - both vocational and fiction - in the category of 'study and adult education'. In some later surveys, vocational reading is still included in 'study and adult education', while in others this term is restricted to participation in evening and correspondence courses. On the other hand, some surveys do not differentiate at all between vocational and leisure reading, classifying them both as 'reading'.

Seventh, time budget studies usually report information as the average amount of time spent on a given activity. Usually these figures are calculated as an average for all respondents, not just those who engage in the activity. It is then unclear whether this average represents even participation by all members of the group studied, or intensive participation by a minority. Some time budgets give no indication of the proportion of the population who participate in a given activity. On the other hand, studies which give details of participation rates may not indicate the time commitment involved.

Finally, there are differences between the picture of reading drawn from library use compared to that given by broader studies in the community as a whole. Library users tend to be the most active readers and are typically younger and better educated than average. Library issue data can be distorted by pressures on readers to borrow certain types of books, whether in response to 'guidance' from the librarian to borrow 'improving' books or to help the librarian by improving issue statistics for politically important works in return for priority access to popular books in short supply. Library-based studies tend to over-estimate the place of non-fiction and serious novels, and to underestimate the reading of newspapers, periodicals and *lighter* fiction, which readers often subscribe to or swap among themselves.

Nevertheless, used cautiously and critically, Soviet studies can provide valuable information on readers and reading in the USSR.

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CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL CONTROLS, CENSORSHIP AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

"A telegraph pole is a thoroughly edited tree" - Old Soviet quip

In virtually all societies censorship and controls over access to information exist in some form. There are considerable differences, however, in the extent to which censorship and control are effected by means of the law, by the use of extra-legal force, or simply through 'gentlemen's agreements' and unwritten understandings. In addition to controls of this type, which principally affect materials already published, the prevailing moral and intellectual climate affects what authors write or do not write, and commercial considerations largely determine what publishers will in fact produce.

Political controls over reading matter and censorship in the USSR are prescriptive as well as proscriptive - whereas in the liberal democracies censorship is chiefly concerned with stating what can not or should not be written, published, made available on public funds, or read, censorship in the USSR has an extra dimension, that of stating what ought to be written about and what approaches to that subject matter are legitimate. Censorship and restrictions on access to information are emotive topics. In the Soviet case, they must be considered, in the context of the Soviet ideology of books and reading discussed earlier, as the obverse of the Soviet view that reading and books do matter and can influence people's lives. There are parallels between the Soviet approach and that of the "new censors" in Britain, who protest at the provision of sexist or racist books in libraries: they believe that what people read does not only influence their tastes and stimulate thought and imagination, but also affects - even partly determines - behaviour and attitudes.

It is not the aim of this thesis to discuss in depth issues of censorship, political socialisation or the relationship between writers and the state. The focus of our interest is the reader, chiefly the mass reader. However,

one can not discuss intelligently the supply and choice of reading matter without examining the issues surrounding the writing of what the reader reads and the decisions which affect its journey from the writer's desk to the reader's hands.

#### FROM WRITER TO READER

In order to understand the various forms which controls and restrictions on the production and dissemination of literature and information can take in the USSR, a summary of various stages an idea passes through from the mind of the author to that of the reader will be useful. At every stage, there are possible barriers to the transmission of the idea. Underlying this process are, first, the prevailing ideological climate and, second, the host of control mechanisms which probably play a more important role in the direction, manipulation and suppression of ideas and information than do the formally constituted censorship bodies. These barriers affect the social and natural sciences as well as literature, journalists and historians as well as poets and novelists.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Author           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- has an idea, but decides not to write or research it</li> <li>- makes a discovery, but knows he or she will not be able to publish it</li> <li>- writes 'for the desk drawer' or for samizdat</li> <li>- writes, but slants the subject or method of presentation to conform to external pressures</li> </ul> <p>Some of these barriers are imposed from outside, but the most powerful control for most authors is self-censorship</p> |
| Publisher/Editor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- may refuse to publish a work at all</li> <li>- may consider for publication only if changes are made, for political reasons</li> </ul>  |

- may publish, but in a small edition or provincial journal

Some of these controls may be applied by the editor on the instructions of the censor, but often the editor will act independently, knowing the limits of the possible

#### Censor

- may prevent publication at all
- may insist on changes
- may insist on rewriting or omissions

#### Booktrade

- may not be permitted to stock a work
- may be instructed to withdraw it from sale
- may divert it to the black market, thus restricting access

#### Libraries

- may not acquire the book
- may restrict its use or promote it heavily
- may record its use
- may withdraw it

#### Reader

- may find the book inaccessible because of language
- may find it inaccessible because of intellectual level
- may not pick up the writer's true message ('Reading between the lines')
- may not believe the book or article
- may just not be interested

At all stages, there may be interference from the KGB or from the Party authorities. The role of the Party in directing and controlling the media is considered next.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The CPSU controls newspapers, books and journals in a number of different ways and at different levels. First, the Party determines Soviet policy in all areas of life, and the media operate within this framework. Second, although the Party directly controls only a limited number of journals, newspapers and book publishers, it in fact supervises all publishing activity through agencies in the Central Committee and in local party organisations. Third, a significant proportion of journalists, writers, publishing house personnel and leading officials in the book trade and in libraries are members of the CPSU.

Party control of the media has a number of aims. First, in its proscriptive form, it has the task of preventing the publication of facts, ideas and opinions which might benefit the USSR's enemies. Perhaps more importantly, it must prevent Soviet citizens from learning undesirable facts or being exposed to harmful ideas and attitudes. In its prescriptive form, party control of reading is intended to ensure that what people read confirms attitudes and ideas consonant with Party policy, encourages them to behave in the way the authorities would wish and ensures their complete and active support of Party policies and campaigns.

The overall policies within which the media operate are determined by the Politburo. It approves top appointments (such as the editors of Pravda and Kommunist) and is involved in long-term organizational decisions about the media. Occasionally it may be consulted about whether to publish a particular book or article - the best known example of this was its approval of Solzhenitsyn's One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich. Normally, the supervision of the media is carried out by the Central Committee Secretariat under the Politburo member chiefly responsible for ideological matters - for many years this was Suslov.<sup>1</sup> From time to time, the Central Committee also issues resolutions and decrees on matters concerning the press, praising or criticising the work of certain journals, publishers or individual writers, commenting on and criticising recent

developments in publishing and calling for changes in future practice.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most important recent decrees was the 1979 Central Committee resolution on ideology which devoted a great deal of attention to publishing and the media. The Central Committee also has the right to decide whether a particular organisation may be granted the right to issue printed matter, and to rule on whether a new publishing-house, journal or newspaper may be set up. The authority of the Central Committee may also be used when a major new publishing project is started - for instance it was Central Committee decrees which initiated preparations for the third edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia and the twelve-volume History of the Second World War.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Central Committee apparatus, a number of specialist departments have particular responsibilities for publishing and the mass media. Chief among these is the Propaganda Department, which has sections concerned with book publishers, journals and newspapers. It is responsible for the overall supervision of all publishing and media activities. However, it cannot pay equally close attention to all aspects of publishing in the USSR, and in practice monitors closely only priority areas. It relies on other specialist departments within the Central Committee for advice on subjects within their areas of competence. Through the 'nomenklatura' system, it controls appointments to important posts in publishing houses and newspaper offices, and in practice a great deal of responsibility for ensuring that publications conform with the 'Party line' is delegated to editors and senior publishing house staff, who have regular briefing sessions at the Propaganda Department. The Propaganda Department also controls Glavlit, the Soviet censorship agency, which is in theory subordinate to the Council of Ministers, not the CPSU. The Propaganda Department also ensures conformity to Party policies by a policy of deterrence - journalists, writers and editors who infringe the rules may be strictly punished, to discourage others from doing the same. It is the Propaganda Department which is believed to organise the programming of newspapers and

journals so that they reach particular readership groups and transmit specific 'messages'. Literaturnaya gazeta, for instance, has a particular remit to appeal to the intelligentsia and to publish articles on controversial topics, within limits. The Propaganda Department also lays down policy on newspaper and journal budget allocations and print-runs. The day-to-day administration of newspaper and journal publishing, and most aspects of book publishing, are not the responsibility of the Propaganda Department. These are the concern of the State Committee for Publishing, Printing and the Book Trade (Goskomizdat), a government organisation. However, its work is closely monitored by the Central Committee, and its Chairman is a full member of the Central Committee.<sup>4</sup> The Propaganda Department does, for instance, scan Goskomizdat's consolidated lists of books planned for publication in the coming year, in order to ensure overall balance and conformity with Party policy.<sup>5</sup>

Several other departments of the Central Committee are particularly concerned with publishing and the media. The International Department, for instance, has special responsibility for foreign affairs coverage, which is generally subject to more detailed and strict supervision than domestic affairs. It approves books and journal articles, as well as newspaper coverage. The Culture Department has special responsibility for literature and the arts. It probably has within its 'nomenklatura' key positions in the Writers' Union and in publishing houses issuing poetry, fiction and art books, and chief editors of leading literary and arts journals. It holds regular meetings to brief editors of 'thick' journals, and is probably the department which initiates most Central Committee resolutions on literary policy. The Department of Science and Educational Institutions supervises the Academy of Sciences and other research and educational organisations, and hence their journals and publishing houses. It appears to be consulted over possibly controversial scientific and scholarly books and articles. A number of other departments are also involved in approving media coverage of their fields of special expertise.<sup>6</sup>

The responsibility for supervising publishing at union republican, oblast' or city level is largely delegated to the party organisations at that level. Thus, the editor of the local newspaper or the director of a republican publishing house would come within the 'nomenklatura' of the appropriate party organisation, which would supervise their work in much the same way as the central party bodies do.<sup>7</sup> As well as these organizational methods of Party control of the media and publishing, the Party also influences all stages of the production and dissemination of reading matter through its members. Just under 10% of the adult population of the USSR as a whole are Party members;<sup>8</sup> this proportion is much higher among the creative and technical intelligentsia, and senior officials. Thus, many publishing house editors, senior book trade officials, library directors and journalists will be Party members, subject to Party discipline and enjoying certain privileges, according to their rank. All Soviet organisations, including libraries and bookshops, have their own Party cell and Party secretary, whose role and influence vary according to the size and importance of the organisation. So the Party is - in theory - able to supervise the work of libraries, publishing houses, bookshops and newspapers from within, and to have a major influence on literary writers through Party cells in the Union of Soviet writers and on other writers through their institutes, university departments, and so on. The following sections analyse more closely how political controls affect writers and publishers, how the formal censorship agencies operate, how the news is managed, and how political pressures are applied in the book trade and in libraries. In conclusion, the impact of all this on the reader is discussed.

#### LITERARY WRITERS

During the early Soviet period, writers had considerable freedom both in subject matter and style. However, since the early 1930s, writers in the USSR who wanted to get their work published have been expected to abide by the doctrines of 'Socialist Realism'. There are three key concepts in this doctrine:





narodnost', popular, both in the sense that its subject matter reflects the life of ordinary people, and in the sense that it is accessible, in language and style, to ordinary people; ideinost', having a mature, correct and fully formed ideology; partiinnost', imbued with the ideals of the Party and in accordance with the Party's current policies.<sup>9</sup>

Classical socialist realism is optimistic in tone, uplifting, demonstrating to the reader how life will be, rather than how it is. Vera Dunham, describing the novel under Stalin in the post-War period, calls this 'the unequivocal command that the writer should lie'.<sup>10</sup> Alla Rusanova, daughter of the Party hack in Solzhenitsyn's Cancer Ward, put it rather differently:

'Telling people the truth doesn't mean telling them the bad things, harping on our short-comings. On the other hand, one may describe the good things quite fearlessly, so as to make them even better (...) Our literature ought to be wholly festive. When you think about it, it's an insult to people to write gloomily about their life. They want life to be decorated and embellished'.<sup>11</sup>

Western critics often see the post-War Stalinist period as the epitome of socialist realism. Brown characterises the writers then as:

'avoiding dealing with moral and social evil in its real quality and dimensions, (they) glossed over it, presented it in such a way as to mislead the reader about its causes, or tried to create the impression that it was being eradicated through the relentless march of progress of the Soviet state. Working under tight restrictions, they were frequently forced to revise and rewrite in insure exact conformity. It is surprising that under such circumstances Soviet literature was not killed outright'.<sup>12</sup>

Sinyavsky would go further: '(The period 1946-1953) saw the apotheosis of the censorship and the annihilation of the remnants of a living literature. Any writer who displayed the slightest independence or attempted to write interestingly was doomed'.<sup>13</sup> Yet despite the pressures of this time, writers did write material that people read. Vera Dunham suggests that during the immediate postwar period, popular fiction gave the people some sense of participation in the social process, some way of working towards an understanding of the society in which they lived, of knowing what that society expected of them. Many people do not want novels to challenge their world view or expand their

minds; rather they turn to literature for hope and consolation. In the harsh post-War environment they may have wanted this more than truth.<sup>14</sup>

The continued vigour of Soviet writers became apparent after Stalin's death in 1953. The writers of the Thaw were generally still operating within the overall concepts of Socialist Realism, in many cases attempting to return to the ideals of the original socialist realist writers, creating heroes who had to fight genuine evils and did not always win. Despite forty years of Soviet power, they showed there were still evil forces at large; this is why they were often so controversial. An important feature of their work was the expectation of justice, a demand for social justice and justice for individuals. They also revealed an awareness of the social and political roots of social ills and individual problems and were willing to blame human suffering and difficulties in daily life on faulty official policies, corrupt institutions or incorrect social values.<sup>15</sup>

However, in the post-Krushchev period literary policy changed. A more traditional socialist realist ethos has been re-imposed. Nevertheless, Soviet writing in the later 1960s, 1970s and 1980s has not gone back to the type of writing produced under Stalin. The 'Positive Hero' does appear more frequently than in the Thaw period, but is depicted with human weaknesses, even vices - which are not, however, allowed to interfere with his basic loyalties, judgement or ultimate performance. Openly propagandistic writing is the exception rather than the rule. Social ills and personal problems are depicted realistically and sympathetically enough, but without the overt recognition of their social, economic and political roots acceptable in writing during the Thaw.<sup>16</sup> Today, as in the 1940s and 1950s, political considerations affect not only the content of literary works, but also their form. Writers who want to use new and experimental forms experience considerable difficulties. Sinyavsky found that:

'Even if I had kept right away from controversial topics and simply written on fantastic themes that had nothing to do with social or political problems, I still wouldn't have been able to get into print ...

I used to say that my main disagreement with the Soviet system was over style (... At my trial, literary) experts pronounced (my work) criminal on stylistic grounds. They wrote that although the works contained no political subject matter, they were anti-Soviet in form'.<sup>17</sup>

Of course the authorities would point out that work which is stylistically unorthodox and experimental is inaccessible to the ordinary reader and so not compatible with being a Soviet writer.

Despite the dominance of socialist realism, a great deal of worth-while fiction has been published since Stalin. 'A political line cannot determine the actual content even of bad fiction: it can only establish the frontiers within which that content takes shape'.<sup>18</sup> Hosking argues that the best writers, in particular, have not retreated into the stereotypes of socialist realism; in some cases they have had to cross into samizdat to be able to say all they want to, but many have found ways of communicating a great deal in legally-published literature which can be understood and appreciated by informed and sensitive readers.<sup>19</sup> Although much artistically uninspiring and politically safe literature is written and published, there have been a number of important new currents in Soviet literature since the Thaw. Hosking emphasises, first, the rediscovery of the non-Marxist elements in the Russian intellectual tradition, principally the writings of the early twentieth century philosophers who had studied Marxism and rejected it; second, the re-discovery of Dostoevsky as a philosopher as well as a writer; third, the awareness of the genuine folk culture of the Soviet people, particularly seen in the work of the derevenshchiki (writers about rural life).<sup>20</sup> To this can be added the gradual rehabilitation of a number of writers of the first decades of this century, such as Babel', Bulgakov, Platonov, Zoshchenko, Mandel'shtam and Tsvetaeva.<sup>21</sup> There has also been a considerable expansion in the range of translated work available, including translations of Western writers little known in the 1950s, such as Kafka, William Faulkner, Eugene Ionesco and J.D. Salinger. Readers in the USSR today - particularly those who have either built

up their own libraries or have access to friends' collections and do not have to rely on the more closely monitored public libraries - probably have access to a far wider range of material than at any time since the 1920s.

#### NON-FICTION AUTHORS

Writers on medicine, science and technology, history, the social sciences and the arts are also affected by political controls both in terms of the topics in which it is permitted to carry out research and in terms of how much of their findings can be published and in what detail. Political interference in scientific research has been extensively documented and so here it is necessary to give only a few examples. It is perhaps not surprising that an atheist state should have stopped the serious study of the Bible in the 1920s, but for many years icons could not be studied as works of art. In the 1930s, no research was permitted on Einstein's theory of relativity. Soviet scientists could not study genetics for many years, culminating in the idiocies of Lysenkoism. In the 1940s, linguistics was severely restricted. For many years, physiologists could not do work which might contradict Pavlov. Sociology virtually disappeared from the USSR between the early 1930s and the late 1950s. Cybernetics was condemned on ideological grounds for many years and not studied there until the early 1960s. In medicine, serious study of sexual problems is not permitted.<sup>22</sup> Obviously, writers cannot write on these topics and readers cannot read them - except, of course, in samizdat. In topics where research and publication are permitted, there are restrictions on access to data, on one's approach to the subject, and to the conclusions that can be drawn. Access to data in the USSR is often on a 'need to know' basis. Legal scholars would be allowed access to statistics on crime and conviction rates not available to the public.<sup>23</sup> However, in publications based on these figures, actual numbers could not be used, although they could be referred to in general terms ('significant', 'at a low level'), or in percentage terms. Similar restrictions apply to many categories of economic statistics. Data on health care are often sensitive

and although books are written about the evils of venereal disease or successful campaigns against diseases such as malaria, statistics on the incidence of these diseases are not published. There is little factual information about the incidence of mental illness. In general, scientific writing - particularly that intended for the ordinary reader - is expected to conform with the official view of progress and the value of scientific advance. So it seems unlikely that Nauka or Mysl' will publish works calling for a return to self-sufficiency farming or advocating alternative technology and life styles.

Many researchers know their work is one-sided because of the limitations on access to foreign archives. Restrictions on foreign travel are particularly irksome for those whose object of research is abroad - Popovsky cites the case of a Leningrad ethnographer working on the Australian aborigines who had never managed to get to Australia despite twenty years of applications.<sup>24</sup> Contacts, whether in person or by correspondence, with foreign scholars, are also limited. There is a considerable conflict between the importance of the 'invisible college' of scholars so important for scientific advance and state concern over secrecy and security.<sup>25</sup> This has been discussed at some length by Medvedev, among others.

Historians and social scientists are subject to pressure in terms of approach to a subject and their conclusions, as well as on content. Nekrich writes:

For the conscientious researcher, work loses all point if the censor asks him not only to delete this or that fact, but also to reach conclusions that are acceptable in the current political scene. And this is where self-censorship comes into play, the most important of all forms of censorship in socialist society. Self-censorship exercises a profound influence not only on the quality of the research done, but also on the researcher himself. If censorship is an essential element of the structure of the USSR, on a par with the army and state security, then self-censorship is an essential quality of homo Sovieticus - especially the sub-species of writers specialising in history and social political sciences. 26

He stresses the extent to which judgement of the acceptability of a subject determines what themes a historian feels able to tackle and argues that the authorities will reject any theme likely to damage the prestige not only of

the USSR but also sometimes of pre-Revolutionary Russia, as in the efforts made to suppress Zimin's work suggesting that the Slovo o Polku Igoreve really was an eighteenth century forgery. Other topics treated gingerly or not at all include the history of political parties other than the CPSU, the fate of the Jews under Hitler, the Purges and the Camps and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Interpretations of history advanced by Soviet scholars have to be consonant with the Marxist-Leninist view of history and writers on economic, education or political questions are expected to publish conclusions which fit in with Party expectations - although in fact the informed Soviet or foreign reader can often read the same data and reach rather different conclusions, which may in fact be what the author originally intended.

Writers in history and social science fields are rather more liable than scientists to be under pressure from the prescriptive censorship and required to write on certain themes. Often, of course, they write on the basis of a commission from a publishing house to write on current events, or to contribute to a current campaign. For instance, during the 10th Five-Year Plan, when great increases in labour productivity and in quality of production were required, a plethora of books and articles appeared on these topics. A similar burst of publishing activity surrounded the 1977 Constitution. This sort of hack work must have a deadening effect on scholars; although much of this writing is done by journalists, research institutes are often invited to take part in such campaigns and it would be awkward to refuse.

#### POLITICAL PRESSURES AND WRITERS

Literary writers suffered the most from political interference and pressures in the late 1930s and in the years 1946-53. These relaxed after Stalin's death and became quite mild under Khrushchev, though often unpredictable and erratic. Under Brezhnev, policies have become more restrictive, particularly for material intended for a mass audience, and possibly also more sophisticated and effective.<sup>27</sup> It seems that now a more complex system of 'safety valves'

is operated for the publication of literary works. The most naked form of political pressure on writers under Stalin was the threat of the camps. Many writers died in the camps; others survived, wrote of their experiences and saw them published during the Thaw, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Evgeniya Ginsburg. In the post-Stalin period, writers have still been subject to imprisonment; in 1964, Iosif Brodsky was sentenced to forced labour as a 'parasite'; he wrote poetry full-time, but was not recognised as a poet as he was not a member of the Union of Soviet Writers. In 1966, Sinyavsky and Daniel were also sentenced to forced labour on charges relating to publication abroad and the writing of anti-Soviet works. However, such cases have been relatively rare in the post-Stalin period and have been largely restricted to those who have deliberately challenged the state over a long period. In recent years, the use of psychiatric hospitals to control dissidents, including writers, has become more common.<sup>28</sup> In the late 1970s, a number of writers have been exiled from the USSR or have been deprived of their passports once abroad. These have included writers such as Solzhenitsyn, Voinovich and Aksenov.

More frequently, though, pressure is applied by making it difficult for writers to find a publisher for their works, or by forcing them to make radical changes before their works are accepted for publication. This is discussed below, in the section on the publishing house and Glavlit. Some writers may compromise by writing what is acceptable. Others transfer their attention to different spheres of literary activity, such as translating. Two of the best-known writers who did this were Akhmatova and Pasternak. The restrictions on outlets for original writing may have contributed to the high quality of so much Soviet literary translating. It seems likely that some writers turned to writing for children out of similar considerations.<sup>29</sup>

Some writers respond to this sort of pressure by writing 'for the desk drawer'; their manuscripts are consciously not written for publication. Until the early 1960s, they seldom saw the light of day and were read only by close

friends. Often writers kept these manuscripts in case publishing policy changed; indeed many of the works published during the Thaw had been written much earlier. However, the early 1960s saw the birth of samizdat and tamizdat. Samizdat is the clandestine reproduction, usually by typewriter plus carbon but occasionally on a purloined duplicator, of a manuscript and the circulation of copies to friends, who will often further reproduce the text in the same way. (It is in order to control such illicit reproduction that access to photocopiers and duplicators is so restricted). Samizdat has been discussed widely in Western writing on politics and literature, and so little need be said here. Some great works have been circulated in Samizdat, which would never have been published in the USSR. However, a number of commentators have observed that the bulk of the literary material circulated in samizdat would have cleared the censor. Some of it goes into samizdat because of the lack of legal outlets for novice writers, such as the 'little magazines' which flourish in the UK and USA. It has been suggested that samizdat may encourage the mediocre - writers do not go through the refining and toughening process of having their work rejected on literary grounds.<sup>30</sup> Indeed some writers are said to have come to assume that having one's work rejected is proof of its quality, when the real cause may be lack of talent or skill. On the other hand, poor quality work is unlikely to be circulated very far. Nevertheless, it can give good writers a considerable psychological boost by liberating them from the need to publish in official outlets and the need to tailor their writings accordingly. A number of writers do circulate work in samizdat as well as publishing in the official press - the most striking example of this was the publication in 1979 of the anthology Metropol', which was published abroad with the authors' consent after it had circulated within the USSR. Some of the material in it had already been published in the USSR, though not in full, and much of it might have found a legal outlet, though not in a central journal. The inter-relationship of samizdat and official literature is complex. It is sometimes suggested that



the existence of samizdat has made the censors tend to be more lenient with certain legally-published writers, who can be bolder in their treatment of themes dealing with the Soviet past and individual destinies.<sup>31</sup>

Tamizdat is publication abroad; sometimes this is done without the writer's knowledge or consent, sometimes on his initiative. A great deal of material does find its way to the West; there have been suggestions of KGB complicity in some cases. Some literary non-conformists, notably Evtushenko and Voznesenskii, have been allowed to travel abroad and recite in the West works which had been heavily criticised or not published in the USSR.<sup>32</sup>

It is hard to know how much samizdat and tamizdat is available to ordinary readers in the USSR and how great its impact is outside the creative intelligentsia and intellectuals generally.

Writers who fall into official disfavour find it hard to get work published, and this will affect their livelihood. Membership of the Union of Soviet Writers is usually essential if one is to get one's work published, and so expulsion from the Union of Soviet Writers means the loss of the right to publish and so of livelihood. Soviet writers' fees seem generous when compared with those paid in the West, at least to writers who are not best-sellers. Successful writers may win lucrative prizes. There are other privileges open to members of the Union, including better travel opportunities within the USSR and abroad, preferential access to recreational facilities, better housing and many of the other perks available to the Soviet elite. Expulsion from the Union clearly has serious material consequences. Further, writers who do not publish in official sources will usually have less time to devote to their writing - in order to avoid charges of parasitism, they often have to take on a full-time job.

The Union of Soviet Writers and groups of writers within it may also exercise control over writers by means of verbal attacks, often at special party meetings. These 'frank and comradely' admonitions over lack of civic zeal

or unsuitable subject matter may extend to criticism for not writing and publishing at all; silence can be seen as a form of 'dumb insubordination'.<sup>33</sup> This sort of 'working-over' in private may be supplemented by press campaigns, often in the form of indignant letters from workers as well as editorial comment and articles by literary critics. Under Stalin, individual living writers might be publicly criticised by the Party in a resolution, as happened to Akhmatova and Zoshchenko.<sup>34</sup> It appears that in the post-Stalin period Party intervention at a high level is more usually done by pressure on the editors of journals, as was done with Tvardovskii when he was editor of Novyi mir, or through the Union of Soviet Writers, or through press campaigns, as was the case with Solzhenitsyn. Other, less public, forms of psychological warfare against writers are employed by the KGB.

This brief account of the pressures to which literary writers are subject shows the extent to which unofficial censorship operates on writers before they submit manuscripts to publishers. Clearly, the Writers' Union itself plays an important role in policing its members. Its subservience to the Party is illustrated by the account of how, in 1954, Ehrenburg, urged by other writers, went to Khrushchev for guidance on literary policy and said:

"Some write this, others write that. We are at a loss to know what to do. Guide us, as we have always been guided". And he replied, "No, that's your business. You are master in your own literary house. Do what you think is necessary. The time of the personality cult is over and will never return". 35

While conditions are different in many ways, nowadays, the leaders of the Union of Soviet Writers still look to the CPSU for guidance. Although there is a:

commonly held view that in the Soviet Union writers are the boldest and most numerous champions of freedom, (in fact) of the 6,500 members of the Writers' Union only a hundred or so can convincingly claim to be active liberals. Most of the others have been corrupted by the constant pressure to write what the censors want. 36

Unlike literary writers, most non-fiction writers other than journalists are not completely dependent on earnings from publishing. Dissenting authors may be pressurised by their colleagues, the local party cell and the KGB in the

same way as a literary writer. Journals and collections of articles may drop their contributions and their names may be removed from the list of members of an editorial board. Their research work may be impeded by difficulties over access to laboratories or to the special sections of libraries. In extreme cases, dissident scholars are sacked. Thus, non-fiction writers, too, have material incentives to 'keep their noses clean'; further, unlike literary writers, scientists and research workers generally need access to laboratories and other facilities if they are to continue their work; loss of a job can mean the end of creative work. Medvedev has described the effects of such restrictions especially on scientific work:

Human creativity is of its nature diverse. It requires a free channel. If a dam stands in its way, then part of its creative energy, the production of the intellect and talent of the people will be lost and will not reach the eternal sea of knowledge of all mankind. A discovery is hidden with its author, never seeing the light of day, an outstanding novel perishes without being read by anyone, and all mankind is potentially the loser. 37

Yet, despite all these problems and pressures, worthwhile books and articles are written, controversial and daring material is submitted to publishers. How political control is applied in the publishing house is considered in the next section.

#### THE PUBLISHING HOUSE

The Soviet publishing system and the editors who work in it have several functions in the process of controlling the flow of ideas and information from writer to reader. First, there are overall publishing policies and priorities. Second, there is the role of publishing houses and of Goskomizdat (State Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for Publishing, Printing and the Book Trade) in deciding the print-run (tirazh) of a book or journal and their influence over where it is published. Third, there is the editor's role as an intermediary between the writer and the formal agency of censorship Glavlit.

Publishing policy is considered more fully in later chapters; here it should be noted that publishing houses have to cope with Party demands that they both perform successfully economically and publish the kind of material which the authorities want the people to read.<sup>38</sup> The question of where a work can be published, and how many copies should be printed, became more important in the Brezhnev era, when the authorities realised the value of a more sophisticated and differentiated approach to publishing and the satisfaction of reader demands. As Dewhirst observes, there have been, on the one hand, firmer attempts to:

prevent the large-scale circulation of works which would, or even might, induce a large section of the population to contest the value of the Soviet system, while (on the other) trying at the same time to mollify people with a political mind of their own by permitting the small-scale legal publication of excellent books and articles on specialised subjects. 39

Indeed, it was during the Khrushchev period that writers first got into the habit of hawking manuscripts round different publishers, knowing that a differentiated policy was applied. Publishers in the provinces are often able to publish material which would not pass the Moscow censors. The best-known case was the publication of Pages from Tarusa in Kaluga in 1961; the first publisher to reissue Sologub's Melkii bes was in Kemerovo.<sup>40</sup> A lot of interesting and adventurous literary criticism, including neo-formalist work, has been published in Estonia, at the University of Tartu; much of this material has been published in editions of only 500 copies, but nevertheless it has been published legally.<sup>41</sup> Western scholars have long known that historical and sociological work published by university, pedagogical institutes and research institutes in the provinces, or small-edition mimeographed books issued by Academy research institutes, is often far more detailed and much richer in its use of archives than books published by major central publishers. The availability of these low-circulation, high-quality books and journals acts as an important but carefully controlled safety valve both for writers and for readers.

The publishing house (or to be more precise, its chief editors) play a vital role in mediating between the author on the one hand and, on the other, the censor and other sources of political interference. Editors of journals and in publishing houses are generally far more aware than authors of the current permissible limits, of the type of literature required. To avoid trouble with Glavlit and lengthy delays, editors may ask writers to make extensive alterations before the work is even submitted to the censor. Indeed, from many accounts of authors' problems with censorship it is clear that much of the pressure to remove or alter text has come from editors rather than the censor as such. Many of the examples of imposed changes detailed in the following section on 'the censor' involve editors as much as censors. Indeed, many commentators suggest that Glavlit plays a secondary role to experienced editors in ensuring that publications conform to the current party line. An amusing but all too credible account of how editorial pressures change an author's original conception appears in Ilf and Petrov's short story A Soviet Robinson Crusoe. Hingley summarizes it thus:

An editor commissions an adventure story with this title from a zealous author who quickly submits a stirring account of a shipwrecked Soviet citizen taming a desert island and triumphing single-handedly over the elements before eventually being rescued. But the editor at once raises a series of fundamental objections. Where, for example, is the island's Party Committee? What of the 'guiding role of the trade unions'? Where are the female activists, the broad masses of the toilers? When the unfortunate author protests that his assignment had been to describe life on a desert island his representations are swept aside; and he eventually retires, promising a revised version on the morrow. In this the original island will have been downgraded, on the editor's insistence, to the status of peninsula. Far from being deserted, it is to be infested with every possible kind of bureaucrat, and the action is to culminate in a mass meeting of workers, activists, trade unionists and the like. As for the hapless hero - the original Crusoe - he has long ago been summarily ejected from the tale as a whining individualist. 42

More seriously, a detailed account of what happened in one - obviously exceptional - case is that given by Solzhenitsyn in Bodalsya telenok s dubom about the discussions within Novy Mir and with the Central Committee about the publishing of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Sinyavsky has described

how his work was regularly censored while he was working for Novy mir:

I remember that on one occasion a very liberal member of the editorial board insisted on striking out some phrases from an article I had written. When I protested, he said "All right, you can take it and publish it as an illegal pamphlet if you like, but we can't put our journal at risk by publishing this stuff". 42

Pre-censorship by editors is apparently particularly important in the case of highly specialised scholarly works, where the Glavlit censors lack the necessary subject knowledge to make a detailed check of the contents.<sup>44</sup> Editors who make serious errors of judgement may well lose their jobs - for instance, the head of the literature department of 'Prosveshchenie' was dismissed because the textbook Three centuries of Russian poetry contained poems by Gumilev and Mandel'shtam.<sup>45</sup>

#### CENSORSHIP AGENCIES

In the Soviet system of political control of publishing, it is Glavlit which has to finally approve publications for dissemination. However, although Glavlit is the best known censorship agency, there are a number of other agencies which have to pass publications in specialist areas before the books or articles can be submitted to Glavlit.

The main 'special censors' are those dealing with the military, with science and technology, and with the KGB. The Military Censor is part of the General Staff, and checks military-related material in articles and books. Military censorship regulations are very tight and wide-ranging, and apply to anything that could have strategic significance. The military censor also vets military history and books about World War II, and presumably also war fiction. The KGB functions as a censorship agency for any publications, fiction or non-fiction, which deal with any aspect of its activities. The 'atomic censorship' comes under the State Committee for Utilization of Atomic Energy, and screens everything that mentions atomic energy, including science fiction. Other areas of science and technology are dealt with by censorship offices in the Academy of Sciences. They include the 'space' censor and censors

for radio electronics, chemistry, geology and computer science.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to these 'special' censors, there is also a system whereby ministries vet material about their work. In order to publish articles about particular ministries, the media must obtain a 'visa' from the ministry (usually its Press Department or a Deputy Minister). This 'visa' is required before Glavlit will pass the article for publication. The system is intended to ensure that no sensitive or secret material is published, although it also protects ministries from criticism. This system has replaced that which operated until the 1950s, whereby clearance of any sort of industrial information for the press was done by KGB-run 'first departments' in industrial enterprises and institutes, in conjunction with Glavlit. On the occasions when the newspapers do publish articles criticising a certain ministry, it is because the Central Committee has decided that the criticism should be published, and has instructed Glavlit to pass it without the ministry 'visa'.<sup>47</sup>

#### Glavlit

Glavlit is an acronym formed from the censorship agency's original title of Glavnoe upravlenie po delam literatury i iskusstva (Chief Administration for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR). It was set up in 1922 and made responsible for carrying out political, ideological, military and economic control of printed matter; in 1931 its responsibilities were extended to cover manuscripts, drawings, paintings, broadcasts, lectures and exhibits. It was also empowered to prepare lists of books whose publication and dissemination were forbidden. The same decree in 1931 brought in the system whereby the number of the Glavlit censor authorising publication must appear on the last page of the item (some exceptions to this are mentioned below). There were further decrees in 1934, extending censorship to cover performances of plays, films and so on, ordering the confiscation of banned items, and among other provisions, re-affirming the earlier decrees.<sup>48</sup>

During the wartime years, the censorship eased slightly, but was re-imposed

even more firmly in the period 1946-53.<sup>49</sup> Despite the easing-up of pressure during the Thaw, the actual laws dealing with censorship were never rescinded.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, in one sense the censorship was even more necessary in the post-Stalin period, as what had for so long been the truth suddenly became heresy, and the amount of translated literature (and hence potentially dangerous ideas) in circulation increased.<sup>51</sup>

Glavlit takes its direct authority from a decree of the USSR Council of Ministers of 1956 (renewed by a decree of 1966) relating to state secrets. In this, secrets are divided into secrets of an economic and of a military character. The main secrets of an economic character include data on military industries, metal industries, radioactive minerals and industries; major mineral resources; inventions and patents of considerable military significance; inventions of considerable economic or scientific importance (until the secrecy has been lifted by the competent ministry); information on the USSR's gold and currency reserves; and furthermore, any other data declared to be a state secret by the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Secrets of a military character embrace all important and comprehensive data on the armed forces.<sup>52</sup> As this list does not cover political or social matters, it would appear that much of Glavlit's authority in these fields comes from the pre-War legislation.

The exact structure of Glavlit is unclear, but in addition to the all-union Glavlit there are Glavlits at union republic level (apart from the RSFSR, which is covered by the all-union Glavlit) which controls the censors in each autonomous republic, oblast', krai and city. There are apparently some differences between censorship regulations in different parts of the USSR, with controls being harshest in border areas. Some variations are made, too, according to the religious and economic background of the area.<sup>53</sup> The number of people employed in censorship is not known - the usual estimate is 70,000. In recent years, Glavlit has upgraded its personnel, introducing younger people, usually graduates and generally Party or Komsomol members. Some have been



members of the KGB, others were editors or journalists.<sup>54</sup>

All types of printed matter are subject to censorship, ranging from tickets to football matches to sauce bottle labels, from receipt forms to school-leaving certificates.<sup>55</sup> However, certain publications do appear without the censor's number. These exclusions include religious publications (probably because the censor's number could be interpreted to imply official approval of the contents), publications aimed at Western audiences and the national bibliographical publications, some Party and government documents, editions of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Translations of foreign fiction and some editions of the Russian classics also omit the censor's number. In the 1930s (and possibly at other times) the censor's number was preceded by a note 'Upolnomochennyi Glavlita'; nowadays it appears, unidentified, in the list of other data relating to the printing and publishing of a book. Apparently Soviet textbooks of librarianship and the book trade, which explain the significance of the other numbers and dates in the colophon, pass over the censor's number in silence.<sup>57</sup>

Censorship procedures for books and journals are rather different from those for newspapers. In dealing with books and journals, Glavlit does not normally see material in manuscript form, unless the publisher asks for its advice at that stage; it can however ask to see the manuscript of a work about which it has apprehensions. Usually the censor works from the corrected galley proofs and then, when satisfied, approves it for printing. If an unusually long period has elapsed between the date when an item was set to the compositor and the date it was signed for the press, it is quite likely that there were problems with the censor. Preliminary copies of the finished book are run off before the main printing run starts; these have to be rechecked (and may require further correction, particularly if another censor sees them) before permission to publish is given.<sup>58</sup>

There are two aspects to the work of the censors. First, they are required to ensure that the work does not reveal any secrets or deal with prohibited

topics. Soviet censors have a long list of such things, informally called 'The Talmud'. The only copy of the list known in the West is that captured during World War II in Smolensk.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, no Soviet censor has managed to defect with a copy, unlike the Polish censor who smuggled large sections of the Polish censorship instructions to the West in the 1970s, so providing a detailed and fascinating insight into how censorship operates in that country.<sup>60</sup> However, Soviet journalists and publishing house staff who have emigrated, and samizdat sources, have listed many of the topics in the Perechen'. One of the fullest lists relating to the post-War period is that given by Kipiani and includes a wide range of agricultural and industrial problems and statistics, accidents at work, suicides, train and aircraft crashes.<sup>61</sup> Popovsky lists a number of forbidden topics in the medical field.<sup>62</sup> Military information is particularly sensitive and extends far beyond data of obvious strategic importance - a censor once reportedly refused to pass an article on the draining of a Lithuanian swamp as 'revealing geographic and topographic subtleties which might be useful to an invading military'.<sup>63</sup> There are also lists of the names of former leaders, dissident authors and emigres who may not normally be mentioned.

Second, Glavlit has the responsibility of ensuring that published work coincides with the current Party line. As mentioned above, in many cases editorial staff bear most of the responsibility for this. Many literary works have been altered heavily as a result of the censor. Sholokhov's The Quiet Don and They fought for their country were both modified before publication, and even staunchly conservative writers such as Pogodin and Fadeev had to make substantial alterations to some of their works.<sup>64</sup> The extent of the alterations imposed on literary works has become clear in recent years, when some writers have published the full original texts of their works in samizdat or tamizdat after they had been published in a legal form in the USSR, as Kuznetsov did with Babii yar.<sup>65</sup> The censor sometimes rewrites literary texts himself. One example involved

Pasternak:

In 1956, the late poet Boris Pasternak gave permission to the monthly Novy Mir to publish a cycle of his poems. One of these poems contained the following lines: Sred' krugovrashcheniya zemnogo, /rozdenii, skorbey i konchin, (Amidst the earthly circuit of birth, suffering and death). The Party censor, evidently displeased with the gloomy image of human life ("nothing between birth and death but suffering") rewrote the last lines as follows: rozhdeniy, trudov i konchin (of birth, work and death) - right in line with the Party's concept of man's existence on earth. 66

There are many other examples of censorship of Soviet literary works.

Foreign literary works, and non-fiction, are also sometimes 'edited' as well as translated. The editing may consist of straightforward abridgements or selections, or, more reprehensibly, books may be condensed and rewritten so as to give Soviet readers a false impression of life abroad - for instance in Truman Capote's In Cold Blood much material about an American farmer's prosperity and high standard of living was omitted.<sup>67</sup> These alterations are often not acknowledged and Soviet readers are thus unaware of the amount of 'editing' which has taken place. Now the USSR has signed the Universal Copyright Convention, such practices should have stopped. In dealing with scientific and technical work in translation, the censors are heavily dependent on editorial staff who have the necessary subject background.

Literary criticism too can be changed under political pressure. Efin Etkind has described in detail how, in the early 1970s, when the literary climate changed, he had to rewrite part of his introduction to Masters of Russian verse translation in the 'Biblioteka poeta' series, and excise all translations by Gumilev, Khodasevich and Zhabotinsky. The change in policy came at a late stage in the publishing process, and all 25,000 copies of the original edition were sent for pulping, and a new one printed. Etkind also describes how other literary works mentioning Gumilev had to be hastily rewritten. Further, after he had been sacked from his Institute, his students had to destroy a nearly completed collection of articles in his honour, and then reissued it, without mentioning his name.<sup>68</sup>

Examples of censorship of historical works include the suppression of data about those who died in the purges, such as the treatment of the death of M.I. Vavilov in the 1969 autobiography of him by Reznik, and the silence over the arrest of S.P. Korolev in Romanov's book on him.<sup>69</sup> The changes in official policy on the treatment of victims of the purges can be seen very clearly in the biographical entries in the Soviet Historical Encyclopaedia. People such as Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotskii are not entered in it at all. An account of the way in which authors and editors bargain with the censor is given by Nekrich, who was one of the editors of the ten-volume History of the World published by Mysl' in the 1960s. He was responsible for the volume dealing with the Second World War and was invited to visit the censor for Mysl' publishers. There he was asked to explain why there was an apparent 'Zhukov cult' in the volume - Zhukov then being in disgrace. In the end, he convinced the censor that eleven mentions of Zhukov were not excessive, and the volume was eventually passed.<sup>70</sup>

Scholarly bibliographies are not exempt from censorship - even a bibliography of American literature published in Russian translation, issued by the Academy of Sciences in 1970, omits all mention of the work of Howard Fast, a left-wing writer who attacked the USSR after being widely translated into Russian for many years.<sup>71</sup> It seems that dictionaries, too, are censored, if Hingley is right:

To the keen vigilance of Khrushchevite censors must be credited the removal from S.I. Ozhegov's one-volume dictionary (1960 edition) of a sentence which appears in the 1952 edition to illustrate the use of the word from which their master's surname derives: khrushch - vreditel sel'skogo khozyaistva ('the khrushch (cockchafer) is an agricultural pest'). Nor has the offending sentences been restored in the Brezhnev period ... 72

The impact of censorship on political works, where the 'Party line' is subject to frequent changes and nuances of meaning are very significant, is very clear. One of the most dramatic such occasions was the effect of the fall of Khrushchev on publications. Early on 14 October 1964 all the presses stopped and censors

went carefully through the newspapers and took out all references to Khrushchev. On the morning of 15 October all the Moscow papers appeared with no mention of his name. The official communique about his resignation did not appear until that evening. Journals and books were similarly treated; some were altered in the press but thousands of tons of material which had already been printed was held back in the warehouses and later sent for pulping.<sup>73</sup> However, even the works of leaders still in favour are 'edited'. It is well-known that not all the works of Lenin have been published, and that the Complete Collected Works, 5th edition, excludes some items published in the 1920s in the Leninskii sbornik. Some of Stalin's comments on the importance of allied assistance to the USSR during World War II were omitted from the official collection of his war-time speeches, orders and decrees. More recent examples include two passages from Brezhnev's speech to the 24th Party Congress omitted from Pravda's text<sup>74</sup> and variations between the text of a Gorbachev speech as heard on radio and the version published in the newspapers.

It is a curious footnote to Soviet censorship to discover that topographical data can also be a state secret. Large-scale maps are not available to the public, and even in cities open to foreigners tourists may find that their maps are inaccurate or not to scale, particularly outside the city centre. There is a shortage of road maps and on those maps which do exist, roads, bridges and railways may be moved out of their true position. Apparently lack of adequate maps and charts has led to the deaths of many fishermen, hikers and prospectors. It is even suggested that during World War II Soviet commanders tried to seize Wehrmacht maps as these were more accurate than their own.<sup>75</sup> This may have had some justification in the past, but seems faintly ridiculous in these days of spy satellites.

Glavlit does not have the right to forbid publication of a work on political grounds, although it can do so if it discloses a state secret. Where the journal editor or publishing house decides to proceed with publication against the advice

of the censor, the Central Committee of the CPSU is informed, as when Literaturnaya gazeta insisted on publishing Evtushenko's Babii yar.<sup>76</sup> More recently, the publishing house Iskusstvo ignored advice not to publish I.V. Ivanov's book on the Czech theatrical figure Jan Werich. As a result, the book was withdrawn from circulation on the orders of Goskomizdat, the responsible editor was dismissed and the publishing house director reprimanded.<sup>77</sup>

In difficult or controversial cases, Glavlit can refer material to special censors and to the Central Committee. One such work was Nekrich's book on the German invasion of the USSR, 1941, 22 June. It was the subject of a special investigation by the Central Committee and was also reviewed by Glavlit, the military censor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the KGB, with further cuts being proposed at each stage; the KGB wanted to prevent publication altogether. Finally it was published, but was later withdrawn.<sup>78</sup> Glavlit keeps a copy of all the material it has checked, whether passed or not - as one commentator has remarked, they must have a marvellous library!<sup>79</sup>

There are a number of ways in which editors and writers seek to evade the censors. In the past, writers often wrote critically of other countries in such a way that readers would interpret it as referring to the USSR. Literary writers would get their message across through allusions which sensitive readers would understand. However, since the late 1960s the censors have become more aware of the 'sub-text':

A classic example was the time when the censor asked two authors who had written on the history of German Fascism to erase the phrase "Hitler created a Party which one might join but never leave". The censor obviously saw in this remark an allusion to the Soviet Communist Party, whose statute does not provide for free exit either (...) In our day the censor takes great pains to ensure that readers do not make 'parallels', so that when reading about the past they do not make unfavourable connections with the present. 80

Occasionally the censor has been tricked by having a work presented as if it is simply a reprinting of an already approved work - Belinkov claims to have done this with his book on Tynyanov, where he managed to slip in an extra 200 pages of uncensored text.<sup>81</sup> 'Forbidden' names can be slipped in - Voinovich mentions

that the censors allowed the publication of an Arthur C. Clarke science fiction novel in which Soviet cosmonauts have the names of Soviet dissidents. The mathematician Yurii Gastev apparently published a book on mathematical logic in which he interspersed works by at least a dozen Soviet dissidents, the majority of whom had nothing to do with the subject of his book.<sup>82</sup> Sometimes foreign scientific literature is used to smuggle in new views in the natural and social sciences which conflict with official ideology.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to pre-publication censorship, Glavlit is also responsible for ensuring that corrections are made to works which have already been published. In most cases, this consists of sending out instructions to withdraw works completely and this will be discussed more fully under libraries. However, sometimes correction sheets are issued. The best known case of such post-publication censorship occurred after the fall of Beriya, when all subscribers to the second edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, including those abroad, received an amendment slip to volume five, recommending them to cut out pages 21-24 and substitute new text. This resulted in the excision of the long article on Beriya and his portrait and the substitution of photographs and a longer article on the Bering Sea, and entries on a writer from Holstein and an obscure violinist. In recent years, it has become not uncommon to find the names of certain authors or editors blacked out on the verso of the title page - usually these are people who have emigrated.

The costs of the censorship system, in terms of staff time, wasted paper and delays, are hard to imagine.

#### MANAGING THE NEWS

The Soviet authorities give particularly high priority to all aspects of directing and controlling the news media. Although many of the observations made in this chapter apply to newspapers as well as to journals and books, some additional points about political control of the news should be made.

As mentioned earlier, the Central Committee's Propaganda Department is closely

involved in supervising the operation of newspapers. It appoints the Chief Editors of central newspapers and holds regular briefing meetings for them, at which it explains the current political campaigns and sets down the topics which it wishes to see discussed in forthcoming issues. There are marked differences in approach between newspapers, and from time to time certain newspapers may get the reputation of being particularly interesting or even daring in their coverage. Newspapers are clearly targeted at particular readerships, and do respond to some extent to the interests and demands of their specialist audience. The best-known example of this is Literaturnaya gazeta.<sup>84</sup> However, recent research by the Rand Corporation, based largely on interviews with emigres employed in newspapers and publishing, confirms that the Propaganda Department does to a great extent coordinate and orchestrate these varying approaches to the news.<sup>85</sup> However, the Central Committee is clearly aware of the need to provide an increasingly sophisticated and differentiated choice of news media if it is to persuade readers to read newspapers and accept their messages.

Journalists, like the other writers discussed earlier, practice self-censorship. Although self-censorship is rooted in the Stalinist legacy of fear for one's life, nowadays it is motivated more by fear of losing one's job, and hence any opportunity to practice one's profession, and by the loss of all the privileges which being a journalist, especially on a major newspaper, confers. However, many journalists do constantly test the limits of the permissible, attempt to write about issues which profoundly concern their readers in a way which will be acceptable to the authorities.

Soviet newspapers differ sharply from their Western counterparts in their definition of what news is and what is worth reporting. Paul Lendvai has carried out an interesting comparison of Pravda, International Herald Tribune and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung for a few days in 1979 which shows how Western and Soviet newspapers differ both in their decision of what to include and in their treatment of the same stories.<sup>86</sup> Western newspapers are concerned



about events, whether trivial and entertaining or serious. They go into great detail about industrial accidents, plane crashes, natural disasters, scandals affecting politicians or pop-stars, and both describe and enter into current political debates. They are obsessed with 'scoops' and with the latest news; old news is no news. Overall, they tend to concentrate on the 'bad news', giving a rather negative view of the world and of the human condition. Soviet newspapers, on the other hand, present an optimistic and positive view of life in the USSR and the socialist bloc. They treat as events economic achievements - excellent performance on a particular collective farm, increases in labour productivity in a factory. Instead of running profiles on pop-stars or party leaders, they often have photographs of ordinary men and women who have distinguished themselves at work, are involved in their local soviet and have a happy home life. Accidents and natural disasters are generally not reported, or reported as tersely as possible.<sup>87</sup> Although the newspapers do carry stories on negative aspects of Soviet life - inefficiency, corruption, drunkenness and crime - the articles are slanted to avoid criticism of the Soviet system as such, and hence often of the root causes of the problem. A great deal of the news carried in Soviet newspapers, particularly the foreign news, does not originate within the newspaper, but is transmitted to it direct by the Soviet news agency TASS, and the newspaper is instructed on which sections are to be published. Indeed, newspapers could well be virtually ready several days before they are published, so little importance does 'late news' have. Compared to even the more serious British newspapers, they seem very grey and dry.

Newspapers are subject to censorship by Glavlit and by the special censors in the same way as books and journals are, but it is clear that Glavlit in particular plays a largely technical role in censoring newspapers. Its main responsibility is ensuring that prohibited names, facts and figures are not mentioned. The political control of the content of newspapers is largely carried out by the editors, under the supervision of the CPSU Central Committee.

In addition to newspapers available to the whole population, the USSR also has a system of special news bulletins which are available to only a limited number of readers. These are compiled by TASS and make use of materials from the Western press, news agencies and radio broadcasts not suitable for publication in the newspapers. These are supplemented by special despatches from TASS and newspaper correspondents abroad. Several different classified bulletins are produced. The fairly innocuous foreign news with no overt anti-Soviet material is in 'green' and 'blue' TASS reports, which go to a relatively large group of people. 'White' TASS is fuller, and has more coverage of problems in other socialist countries. 'Red' TASS is far more confidential and goes to a more select group of ministers and their deputies, chief editors, high-ranking officers and officials, and party secretaries at regional level or above. Above this, there is reputedly a further top secret category. Access to confidential news bulletins is regarded as a great privilege.<sup>88</sup>

It is hard to assess the overall effectiveness of the Soviet news media. As will be shown in chapters five, six and seven, a very high proportion of the Soviet people do read the newspapers. However, many people supplement them by listening to foreign broadcasts, although the number who do so is of course unknown. Probably they are mainly the urban intelligentsia. However, people all over the USSR clearly rely to a far greater extent than do most Westerners on word-of-mouth information and on rumours, particularly for information on accidents and calamities, and on the top leadership. Discrepancies between life as they know it and events they themselves experience, and the way in which these are reported in the newspapers, must make many people highly distrustful of the media.

#### DISTRIBUTION

In the distribution system, control over reading matter is effected in a number of different ways. Many publications are not intended for public sale. Apart from documents which are classified or secret, there is a large group of

'unpriced' documents, which are non-confidential material of an official or specialised character which are issued free-of-charge and distributed directly to the relevant organisations or individuals. Copies of these documents are usually available in larger libraries, but they are generally not available for export. One example of material in this category is school syllabuses.

Second, certain works appear to be published with foreign public opinion in mind and most of the edition is therefore destined for export. This is particularly true of poetry and novels. The edition of Mandel'shtam published in the Biblioteka poeta series by the publishing house 'Sovetskii pisatel'' is one example of this - apparently at a meeting of the editors of the publishing house a high official said 'We published Mandelstam for the purpose of stuffing it down the throats of our ideological enemies abroad' - at which someone in the room shouted out 'How about stuffing it down ours!' Virtually all the copies printed of this, and of the Soviet editions of Pasternak and Kafka went abroad; those left in the USSR either went onto the black market, or were sold in shops only accessible to foreigners or the elite.<sup>89</sup>

Third, there are certain publications which the USSR is supposed to make available to its citizens, but are in practice very hard to acquire through the normal channels. These include certain UN documents such as the Unesco Courier, and Angliya and Amerika, the British and American equivalents of the Soviet journal Sputnik, freely available in the UK. Some Eastern bloc publications also fall into this category.<sup>90</sup>

Fourth, access can be restricted by limiting the print-runs of books and journals. In some cases, books by controversial poets and novelists are deliberately published in minute editions, so few readers can obtain copies. Interesting scholarly research is sometimes issued in editions of under 800 copies, making it available to very few people indeed. However, access is most often limited indirectly, by giving priority in the allocation of paper and printing facilities to politically important books, such as a new edition

of Chernenko's works, pamphlets campaigning against alcoholism or the journal Kommunist, rather than to ideologically acceptable but lower priority publications, such as popular novels, cook-books and women's magazines.

Fifth, book shops are from time to time instructed to withdraw certain books from their shelves. These are usually books which have been condemned just after publication, and have already been sent out to the shops. Apparently bookshop managers often sell these books for large sums on the black market.<sup>91</sup> Second hand book shops are restricted in the books which they can accept for sale; the lists of prohibited works appear to be similar to those for mass libraries. A 1975 decree issued by Goskomizdat has been published in the Chronicle of current events. It mentions, first, that shops must not buy or sell books appearing in the Consolidated list of books to be removed from libraries and the book trade network (issued by Glavlit in two parts in 1960 and 1973) or in similar lists issued by union republic state committees. They must not buy foreign publications bearing the hexagonal stamp which indicates they have not been passed by the Soviet censor. Further, shops must not deal in books clearly marked as secret or classified, proof copies, legal deposit copies, official publications not intended for public use, etc. Shop staff must also look out for 'politically harmful, non-periodical home-produced literature in all languages', especially that produced by groups which opposed the Bolsheviks, or items quoting from or favourably mentioning people whose works are subject to confiscation. Shops may not deal in religious publications, even those issued by officially recognised Soviet organisations. There are also prohibitions on 'pornographic and vulgar' works. Book shops may buy in CPSU Congress and Conference reports and Komsomol, Comintern and trade union reports issued prior to July 1953, but may only sell them to libraries, Party organizations and Soviet institutions, not to the general public. Similar restrictions apply to full sets of pre-1953 encyclopaedias and literary and socio-political journals. However, individual volumes and issues may be sold to the general public if they

are not 'politically dubious'.<sup>92</sup> It is not clear whether people who offer prohibited books to book shops have them confiscated, or whether they are allowed to keep them. As people selling books have to present their passports and so identify themselves, it is possible that the appropriate authorities will be informed that they have politically dubious literature.

### LIBRARIES

Political controls can affect libraries and librarians at many stages of their work. These are chiefly (a) selection policy and practice; (b) cataloguing and classification policy and practice; (c) arrangements for access to stock; (d) guidance and advice to readers; (e) issues policy and practice. In addition, librarians themselves are members of their society, whether Stalin's Russia, McCarthy's America or conservative Britain, and are affected in their work by its norms and expectations. The nature of political controls in Soviet libraries can usefully be compared to the position of Western libraries, chiefly in the UK.

### Selection

In British libraries, this is the point at which censorship and control over access to information are usually exercised. If the library does not acquire a particular book journal or newspaper, or does not cater for a particular group in the population, or does not consider it to be its responsibility to provide certain types of information, then this imposes barriers on people's ability to get access to information and ideas. Clearly, no one library can hope to acquire all the published material now available. In Britain it is generally asserted that selection policies are free from censorship provided that a balanced collection, reflecting the interests of the local population, is created. This classical liberal position has come under attack in the 1970s and 1980s, principally from the left and from feminists. They argue, first, that public libraries are reluctant to purchase material produced by alternative publishers, partly because it is often ephemeral and hard to obtain and store, but also

because of a preference for more traditional values. British public libraries are traditionally middle class institutions, making insufficient provision for ethnic and other minority groups. Second, the liberal view of the balanced collection as one in which the reader has the right to find material supporting diametrically opposed points of view, including ones which the librarian and society as a whole may find repugnant, regularly comes under attack. Over the last couple of years the journal Assistant Librarian has carried several articles and letters debating whether public libraries should hold material transmitting racist and sexist views. Many argue that traditional ideas of balance are inappropriate when dealing with an organisation such as the National Front and its publications. Other librarians feel strongly that to deny any legal group the opportunity to express its views is in itself an expression of the same spirit which makes Nazism repugnant. During the Second World War, there were reports from several libraries of attempts to stop subscriptions to left-wing, pacifist and communist newspapers; communist publications became an issue again later in the 1940s and 1950s, during the Cold War and especially after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. At that time there were a number of attempts to ban Soviet News and The Daily Worker from libraries.<sup>93</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, political influence on acquisitions policy was demonstrated in Bristol's refusal to accept a free copy of the anarchist paper Freedom for display and the refusal of the Labour-controlled libraries committee in Sheffield to provide Liberal News. Some British libraries still refuse to stock the Morning Star.<sup>94</sup> British librarians have often come under attack over the provision of fiction and non-fiction about sex. A typically British solution to the problem often seems to have been to purchase some controversial 'naughty' book, but then restrict readers' access to it. While book purges have seldom affected British libraries, pre-selection timidity and conservatism have. It is often hard to trace and expose this type of censorship, as it is generally expressed in terms of complying with public taste and upholding commonly accepted standards. It

is sometimes then suggested that those who want to read about sex/violence/ridiculous political ideas/crack-pot religions or whatever should buy it for themselves, not expect the ratepayers to provide it. However, no-one can buy all the books he or she would like to read - not, that is, unless their reading horizons are limited to a cookery book, car maintenance manual or The Sun. As books become more expensive, fewer people will be able to buy them and as unemployment rises, more people are looking to the public libraries for reading and other activities to fill their enforced leisure. Yet in a time of great need, public libraries' budgets are being pruned ruthlessly. As Sutherland observes, the British may not go in for burning books, but they are certainly freezing them out.<sup>95</sup>

When we consider the selection policies of the Soviet mass library, we find a rather different picture.<sup>96</sup> The Soviet librarian is not faced by a book market where books are expensive commodities likely to remain in print for several years. She has to cope with a situation in which books are cheap but generally go out of print rapidly and where editions of popular authors are seldom large enough to satisfy library demand, let alone private buyers. On the other hand, she knows that the books available have been cleared by the censor and so can be safely offered to her readers, for the time being at least. Further, librarians in mass and school libraries are notified by the publishers of which books the Lenin Library recommends for their type of library, although they are free to acquire others appropriate for their readers' needs. Mass libraries do not normally acquire material published abroad. The foreign language material they hold will be in a Soviet edition, furnished with appropriate introduction, commentary and notes.

The situation is rather different for the large general libraries, such as the Lenin Library and the All-Union State Library of Foreign Literature, and specialist research libraries. Although their domestic books are supplied under legal deposit arrangements, they have to acquire substantial amounts of

foreign literature as well. Judging from the lists sent to Western libraries by exchange partners, a wide range of Western material is acquired, including much Western writing about the USSR. A major limitation in these libraries' acquisitions programmes is lack of foreign exchange; until very recently libraries could not purchase material from the hard-currency area. Since 1980, however, limited funds were made available to some libraries for book purchase. Nevertheless, Soviet libraries are still heavily dependent on exchange partners to supply foreign books. All incoming books and journals are subject to censorship; this will be discussed more fully later in this section.

Thus, Soviet librarians have less freedom of choice in stocking their libraries than do their British counterparts. On the other hand, they are not constrained by lack of funds, which can in the end also seriously restrict readers' access to publications.

#### Catalogues and classification

In any library system, catalogues and classification schemes are not ideologically neutral. They are not merely lists of what a library holds; they also have the function of assisting readers in identifying and selecting material and guiding them to the right work for their particular needs. A fundamental principle of Soviet librarianship is the need to provide two separate and different catalogues for official and for public use. In some cases, particularly in smaller libraries, the classified catalogue will be for public use and the author catalogue for official use - the assumption being that readers are more interested in subject matter than in authors. In many larger libraries, there are separate author and classified catalogues for public and for official use. The public catalogues are more selective than the official ones. In mass libraries the catalogues are seen as a part of the recommendatory bibliography system and designed to bring to the notice of readers only the best books and articles. A positive feature of the catalogue system in many Soviet libraries



is the provision of entries for journal and newspaper articles. The significance of incomplete or slanted catalogues for the reader can be better understood when it is remembered that open access has been a feature of mass libraries only since the early 1960s and that many specialised and research libraries still have virtually all their stock in closed stacks. The issue of incomplete catalogues and restricted sections of libraries is discussed more fully below.

Classification schemes reflect the world view of their compilers as they are based, however imperfectly, on a particular view of the structure of knowledge. For instance, the Library of Congress scheme, heavily used in university libraries in the UK and USA, was compiled in the late nineteenth century and lacks provision for many modern concepts and phenomena. It is orientated towards an Anglo-American perspective on the world. Its treatment of socialism and communism is amusing - these two political concepts are placed in class H, after sections on 'social welfare' and 'social pathology', which deals with alcoholism, crime, police and prisons, giving rise to a suspicion that LC's compilers saw socialism and communism as particularly dangerous manifestations of social disease. All other political groupings are in a separate class, J. The Dewey Decimal Classification, popular in many British and American public libraries, is also often criticised for its Anglo-American approach, with the languages, literature and history of the peoples of lands outside Europe and North America being treated almost as an afterthought. In both schemes, Religion is given a prominent place in the schedules.

In the USSR, political aspects of classification were identified and discussed from the early 1920s. The Dewey system was used at first, but in the 1920s there was growing interest in subject cataloguing and in 1928 subject catalogues were introduced officially into public, trade union and vocational libraries. In practice, however, they were found to be less satisfactory and the classified catalogue was restored. From the early 1930s, attempts were made to devise

schemes with the organisational advantages of decimal classification without Dewey's ideological shortcomings, particularly in the treatment of the social sciences.<sup>97</sup> L.N. Tropovskii produced a number of modifications of the Dewey scheme for smaller and medium sized libraries in the 1930s and 1940s, and these were further adapted for Soviet needs by Ambartsumyan. Most medical, technical and agricultural libraries use the Universal Decimal Classification.<sup>98</sup> For large general libraries, a separate Soviet classification scheme based on a marxist theory of knowledge was drawn up in 1958-68 called the 'Bibliotekno-bibliograficheskaia klassifikatsiia'.<sup>99</sup> Versions of the 'BBK' have been created for smaller mass libraries and children's libraries too.

Political considerations affect the way in which cards are filed in Soviet library catalogues. To encourage readers to see any topic from the correct perspective, materials by Marx, Engels and Lenin are filed first in the classified catalogue. They are then followed by books by Soviet Russian writers, by other Soviet writers, by writers from the people's democracies and then works by other foreign and classical writers.<sup>100</sup> Bibliographies, too, usually open with a section of works by Marx, Engels and Lenin, followed by party documents.

#### Access to library materials

As in Britain, some libraries are not open to the general public, and give access only to limited groups of professionals, scholars or civil servants. However, as in Britain, state funded public (mass) libraries are open to all, free of charge. In the USSR there is also a network of mass libraries run by the trade unions and available to workers at their work-place. These are not generally open to members of the public. University and college libraries generally serve only staff and students of the institution. Research institutes and specialist libraries are usually restricted to members of the parent body, although some are open to other specialists. With the emphasis in the 1980s on centralisation and cooperation between library systems, it is likely that these libraries will become more easily accessible to the ordinary reader. The

USSR's great general collections like the Lenin Library and the Saltykov-Shchedrin are open to all in theory, but in practice readers are usually only admitted if they have a higher education and a letter of recommendation or other document testifying to their need to use these facilities; they may then only be permitted to order material relevant to their work. This seems to depend on the reader's status. A number of the well-known academic libraries, such as the State Public History Library (GPIB), the Institute for Scientific Information on the Social Sciences (INION) and the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad (BAN) are even more selective about who they admit as readers. In theory, the holdings of all these libraries are available to readers throughout the USSR through the inter-library loan system, but in practice many readers have to travel to the major centres to get access to the materials they need. This is particularly true of older and foreign material, which is not collected systematically outside the major cities. It is certainly true that those libraries which are hardest to get into, such as BAN and INION, have material readily available to their readers which is not in the public catalogues of the Lenin Library.

Access to archives is even more difficult, for Soviet citizens as well as for foreigners. It appears that the longer ago an event happened, the easier it is to get access to the archival material relating to it. Apparently access to the archives was relatively <sup>easy</sup> for about eighteen months after the fall of Khrushchev, but the regulations have since been tightened up.<sup>101</sup> Research workers who get access to the archives are largely dependent on the archivists to select files and documents relevant for their work, as catalogues and hand-lists are often not available. Access to archives and to the full texts of theses is probably restricted because, among other things, they contain material which has not been censored.<sup>102</sup>

The availability of material in a library's stocks can also be restricted by making the collection closed access. Like many British libraries before

the First World War, Soviet libraries used to have closed access to all the stock. Readers had either to use the catalogues to identify the book they needed and then ask the librarian to fetch it, or else they had to ask the librarian to recommend something suitable for them. Readers could not browse on the shelves. Such an arrangement encourages readers to see the librarian as their adviser and as an intermediary between them and the books. During the 1920s, a number of Soviet libraries experimented with open access to the bookstacks, or to a large part of it, but although some libraries found it successful, it was generally found to have been introduced prematurely. Readers were disorientated, books were lost and misplaced and besides, the stocks were often too poor and out-of-date for browsing to be desirable. While some libraries did continue with limited open access, most reverted to closed access. During the 1960s, open access was gradually reintroduced to most mass libraries, although the stocks were of course carefully 'purged' before being put on the open shelves. In academic and research libraries, closed stacks remain the norm, although most have now organised fairly large 'subsidiary collections' (podsobnyi or podruchnyi fond) in the reading rooms, consisting of the most heavily used texts, monographs, textbooks, journals and so on.

Within libraries generally open to the public and even in those with their stock largely on open access, there may be restricted collections. In the USSR these are generally referred to as 'spetskhran' - the abbreviation for 'otdel spetsial'nogo khraneniya' - section for special storage. The existence of restricted collections is not, of course, peculiar to Soviet libraries. The British Library Reference Division (British Museum) does have its Private Case. This includes materials withdrawn after publication by the author or publisher or found to be libellous in a court of law. It holds works containing police and official secrets and some material on the British in India, including seven volumes of the Curzon Papers. Perhaps understandably, the Private Case provides a home for many books on lock-picking, safe-breaking and explosives! It also

contains some works condemned as blasphemous. However, the main and best-known inhabitant of the Private Case is erotic literature - for many years this was not entered in the British Museum's General Catalogue, but as a result of pressure from readers it has been recorded there since the mid-1960s. Some non-fiction material on sexual matters is also kept in the Private Case; in order to get access to it, readers have to satisfy the Superintendent that they are serious scholars, not just sensation-seekers.<sup>103</sup> Most British public libraries also have some kind of restricted collection which is usually stocked with sexually-explicit materials, both fiction and non-fiction.<sup>104</sup> Different libraries have different regulations on access to such things. In some cases, access is restricted in order to protect the books - librarians find that readers either deface the books or remove the sections they find most useful. Until the 1970s, Sheffield, for example, kept all books dealing with birth control in a closed section. Although they were issued to readers over 21 on completion of a special form, those aged 18-21 had to have a letter from a teacher and people under 18 were not allowed access at all.<sup>105</sup> To request such material must have required a certain amount of persistence and courage!

Soviet libraries too restrict access to material about sexual matters. Furthermore, books on sex-education for the general public are published in small editions, and are simply not stocked by many libraries. Even in the Lenin Library, researchers cannot get access to it. A Soviet weekly told of a demographer who ordered some books on sexual problems in a scholars' reading room. He was told: 'You are not a doctor, and so you are not permitted to read such literature'. And he did not get his books until he brought in a testimonial confirming that he was a scholar engaged in research on the sociology of the family.<sup>106</sup>

However, the restricted collections in Soviet libraries are generally rather different in character. Some libraries have in their public catalogues items which can be issued only with special permission and are marked accordingly

on the catalogue cards. More commonly, though, such material is not listed in the public catalogues and is kept in the 'spetskhran'. On books and in the catalogues the abbreviation OSKh is used. The spetskhran appears to contain two types of material. First, there are items removed from the open collections during library purges, discussed more fully below. Second, there are documents sent to spetskhran immediately they are received in the library.

Material sent directly to spetskhran includes, first, Soviet material not intended for the general public. It is doubtful whether material in the two top security classifications 'secret' and 'top secret' would be sent to libraries open to the public at all. However, documents with the lower grade classifications 'ne podlezhit oglasheniyu' (not to be made public) and 'dlya sluzhebnogo pol'zovaniya' (for official use) are. Indeed, in certain libraries to which the general public does not have access, these publications do appear in the public catalogue. Certain journals are restricted. These appear to include many relating to the police, security, defence and defence industries. In addition, there have been instances where odd issues of journals generally available to the public and even for export have been restricted. This happened to certain issues of Energeticheskoe stroitel'stvo in the late 1960s. A number of the official bulletins of the councils of ministers of the union republics and other bulletins of legislation seem to have classified issues quite frequently - the public catalogue reports very patchy holdings.

In addition to Soviet material, a great deal of foreign material is sent to spetskhran on receipt. Library staff do not have the right to decide on the location of incoming foreign material; this is done by Glavlit. Glavlit checks material intended for private individuals and for libraries and stamps it to show it has been checked. Material destined for spetskhran has a double hexagon containing the censor's number. Sometimes incoming foreign material is destroyed by Glavlit. Material addressed to individuals which Glavlit does

not pass is sent to the Lenin Library for the spetskhran; the addressee has no right of appeal.<sup>107</sup> Foreign newspapers, apart from those from the socialist bloc, are kept in the restricted collections; the only exceptions are communist party papers such as the Morning Star, although even individual issues of these may be restricted if they contain material unfavourable to the USSR. In addition to the outright refusal to make material publicly available, journals may be edited before they reach the reader. Until the USSR signed the Universal Copyright Convention in 1973, VINITI (The All-Union Institute for Scientific and Technical Information) used to receive about 500 foreign scientific journals, including Science and New Scientist. It would remove materials unsuitable for Soviet readers and then reproduce them itself and distribute the edited copies to Soviet libraries. This not only saved on foreign currency but also ensured that the social and political content of these journals did not reach Soviet scholars. The sections omitted were often replaced by adverts. The editing was obvious, as the removed items were still listed in the annual index. The editing took time and so Soviet scientists were usually six or seven months late receiving these major journals.<sup>108</sup> Such practices are illegal under the Universal Copyright Convention (which the USSR joined in 1973) but may still go on; in addition it seems that the offending items may simply be torn out, or the whole issue sent into spetskhran.

Some indication of the extent of the spetskhran is given by Popovsky,<sup>109</sup> who estimates that up to a quarter of the holdings of the Lenin Library are in spetskhran. Clearly a great deal of older Soviet material is stored there, in all subject areas and ranging from popular agitational literature of the 1940s to monographs by purged scientists, poetry and novels. It is clear that the holdings of the spetskhran are reviewed from time to time; material is sometimes restored to the open shelves. One may sometimes get a book which has been stamped for spetskhran and then over stamped 'pogasheno' (cancelled).

Material kept in the restricted collections has not been listed in the public catalogues since the late 1940s. At least some of the material in spetskhran can be found in the official author catalogue. In the Lenin Library, for example, when Futtrell worked there in the late 1950s he found that works by Pilnyak, Trotsky, Bukharin and Zinoviev were not in the public catalogue. He was allowed to use the official author catalogue and found cards there for virtually all the literary figures of the 1920s who interested him. The catalogue of foreign books contained a number of Western books about the USSR not in the public catalogue. Accounts of other scholars who have used the official author catalogue in the Lenin Library confirm that information on certain types of restricted materials has been in the official author catalogue; this material has been made available to foreign scholars in Reading Room No. 1. Futtrell, however, could not find entries for people like Trotsky in the official catalogue and his requests were taken to be checked by the staff in another catalogue to which he did not have access.<sup>110</sup> It does appear that some socio-political literature published after 1917 which has been withdrawn from the open catalogue is not listed in the official catalogues at all, and is only recorded in the catalogue of Section 13; section 13 is the official name for spetskhran.<sup>111</sup> Ordinary library staff do not have access to this catalogue, although they do use the official catalogue and may allow readers to consult it too.

Access to material kept in spetskhran is restricted to those who have special authorisation to use it. In the Lenin Library, foreign researchers may be allowed to consult certain items from it in Reading Room No. 1. Soviet researchers use the material in the 'spetskhran' reading room, which is located on the third floor off the smoking room. In order to get permission to read a particular item, a reader has to produce a recommendation from his place of work testifying to his ideological reliability and confirming that the given article is necessary for his work.<sup>112</sup> Getting permission to use material may



involve considerable delays, as Nekrich found when he applied for access to Churchill's History of the Second World War. Researchers using materials from spetskhran have to sign an undertaking not to divulge the contents of what they have used. These regulations are enforced. The Chronicle of Current Events reported:

This spring in Leningrad two graduate students of history at the Herzen Pedagogical Institute were arrested for 'divulging material from the special collection'. One of the students was writing a thesis on 'The gnoseological roots of Fascism' and he had been telling his acquaintances about the contents of the books he had been reading in the special collection. The names of these students and their fate, are unknown. 113

It is also rumoured that Sinyavsky's arrest was brought about because, in a work published under a pseudonym, he cited a work of Lenin only available in spetskhran. He was one of the few people to have had permission to consult this work.<sup>114</sup>

In addition to material formally restricted in this way, readers may sometimes be refused access to material on spurious technical grounds. These works are listed in the catalogue, but when requested are not delivered because they are in the bindery, on loan to another reader or in temporarily inaccessible storage. Obviously in most cases these explanations are genuine, but sometimes they are clearly false, as Lifshitz-Losev describes in his account of how the translation into Russian of some of Freud's works, published in 1910-20, was reported to be in the bindery throughout his five years at Leningrad University in the late 1950s, and was still there when he applied in the 1970s.<sup>115</sup>

### Library purges

British libraries have experienced nothing that can be compared to Soviet library purges. Probably the closest parallel would be the P.G. Wodehouse affair. In 1941, Wodehouse made five broadcasts over German radio from Berlin, directed at the USA. British public opinion was outraged by this apparent betrayal, and there were many calls for his books to be withdrawn from libraries, sent for scrap or even publicly burnt. Several libraries did indeed withdraw

his books and only restored them to the shelves some years after the war.

Those librarians who left his books on the shelf reported much reduced borrowing rates.<sup>116</sup> During the McCarthy era in the USA, there were a number of witch-hunts involving books by communist sympathisers in American libraries.

In pre-Revolutionary Russia, the large public libraries like the Rumyantsev Museum (now the Lenin Library) or the Imperial Public Library (now the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library in Leningrad), which were mainly used by academics or the middle and upper classes, had relatively few restrictions placed on their collections. Smaller libraries intended for the general public had, however, to select their stocks from government-approved lists and were subject to regular inspection by the police.<sup>117</sup> Sometimes libraries which infringed regulations were closed down and their staff persecuted.<sup>118</sup>

After the revolution the libraries which had belonged to many landowners, monasteries and government institutions were broken up and the books taken to local libraries, or destroyed. Steps were taken to requisition the most valuable collections and control the dispersal of books, but nevertheless all sorts of books found their way into the libraries set up by local soviets, factories and institutions to serve the workers and peasants. Given the leadership's concern about literacy and reading, it was to be expected that they would not approve of this type of material being made available to the people. The library purges of the 1920s and 1930s have been discussed in detail elsewhere,<sup>119</sup> but their main features are summarised here, as background to the post-War situation.

The first library purge took place in 1920; its detailed provisions are not known but it seems to have been aimed at ridding libraries and reading rooms for the general public of specialist monographs, old textbooks, pornography, books in foreign languages and literature from extreme Right-wing organisations such as the 'Black Hundreds', which were clearly unsuitable for their readers.<sup>120</sup>

This was followed in 1923 by a further large-scale purge organised by Krupskaya.<sup>121</sup> Apparently for the first time, large scholarly libraries were included, but the regulations for them were rather different to those for mass libraries. They could retain copies of 'suspect' literature, but had to ensure they were not lent to ordinary readers. This is the start of the 'spetskhran'. The instructions stress that 'books must be sifted with particular care' in small libraries serving the masses. The circular indicates, in fairly broad terms, the kind of books to be withdrawn in areas such as philosophy and religion; ordinary libraries should retain only anti-religious literature, although larger libraries could retain the Bible, the Koran and the Talmud. In the socio-political area, all pre-1917 anti-revolutionary books issued by government institutions and patriotic organisations had to be withdrawn, along with propagandist literature of the period 1914-1917 which opposed the Bolsheviks and the moves to make peace with Germany. Small libraries had to remove 'propagandist and reference books and pamphlets issued by Soviet organs in 1918, 1919 and 1920 concerned with matters that have been differently dealt with by the Soviet Government and that are consequently out of date (land, taxes, free trade, food policy, etc.)'. The instruction stresses that copies of such literature shall be retained in central Guberniya and research libraries. Out-of-date legal works should be withdrawn; large libraries may retain them but should note in the catalogue that they are obsolete. Small libraries should also withdraw out-dated scientific books. In the sections on history, literature and geography, books praising the tsarist system and antagonistic to socialism and communism had to be removed. Fiction and children's books required particular care:

It is necessary to remove books which may excite, strengthen and develop low, animal, selfish and anti-social feelings (such eg as malice and cruelty in detective stories, sexual feelings and perversions in pornographic and semi-pornographic books, narrow family and religious feelings, the crude nationalism and militarism of many historical novels, and so on). It is particularly important to banish from the children's section all books with a bad emotional

and ideal content and all inartistic books with a deliberate tendency to glorify the customs, manners and ideas of the bourgeois society.

To the instruction was attached a list of works of fiction to be removed, largely consisting of authors' surnames, followed by lists of certain authors and works to be taken out of the non-fiction section. There is also a list of children's authors to be removed, which includes a large number of foreign writers. The circular ends with a list of 'Publishing firms that do not inspire confidence'. Ironically, one of the publishing firms listed was Posrednik, in whose work Krupskaya herself had been involved while a student.<sup>122</sup>

These instructions became widely known abroad and raised a storm of protest among socialists<sup>123</sup> and aroused the wrath of Gor'kii, then living abroad; probably a number of Soviet leaders, including Lunacharskii, Krupskaya's superior at Narkompros were also angered by it.<sup>124</sup> Krupskaya replied to these criticisms in an open letter to Pravda in April 1924, reminding readers of the amount of unsuitable literature in mass libraries and arguing that in ordering the removal of such material from libraries for the masses, she was defending their interests. However, while the issue of the circular was not an error, the inclusion with it of a 'most unfortunate list of books' to be withdrawn was; it had been drawn up by the Glavpolitprosvet Commission for Book Revision and sent out without her knowledge. 'As soon as I saw this list it was cancelled'. She goes on to argue that the list was a mistake - many of the works included in it were not so much harmful as irrelevant to the peasants and workers, such as Kant. The prohibition of certain works by Tolstoy and Kropotkin was also a mistake; while their world-views might not be ones which should be actively promoted, they could do no real harm.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the fuss caused by the 1923 'Instruction', there were several other 'library purges' during the 1920s, which were mainly concerned with removing remaining unsuitable pre-Revolutionary literature and withdrawing out-dated political works from earlier years of Soviet power.

The library purge of October 1929-1932 however, marked the beginning of the Stalinist period in Soviet libraries. In the 1920s, librarians could still argue the case for balanced collection development and the removal from libraries only of factually false or obsolete literature rather than works which were politically unacceptable. Krupskaya herself said 'What is important is the general physiognomy of the library, rather than whether or not, by some carelessness, there will be five unworthy works out of a thousand'.<sup>126</sup> However, at the start of the 1930s librarians with bourgeois sympathies were hounded out and many of Krupskaya's close associates lost their jobs. From the beginning of 1930 huge numbers of books were withdrawn from libraries of all types, and as in previous purges, libraries suffered from over-zealous librarians and Komsomol activity who withdrew anything they feared could possibly be suspect. In the tense atmosphere of the mid to late 1930s, library stocks were increasingly depleted and librarians grew more and more confused, as the Smolensk Archives reveal.<sup>127</sup> Every change in policy, every new trial, resulted in new lists of books for withdrawal. It is difficult to estimate how many books in all were removed from libraries and destroyed, but it must have run into millions of volumes.

During the War, the ideological climate eased, but book purges started again soon after the War. Books and periodicals giving favourable treatment to the USSR's former allies had to be removed as the Cold War developed. Zhdanov's attacks on writers such as Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, and on literary journals, were followed by the wholesale withdrawal of such publications. In 1950, a further large-scale purge attacked materials on Yugoslavia from before the Tito-Stalin split, books on the nationalities deported for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis, and other out-of-date socio-political works. Libraries were also purged of books by scientists who opposed current Party thinking on matters such as genetics and linguistics. In the opinion of some authorities, the Stalinist post-War library purges caused even more damage than did those of the 1930s.<sup>128</sup>

Periodic purges of library stocks continued after Stalin's death. Stalin's own works, books about him and literature linked with his policies were withdrawn in the late 1950s. In Ministry of Culture libraries alone, over 65 million 'obsolete' books were withdrawn in 1956-58; these would have been mainly works by or relating to Stalin and his policies. After the June 1957 Central Committee Plenum, which gave Khrushchev victory over the 'Anti-Party Group', libraries were instructed to remove books by Malenkov, Molotov and others. Despite all these withdrawals, the major CPSU decree on libraries in September 1959 criticised libraries for, among other shortcomings, holding large amounts of obsolete literature.<sup>129</sup> At the same time, in October 1956, the Central Committee did call on Glavlit and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism to consider returning to the open shelves books about Lenin taken out of circulation in the 1930s and 1940s;<sup>130</sup> this was part of the general reassertion of 'Leninist norms' in Soviet life in the mid-1950s.

In February 1960, the USSR Ministry of Culture issued a new and detailed Instruction on the withdrawal of obsolete books from libraries of all types.<sup>131</sup> This lays down, perhaps for the first time, that libraries are to be 'weeded' regularly (at least once a year), and also differentiates between this routine act of library housekeeping and the procedures to be followed when special instructions are received, which have to be acted on immediately. The 1960 Instructions opened with a preamble stressing that libraries should contain literature which is valuable ideologically and politically, for scientific study, production and artistically, encouraging the formation of a communist world-view and raising the cultural and technical level of the workers. Regular reviews of library stocks are essential for maintaining its quality. In reviewing the collection, librarians should both examine the book stock directly and check items against the 'Bibliographical indexes of obsolete publications' and the 'Union lists' (of books to be excluded from libraries and the book-trade network). The instructions stipulated that: (1) a review must be carried out at least

once a year, (2) Directors and Heads of republican and oblast' level libraries, of central specialist libraries and Academy libraries had the right to carry out these reviews independently, and were to keep in the library one or two copies of any books relevant to their work which contained factual, historical or other material necessary for scientific work. (3) Heads of libraries controlled by industrial enterprises, institutions, education organisations, trade unions, sovnarkhozy and so on could carry out the review with the permission of the management of the superior body. The heads of town, district, rural and children's libraries had to have permission from the responsible cultural organs. In all these libraries, special commissions were to be set up to carry out the revision of the stocks, including members of the superior body and the local cultural organs and drawing on the advice of local experts in particular subject fields. If necessary, these commissions could turn to larger libraries for advice. (4) Scientific and technical libraries in sovnarkhozy and industrial enterprises, and all types of libraries in research and design institutes, other organisations and higher educational establishments had the right to retain one or two copies of obsolete literature for reference use, if it was in their subject area and had the approval of the superior body. (5) Responsibility for carrying out the stock revision was shared by the library director and the management of the superior agency controlling the library. (6) The identification of material for withdrawal had to be carried out most carefully. Books, pamphlets and other material which were out-of-date either ideologically and politically or factually were to be withdrawn. This included (a) 'obsolete mass agitational literature ...'; (b) 'popular pamphlets for the masses published before the 20th Congress of the CPSU in which important questions of revolutionary theory and the practice of communist constructions are set out dogmatically'; (c) obsolete instructional aids for Party and Komsomol education published before the 20th Party Congress; (d) draft Five-Year Plans, Party statutes and other drafts, provided the library had the final version; (e) all types of technical,

production and mass literature now out-of-date either economically or technically, such as old standards, norms, instructions, pricelists and textbooks, unless they contained diagrams or illustrations still useful to readers;

(f) mass agricultural literature containing wrong or out-dated views and instructions not in accordance with the decisions of the Party and government on agricultural matters; (g) textbooks no longer of the recommended lists from the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education; (h) all types of out-of-date military textbooks, instructions etc.; (i) mass legal literature containing legislation no longer in force; (j) all books and journals in the languages of the peoples of the USSR printed in scripts no longer in use, unless these works had academic and historical importance; (k) loose issues of journals and newspapers, provided the library had a full set; different types of libraries retained periodicals for varying lengths of time.

(7) Libraries were forbidden to withdraw the classics of Marxism-Leninism, speeches by party and government leaders and official publications of the CPSU, Komsomol, VTsSPS, and all-union and union republic legislatures and councils of ministers. Old editions of encyclopaedias were to be kept. If the library had surplus copies of books of academic or artistic value, these were not to be withdrawn but offered to other libraries.

(8) Lists of literature for withdrawal had to be confirmed by the library's superior body; for mass libraries under the ministry of culture, this meant the oblast' cultural department. However, in the case of those large libraries with the right to review their stocks independently, lists of material for withdrawal could be approved by the library director.

(9) The Instruction stresses that books must not be removed from the catalogue, de-accessioned or destroyed until the approved lists have been returned.

(10) On receipt of (presumably new issues of) the Bibliographical indexes of obsolete books or Union lists (of books to be excluded from libraries and the book trade), the stock had to be checked at once and the designated books withdrawn within two weeks. If none



of the items included in the instructions were found in the stocks, then the library had to make a return confirming that the list had been checked.

(11) The necessary adjustments had to be made to inventories etc. (12)

Withdrawn literature had to be rendered unfit for use and given to the local waste paper agency; a receipt for the waste paper had to be attached to the documents about the removal of the books. It was categorically forbidden to give the waste paper to other organisations, such as shops or canteens (as wrapping paper) or to destroy it independently, e.g. by burning. (13) The final clause of the instructions lays upon ministries with libraries under their control the duty to ensure that these regulations are carried out; the ministries of culture and their local organs have the responsibility for checking on all libraries of whatever organisation. To the Instructions is appended a sample form for registering the books for withdrawal, including a column for indicating 'On the basis of which documents the work is removed'.

Some idea of the impact of the 1960 Instruction on library stocks is given by stock withdrawal figures for RSFSR libraries. Although in 1966-72 they withdrew between 4% and 7% of stock annually, in 1960 alone they withdrew up to 10% of books in stock. Despite these regular reviews of the collections, in 1972 it was still estimated that about 8% of the average mass library's stock was 'morally obsolete'. Librarians found the withdrawals procedure very laborious and time consuming, and apparently many, when they encountered a book they were not certain of, preferred to simply leave it on the shelf for reconsideration the following year.<sup>132</sup>

The 1960 Instruction was replaced by a new Instruction in July 1978.<sup>133</sup> Although the general procedures for stock weeding are the same, there are a number of changes in the types of material to be withdrawn, and large libraries have more discretion to retain books of scientific or historical value. Clearer instructions are given on old technical literature to be withdrawn, on superseded school and college textbooks, out-of-date reference books and so on. Where the

1960 decree called for the exclusion of pre-1956 mass popular literature on economic, political and agricultural questions, the 1979 decree makes the cut-off point 1965, when the Brezhnev regime removed the last vestiges of Khrushchev's policies and initiated a number of reforms. Some publications have later cut-off points, while others use the 1965 base-line. In particular, the following were to be withdrawn: popular non-fiction works on philosophy, psychology and atheism, published before the 1970s, containing out-dated information; all material on party history intended for the general reader published before 1965; all books and pamphlets on scientific communism for the general reader published before 1971; all pre-1970 short biographies of Lenin; all material on the USSR's foreign policy and international relations published before 1971; works on the world communist movement published before 1969; works on foreign countries issued before 1965, plus any later publications which had been overtaken by major changes in the country described. The regulations on withdrawing old newspapers and journals have been clarified and allow for greater local discretion - for instance, librarians can retain issues of journals which would otherwise have been withdrawn, if they contain fiction in heavy demand or useful local studies material. As in 1960 (point 7) librarians are instructed not to withdraw CPSU and Komsomol congresses, government materials etc.; however, they are now permitted to offer duplicates for exchange. Librarians are, however, instructed to withdraw editions of the classics of marxism-leninism which have out-dated introductions and commentaries, or have a 'morally obsolete typographical presentation', such as superseded emblems or organisational names. (This presumably refers to books issued by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism when it included Stalin in its name). Curiously, these works are not to be included in the lists of books withdrawn as obsolete, but in those of worn-out books. Unlike the 1960 Instruction, the 1979 Instruction also encourages libraries to withdraw little-used books, and to offer them on exchange to other libraries.

The 1979 Instruction makes some changes in the regulations relating to directives received from 'superior organs' ordering the withdrawal of certain books. Both catalogue cards and the actual book must be withdrawn within one week. It is stressed that the books must be made unfit for further use, and sent for pulping. Other instructions make it clear that books withdrawn in response to these directives must never be offered on exchange to other libraries.<sup>134</sup>

These instructions make it clear that part of the 'library purges' which occur in Soviet libraries are the routine withdrawals of out-of-date literature which would be withdrawn by ordinary public libraries in the UK - old time-tables and calendars, superseded yearbooks and almanacs, out-of-date textbooks, old newspapers which are kept on file centrally, etc. However, a further element in Soviet stock 'weeding' is the search for works which are now politically out-dated or inconvenient, which praise former Soviet leaders (other than Lenin) and set out their policies. As Soviet libraries are often flooded with topical political literature, a large part of their social sciences stock (broadly defined) is liable to be withdrawn every few years. However, this routine removal of out-dated literature is clearly not an urgent matter.

The 1960 Instruction mentions 'Bibliographical indexes of obsolete publications' and 'Union lists' (of books to be excluded from libraries and the book trade network). These are not referred to directly in the 1978 Instruction. The 1975 Goskomizdat decree on the second-hand book trade, however, does mention a 'cumulative list of books to be removed from libraries and the book trade', which was published in two parts (1960 and 1973).<sup>135</sup> It seems to be the same publication as the 'Union lists' mentioned in the 1960 Instruction. However, the wording of section 10 of the 1960 Instruction implies that the 'Bibliographical indexes' and 'Union lists' are up-dated by orders sent out by Glavlit as the need arises. It appears that there are (a) two consolidated lists, prepared at intervals, which list 'banned' books; (b) occasional or frequent supplementary bulletins. A copy of a consolidated list was seen by Maggs. He describes

it as an 'Alphabetical handbook of obsolete publications' (Alfavitnyi spravochnik ustarevshikh izdaniy) issued in Moscow in 1960 by the All-Union Book Chamber, which contained a great deal of obviously out-of-date material, such as sports schedules for past years, but also books by people who have been criticised or officially disowned.<sup>136</sup> A 'Union list of books to be excluded from libraries and from the book-trade network' was seen in Moscow in the early 1960s by an anonymous Western scholar. He or she saw volume II of the list only; it was one of an edition of 35,000, marked confidential and issued by the All-Union Book Chamber in July 1961. Part II contained about 10,000 titles published during the period 1918-41; apparently Part I had included about 20,000. In the part seen, about half the titles were monographs on political topics, or memoirs. There were also some collective works by universities and other educational establishments, and some reference works. The list did not mention works by people such as Bukharin and Trotskii; the writer suggests these may have been in Part I, which may have had a higher security classification. Earlier editions of this list had appeared in the mid-1930s, 1939 and in 1958. Part I may have been part of a continuing effort to round up books by deviationists. The reasoning behind the works included in Part II was unclear. Probably some included favourable references to persons later disgraced; others may have contradicted the present Party line.<sup>137</sup> Given that the 1961 Instructions for libraries under the Ministry of Education (chiefly school libraries) mention only the Bibliographical index and not the Union list,<sup>138</sup> it seems likely that the Union list was only relevant to the work of larger libraries and the book trade, where older works were more likely to be found.

These cumulated lists are supplemented by the orders which Glavlit sends to the Ministry of Culture listing books which are to be withdrawn from libraries and the book trade. The USSR Ministry of Culture transmits these orders to its subordinate organisations. Other ministries and departments with libraries also send these orders to the libraries under their control. The texts of such

orders which I have seen all refer to 'libraries for general use and the book trade network'; presumably in large libraries with restricted collections the books are simply withdrawn from the open shelves and the open catalogue. The documents are marked 'For official use only', but have found their way into dissident hands.<sup>139</sup> Samizdat also gives us some indication of how the purges are done. When Kuznetsov emigrated, readers who asked for his books in libraries were told that the books were on loan. Meanwhile, his name was gradually removed from all the readers' catalogues.<sup>140</sup> These procedures are used for the works of people who emigrate, whether from choice or by force, and writers who have incurred the wrath of the authorities, but remain in the USSR. Although the Instruction states that books removed under these procedures should be pulped, there are several reports of them being burnt in library stoves instead.<sup>141</sup> Librarians who do not remove literature as instructed are severely reprimanded;<sup>142</sup> presumably they may also lose their jobs.

In addition, it seems that librarians are expected to exercise political discretion in the absence of, or in advance of, official instructions. Gorodetskii, for instance, suggests that when Trifonov's 'Dom na naberezhnoi' was criticised, a number of librarians withdrew that number of Druzhba narodov from the lending section of the library on their own initiative.<sup>143</sup>

A curious footnote to the study of purges in Soviet libraries is the reported existence of excellent uncensored libraries in Soviet prisons. Bukovsky writes of the excellent library in Lefortovo prison;

It looked as if all the books confiscated from the enemies of the people over half a century had ended up here. Up and down the country they had 'purged' libraries and burnt 'pernicious' books, while in here, everything was preserved as in an oasis. It had never occurred to anyone to purge the libraries of the KGB prisons ...<sup>144</sup>

Solzhenitsyn makes the same comment about the Lubyanka prison library, at a rather earlier date.<sup>145</sup>

#### Reader guidance and issues

Although library stocks are regularly weeded in the way described above, and

in mass libraries the catalogues are designed to promote the 'best' books, librarians must still guide readers' choice, even in open access collections,<sup>146</sup> Librarians are not supposed to be passive custodians of the stock but active propagandisers of Marxism-Leninism involved in current Party campaigns and promoting literature dealing with topics of current concern to the government, whether it be raising the quality of production, combatting alcoholism or promoting civil defence. Librarians have the duty to encourage readers to develop all facets of their personalities through reading, by ensuring that they read a wide range of non-fiction books in socio-political, historical, scientific and technical and aesthetic fields, as well as novels.

According to Korsch librarians collect confidential data on readers' social and political attitudes, and their response to Party and government propaganda, while engaged in reader guidance. In Soviet libraries, detailed records are kept on the reader's card of the books he or she borrows; this is intended to help the librarian to guide reading more effectively. Korsch maintains that these cards are not only an invasion of readers' privacy, but can also be used to check on the librarians' competence and loyalty. Librarians are held to be as responsible as the reader, if not more so, if the readers card reveals unbalanced reading tastes. 'Instances have been known in which librarians, to be on the safe side, made fictitious entries with the reader's connivance and consent'. The KGB do apparently take an interest in readers' records. Cases in which users of restricted material were identified by the KGB were mentioned earlier; according to Korsch Jews in Leningrad were afraid to borrow Hebrew books because these were recorded on their cards. Apparently notes scribbled in library books have been used to identify dissidents.<sup>147</sup> Another observer has described how in the early 1960s a student interested in psychology applied for eight books on Pavlovian psychology and Freud's General Introduction to Psychoanalysis. The eight books were duly delivered. The student asked about the Freud and as he was so persistent he was sent by the librarian to another room.

The official there told him he did not need to read it. 'Dozens of our texts will explain what you need to know about Freud ... I'll give you the book if you insist. But take my advice and don't. Why have such things on your record? Be sensible: pick up your other issues and go'.<sup>148</sup>

### The reader

There are many barriers and pressures which prevent the flow of writers' ideas to the reader in the USSR, some of which also hinder the flow of ideas in the West. In what ways is the Soviet reader affected by the political controls peculiar to that system?

First, some commentators argue that it has eroded the reader's ability to discriminate and appreciate real literature. For instance, Finkelstein asserts:

Half a century of Soviet literature, Soviet censorship, Soviet editing or Soviet dictatorship - call it what you will - has so ruined the reader's taste that today he can no longer appreciate real literature.<sup>149</sup>

Other commentators are much less pessimistic, and stress the way in which readers have learnt to understand Aesopian language and to read more deeply. Kuznetsov, for instance, reports how one of his books was received 'The orthodox critics praised the novel and honest, intelligent people told me that they had enjoyed it and realised that the "happy end" had been a condition of publication'.<sup>150</sup>

It cannot be disputed that the overall range of imaginative literature available to the Soviet reader is less than to a Western reader. Many topics which concern readers cannot be debated openly in fiction, some innovative approaches cannot be employed. All this results in an impoverishment of the pool of fiction, poetry and drama from which the reader can select. At the same time, it does not follow that this restricted choice dulls readers' tastes and sensibilities. Rather, it may be that Western readers, who have access to a wide range of tasteless and even degrading 'pulp' fiction have lower aesthetic standards and a less keen appreciation of good literature than do ordinary Soviet readers.

Second, political controls and censorship are wasteful. They waste the talents of writers. As Etkind put it at the funeral of the persecuted literary

historian, Yu.G. Oksman:

'For whose benefit did (he) die without writing all the books he should have written, all the books he had in him? For whose benefit was Russian culture deprived of all it had the right to expect from Oksman? Today we are burying his great knowledge, his fine artistic taste and his dozens of unwritten books. For whose benefit? And I said also that if you could build power stations on the intellectual energy we allowed to run into the sands, we could have built thousands of fraternal hydro-electric plants. Who benefits from this monstrous waste?' 151

Writers who are forced to stop publishing, are imprisoned or are forced to emigrate are largely cut off from their potential readers, and so diminish the choices open to them.

Censorship - in both its prescriptive and proscriptive forms - is wasteful of material as well as spiritual resources. Books withdrawn at any stage of production waste paper, ink, the labour of printers and editors. Maintaining the censors is expensive in terms of salaries. Then, the political system is wasteful in demanding the production of material which is not really needed by readers at the expense of books and journals they want to read. The waste in the production of books and journals is seen most clearly in libraries. While all libraries have to dispose of some out-of-date material, the situation in the USSR is greatly exacerbated by the amount of mass political literature they acquire, which has a very short 'shelf life'. In addition, an unquantifiable number of books are withdrawn because their authors or the ideas they put forward are unacceptable. These 'library purges' both waste paper and librarians' time.

Censorship and political controls on information must also have costs in that information which people need to perform their job does not reach them. For instance, detailed information on agricultural pests affecting crops on particular areas cannot be published, which must hamper efforts to fight the pest in neighbouring areas.<sup>152</sup> According to Popovsky even the head of an institute charged with protecting the country from infectious diseases had limited access to information on outbreaks of diseases such as diphtheria.<sup>153</sup> Many people's work must be hampered by restrictions on access to statistics.



Censorship is also wasteful in that it delays publication. This is particularly serious in science and technology, where knowledge advances rapidly. It delays and restricts the communication of knowledge across national boundaries, both by interfering with the free flow of publications into and out of the country, and by limiting contacts between Soviet scholars and their Western counterparts.

Third, political controls on information and news mean that the media are often not believed by the readers. Many readers, particularly in more educated groups, are cynical about the information presented to them. Some people do have access to foreign radio stations (illegally) or to the various classified TASS bulletins. Cynicism about the official media is also fed by Soviet citizens who have travelled abroad, have extensive foreign contacts or can read foreign literature, and compare their experience with that portrayed in the press. Information from these sources becomes part of the 'word-of-mouth' communication system, which is also fed by rumours and eyewitness accounts of domestic events not reported by the official media. Indeed, Havlicek claims that interpersonal communication has taken on 'dimensions which make it a mass communication medium'.<sup>154</sup>

Fourth, the Soviet authorities have in recent years recognised the need to make available a greater variety of publications, to go some way towards meeting reader demands in areas which are below the threshold of political sensitivity. They have recognised that unless people find the media sufficiently attractive and credible, they will not read them and will therefore not receive the messages which the authorities wish. The media have had to change in order to keep up with an increasingly modernised and complex society, become more sophisticated and differentiated without promoting concepts which would undermine the leading role of the CPSU. The relationships between book publishing policy and consumer demand are explored more fully in chapter three, but here it should be noted that

while the authorities are willing to yield to pressure for more light fiction, such as Dumas or detective stories, they will not yield over politically sensitive writers.

To conclude, political controls and censorship do restrict Soviet readers' access to information and limit the range of material they can read. Despite this, people find alternative sources of information and value the literature they do read. But there are real costs, both to the individual reader and to society as a whole.

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CHAPTER 3

PUBLISHING, THE BOOK TRADE AND THE READER

The USSR publishes a huge number of books each year - in 1983 enough books and pamphlets were produced to provide 7.2 for every man, woman and child in the country.<sup>1</sup> Despite this large output, the existence of a well-developed library network and comparatively low prices for books, periodicals and newspapers, the supply of reading matter to the people continues to pose serious problems in the Soviet Union. The aim of this chapter is to explore all aspects of the supply of books to the retail book buyer - publishing practices, the determination of print runs and the paper supply, the growth of private libraries and problems of the retail trade, such as the black market in books and the expansion of the second-hand book trade. The following chapter will study the provision of books through libraries.

PUBLISHING POLICY

Soviet book publishing policy has been described in detail by Gregory Walker,<sup>2</sup> and so only a brief summary is required here. A study of reader preferences must take account of the range, quality and quantity of the reading matter made available to the reader and at the same time look beyond what people actually buy, borrow from the libraries and read to consider the questions of what they would actually read given a full freedom of choice. It would be a mistake, however, to view Soviet readers as just passive consumers of whatever is provided. The book market in the USSR may be largely a seller's market, but readers do still have the power to purchase or not purchase

a book, or to leave it unread on the library's shelves. However, in the Soviet publishing world, as in other parts of Soviet industry, consumers' tastes and desires are not paramount; as Walker observes

'the undifferentiated satisfaction of "raw" demand, as expressed in pre-publication orders and queues in bookshops, is not the primary aim of socialist publishing' <sup>3</sup>

That is to say, publishing policy emphasises making available to the people the kind of material they really need, rather than responding to their uninformed or short-term expressed demands. However, over the years there have been a number of changes in publishing policy, not only in the obviously political ways discussed in the previous chapter, but also over matters such as the amount of translated literature or detective stories to be produced, or increasing the availability of publications on cultivating a private plot. In addition to publishing ideologically sound, or at least unexceptionable, works, publishers have also to fulfil their plan and either make a profit or contain their losses within the limits established by the plan, by publishing books which will be bought by the readers. The balancing act is further complicated by the USSR's chronic paper shortage, and by the mechanism for determining retail prices for books, which lays down fixed prices for each category of book according to the length, not according to likely market demand.

Manuscripts sometimes come to the publishing house on the initiative of the authors. Secondly, publishing houses may commission manuscripts from authors by approaching suitable authors or institutions with ideas for books which they consider desirable. This is particularly practiced by publishers in scholarly fields. Third, manuscripts may be transmitted to the publishing house by its superior organ, with instructions to publish.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, editors have been encouraged to be more active in identifying which books need to be written and approaching appropriate authors. The use of the different sources of manuscripts varies considerably between publishing houses; in 1968, for instance, Politizdat, which is subordinate to the Central Committee of the CPSU and publishes a great deal of propaganda material, found 15% of its manuscripts from direct proposals by the Central Committee and 60% on the basis of commissions by its editorial staff; only 25% of its publications originate d from unsolicited manuscripts. On the other hand, Mysl', which also specialises in socio-political literature, relied on<sup>5</sup> unsolicited proposals for 65-70% of its publications in 1973. Authors are paid a fee for their work and do not depend on royalties. There are some variations between the republics in the fee scales, but they are all based on the principle of payment according to the type of work and the length of the manuscript. There is considerable flexibility within the scales for remuneration according to quality. Nowadays, the scales have been fixed to reduce the incentive authors once had to produce over-long manuscripts. Authors have no direct<sup>6</sup> financial interest in the saleability of their work.

On the basis of the manuscripts commissioned or received, the publishing house director compiles an annual plan describing the titles to be published in the following year, with some indication of the number of copies of each title. These plans are transmitted to the State Committee on Printing, Publishing and the Book Trade (Goskomizdat), which examines them alongside the plans of other publishing houses with the aim of eliminating duplication of titles and ensuring that overall subject coverage is correct. The revised plans are then circulated to the book trade. The wholesale organisations collect orders from their retail network, and then relay the results back to the publishers. The publishers then compare the amounts ordered with their supplies of paper and their printing capacity and other indicators established by the plan and revise the edition size accordingly. Usually they have to reduce the edition size as demand from bookshops and libraries generally outstrips paper supplies.<sup>7</sup> In legal terms, the edition size for each title is agreed jointly by the publishing house and the bookseller; the main responsibility however lies with the publishing house. Disagreements between the two parties can be settled by special commissions (tirazhnaya komissiya) and in the last resort by the republic's State Committee on Publishing.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to formally constituted publishing houses, a number of other organisations in the USSR have the right to publish. These include government bodies issuing instructions and guidance to their officials, industrial enterprises preparing parts lists and manuals for their workers, educational institutions printing their own teaching materials and research institutes and pedagogical institutes issuing their own collections of articles, monographs and irregular series.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Goskomizdat took a number of measures in an attempt to limit this type of publishing, partly because of the need to improve ideological control but also because the number of such publications was growing steadily, avoiding the supervision of Goskomizdat in its use of paper and printing facilities and often very poorly controlled bibliographically. In the 1970s, such publications made up well over 40% of the total number of titles issued; however they were generally issued in small editions and consumed only about 2% of the USSR's paper supplies each year.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE PAPER PROBLEM

As paper supply problems account for many of the shortages of books and journals in the USSR, a few words on the question are appropriate here. The USSR is a major exporter of paper, and foreign customers paying in hard currency seem to be given precedence over domestic customers. The Soviet press has identified a number of reasons for the paper shortage. First, many paper-making plants are working below capacity because of inadequate supplies of wood pulp and poor working practices in the plants. Finished paper is often stored badly, even in the open air, at the mills. Poor handling on the railways causes further damage - each year, over 40,000 tonnes of paper are lost because of bad transport alone. In the print shops, further losses occur because paper is supplied in rolls even though the printers would prefer paper supplied in sheets; a further 10,000 tonnes each year are lost in this way. As plan indicators for the paper mills are expressed in terms of weight produced, the mills have no incentive to produce lighter weight papers. On one estimate at least 5% of all paper produced is lost in these ways.<sup>10</sup><sup>11</sup>



The shortages are also caused by some of the uses made of the paper once it has been produced. Official forms and stationery are often identified as consumers of significant amounts of paper which could have been used for books and journals - in 1975 in the RSFSR for instance, 90,000 tonnes of paper annually were used in this way, the equivalent to half the paper used for book production in the republic that year.<sup>12</sup> Regulations require that goods sold be accompanied by technical documentation, and some 50,000 tonnes of paper a year are used for this purpose; while some are obviously essential, others are completely superfluous.<sup>13</sup>

#### BOOKS and 'NON-BOOKS'

Despite the genuine problems which paper supply causes, many commentators agree that the main reason for the shortage of books people want to read is the amount of resources devoted to what one 'emigre' calls 'non-books', which he defines as :

'propaganda books which no-one buys or takes out of libraries, which simply do not exist for the reader'.

In this category he places some 80% of Soviet book production, including the works of Brezhnev and of many people in the literary, academic and scientific hierarchies.<sup>14</sup> Another dissident writer condemns to this category the bulk of the mass socio-economic literature published in the USSR, and the publications produced as part of official campaigns, such as that against alcoholism in 1973-4, when local and central publishing houses issued over 35 books and pamphlets on the subject in Russian alone, a total of over a million copies.<sup>15</sup>

More recently, publishers have responded to the public's interest in ecological matters by publishing dozens of books and pamphlets on the subject; it has been argued that the readers would have been better served had they published fewer books, but better ones.<sup>16</sup>

Reading 'between the lines', it seems that mass political propaganda accounts for much of the waste in Soviet publishing.

Other types of 'non-books' singled out by Soviet commentators include reprints of works which are obviously out-of-date. For instance, one teacher complained that the third revised edition of a technical drawing textbook published in 1980 was largely useless, because it was based on standards which were no longer in force and had been replaced even before the textbook went to press.<sup>17</sup> Many publishers have wasted paper by producing anthologies of articles already published in the periodical press or the newspapers.<sup>18</sup> There are also complaints about the amount of 'prestige' publishing in the USSR. This includes books produced to mark significant anniversaries in the history of various factories and collective farms, such as the volumes produced to mark the 25th anniversary of 'Moslift' and the 15th anniversary of the Baranovichi Cotton Combine.<sup>19</sup> The publishing house Liesma was criticised for putting out a book called 'Sport in Latvia' in a 20,000 copy edition on the best quality paper, largely for foreign consumption; similar accusations of wasteful use of top grade paper were levelled at the Academy of Sciences' publishing house Nauka for printing 4,000 copies of a list of its members from 1917-1974.<sup>20</sup>

Scholars, too, waste a great deal of printing paper, as they can be required to publish a certain amount each year in order to fulfil their institute's plan and so earn bonuses; the repetitious nature of much Soviet scholarly publishing is familiar to Western scholars,

and, apparently, to the Director of the Lenin Library as well, who is reported to have complained of the amount of research work done each year on the Komsomol and the Pioneers, resulting in

"a vast volume of superfluous literature not  
containing any new information and all repeating  
the same theme".<sup>21</sup>

Other librarians' criticisms, though, might win less support from the Soviet public: Vaks and Pervoushina argue that the humour books published by central and local publishing houses in the 1970s are not funny in the face of paper shortages depriving people of better books !<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, the question of what a 'non-book' is varies according to the viewpoint of the individual commentator. Many literary critics and cultural authorities fulminate about the amount of resources diverted to what they see as popular 'pulp' fiction, which is nevertheless often enjoyed by ordinary readers. Even though novels and poetry are generally much sought after, there are books which lie unsold on book shelves or untouched in libraries. There are complaints that new poets are often published in excessively generous print-runs, and that poets with 'patronage' get new editions published long before the previous one has sold out.<sup>23</sup> A Western journalist observes that while the demand for good modern poets is never satisfied, obscure and often poor poets from the non-Russian republics are translated and published freely.<sup>24</sup> At the highest level, Stukalin, then Chairman of Goskomizdat, has criticised a number of Soviet publishing houses for taking on immature works not worthy of publication simply because they have been recommended to the publishing house by important literary figures.<sup>25</sup> As Voinovich

sharply observes in *The Ivankiad*, editors have to :

'separate the necessary writers from the unnecessary. Necessary writers are the secretaries of the Writers' Union, the directors of publishing houses, the chief editors of journals. You do them a good turn, they do you one: they get you published (if you have something), arrange favourable reviews, throw some profitable job your way [...]. Unnecessary writers are those who are not able to do any of these things, cannot and do not want to. The most unnecessary ones are Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, and other classics - you won't get anything out of them at all. True, sometimes it is necessary to publish them anyway, but the paper shortage does make itself felt...' 26

Although figures are published on the number of books which remain unsold, they do not give a full picture of the 'non-book' problem. Compared to the number of books published, the amount actually sent for pulping is small, and is getting smaller. In 1965, 5.5% of central publishers' output was pulped, and in 1975 only 1.1%.<sup>27</sup> Annual averages based on stock-taking show that only 3-4% of books and pamphlets in the retail system at any one time are unsaleable.<sup>28</sup> A relatively high proportion of socio-political literature remains unsold; in 1974 3.6% of books on political economy and 3.2% of those on scientific communism did not find a buyer, compared to 1.4% for central publishers' output as a whole.<sup>29</sup> A more recent report on books not sold within 5-10 years of publication confirms that the majority are mass political propaganda, but also mentions scholarly books published in too large editions.<sup>30</sup> However, these figures are not altogether reliable, in that there are frequent reports of bookshops 'dumping' unpopular books on mass libraries, which will later have to de-accession them and dispose of them, often to the scrap paper mill. (This is discussed more fully in the following chapter). Further, bookshops often dispose of unsaleable books

by making purchasers who want to buy popular books take several unwanted ones too. This illegal practice is discussed more fully later on. The scale on which library dumping in particular appears to take place suggests that the figures for books sent for pulping by the book trade gives very little indication of the true level of waste in the system.

Although, as indicated above, some poetry and fiction does not find its reader, the most acute shortages are of poetry and fiction for adults, and children's books. There is also a considerable unsatisfied demand for home reference books, including dictionaries and one-volume encyclopaedias, cookery books and books on household management and all types of hobbies and 'DIY' activities.

#### BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Given the shortage of paper, Goskomizdat has the task of allocating paper (and other relatively scarce resources such as printing capacity) between various types of publication. At the end of the 1950s, it was decided that increased emphasis ought to be placed on the production of journals rather than books, and between 1960 and 1970 the number of copies issued of journals went up by nearly 250%, but that of books by only 6%.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, many popular journals and newspapers were published in smaller editions than required, and only a limited number of subscriptions were accepted for these titles. The situation has improved considerably in recent years. By 1980, there were only 47 newspapers and journals which were restricted in number of subscriptions, and by 1983 this had fallen to 15. From 1983,

it was possible to subscribe freely to a number of the most popular journals for the first time - this included the women's magazines Rabotnitsa and Krest'yanka, the mass health monthly Zdorov'e, Roman-gazeta and Chelovek i zakon, the popular journal dealing with crime and law enforcement.<sup>32</sup>

#### MORE FICTION, LESS WASTE

However, since the beginning of the tenth five-year plan, more resources have been channelled into children's books and poetry and fiction for adults. Although the supply of suitable paper went up by only 12.8%, output of these two categories of books increased by over 30%, in terms of number of books issued.<sup>33</sup> Where in 1975 only 35% of the books and pamphlets published in the USSR fell into these categories, by 1984 51% of books did, in terms of number of copies printed. A particular emphasis has been placed on satisfying the demand for Russian and Soviet classics, and several series, such as 'Klassiki i sovremenniki' and 'Biblioteka yunoshstva'. now regularly put out such books in editions of hundreds of thousands.<sup>34</sup> A 22-volume edition of Leo Tolstoy's works was issued with a print-run of one million copies.<sup>35</sup> In 1984, as an experiment, it was decided to offer a three-volume edition of Pushkin on unlimited subscription, i.e. to print as many copies as were ordered. In all 10,700,000 people subscribed. The Chairman of Goskomizdat has stated that other works will also be offered in this way.<sup>36</sup> In 1984 and 1985 there have been some reports in the press claiming that the demand for some fiction and poetry has now been sated, although people are

still keen to buy sets of selected and complete works of the classics. However, there seems to have been little improvement in the supply of children's books in the 1980s, apparently because they are not sufficiently profitable.<sup>38</sup>

The increase in the publication of children's books and fiction and poetry for adults has to some extent been achieved without reducing the availability of other categories of publication. Goskomizdat has taken a number of measures to release scarce paper supplies for popular books. These have included measures to reduce losses of paper in transit and in the print shop, and attempts to save paper by improving book design and making fuller use of each printed page.<sup>39</sup> In popular series intended for the mass reader, a considerable amount of paper has been saved by cutting down on the introductions and notes to Russian and foreign classics.<sup>40</sup>

Goskomizdat is also trying to limit the amount of duplication between publishers, and restrict the issue of books which it does not consider sufficiently topical.<sup>41</sup> Publishers which do not normally issue fiction have been instructed to use paper they save by following all these instructions to publish fiction which is in great demand. For instance, a variety of publishers of technical literature cooperated in reprinting the twenty-volume 'Biblioteka priklyuchenii', which included favourite adventure stories, both Russian and foreign.<sup>42</sup> However, in their rush to issue popular literature which will sell well and bring in ample profits, publishing houses often duplicate books. For instance, four Moscow publishers brought out Oliver Twist almost simultaneously, in editions averaging 150,000 copies.

In 1984 at least five publishers produced Prishvin's stories, and on one estimation, virtually every publishing house in the country has published Alexandre Dumas, Conan Doyle and Jules Verne in the last two or three years. As each publisher has had the book edited, designed and type-set independently, this has resulted in considerable waste of resources. Goskomizdat is now attempting to improve the co-ordination of the printing and publishing of these highly popular novels.<sup>43</sup> There have also been complaints that this policy is encouraging the over-production of the most famous foreign authors, principally Dumas, Simenon, Conan Doyle, Fenimore Cooper, Andre Maurois, Charles Perrault, George Sand and Maurice Druon. In 1984 along over 5 million copies of their books were planned for publication, and it is feared that this over-concentration on a limited number of authors will in the end restrict readers' choices.<sup>44</sup>

Another policy which has saved a great deal of paper has been the establishment of stable school textbooks and textbook libraries; this process was planned to commence with school year 1978/9 and end in 1983/4.<sup>45</sup> Textbooks will in future be revised and reissued on a four-year cycle, and it is hoped that the number of copies of each textbook can be more closely matched to the numbers of pupils needing them. Very considerable savings of paper are being achieved by this measure. In 1981, Prosveshchenie reduced by a quarter the number of textbooks it issued, and used the paper to issue more teachers' manuals and books on pre-school education.<sup>46</sup> It has also greatly expanded its production of the books recommended for out of school reading, and has issued them in millions of copies



in the series 'shkol'naya biblioteka'.<sup>47</sup>

Another measure, which aims to rationalise the size of print-runs and ensure that readers get the books they need for their work, has been the introduction of a system whereby readers can place advance orders for specialist books. In 1984 alone, 100 million volumes were ordered through this system, 30 million more than in 1983. However, advance orders are not accepted for books which are expected to be in great demand. Since 1981, this has been taken a step further. Certain very specialised books, designated as such in the publisher's plan, are distributed only on the basis of advance orders from customers. In 1984 about 400 books were distributed in this way. The number of bookshops accepting these 'subscriptions' is increasing, but there are problems with publicising the system. Readers are also often disappointed, as books publicised in this way are often very late being published, or do not appear at all - in March 1984, a third of the books announced for 1983 as being available on subscription had not been published. However, this system does appear to have considerable potential for satisfying demand for specialist and academic books with clearly definable readerships.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to these measures aimed at alleviating the effects of the paper shortage by directing resources to the areas most demanded by readers, some attempt may have been made to damp down demand for certain types of publication through the price mechanism; as Walker has pointed out, the 1977 retail price rises for books were particularly large for reference works, adult fiction and books on hobbies and domestic pursuits.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, books in the shops in the USSR still seem relatively cheap compared to the cost of consumer goods such as boots and shoes.

## FOREIGN BOOKS

In recent years, measures have also been taken to improve the supply of foreign books. Books from other socialist countries have long been available to individual readers. In 1982, the USSR imported books from eleven socialist countries and sold them through over 200 shops and departments throughout the USSR, and by post. Since 1977, books have also been imported from Western and Third World countries for retail sale. In 1981, over 10,000 titles were purchased, adding up to about a million copies. There are now 22 shops specialising in selling books from the West and the Third World. The largest selection is available in the Moscow Dom knigi on Prospect Kalinina, which normally has about 5,000 titles in stock. Readers can order books from abroad through these specialist bookshops, using publishers' catalogues as well as ordering from book displays. Most of the titles ordered are in the fields of medicine, science, technology and computing.<sup>50</sup> However, in terms of number of copies imported, fiction and children's books predominate.<sup>51</sup> Books from non-socialist countries on sale in the USSR appear very expensive compared to Soviet books. However, for specialists in fields such as computers the opportunity to buy English and American books is very valuable, and readers who know foreign languages well appreciate the wider range of fiction and poetry imported Western literature can provide.

BOOK BUYERS

The supply of books in the Soviet Union has not always posed as many problems for readers and for the authorities as it has done in the 1970s and 1980s. The two major factors underlying the 'book boom' have been, first, the increased willingness of the authorities to permit the publication of a greater variety of popular fiction, particularly lighter and less 'improving' works. This is discussed in more detail in chapter eight. Second, since the late 1960s there has been a sharp increase in the number of ordinary citizens wanting to buy books for themselves.

In the 1920s and 1930s, book production and distribution policy emphasised the collective use of books, through libraries, although workers and peasants were not discouraged from buying books for themselves. In the post-war period, building up public library resources was given top priority. However, in the 1960s public interest in owning books gradually increased. There are a number of reasons for this. First, people had more opportunities to buy books they wanted - there were more large editions of the Russian and soviet classics published, more entertaining foreign fiction, detective stories and adventure stories. Readers are not confident that so wide a selection of popular books will always be available in future, and so they are determined to acquire them at once, and hoard them if need be. Second, people's living standards were gradually improving, and they could afford to buy more books. As housing conditions improved, fewer families lived in over-crowded communal apartments. Having a single

family home encouraged people to spend more of their leisure time at home, to read at home in comfort rather than in the library. They now had space to keep their books. People have come to think of libraries as places to go to study, but prefer to do their leisure reading at home, with their favourite authors to hand. Third, educational standards have increased rapidly over the last 20-25 years and, as is shown in chapter five, the more educated people are, the more they read. Fourth, as pressure from private purchasers increased, mass libraries found it increasingly difficult to acquire popular books in adequate numbers. The resulting impoverishment of library stocks meant that fewer people could borrow the books they wanted to read, and this in turn forced more people to try to buy books which in the past they would have borrowed. The decline in library stocks is discussed further in chapter four. Fifth, book-collecting is also another facet of the growing consumerism of Soviet society. Just as some people go to great lengths to acquire imported clothes, so others seek to establish their superior status by having at home good collections of scarce books. Sixth, despite the undoubted element of snobbery in some people's passion for book-collecting, it is nevertheless true that books and reading do have a certain prestige, a high status in the eyes of ordinary people, which is not found in many Western countries today. The prestige of books and reading is hard to quantify. Soviet librarians, for instance, argue that although television is people's main leisure activity, many say that reading books is one of their

favourite pursuits, and assert that if they had more leisure time, they would spend the extra time reading.<sup>52</sup> However, the cynical Western observer could argue that this simply shows that people are aware of the gap between their actual behaviour and that which is officially considered desirable, and wish to present themselves in a better light. However, despite some reservations about survey responses as an indication of people's true values, it does seem that books and reading are very important to ordinary Soviet people. Naturally, when circumstances allowed, they would choose to buy books for themselves.

There has been a rapid growth in the number of people with collections of books at home, and the number of books in these home libraries also increased. For instance, a sample survey in 1966 in six regions of the USSR found that 4.6% of those questioned had no books at home; by 1978 the percentage had dropped to 0.3%. The size of home libraries had increased too; in 1966 only 15.7% of the workers in the survey had over 100 books at home, but by 1978 45.5% had. The figures for engineering and technical personnel, employees and students all showed an increase of about 20% in the numbers of people who had over 100 books at home.<sup>53</sup> The major Lenin Library study of industrial workers' reading habits in the early 1980s found that 89% of them had books at home. Where in 1965 only 8% of skilled workers had 100 books or more at home, by the 1980s the average for industrial workers in large towns, irrespective of skill level, was 120 books. The researchers estimated that workers' home libraries had doubled in size over

the preceding five years.<sup>54</sup> The Lenin Library's earlier study of reading in small towns found that 84% of respondents had books at home, but only 17% had over 100 books.<sup>55</sup> The study of rural readers in the mid-1970s found that the same proportion of respondents had over 100 books, but overall levels of book ownership were lower - only 67% of rural families had books at home.<sup>56</sup>

Building up a home library is obviously easier in large towns, where book shops are better stocked. This is borne out by a study of young workers in the Urals in the late 1970s or early 1980s, which found that only 15% of those living in small towns said they bought books, compared to 25% of those in the cities; 69% of young workers in small towns mentioned the library as their source of books, compared to only 57% of those in major cities.<sup>57</sup> People in rural areas face the greatest problems in acquiring books, whether for purchase or through the library. This is one of the reasons why journals and magazines are so important to rural readers (This point is discussed further in chapter six).

Overall, in the USSR today, five times more books go into home libraries than go into all the country's libraries.<sup>58</sup> Estimates of the number of books in private collections vary, and on a national scale are probably little more than inspired guess-work. Figures of 30 thousand million and 35 thousand million are often cited,<sup>59</sup> compared to around 2 thousand million in the country's mass libraries.<sup>60</sup> Even in small towns in the early 1970s, the number of books in private hands was double those in the towns' libraries. Under half the books people were reading at the

time of the survey were library books.<sup>61</sup> In rural areas, the proportion of people reading library books was higher (59%); 18% were reading their own books and 23% books borrowed from friends and acquaintances.<sup>62</sup> Although no figures are available, it seems probable that in the 1980s the percentage of library books being read will have fallen further, particularly in major cities. The change in the relative importance of public libraries and home collections as a source of reading has been recognised by the Lenin Library's reading research team. Where in the 1960s, use made of mass libraries gave an adequate indication of readers' preferences, later studies have had to pay far more attention to people reading their own books or books borrowed from friends. Indeed, the Lenin Library is now cooperating with the book-lovers' society VOK in a major study of home libraries, and of the differences between book buying and book reading.<sup>63</sup>

#### THE BOOK 'BOOM'

At first, the growth in book buying by members of the public met with the full approval of the authorities, who gloried in the reputation of the Soviet people as a nation of readers, and saw the growth of home libraries as proof of the high cultural level of the population, of their love of learning and reading. However, it soon became clear that there were negative aspects to the growing passion for buying books, and journalists, librarians, officials in publishing and the book-trade, as well as members of the public began to appreciate the effects of the surge in demand for books.

The 'book boom' and the 'book deficit' have been widely discussed since the mid-1970s. The problem areas are, first, the motives of some book-collectors, and, second, the measures which some book-lovers are prepared to take in order to get the books they require.

Book-collecting has become fashionable in the USSR, and there are numerous stories of people who collect books just for prestige, for the intellectual veneer they give their owner's home.<sup>64</sup>

Book-collecting is seen as yet another facet of bourgeois consumerism.<sup>65</sup>

For some people books are just 'an object for the interior decor of their apartment'.<sup>66</sup>

One story about such attitudes tells of a woman going to a bookshop and requesting a particular book.

The assistant told her the work, a two-volume publication, was intended only for doctors. The woman confirmed that she was not a doctor, but wanted to buy the books all the same as 'those books have a brown cover, and I am displaying only brown books on my shelf'.<sup>67</sup>

Other commentators criticise those who collect series of books, such as the biography series "Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei", the fiction series 'Klassiki i sovremenniki' or 'Literaturnoe nasledstvo', a series of documents and literary criticism intended for serious academic study, which has become something of a status symbol.<sup>68</sup>

There are many stories of people scrambling to buy new books which appear to be in great demand, with no idea of what the book is. One of the best instances is recounted by Mehnert;

To explore to what lengths this bibliomania can go, the Leningrad House of Books made an experiment: one morning the rumour was started that in the afternoon a two-volume edition of Joe Rosinant would be on sale.



Soon lines began to form by people eager to buy the book of the famous Frenchman, although they could not quite agree among themselves whether he was a novelist or caricaturist. Only gradually did it dawn on them that they were being taken for a ride and that Rosinant was not an author but Don Quixote's horse ! 69

Many of the people who enthusiastically collect books do not in fact read them; the books sit on their shelves unread. Such collectors often say they plan to get round to reading when they retire. More commonly, they justify their collections of Russian and Soviet classics and popular foreign adventure stories by saying they are collecting them so that their children or grand-children will have plenty to read. There may be some truth in this - people can not be confident that popular books will continue to be re-issued. Nevertheless, it is clear that many people do buy books for investment or prestige, without intending to read them.

#### PROMOTING THE BETTER USE OF HOME LIBRARIES

The official reaction to the book boom has been, first, to take some measures to improve the supply of popular publications, as detailed above. However, these have not been sufficient to deal with the situation, and attempts have also been made to tackle the demand side of the equation. Through the book-lovers' society, VOK (which was set up in 1974 partly as a response to the growing interest in books), people are being encouraged to take a more rational and cultured approach to book collecting. In Knizhnoe obozrenie (which is published under the auspices of VOK and Goskomizdat), and in the newspapers, there are constant

criticisms of people who collect books for unworthy motives, who do not read them themselves. People are encouraged to be more selective in building up home libraries, collecting only those books which they particularly like or which they need for their work. Books they want to read just once ought to be borrowed from a library, not bought.<sup>70</sup> People are also urged to find ways of making fuller use of books already in private hands, and not merely wait for more to be published. The main measures promoting the more intensive use of books have been, first encouraging people who have large book collections to make them available to others, and, second, expanding the second-hand book trade.

Moves to encourage people with large or well-chosen home libraries to make them available to a wider circle of readers began with a 1979 joint decree of the USSR Ministry of Culture, Goskomizdat, the Komsomol Secretariat and the Presidium of VOK.<sup>71</sup> Since then, there have been numerous articles and letters in the press praising book-collectors who do not keep their books to themselves. Sometimes this takes the form of allowing them to be used informally by friends and neighbours;<sup>72</sup> other book collectors have deposited a copy of their catalogue with the local mass library and will allow its readers to make use of their collections.<sup>73</sup> Book-lovers are also encouraged to donate or bequeathe their collections to local mass libraries.<sup>74</sup> In addition, VOK organises the collection of smaller collections of unwanted books from people's homes and passes them to larger libraries, which organise their onward distribution to other libraries, particularly in rural areas, Siberia and on construction sites such as BAM.<sup>75</sup>

The 1979 decree also supported the development of 'voluntary libraries' (na obshchestvennykh nachalakh); these are libraries set up in flats, in the work-place or even in a local militia post staffed by volunteers and with books donated by the organisers and the readers. Such libraries were in existence before the Second World War, but have become far more widespread in the late 1970s.<sup>76</sup> Some of these libraries have tens of thousands of volumes. They are usually run by local pensioners. According to information I was given by a mass librarian in Leningrad in 1977, these voluntary libraries come under the supervision of the local mass library, and their scale and more public nature appear to make them a different type of library to the informal use of book collections in people's homes encouraged by VOK. Clearly the authorities would have cause for concern if unweeded collections of books amassed over the last 30 or 40 years were to be made freely available. It is possible that one reason for the official concern about the development of home libraries is the realisation that these collections are largely beyond official ideological and political control. Indeed, it has been suggested to me that one of the motives behind the 'books for scrap paper' scheme discussed below was the need to flush out collections of unsuitable older material.

#### Second-hand books

As well as encouraging people to make their own books more widely available, the authorities have attempted in recent years to expand the second-hand book trade in the hope of making fuller use of books already in existence and so to some extent satisfying the demand for Russian and foreign classics in particular. There has been a rapid

increase in the network of shops dealing in second-hand books.

In 1973 there were only 2000 bookshops or departments within bookshops which bought and sold second-hand books,<sup>77</sup> compared to

5,000 in 1983. However, only 200 of these shops specialise in second-hand and antiquarian books.<sup>78</sup>

The network is developing unevenly - in 1980, large cities such as Khar'kov, Kuibyshev, Alma-Ata and Baku only had one or at most two second-hand book shops, and a city as large as Gor'kii, with a population of one and a half millions had only a second-hand section in a shop dealing in new books.<sup>79</sup>

The volume and value of the second-hand book trade has increased significantly over the last decade, and was worth five times more in 1983 than in 1970.<sup>80</sup>

The second-hand book trade is gradually becoming a larger part of the retail trade's total turnover - from 5% in 1975 to over 8% nationally in 1983.<sup>81</sup>

In several cities, second-hand books make up nearly 10% of retail turnover. However, in other areas there is very little activity - in the Central Asian republics, for instance, second-hand books are less than 4% of retail turnover.<sup>82</sup>

From reports in the book-trade press, it does seem that considerable amounts of highly popular modern and classical foreign and Russian fiction and poetry are becoming available second-hand now.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the undoubted increase in second-hand book sales, there are still many problems in ensuring that the system works smoothly. Second-hand shops will only buy books that they expect to sell fairly quickly. Many of them are short of space, and so are reluctant to hold large stocks. Their plan fulfilment indicators also require them to dispose of books quite rapidly, which discourages them from buying more specialist works which will take longer to sell.

If they have several copies of a book in stock, they will not buy additional copies, even of books which are likely to sell quite quickly. This is a serious problem with textbook-type material, as students want to sell it at the end of one academic year, and the new generation of students will not look for it until several months later. People who want to sell books are discouraged by the long queues, the uncertainty about whether the books they offer will be accepted, the need to take non-fiction books to a number of different shops.<sup>84</sup> There are also difficulties over the pricing of second-hand books. There are no price-lists covering most books published before 1960, although particularly valuable items are listed in special catalogues. The prices established for post-1960 books, particularly poetry and fiction in selected and collected editions, are less than the original purchase price - in the 1970s at least book-shops could only buy them for 20% less than the cover price, at a time when such books could often command high prices on the black market.<sup>85</sup> Traditionally, the individual selling a book had to pay the bookshop's commission of 20%, which made the deal still less attractive financially. Recently, however, the book trade in Belorussia has started paying the seller the full second-hand price for books which they expect to be able to sell easily; the purchaser pays the commission. This system has apparently been successful in encouraging many more people to sell their books through the book-shops, and the book-trade in a number of other areas is now adopting this system.<sup>86</sup>

As well as attempting to make selling books through the book trade, rather than the black market, more attractive to individual

book owners, there have also been suggestions that the reserve of books available in second-hand shops could be significantly augmented if libraries were permitted to sell surplus stocks.<sup>87</sup> However, as the regulations stand, libraries are not permitted to earn income through the sale of books and the shops are not allowed to accept books with library stamps,<sup>88</sup> although some of the accounts of thefts from libraries do accuse bookshops of negligence on this.<sup>89</sup>

Another successful innovation for the second-hand book trade has been the introduction of book exchange services. This first began in 1976, and has become widespread in the 1980s. Briefly, there are three types of book exchange. Under the first or 'free' exchange, a person takes a book to the book-shop and swaps it for one in the bookshop's exchange stock and pays commission. It is up to the shop assistant and the customer to agree what is a fair exchange. In the 'limited' exchange system, the person who has a book to dispose of stipulates which titles he or she will accept in return for the book offered. If no-one offers what is required, the customer takes the book back, less a fee to the shop for its services. The third variant, which is less widespread, is the 'book auction'. The customer offers a book, which is left on display for about two months, and other customers, who want the book, offer what they think would be a reasonable exchange. It is then up to the person offering the book to decide which (if any) of the responses are acceptable. Bookshops can make a good profit on providing an exchange service. However, only popular books are accepted for the exchange - this means primarily fiction and poetry plus popular biographies and memoirs and home reference books. Most non-fiction is not accepted at all.<sup>90</sup>

Exchanges of books are also organised through VOK, the Book-lovers' Society, and through advertisements in Knizhnoe obozrenie.<sup>91</sup>

The exchange of books under VOK auspices appears to have had a rather chequered history. The first exchange sessions were organised in 1976 in Alma-Ata, Moscow and Rostov-on-Don, but they seem to have encountered administrative difficulties.<sup>92</sup> At the Alma-Ata club, for instance, the organisers were overwhelmed by the enormous numbers of people who wanted to take part, and were unable to keep proper controls on the transactions or keep adequate records. Very soon it became clear that the club was being used as a centre for the black market, and it was closed. There have been reports of successful and well-organised book exchanges under VOK auspices in other towns more recently, but they have also been criticised for encouraging an unhealthy commercial atmosphere.<sup>93</sup> It is quite clear that the authorities are nervous of encouraging exchanges through the book clubs both because of the risks of black market involvement and also because such uncontrolled exchanges can lead to the circulation of politically undesirable books which would not be handled by the book shop.<sup>94</sup>

#### BOOKS FOR SCRAP PAPER

Another development in recent years which has attempted to make fuller use of publications already in existence is the 'books for scrap paper' scheme, which sheds some light on the authorities' awareness of the kinds of fiction which are in greatest demand. It was first proposed in January 1974 by a reader of Literaturnaya gazeta and tried out experimentally in Moscow, Leningrad and eight other major cities.<sup>95</sup>

The general public had to bring in 20 kgs of waste paper and in return were given a voucher which entitled them to purchase a book selected from a list of desirable items specially published for the experiment. The initial list consisted of Il'f and Petrov's The Twelve Chairs, A.Tolstoi's Aelita and The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin, a two-volume edition of Andersen's Fairy Tales, Voynich's The Gadfly, Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles, Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White, some Maigret stories and Dumas's Queen Margot.<sup>96</sup> The authorities appear to have been overwhelmed by the popularity of the scheme and the waste paper collection points were besieged by readers. By 1983, the scheme was operating in 60 towns throughout the USSR. In some major cities, people wanting to participate no longer have to trudge to the collecting points themselves - some factories and enterprises have arranged to collect in all the paper for them, make up lists of the books required, and use their transport to deliver the paper. From 1981, the scheme was also introduced into rural areas, with the assistance of local retail cooperatives. However, the special books published for the scheme are not available, and the only incentive offered appears to be priority in acquiring books sent to the local bookshop in the ordinary way.<sup>97</sup> Despite its popularity, the scheme has encountered various problems. Although the system was intended for waste paper collected at home, many people brought in paper clearly taken from their place of work which ought to have been collected from there as part of the routine collection of recyclable materials.<sup>98</sup> Other people brought in books stolen from libraries<sup>99</sup>. Those who did bring in their own paper did not only bring in waste newspaper as expected; some people even brought in valuable antiquarian publications, including sets of pre-Revolutionary journals.<sup>100</sup>



There were numerous reports of people bringing in sets or volumes of Gogol, Chekov, Tolstoy, Dostoevskii and Soviet classics. As Friedberg observes, this does not mean that these writers are not popular; rather, people are confident that they will be re-issued, whereas opportunities to buy light reading are very limited.<sup>101</sup>

There were suggestions that the waste paper points ought only to accept materials which had been turned down by the second-hand book trade<sup>102</sup>, or that members of VOK should supervise the work of the recycling operatives and ensure that valuable or useful books were not destroyed.<sup>103</sup>

In some cases, teachers and children from local schools went through the books before they were prepared for pulping and found a lot of value for themselves and their school libraries, ranging from the pre-Revolutionary eight-volume edition of Klyuchevskii's history through volumes in the 'Literaturnoe nasledstvo' series to books by Maine Reed and Robert Louis Stevenson.<sup>104</sup> Some Soviet commentators were concerned at the sight of people swapping Blok for Conan Doyle, or Tolstoy for Dumas,<sup>105</sup> but the experiment retained its popularity when the list of books was expanded to include more serious books such as Tynyanov's work about Pushkin and Stendhal's Chartreuse de Parme.<sup>106</sup>

On the other hand, more recent lists<sup>107</sup> have included a volume containing Arthur Hailey's Airport and Hotel!

In all, over 70 titles had been offered in the scheme by 1983, and over 70 million copies had been produced. Despite complaints about the quality of the books selected in the scheme, it continues to concentrate on translated fiction. For 1983, Zola and Somerset Maugham were available, along with some popular Soviet novels, and

in 1984 a four-volume Jack London was to be offered, at 20kgs of paper for each volume. Foreign children's books offered include Winnie the Pooh and The Jungle Book.<sup>108</sup>

Some people who brought in waste paper have experienced difficulties in finding the books they wanted, or in redeeming their vouchers before the relevant phase of the experiment ended.<sup>109</sup> There have been reports, too, of long queues and irregular opening hours at the collection points, and speculation by depot staff.<sup>110</sup> So popular were the books offered that counterfeit coupons went into circulation<sup>111</sup>. Many of the huge numbers of books produced for the scheme never reached the shops - in 1979 alone Soyuzglavtorgsyre, the authority responsible for recycling and hence for the waste paper scheme, retained 1,780,000 volumes of the 8,450,000 produced for the sixth phase of the scheme, and distributed them to its staff, their friends and relations, and to the black market.<sup>112</sup> Soyuzkniga, too, was guilty of a number of violations of the regulations governing the sale of these books. Sadly, given the enormous amount of effort people put into collecting the waste paper in the belief that their scrap would be turned into books and so help the paper shortage, the paper collected has in fact mainly been used for cardboard and wrapping paper. The USSR lacks the facilities to de-ink the paper and although a plant should have opened in 1981, as late as November 1980 it had not even reached the drawing board.<sup>113</sup> In 1982, however, it was reported that two new waste paper processing plants had opened, in Leningrad and Kiev; these would 'soon' be able to produce printing paper.<sup>114</sup> There is a shortage of adequate storage and transport facilities for the waste paper, and while the collection points in some parts of the USSR are full and will accept no more paper,

in other areas some cardboard and packaging factories are using wood pulp because of a shortage of scrap paper.<sup>115</sup> Despite the difficulties, the scheme has continued to operate. Many readers, though, have become disillusioned with the experiment and an influential journalist writing about the scheme has strongly criticised Gossnab and Goskomizdat for the shabby way in which they have treated readers like poor relatives, while, in fact, they have brought in 140-150 thousand tonnes of scrap paper each year.<sup>116</sup>

The administration of the coupon scheme has given rise to many problems, and to ideas for how it could be improved, including using the coupons to give the reader the right to use it to place a firm and guaranteed order for any forthcoming book, thus doing away with the need to produce special books for the scheme and encouraging the participation of those who are not attracted by the books currently on offer.<sup>117</sup> More recently, the rules were changed so that for every four kgs of paper handed in, the reader received a lottery ticket; one lottery ticket in five won a prize; in Moscow at one time it was a volume of Shukshin, in Leningrad a novel by Dumas.<sup>118</sup> How long the system will continue to operate in the face of considerable popular disillusion is hard to tell, but it has revealed how much effort people are willing to put into acquiring the books they do want to read.

#### PROLONG THE LIFE OF THE BOOK !

Another aspect of the drive to make better use of books already in private hands is the provision of more facilities for binding

and repairing books in private ownership. Many books are issued in paperback, in the inappropriately named 'perfect' binding (which is also familiar to readers of cheap Western paperbacks). This means they withstand only a few readings. The issue of paperbacks is likely to increase, as they are cheaper and use fewer resources than hardbacks.<sup>119</sup> However, many people would like to get their books bound and repaired, so they can re-read them. At present, virtually the only source for this service are the 21 VOK workshops and factories. VOK is also planning to issue textbooks and films on book binding and repair, and to manufacture small-scale presses and other binding equipment, so that individuals and local book-lovers' groups can repair their own books.<sup>120</sup>

#### THE BOOK DEFICIT AND THE RETAIL TRADE

Although these measures to promote the more intensive use of books already in existence, particularly the 'books for scrap paper' scheme and the measures to make selling and exchanging second-hand books easier and more attractive, have had some success, there is nevertheless continued pressure on the retail trade. Whenever a deficit arises in the USSR, people look for unorthodox ways of acquiring scarce goods. These are, first, various abuses within the retail trade network and, secondly, the growth of the black market.

A few words about the organisation of the book trade in the USSR are appropriate here; it has been discussed in more detail by Gregory Walker.<sup>121</sup> At national level, the book trade is organised by Glavkniga, one of the administrations of Goskomizdat, which also supervises

publishing. Book trade organisations in urban areas (and in all areas of Moldavia and the Baltic States) come under Glavkniga and its republican equivalents; however, in most rural areas, readers have to rely on consumer cooperatives. Like other Soviet organisations, book shops operate according to five-year, annual and quarterly plans which lay down a number of indicators which have to be fulfilled. Non-fulfilment can lead to financial penalties for the shop staff, as they lose bonuses. Shops have to reach certain targets for profits and sales, while at the same time ensuring that they do not keep books in stock for longer than the standard periods laid down.<sup>122</sup> However, book shops cannot order only these books which will sell well; they must also stock more specialist books, and political and economic books and pamphlets. Also, they are unable to acquire popular books in anything like the quantity that would be required to satisfy local needs.

Books shops do have the opportunity to look through publishers' advance plans and to estimate the number of copies they are likely to sell. However, the process is often very rushed, and in practice local wholesale organisations often formulate an order on behalf of the shops under their control, especially the smaller ones. However, advance ordering does not ensure that the book shops gets the number of copies it requested - it has been estimated that, overall, orders placed with publishers by the book trade amount to one-and-a-half times or double the number of copies eventually issued. Clearly the shortfall is largest for the most popular books. At the same time, Glavkniga and its equivalents in the union republics have the right to send to the book trade, without any advance order, books which are considered

particularly urgent or important, and the recipient must pay for them. Obviously, these provisions mainly apply to political literature and books and pamphlets for various campaigns, such as the Food Programme or the drive against alcoholism.

As well as responding to works offered by the publishers, the book trade also sends Goskomizdat information about individual non-fiction works for which there is considerable unsatisfied public demand. Goskomizdat had expected that the publishers would take these requests into account when formulating their plans, and had anticipated that 15-20% of publications would be reprints or new editions requested by the retail trade. However, in 1983 only 2% of publications fell into this category.<sup>124</sup> For 1983-85, 4638 books were identified as needing re-issue, but the publishers have undertaken to produce only around a quarter of them.<sup>125</sup> Demand from customers clearly has only limited influence on Soviet publishers.

Individual readers can place advance orders through book shops for non-fiction books not expected to be in great demand, but the range is very limited. For instance, in the Moscow Dom knigi in November 1982 there was a notice stating that the shop could accept no advance orders at all for 1983 publications from 26 publishers, including Muzyka, Pedagogika, Prosveshchenie, Avrora, Sovetskii Kompozitor, Voenizdat, Sovetskaya entsiklopediya and Lenizdat. Not surprisingly, in view of the great demand for fiction and children's books, no advance orders at all were accepted for the publishers which issue these books. Even when readers do place advance orders, there is no guarantee that they will be successful.

Once the book trade's initial order has been placed, there seems to be no way in which the individual reader can order a personal copy of a book. Unlike British book-shops, Soviet book-shops will not order books for customers, presumably because so many books are in print for such a short time. Some large bookshops specialising in technical and scientific books do provide a postal service, but this does not seem to operate very efficiently. Individuals and enterprises in the more remote parts of the country, and people without access to adequate local bookshops, also make use of 'Kniga-pochtoi' departments, but these only handle non-fiction. There are frequent complaints of how badly stocked they are. The wholesale network directs most books to ordinary retail shops, and 'Kniga-pochtoi' often only gets the books which the retail stores have been unable to sell. The situation appears to have got worse in recent years - for instance in Moscow, where many of the specialist shops do have a postal service, about one in nine of the books which reach the city's book trade network are now sold by post, whereas a few years ago the proportion was one in six. As it has become more difficult to get books through retail stores, the various 'books by post' organisations have come under increasing pressure, and receive more and more requests from readers in cities which should be adequately served by ordinary retail shops.<sup>126</sup>

In view of the strong and unsatisfied demand for certain types of books, the surplus of other books and the way in which the planning mechanism operates in the book trade, it is not surprising that a number of illegal practices have developed in book shops in recent years. These are described below.

'Tie-in' sales

'Tie-in' sales (torgovlya s nagruzkoi) appear whenever there is a deficit in any commodity in the retail trade. 'Tie-in' sales involve making purchasers who want to buy a popular book buy an unpopular one too. As books are relatively cheap, customers are generally willing to cooperate. The books most often disposed of in this way are books on subjects such as scientific atheism, or the local party secretary's works.<sup>127</sup> Technical books are sometimes also involved. One press report of such a transaction described how a man buying a coveted book about the Zhiguli car was forced to buy with it one on automated management systems in the meat industry. The reporter stressed not only the illegality of the procedure and the waste of the customer's money, but also the fact that a book which might well have been useful to engineers in the local meat processing plant had not found the right reader.<sup>128</sup> Even members of VOK, the book lovers' society, who help to distribute books to work-places voluntarily, have been found guilty of selling books to their colleagues 'with strings'; they and the book trade staff who permit such practices have frequently been reprimanded.<sup>129</sup> Despite many reminders to book-store staff that the practice is illegal, it seems certain to continue. It enables the assistants to get rid of books they cannot sell, which would depress their indicators for stock turnover, and so lose them money. Book buyers cooperate, partly because the financial cost to them is fairly limited, partly because they hope to get further favours from the assistant in the future. It may be that the authorities turn a blind eye to the practice because it does save them from having embarrassingly large stocks of unsold books on their hands.



### Dumping

'Dumping' involves selling customers books which they did not order. The most common victims are libraries, and this will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. However, in the retail network the people who suffer it most are those who use the 'Books by post' service. One example is that of a pensioner who ordered a dozen books from 'Kniga-pochtoi'. After a long wait, the parcel arrived and he paid 11 roubles for it. Inside he found six books which he had not ordered, all of which were in ample supply in local book shops. After a long battle, Kniga-pochtoi agreed to refund the cost of the books, but not the postage involved. In another case, a Tol'yatti technical bureau sent Kniga-pochtoi 385 roubles for new technical literature. In return, they received 975 out-of-date posters and books and pamphlets published in 1975-79. Only four of the books supplied were published in 1983.<sup>130</sup> It seems that in many cases customers are dependent on the books by post service, and are reluctant to complain for fear of being 'black-listed'.

### 'Favourite' customers

An apparently widespread abuse in the book trade is the practice whereby book store staff put aside copies of popular books for favourite customers. These books never go on open sale at all. The shop does not suffer, in that the customer pays the full price for the book. However, the shop staff get many benefits.<sup>131</sup> A recent emigre has described how bookshops managers, like others with access to goods in short supply, will retain a proportion of the

scarce books which reach the stores and use them to barter with other officials, so that an unofficial barter system develops in which 20 volumes of Voznesenskii's poetry is the equivalent of  $\frac{1}{2}$ kg of caviare or a pair of Italian boots; books not exchanged in this way would be sold on the black market.<sup>132</sup> Ordinary assistants might be bribed, or would reserve books for customers who could provide them with access to scarce goods and services in exchange. Several stories about the extent of this practice have appeared in the press. In Ust-Kamenogorsk, for instance, large stocks of books in heavy demand were found hidden in the stockrooms of the bookshops and the manager of one store had distributed illegally a considerable proportion of the much-coveted subscription to the collected works of Pushkin.<sup>133</sup> In 1982, a large-scale inspection of book-shops by the RSFSR State Trade Inspectorate found huge quantities of popular books hidden in the store rooms of book-shops all over the republic. Some were reserved for book-trade staff, others for their friends and influential local people.<sup>134</sup> As well as books by popular foreign and Soviet writers, there were much sought after home reference books hidden from view - in one store in Kirovograd the inspectors found eight copies of a book on home cake-making, each reserved for a named person. The flustered assistants tried to explain this by claiming that eight people had called in at the shop on their way back from having a good steam at the baths. They had no money with them, only their birch twig brushes, and so had asked for the books to be put aside for them while they went home for their money.<sup>135</sup> The inspectors did not believe their stories, and those involved in these illegal practices were reprimanded and lost bonuses. As well as reserving new books

for favoured customers, bookshop staff also hold back interesting second-hand and antiquarian books for connoisseurs, who will pay them well over the official price for rarities. Again, the shop's accounts are kept in order. It is difficult to see how this practice, which is common throughout the retail trade and service sector of the USSR, can be stopped.

### THE BLACK MARKET

These abuses in retail shops rapidly fade over into black market transactions. The black market does provide some indication of the types of books which are in heavy demand, and of the prices which people will pay to acquire books they want. Since the late 1960s, the supply of goods and services in the USSR has generally not kept up with the growth of money incomes, and suppressed inflation has developed. Given that Soviet citizens have few opportunities to spend money on foreign travel and have only limited space at home for consumer goods and may find owning a car more trouble than it is worth, books can be a good investment while at the same time gracing the owner's flat and giving prestige.<sup>136</sup> Probably the black market in books is the section of the black market where respectable citizens most often shade over into being criminals; it seems that many of those involved are students or members of the intelligentsia who really do read the books as well as trade in them.<sup>137</sup> The black market does deal to some extent in literature in the languages of the USSR published abroad (tamizdat), and with samizdat. However, the type of samizdat traded on the black market is likely to be illegal copies of material published legally in the USSR in small editions - Bush<sup>138</sup> gives as an example the issue of Innostrannaya

literatura for September-October 1978 which contained long passages of American literature in translation. As these issues were very hard to acquire, samizdat went into operation and produced photocopies which could be bought for 30-100 roubles. However, the bulk of the material traded on the black market seems to be recently published editions of novels or poems by popular Soviet or pre-Revolutionary writers, Soviet translations of foreign fiction, detective and adventure stories, science fiction and children's books. Biographies in the popular series 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei' are also available on the black market.<sup>139</sup> One can also find on the black market editions of writers such as Nietzsche and Plato, who are not officially approved, but are not actually proscribed.<sup>140</sup> In all cases, sets of collected or selected works are particularly valuable. Many antiquarian works are also sold on the black market, at least in part because of the low prices offered for them by the second-hand book shops.

Books reach the black market in various ways. New Soviet books may 'leak' from the printing works - for instance in Mozhaisk near Moscow there is reported to be a flourishing black market in books stolen from the town's printing works; the militia do not intervene because the face value of the books stolen is relatively small.<sup>141</sup> At another printing works near Moscow, in the town of Chekhov, a number of workers were involved in a black market operation in which large numbers of defective books and printers' sheets were stolen and made up into perfect copies. The racket was aided by some of the quality controllers, who rejected some perfect books so they could be diverted to the black market.<sup>142</sup> There have also

been large-scale thefts from the printing houses in Moscow serving the publishers Molodaya gvardiya and Sovetskaya entsiklopediya<sup>143</sup>; from the former, thefts would probably have involved fiction for young people and from the latter, reference works in popular demand. More recently, a gang in Leningrad stole thousands of popular books, mainly foreign classics, from the printers where they worked, and sold them for huge amounts on the black market.<sup>144</sup>

Books also leak into the black market from the wholesale and retail trade network. Books may simply be stolen from shops and warehouses. In other cases, staff may buy up books in short supply when they reach the shops, so that the shop's accounts are in order, but then sell them at a considerable profit on the black market. Many second-hand and antiquarian books destined for the legitimate retail trade in fact never reach the shop - shops which buy second-hand books from the general public are virtually picketed by 'book lovers' who intercept people on their way to sell books and buy the books from them for far more than the shop can offer.<sup>145</sup> The changes in the second-hand book trade discussed above do not seem to have had much impact on this practice.

An unwitting source for the black market in books are foreigners who buy Soviet books abroad and send them to friends in the USSR; they often select books published largely for the export market, such as the recent editions of Kafka, Pasternak and Mandel'shtam. Books posted to the USSR (and within the country, for that matter) often do not reach their destination and find their way onto the black market through corrupt postal or customs officials. It has long been believed that copies of Playboy and other undesirable Western publications confiscated at the border crossing points are

not always burnt and do reach Soviet readers. The links between postal and customs officials and the black market were confirmed in 1975 when Sokolov, Deputy Director of Glavlit's foreign department and so responsible for scrutinising foreign books coming into the USSR, was arrested. In his office, police found a total of 170 sacks of confiscated literature, all documented as having been destroyed. Apparently Sokolov had been supplying the black market for 15 years and had made a huge profit from it.<sup>146</sup>

Books stolen from libraries sometimes make their way onto the black market. While generally such thefts are probably on a small scale, in some cases valuable books are involved, as when a historian was convicted in 1978 of stealing rare books from the library of the Ukrainian Institute of History and selling them on the black market for over 12,000 roubles.<sup>147</sup> A Saratov woman, over a period of less than a year, enrolled herself and her five imaginary children in eleven different libraries and borrowed hundreds of books on these readers' tickets. The books she stole were worth 3,000 roubles to the libraries<sup>148</sup>, but she must have made far more than this on the black market, where she sold them all. The problem of thefts from libraries has become very worrying to librarians over the last few years, and is discussed further in the next chapter.

Some figures are available on the prices charged on the black market; these vary to some extent according to the location and time of the report, but give some impression of the extent to which people are willing to pay inflated prices to acquire the books they want. Once a book has been out-of-print for a year or two, the black market prices for it increase to perhaps double what they were when it first

appeared - for instance, a book selling for 1r50 might get 5 roubles on the black market at first, but 10 or 12 roubles eighteen months later.<sup>149</sup>

Table 1 gives some indication of the books traded on the black market, and the mark-ups encountered. It would be wrong to assume that books were always purchased at these prices; much of the trading is done by exchange, rather than sale.

Table 1: Black market prices for books

| Book/Author                                 | Official price | Black market price | Location             |
|---|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 vol. Herodotus                            | 3r11k          | 10r                | Odessa               |
| 2 vol. Georges Sand                         | 4r             | 75r                | Odessa               |
| Bulgakov, <u>Master i Margarita</u>         | 1r53k          | 50-200r            | Moscow               |
| Dumas, <u>Three Mustekeepers</u>            | 1r70k          | 25r                | Moscow               |
|   |                | 20r                | Leningrad            |
|   |                | 10r                | Kiev                 |
| 3 vol. Byron                                |                | 40r                | Kiev                 |
| 2 vol. Fet                                  |                | 50r                | Leningrad            |
| 2 vol. Evtushenko                           |                | 25r                | Leningrad            |
| 1 vol. Montaigne                            |                | 30r                | Leningrad            |
| 4 vol. Zweig                                |                | 200r               | Makhachkala          |
| 1 vol. Arthur Hailey                        | 9r.50k         | 75r                | Moscow <sup>1</sup>  |
| 1 vol. Kuprin                               | 1r             | 3r                 | Moscow <sup>1</sup>  |
| 2 vol. Maurice Druon                        |                | 27r                | Moscow <sup>2</sup>  |
| 1 vol. Akhmatova                            | 3r             | 9r                 | Saratov <sup>3</sup> |
| 1 vol. Fantastika - 83<br>(Science fiction) | 1r50k          | 15r                | Saratov <sup>3</sup> |
| 6 vol. Bernard Shaw's plays                 | 18r            | 40r                | Moscow <sup>4</sup>  |

Sources: Figures are derived from O'Hearn, D. 'The Consumer Second Economy', Soviet Studies 32(2), 1980, pp. 218-234, except for:

- 1) Listukhin, A. and Chernenko, A. 'Kogda zavelis' "chernoknizhniki", Sovetskaya Rossiya, 14.1.1982;
- 2) Oganyan, S. 'V tuskhom svete fonarya', Komsomol'skaya pravda, 24.12.1981;
- 3) Tetel'baum, M. 'Nalim v knizhnom more', Pravda, 10.2.1985;
- 4) Vainshtein, B.S. 'O knigakh i nekotorykh svyazannykh s nimi ekonomicheskikh i npravstvennykh kategoriakh', EKO, 1983, No.9, pp. 141-149.

Despite the profits to be made on the book black-market, it seems that many of those involved in it are not otherwise criminals, but book-lovers, attracted by the range of books on offer, who either have spare cash with which to buy the books or equally interesting books to offer on exchange. Although the militia do raid the black markets from time to time, and large-scale or frequent offenders do get prison sentences<sup>150</sup>, it seems that in some areas the militia largely turn a blind eye to the book trade<sup>151</sup>. In any case, there are plenty of people willing to take the risk of imprisonment or fines to get interesting and valuable books.

#### INDIVIDUAL BUYERS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

In the discussion about the 'book boom' and the measures which ought to be taken to deal with it, many commentators - particularly librarians and VOK activists, and the cultural authorities - have argued that it would be better to adjust the book distribution mechanism so that libraries get top priority in practice, not just in legal terms.<sup>152</sup> If people could once again be certain of borrowing the books they want from libraries, it would take a lot of heat out of the book market. They argue in favour of the collective use of books, of ensuring that the most intensive use is made of books published. While not denying people the right to buy books, they believe that private libraries should simply complement the public library service, not compete with it.

However, there are many groups who want private individuals to have the right to buy the books freely. For many ordinary readers, owning books is a great pleasure, and they enjoy buying and reading books, and lending them to family and friends. The book deficit has angered many ordinary readers. Some economists too argue in favour



of the private buyer. Sominskii, a leading economist in the paper industry, shows that publishing books in large editions is extremely profitable for the publishers, and hence for the economy as a whole. He proposes issuing a series of popular Russian and foreign classics in huge editions, finding the paper required first by investing in more reprocessing facilities and second by moving most printing operations to the same areas as the paper mills. He claims that the cost of the additional investment could be recouped in seven months.<sup>153</sup> Another leading economist argues in favour of altering the pricing system for books so as to take full account of the real cost of paper. He also suggests that readers' interests would be better served if it were possible to order any book announced for publication in advance, directly from the publisher. The publisher would supply the book direct to the customer on publication. However, the customer would pay twice the normal retail price for this service. Vainshtein argues that this would effectively kill the black market in books, while at the same time resulting in many more contented book readers.<sup>154</sup> It seems likely that both these economists also have in mind the way in which books bought by private individuals could mop up some of the excess savings in the USSR. At the same time, easier access to popular books would remove one source of dissatisfaction with the regime.

### CONCLUSIONS

The Soviet reader is faced with, simultaneously, a book glut and a book shortage. Despite the impressive Soviet book production figures, and plenty of books in libraries and book-shops, it is hard to find the books people actually want to read. At the heart of the 'book deficit' lies what Maurice Friedberg has described as 'a permanent tug of war between the Communist authorities and the Soviet reading public'.<sup>155</sup>

There is competition for resources between (a) the publications which the authorities are eager to disseminate, but which most people would not choose to read, particularly the classics of marxism-leninism, all sorts of books and pamphlets on political topics, and materials relating to current campaigns, (b) publications which are generally recognised as necessary - textbooks and educational materials, technical and scientific books for instance, (c) and publications which people want to read, and to which the authorities have no objection. This last category includes fiction and poetry, whether translated foreign books, the Russian classics or popular Soviet works; children's books of all sorts; home reference books such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias, cookery books, DIY manuals, gardening books; and some general non-fiction, on subjects such as chess, natural history, travel and history. This last category consists of mainly books which people want to read for entertainment and interest, or books which are of real immediate practical benefit to them. People will spend a great deal of money, and become involved in illegal activities, to get the books they want.

The demand for books in the last category has increased sharply since the late 1960s. The authorities have responded in several ways. First, they have taken measures to increase the production of the books which people want to read. The publishers have responded to consumer demand, partly because it is to their economic advantage to do so. Decisions at the top to take measures to satisfy readers' demands must also have taken into account the need to be seen to respond to obvious dissatisfaction with official policies, to remove or at least contain one source of public criticism of the regime.

However, increasing the production of popular books has not resulted in any real reduction in the publication of works which the regime is eager to disseminate. Second, as well as increasing the production of books in heavy demand (the extensive solution), the authorities have also tried to encourage making fuller use of existing resources (the intensive solution). This has included encouraging people to give others access to their private collections and praising the work of 'voluntary' libraries, improving the second-hand book trade and extolling the benefits of using the public library. Despite these measures, pressure from book buyers has led to the development of a black market in popular books, and to numerous reports of abuses in the retail trade.

It seems unlikely that the situation will improve much over the next few years. There are claims that the market for some classical books has been satisfied, but reports on the continuing activities of the black market and complaints about shortages suggest that book-buyers still experience a genuine deficit of all categories of popular books. The demand for the works of some major classical writers may be satisfied by issuing further editions of the classics in unlimited editions, and more efforts will be put into publishing large editions of a limited range of highly popular authors. Some adjustment of the price mechanism for books in heavy demand seems quite possible. More measures to enable libraries to compete on equal terms with the retail customer are likely, but will be ineffective unless the economic indicators governing the book trade are radically changed. The black market in books and illegal practices in book-shops will continue to flourish.

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CHAPTER FOURLIBRARIES, THE BOOK SUPPLY AND THE READER

'Knig mnogo, a chitat' nechego'

The Soviet government and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are proud of the country's extensive library network, with its large and growing stocks of books and journals. Compared to Western Europe and the USA, a high proportion of the population are library users. Yet in the last decade, newspaper articles have appeared under titles such as "Lots of books but nothing to read", 'Satisfactory figures and dissatisfied readers', 'Those full and empty shelves'. Readers complain bitterly of how hard it is to get popular books through libraries, and sociological surveys provide hard evidence of dissatisfaction. It is the intention of this chapter to explore the provision of books through libraries. After a brief outline of library organisation and library membership figures, acquisitions problems and procedures are examined in detail, as the quality and quantity of what libraries buy largely determines what they can offer their readers. This is followed by an attempt to analyse the quantity and quality of mass libraries' book-stocks, and to describe problems, such as thefts of stock, which lower the standard of provision. The chapter concludes with an assessment of how effectively Soviet libraries serve ordinary readers.

THE LIBRARY SYSTEM

In 1980, there were 329,000 libraries in the USSR, with a total stock of books and journals approaching five thousand million items.<sup>1</sup> As in Britain, these libraries vary widely in their size, subject coverage and function, belong to a wide range of differing organisations and serve different groups of readers. The main groups of libraries in the USSR are:

- (a) Universal national and quasi-national libraries, i.e. the Lenin Library in Moscow and the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library in Leningrad. They come under Ministry of Culture jurisdiction.

- (b) Libraries under the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the republican academies of science. These include huge research libraries covering large subject areas, such as INION in Moscow and the Academy of Sciences Library in Leningrad, and smaller specialist libraries serving research institutes.
- (c) A wide range of special and research libraries under various ministries and state committees, including libraries in hospitals, research institutes, agricultural research stations, industrial laboratories and museums.
- (d) Educational libraries in schools, colleges and universities
- (e) Mass libraries

Mass libraries - the equivalent of British public libraries, are by far the most important for the ordinary reader. In 1982 there were 133,200 mass libraries with stocks of about two thousand million items.<sup>2</sup> In 1975, the last year for which figures appear to be available, over 120 million readers were registered in these libraries.<sup>3</sup> Mass libraries may belong to different networks. The majority (over 100,000 in 1975) come under the Ministry of Culture. The second largest group are those belonging to the trade unions (about 22,000 in 1975). Most of the remainder either belong to collective farms or are small voluntary libraries.<sup>4</sup>

Until the early 1970s, the Ministry of Culture library network consisted of

- (a) large universal libraries serving a whole union republic, krai or oblast';
- (b) city libraries;
- (c) raion libraries serving the country town in which they were based, and the more specialist interests of readers in the surrounding rural areas;
- (d) village libraries.

Each library, however small, was an independent unit, with its own staff, budget and stocks. Between 1974 and 1982 the Ministry of Culture mass library network was centralised. This involved amalgamating formerly independent libraries into a system with a large central library plus branches. In rural areas, the raion library usually became the central library, with its branches in villages often many miles away. In large

towns, each district has a central library, with smaller libraries becoming its branches. In urban areas, there are usually separate children's libraries, but in rural areas one library serves adults and children. The aim of centralisation is to improve library services by creating an amalgamated book-stock for the central library and its branches, *which* all the branches can draw on. In some systems (but not yet all), stock regularly circulates between the central library and the branches, allowing readers in branch libraries a much wider choice of books. Acquisitions, cataloguing and processing are carried out in the central library. This saves time in the branches, allowing branch librarians to spend more time working with readers. Centralisation has run into a number of problems. Chief among them are (a) creating a unified stock, and union catalogues, has been time-consuming and laborious; (b) the acquisition of new books, particularly those in demand, has not always improved; (c) many small libraries were partly funded by local farms and enterprises, which have been reluctant to put up money for a library they no longer perceive as 'theirs'; (d) cooperation and coordination between branches, and between branches and the central library, has been bedevilled by technical problems, such as the dire shortage of transport to move books between libraries, the lack of telephones in some rural libraries; (e) management problems, in that librarians used to running one library have found it hard to develop the skills needed to manage a much larger system with remote staff and service points, and some librarians have resented losing their independence.

Nevertheless, the experiment has generally been a success. Staff have access to more advice, assistance and training, readers can draw on a larger pool of books, library organisation has generally become more professional. There has been a steady increase in the number of professionally qualified librarians. Instead of small (under 2,000 books) libraries staffed part-time, many small villages and enterprises are now served by mobile libraries, or receive regular book-boxes from the central library.



Parallel to the Ministry of Culture network is the trade union network. Run by individual trade unions, they are located at the work-place. Some are large libraries, well stocked and generously staffed. Others are small and unable to keep up with the demands of the 1980s. This network too is now being centralised and, in some areas, particularly smaller towns, it is being merged with Ministry of Culture libraries. This is a difficult process in the USSR, as it requires cooperation and shared funding across departmental boundaries. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it will be achieved by the late 1980s, and allow considerable rationalisation of library services.

There has also been some centralisation and rationalisation in special and academic libraries. At the national level, library provision is coordinated by the Library Commission (Gosudarstvennaya mezhdovedomstvennaya bibliotekhnaya komissiya), set up by the Council of Ministers. It operates at ministerial level and includes all ministries and organisations with significant library networks. Until 1984 it had an advisory role, but the new Library Law adopted in March 1984 provides for its decisions to be mandatory. Subordinate to the Commission is the Library Council (Biblioteknyi sovet), an organisation of librarians and scholars chaired by the director of the Lenin Library. It discusses all aspects of library work, and makes recommendations for action to the Ministry of Culture and the Library Commission. Within the USSR Ministry of Culture, library matters are the responsibility of Library Administration (Upravlenie po delam bibliotek); there are parallel organisations within the ministries of culture in each union republic.

#### LIBRARY MEMBERSHIP

Mass libraries in the USSR serve a higher proportion of the population than do British public libraries. In Britain, around a third of the population are registered members of public libraries,<sup>5</sup> compared to about half the Soviet population. In both countries, though, the extent of library membership varies according to area of residence, age, social class and educational level. Further,

membership figures do not give an altogether accurate picture of the use made of libraries and their books. Many people read books borrowed from the library by their friends and relatives, but are not members. Non-members can use reading rooms and reference collections. On the other hand, a proportion of registered members seldom use the library, and readers who are registered with more than one library may be counted twice.

Generally, people who are library members tend to be more active readers than are non-members; in particular, they tend to read books more. However, many book readers are not library members - a study of rural readers in the USSR for instance found that nearly a third of book readers were not library members.<sup>6</sup> A more recent study of industrial workers found that 16% of library members read books every day, compared to 8% of non-members; 21% of members but only 14% of non-members regularly read journals.<sup>7</sup> Library members also tend to have home libraries more than do non-members; readers with larger private collections at home still use public libraries.<sup>8</sup> In the USSR as a whole in 1981, 54.4% of the population were library members.<sup>9</sup> There are considerable variations between geographical areas. Full up-to-date figures do not appear to be available, but in 1981 the percentage who were library members in Estonia, Turkmenia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, the Komi and Tuva ASSRs and Tyumen' and Tomsk oblasti varied between 30% and 42%.<sup>10</sup> In the Central Asian republics, this is probably linked to the poorer library service in these areas, but Estonia on the other hand is above the national average in terms of number of books per head of population.<sup>11</sup> There are differences between town and country too. In 1973 in rural areas 45.8% of residents were library members; in the village libraries studied as part of the Lenin Library's rural reading survey, the proportion was a little higher, 50% of those aged over seven. Nearly four fifths of families included a library member (sometimes a child), and about half the books returned to the library had in fact been read by more than one person.<sup>12</sup> In small towns, two-thirds of the population made use of libraries, but only a

third used it 'regularly'.<sup>13</sup> A more recent study of three medium towns found that 49% of the population were library members, and 39% of the population used the library at least once a month.<sup>14</sup> Differences between rural and urban areas can partly be explained by the age and educational structure of the population, which means that there are fewer readers in rural areas (see chapter 5), but on the other hand readers in rural areas have fewer opportunities to buy books, and so are more dependent on libraries as a source of reading matter.

Young people use libraries the most heavily. In the early 1970s, readers aged between 15 and 24 made up over half the members of urban and raion libraries.<sup>15</sup> More recent figures, covering both urban and rural areas, show that 42% of adult library members are aged between 15 and 25, 30% are aged 26-39, 21% are aged 40-59, and only 7% are over 60.<sup>16</sup> As young people are the most active readers of books,<sup>17</sup> this pattern is to be expected. The study of industrial workers in the early 1980s asked people why they had stopped using the library in their early twenties, and discovered a variety of reasons. Many people had used it mainly for study purposes, or to get trade qualifications, and stopped using the library when they no longer needed it. Others lost interest in reading generally, while other people had become too involved in caring for children or sick relatives.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any figures on variations in library membership between men and women.

Library membership varies by educational level. In the mid-1970s, people with only a primary education made up just 2.5% of library members, although they formed about a quarter of the employed population. At the other end of the scale, graduates and people with incomplete higher education made up 21% of library members, although they were only 7% of the population (aged 10 or over).<sup>19</sup> Differing educational levels underlie the differences between occupational groups in library membership. Professionals make up a quarter of library members nation-wide, and school-children and students account for nearly another quarter. About 10% of library members are pensioners. Although workers

make up two-thirds of the employed population, they are only 29% of library members in urban areas. In rural areas, workers and collective farmers together make up 43% of library members. Commenting on these figures, a senior Lenin Library researcher suggests that the overwhelming majority of professionals, students and school children are now covered by library services. However, the level of library membership among workers and farmers is far below the ideal, particularly in the less educated groups.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the Lenin Library's study of industrial workers as readers in the early 1980s found that the proportion of workers who are library members is in fact decreasing.<sup>21</sup>

Although library membership has increased rapidly over the post-war period - it nearly doubled between 1950 and 1972, while the population increased by only 28%<sup>22</sup> - in recent years there have been suggestions that the overall level of library membership in the USSR is now increasing very slowly. Furthermore, most of the increase has been in the groups which are not economically active - school children, students, pensioners, housewives. There has been a decline in the proportion of library members who are in employment. The decreasing popularity of the library among this key group has been particularly marked in large cities.<sup>23</sup> Another researcher, commenting particularly on young workers, has expressed concern at the decline in library use among better qualified urban readers.<sup>24</sup>

This decline in the prestige and popularity of public libraries, particularly in the cities and among the most active groups in the population, is causing much concern. It can largely be attributed to the difficulties readers experience in finding the books they want to read in their local library. The problems of library acquisitions and holdings are considered in the next section.

#### ACQUISITIONS - PROCEDURES AND PROBLEMS

A significant proportion of the USSR's output of books and pamphlets reaches libraries - on one estimate, about a quarter of the two thousand million items

published annually.<sup>25</sup> Many of these books are destined for special and academic libraries. On another calculation, mass libraries received 7.6% of copies issued in 1970; by 1980 this had risen to 9.3%.<sup>26</sup> As these will include many multiple copy sets, the percentage of total titles published which reach mass libraries will be rather smaller. By comparison, a recent study by the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library of the plans of 45 central publishing houses found that about a fifth of the titles were suitable for mass libraries.<sup>27</sup> Clearly, then, mass libraries do not acquire as full a range of publications as they might, and it is obviously important that the books they do select and acquire should be appropriate to the needs of their readers. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. The heart of the problem lies in acquisitions procedures.

#### Legal deposit copies

Many libraries receive free legal deposit copies of all works published in the USSR. These institutions include the All-Union Book Chamber (VKP), which has the right to the most complete set of publications for compiling the national bibliography and maintaining a national publications archive, the Lenin Library in Moscow, the Academy of Sciences' libraries in Leningrad and Novosibirsk, and the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library in Leningrad. Publishers are obliged to supply additional legal deposit copies in quantities which vary according to the type of publication. These are distributed, at cost price, by the Central Collector for Academic Libraries (TsKNB) in Moscow to some 300 libraries in the USSR; these libraries have blanket orders for publications in certain subject areas. In addition, state libraries at krai, oblast' and union republic level, libraries of the academies of sciences of the union republics, and the library of the state university of each union republic receive a set of publications issued in their area; these copies are not free-of-charge. Legal deposit copies not required by any of the libraries can be sold by the TsKNB to other academic libraries.<sup>28</sup>

### Library collectors

Library collectors (Bibliotechnye kollektory) are the main source of books and pamphlets for Soviet libraries of all types, except those which receive free legal deposit copies. The library collectors were established in 1920 and at first distributed books free-of-charge.<sup>29</sup> In the 1920s, in addition to the state-run library collectors under Glavpolitprosvet which supplied libraries through the uezd education departments, trade unions and certain publishers also provided library supply agencies. In 1931, these networks were amalgamated and became part of the book trade organisation KOGIZ. In 1949, Glavpoligrafizdat, the forerunner of Goskomizdat, was set up by the USSR Council of Ministers and the book trade was reorganised; the library collectors were then transferred to its jurisdiction.<sup>30</sup>

There is a library collector attached to the book trade organisation at krai, oblast' or ASSR level; in union republics without oblast' divisions the library collector is attached to the book trade organisation at republic level.<sup>31</sup> In addition, some major cities which are not oblast' centres have their own library collector. In Moscow, Leningrad, Novosibirsk and certain other large cities with many libraries, there are separate library collectors serving children's and school libraries and academic and technical libraries. The Moscow TsKNB, mentioned above, serves certain major libraries in other parts of the USSR, as well as libraries in Moscow.<sup>32</sup> Army and navy libraries are served by separate library collectors under the military publishers Voenizdat.<sup>33</sup> The number of library collectors has increased steadily in the post-war period, from 134 in 1958 to 155 in the mid-1970s, and 169 in 1981.<sup>34</sup> Since the mid-1960s (if not earlier), the library collectors have been formally responsible for supplying all types of library, but in practice many smaller libraries are excluded. These are mainly trade union and school libraries. The position varies in different parts of the USSR; while some collectors can service virtually all the libraries in their area, others exclude a significant number of libraries,

generally because of shortages of space, facilities and equipment.<sup>35</sup> The number of libraries served by collectors is gradually increasing, and in 1981 over 260,000 libraries made use of their services. However, a quarter of libraries are still excluded.<sup>36</sup>

The proportion of libraries' total acquisitions supplied by the collectors is gradually increasing. In 1973, they supplied about half the books purchased by libraries,<sup>37</sup> and by 1979 the proportion was much higher.<sup>38</sup> However, in some areas library collectors are less successful - in Kazakhstan in 1977 under half libraries' acquisitions came from the collector, and in the Ukraine, Belorussia and Uzbekistan, only just over half.<sup>39</sup> Libraries then have to compete with retail customers in bookshops. Indeed, there have been reports that certain bookshops will no longer sell books to libraries, despite orders from the Ministry of Culture that children's books, works about art and adult belles-lettres may be purchased from retail stores.<sup>40</sup> Clearly the efficiency of the library supplier is one of the most important factors in determining the quality of Soviet libraries' book stocks.

The library collectors are a part of the local book trade organisation, not part of the library system at all. They operate by drawing up a contract with each library, usually on an annual basis, to supply it with books up to a certain value and in conformity with the needs of the library and its readers. The books supplied are partly ordered individually by librarians, and partly sent through a 'blanket order' system. Under the 'blanket order' system, the library collector maintains files on each library it supplies, with details of the population served, major enterprises and crops, minority languages, etc. On the basis of these files, and guided by the Lenin Library's recommendations of books for various types of mass libraries, the collector selects appropriate books. Rural and more remote libraries may be largely supplied in this way. However, particularly since libraries were centralised, librarians have taken a more active role in book selection, and a far higher proportion of orders

are now based on requests by libraries for specific items. Librarians work through publishers' plans of books for the coming year (tematicheskie plany) and make their selection. In centralised systems, a cumulated order for the whole TsBS is submitted. In addition, libraries located reasonably close to the library collector are divided into acquisitions groups according to the type of library and its subject profile, and visit the library regularly as a group to examine new books, hear lectures, meet publishers and so on.<sup>41</sup> In addition, certain libraries may order books published abroad, on the basis of catalogues of foreign publications compiled by Mezhdunarodnaya kniga.<sup>42</sup>

The library collector cumulates all the orders received from libraries and adds those its staff have selected. These orders are then added to those from the retail network, and passed up the chain of wholesale organizations. However, as was shown in the previous chapter, orders from the book trade do not determine the number of copies of a book printed, and the local wholesaler may receive far fewer copies of a book than were ordered. The books then have to be distributed between retail outlets and the library collector. Although libraries are supposed to have priority in acquiring books in short supply, in practice the books are often sent to the shops in preference, because this is more profitable for the book trade.

Thus, library collectors often receive far too few copies of popular books, far fewer than libraries have ordered. At the same time, they often receive excessive quantities of other books the retail trade does not expect to sell easily. From this arise many bad practices which have led to frequent complaints by libraries about the books supplied to them, and from readers about the quality of the library's stocks.

First, libraries often do not receive the books they order in advance, or receive them in very small quantities. On average in the 1970s, only 20%-40% of libraries' advance orders were satisfied.<sup>43</sup> In 1984, the situation had improved to some extent. Overall, between 25% and 40% of advance orders for



belles lettres and children's books were satisfied, and only 30% to 40% of orders in the fields of medicine, agriculture and technology. Even orders for socio-political literature and work-related books and pamphlets were only three-quarters supplied. Surprisingly, it was reported that libraries did not even get all the books they required to support political education programmes. Although there are many cases of libraries receiving no copies at all of books they order, the Head of the USSR Library Administration believes that the problem lies not so much in the limited range of books supplied as in the utterly inadequate number of copies sent. Many library collectors will send each TsBS (Centralised library system) no more than three, or at most ten, copies of even the most popular and essential books which need to be available in every branch library in the system.<sup>44</sup> For example, almost all the mass libraries in the Vitebsk area wanted copies of Yuliya Drunina's poetry when it was published by *Khudozhestvennaya literatura*, and 1,300 copies were ordered from the library collector. 3 were delivered. A similar situation developed with orders for stories by V Astaf'ev, poetry by Musa Dzhaliil and Anna Akhmatova, Sholokhov's Virgin Soil Upturned, an anthology of European Poetry and a novel by Albert Moravia.<sup>45</sup> A librarian from Kaluga has recently written of how the 36 branches in their TsBS have to compete for three copies of a book, when the system has perhaps ordered as many as 160 copies.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, many librarians are becoming disillusioned with the advance order system, although senior librarians and book trade officials argue that it provides, in the long term, the best way of improving acquisitions.

Sometimes, though, the collectors send libraries far more copies than they ordered, even of fiction which is in demand elsewhere - one library ordered eight copies of Furmanov's Chapaev and got 17, and sixteen of Gorbатов's Nepokorennye, and got 49.<sup>47</sup> In another case, a TsBS was sent 250 copies of Turgenev's Asya, sufficient for 30 copies in every branch.<sup>48</sup> Excessive copies are probably more common for non-fiction - for instance, one TsBS in Kuibyshev ordered two

copies of a manual on labour organization in large dairying complexes, as there was one such farm in their area . They received 28 copies!<sup>49</sup>

Under the blanket order system, librarians frequently find they are sent books which are completely unsuitable for their library and which they did not order. For instance, one library in the Crimea was supplied with books on rice cultivation, although the area has never grown rice, and is usually sent fiction in Ukrainian, although most of the local population speaks Russian.<sup>50</sup> Libraries in the Kazakh steppes have been sent books on welfare provisions for workers in the Far North and on growing cranberries. A library in the mountains in the South received books on flax cultivation, atlantic fishing and feed production in the Far North. Specialist books are often sent to mass libraries, not to technical or academic libraries - for instance, a specialist monograph on mathematical methods in clinical medicine in a village library in the Ukraine, twenty copies of a specialist biology text-book on macromycetes to a rural library near Grodno, books on industrial safety in the oil industry and highly specialised physics monographs to a library in Mogilev oblast'.<sup>51</sup> One library collector in Kazakhstan dumped thousands of roubles worth of old posters on mass libraries - most of them were sent straight for pulping.<sup>52</sup>

It is hard to estimate precisely what proportion of the books and pamphlets supplied each year to mass libraries are unsuitable for them, whether because they are supplied in too many copies or are out-of-profile. A senior librarian at the State Republican Youth Library, Pervouzhina, has mentioned that a study by the Saltykov-Shchedrin library of mass libraries found that between 40% and 65% of their stocks ' did not conform to the interests of mass readers'.<sup>53</sup> This figure will include some out-dated literature which ought to have been withdrawn, but probably the bulk of these books will be ones which were wrongly ordered or wrongly supplied. In 1982, a massive study of 430 mass libraries in the Ministry of Culture network by the People's Control Committee (a sort of public expenditure watchdog attached to the CPSU) found that over a quarter of

the books supplied in 1980-1981 had not yet been used. Over the two and a half years preceding the study, the libraries had received 642,000 unordered items from the library collectors, to the value of over half a million roubles.<sup>54</sup> This works out as an average of about 600 items a year per library; unfortunately we do not know how many items the libraries surveyed acquired annually, and so it is difficult to put these figures in context. A 1975 estimate of the amount Soviet mass libraries spend on books which are not in demand was 40 million roubles,<sup>55</sup> but this too could only be interpreted in the context of the total amount mass libraries (both trade union and Ministry of Culture) spent on acquisitions in that year. The effects on individual libraries are more easily documented. For instance, a librarian at a ship repair yard in Nakhodka reported that on average for every 100 roubles they spent, only two or three worthwhile books resulted - the rest were unsuitable.<sup>56</sup> Pervoushina described a recent, apparently typical, visit to a central library in the Mari ASSR. One parcel of new books contained 50 items, of which 25 were clearly not suitable.<sup>57</sup> Obviously supplying libraries with books which will never be read is a waste of resources. The librarians are angry, because the library collectors have, on paper, fulfilled their plan - they have supplied books to the value laid down in the contract. However, the libraries have not got the books they need.

Nevertheless, libraries do have the legal right to return to the library collectors books they have not ordered which are not relevant to their profile, or are supplied in excess copies. However, there is an important exception to this. The book trade is instructed to send to libraries immediately on receipt copies of party congresses and plenums, proceedings of the supreme soviets of the USSR and union republics, and works by party and government leaders. Libraries do not have the right to return this material to the collector as unordered.<sup>58</sup> It seems likely that a considerable amount of other political and economic material, particularly that linked with current Party campaigns or with other issues of official concern (such as alcoholism or labour discipline)

is distributed in the same way.<sup>59</sup> Although the complaints published in the press almost never mention political literature, it seems highly likely that a high proportion of the unwanted literature off-loaded onto libraries consists of this sort of 'socio-political' books and pamphlets, which libraries do not have the right to return.

Libraries have had the right to return other books to the library collector since 1956.<sup>60</sup> In every subsequent regulation dealing with the relations between the book trade and libraries, it has been stressed (a) that the collectors must only supply material the libraries have ordered, and can be punished for breaking the rule; (b) that libraries do have the right and duty to return unsuitable literature.<sup>61</sup> Yet many librarians do not make use of these legal provisions. In some cases, they seem to be too passive and reluctant to stir up trouble. There is no guarantee that if they do return books, better ones will be sent in their place. Librarians are also heavily dependent on the goodwill of the library collector, and may well be willing to acquiesce in accepting a certain amount of unsuitable books in the hope of getting priority for good ones later. However, there are also reports of tough librarians who insist on returning unwanted books, and make life so uncomfortable for the library collectors that they do get preferential treatment in the end.<sup>62</sup> A further factor is the finance system. Libraries are expected to spend their acquisitions budgets by the end of the financial year. The bulk of their book budget is in fact deposited with the library collector, and so what is not spent will simply be lost. And if they do not spend their full annual allocation they will get less the following year, and may well be severely criticised as well, for not acquiring enough new books.<sup>63</sup> The People's Control Committee has urged that libraries be allowed to carry over unspent funds to the following year, if suitable books are not available in the current year.<sup>64</sup>

Other acquisitions problems arise out of poor administration and carelessness, both by the library collector and by the libraries. For instance, the

publishers' plans sometimes do not reach the libraries until after the closing date for orders has passed, and in these cases the library collector puts in an order based on guess-work. In other cases, the central library in the TsBS may be too remote from its branches and not pay sufficient attention to their needs.<sup>65</sup> In addition to dissatisfaction with the range of material supplied, librarians also complain of delays in sending out the new books. In certain republics, the collectors send out books quarterly, or even only twice a year; rural libraries are particularly likely to experience these delays. On the other hand, in Estonia fortnightly deliveries have been organised and in Donetsk oblast' deliveries are even made weekly.<sup>66</sup> Since library networks have been centralised, further delays often occur with books being held up in the central library of the system for 2-3 months.<sup>67</sup>

There are also complaints about the book processing which library collectors are expected to carry out for libraries. This includes labour intensive operations such as sticking in date labels and book pockets, stamping books, lettering and so on. (Similar services are provided by many British library supply agencies). Although the number of library collectors offering this service has increased over the years (over half provided some processing in the early 1980s), there are complaints about the quality of the work done. Many library collectors cannot provide a better service because of cramped premises and lack of equipment.<sup>68</sup> Librarians still have to carry out these time-consuming operations themselves.

#### Other methods

Although legal deposit copies and purchases from library collectors are libraries' chief sources of books, other methods are used. A number of large research libraries and specialist libraries do acquire considerable numbers of books and journals through exchanges with foreign libraries; foreign exchanges will not be discussed in detail here as they do not affect mass libraries. Since 1959, libraries within the USSR have been encouraged to organise exchanges

between themselves, using surplus copies of books held in their stocks in more than one copy, or items withdrawn from stock as unsuited to the needs of that library's readers. The Lenin Library runs a Central Exchange Store and local exchange stores are provided by state libraries at union republic, krai and oblast' level and by some libraries under other authorities.<sup>69</sup> The Smolensk oblast' exchange library, for instance, redistributes about 12000 items a year. Some go to special or academic libraries, others are used to set up small collections in hostels, museums, even local music schools. From libraries in other parts of the USSR it obtained books in minority languages for soldiers stationed in the oblast', and set up libraries for them.<sup>70</sup> There is also the State Literature Reserve (Gosudarstvennyi Rezerv Literatury), set up in 1975 and administered by the RSFSR State Republican Youth Library (GRYuB), whose functions include supplying books for new libraries, particularly those set up in new towns in Siberia and the Far North and on special projects such as the Baikal'-Amur Railway.<sup>71</sup> At least some of the books in the State Literature Reserve have been donated by the public for setting up new libraries. Sometimes, though, books are collected for particular projects, as when the journal Smena made a highly successful public appeal for donations of books for the library at Novyi Urengoi in the Tyumen' oil and gas field, and also organised volunteers to build and erect a library building.<sup>72</sup>

However, for most libraries the main source of books other than legal deposit or purchase through a library collector is purchase through local bookshops, and many smaller libraries have to rely on them entirely. As these are often poorly stocked, the library has few opportunities to acquire what it needs. Some libraries in rural areas also use the mail order service 'Kniga-pochtoi'.

Libraries do not appear to have special channels for subscriptions to periodicals and newspapers, unless they receive them under legal deposit arrangements. The library collectors do not handle journals, and libraries place their subscriptions through the local branch of 'Soyuzpechat'', which has

quotas for the numbers of subscriptions which can be accepted for many journals. Newspapers appear to be freely available on subscription. Libraries have to compete with private individuals for subscriptions to popular journals, and some difficulties are reported. Thus, one rural library in Kalinin oblast' could not get a subscription to Nash sovremennik, although it was in heavy demand,<sup>73</sup> and a librarian serving a collective farm in the Non-Black Earth zone of the RSFSR could not get a subscription to Ptitsevodstvo, although the farm had decided to go into intensive poultry rearing.<sup>74</sup> Soyuzpechat' is frequently criticised for failing to supply libraries with the supplements to journals such as Druzhba narodov and Ogonek, even though the novels in them are very popular with readers.<sup>75</sup>

#### Possible solutions

The underlying cause of the problems libraries experience in acquiring literature is that the demand for good books generally exceeds supply. At the same time, certain types of material are published in excessive quantities. Libraries have to compete against private buyers for scarce books. Staff in the book trade have no incentive to allocate popular books to the library collector rather than to the retail trade, or to improve services to libraries.<sup>76</sup> The book industry in the USSR simply does not produce enough books to use up all the acquisitions money allocated to libraries.<sup>77</sup>

In this situation, the Soviet authorities are trying a number of schemes to improve libraries' access to publications. Their right to priority in the supply of books has been asserted in a number of orders and resolutions from the Ministry of Culture and Goskomizdat over the years, but in 1984 it was included in the provisions of the Library Law, passed by the Supreme Soviet in March 1984 (Article 15). However, these provisions seem unlikely to be effective unless the plan fulfilment indicators for the book trade are changed so that it is more advantageous financially to supply libraries. Another measure, aimed at regularising the assortment of books offered to libraries, is

contained in the 1982 order on library acquisitions and stocks issued jointly by the Ministry of Culture and Goskomizdat. In terms of number of copies provided, library collectors should supply 15%-17% socio-political material, 6%-7% agriculture and technical, 9-10% natural sciences and 50-55% children's and belles lettres.<sup>78</sup> It is too early to say what effect this will have, but already there has been sharp criticism in the press of some library collectors in Kazakhstan who have supplied far more socio-political literature and far less fiction than these norms permit.<sup>79</sup> However, these norms are expressed in terms of quantity, whereas libraries are particularly interested in quality - they want to acquire certain specified books to fill gaps in their holdings, or books suited for their individual readers' needs. Another measure recently announced should make it rather easier for libraries to get multi-volume works, particularly of popular fiction - 20% of subscriptions will be reserved for libraries.<sup>80</sup> Another initiative, which has met with some success, has been the publication of books intended primarily for libraries. These are discussed below. In addition, Soyuzkniga has, since 1983, selected a limited range of fiction and non-fiction books suitable for rural libraries and allocated most copies to the rural library network. In 1983, ten titles were chosen and 780,000 copies of them were sent to rural libraries. By the end of 1985, it is hoped that this measure will have succeeded in sending rural libraries an additional two and a half million items.<sup>81</sup>

#### Library series

In an attempt to provide libraries with the books they need without competition from private buyers, Goskomizdat has encouraged publishers to produce series of books intended primarily for the library market, such as the 'Biblioteka klassiki', 'Biblioteka yunoshstva' and the 'Shkol'naya biblioteka'.<sup>82</sup> However, the most important such initiative was the joint Goskomizdat and Ministry of Culture decision in 1971 to establish the 'Bibliotechnaya seriya'.<sup>83</sup> Books in this series are published by a number of all-union and republican publishing houses and are for sale to libraries only. It was planned that the edition



sizes of publications in the series would be large enough to satisfy library demand - the 1971 decree envisaged editions of 250,000 copies. In 1973-78, central publishers alone issued 425 titles in the series, a total of 42 million copies.<sup>84</sup> In the series for the RSFSR, 823 titles were issued between 1973 and 1980, a total of over 50 million copies.<sup>85</sup> Regulations for the series were drawn up in 1979 by the Ministry of Culture and Goskomizdat, providing for Goskomizdat to allocate titles to central publishers on the basis of the Ministry's recommendations; in addition, the Lenin Library would prepare a five-year plan of the books to be published in the series, and would oversee the distribution of books in the series to the library collectors;<sup>86</sup> similar responsibilities were laid on the ministries of culture, committees on the press and republican libraries in each union republic.

The series is largely made up of children's books and adult fiction - the RSFSR list for 1980, for instance, comprised 20 children's books, several novels translated from English (including some Jerome K. Jerome), a book of Greek and Latin poetry in Russian translation, several collections of poetry by Russian poets such as Evtushenko, and several dozen Russian pre-Revolutionary and Soviet novels. Some non-fiction books and reference works are also included.<sup>87</sup>

The series has generally been well received. For instance, issue figures show that books in the 'Library Series' are borrowed 3 or 4 times more often than average.<sup>88</sup> However, it has not provided a full solution to libraries' acquisition problems. Print runs have been too low - for instance in 1979 only 5 titles were issued in over 200,000 copies,<sup>89</sup> in 1982-3 the average print run was only 120,000 copies,<sup>90</sup> when there are over 130,000 mass libraries in the country. However, in 1985 it is hoped to print 250,000 copies of fiction and children's books in the series, and 120,000 copies of non-fiction.<sup>91</sup> Distribution has been uneven; in one year, when 89 titles were issued in the series, only 4% of libraries received more than 50 titles, and 10% got none. As the books in the series are distributed only by the library collectors, many smaller libraries not served by the collectors were completely excluded.<sup>92</sup>

In other cases, as in Rostov and Yaroslavl' oblasti, the collectors allocated the books in the series to all types of libraries, including specialist and technical libraries; the Perm' collector even sent children's books in the series to special libraries.<sup>93</sup> Soyuzkniga has also been accused of diverting books in the series to the retail trade; although this has been categorically forbidden by Goskomizdat, the practice is widespread, particularly for children's books. For instance, Detskaya literatura published a volume of The 1,001 Nights in 100,000 copies, but less than 60,000 reached the library collectors. Of 496 copies of Grimm's Fairy Tales sent to the Dushanbe Oblast' Book Trade Organisation only 30 reached the library collector and only a half of an edition of the selected works of Garcia Lorca reached the libraries in the same oblast'.<sup>94</sup>

The selection of titles for the series has also been criticised, for instance for excluding science fiction or, more importantly perhaps, for concentrating on reprints of established works.<sup>95</sup> Sometimes the series includes books which libraries can easily acquire in the normal way, or which are really not in heavy demand; this arose in Belorussia, for instance, because the republic's Ministry of Culture and Committee on the Press 'corrected' the lists of suggestions compiled by the republican library on the basis of requests from mass libraries.<sup>96</sup> Recently there have been complaints from the book trade that libraries have refused to buy books in the series, although they originally requested them.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the series has clearly helped some libraries acquire books in short supply. But libraries must still compete with the retail trade for most of their purchases.

### Finance

For British libraries, the main factor inhibiting them from obtaining the material they require is usually shortage of money. Soviet librarians rarely complain of inadequate funding for acquisitions. Further research on library funding is required, but it seems that Ministry of Culture mass libraries are allocated acquisitions money through the local soviets, according to a formula

based on the number of readers and existing book stocks. Trade union libraries are funded by the appropriate union, out of its cultural budget. Both trade union and Ministry of Culture mass libraries may receive additional resources from local farms and factories. Libraries also receive additional funds from the government when book prices rise officially - in 1977, for instance, when prices for fiction rose sharply, mass libraries were allocated an additional 50 million roubles for book purchases.<sup>98</sup>

However, some complaints from the book trade suggest that the administration of library finance does cause problems for the library collectors, and affects their ability to provide books. First, advance orders from publishers' plans are collected in the February or March of the year preceding publication, but libraries are not allocated their funds until the December. It seems there can be considerable variations between the value of the books libraries order and the amount of money they are eventually allocated.<sup>99</sup> Second, very recently (1984) there have been suggestions that the overall amount of money allocated for acquisitions is inadequate, in that the total amount of money libraries deposit with the collector is less than the collector's sales turnover target for the year. This has apparently arisen fairly regularly in Belorussia, Kirghizia and Turkmenia, and the republic Ministry of Culture has allocated extra funds to the library collector to cover any short-fall between the money allocated by local authorities and their turnover targets. The same author, a senior Soyuzkniga official, also suggests that in some areas, total resources allocated for library acquisitions are declining.<sup>100</sup> Despite these comments, it does seem that it is more common for libraries to encounter difficulties in spending the money allocated to them, unless they are willing to accept unwanted books.

#### READER SATISFACTION

This account of libraries' acquisition problems has demonstrated that many libraries experience considerable difficulties in getting 'good' books. How has this affected readers? Since the mid-1970s, complaints about library

stocks have frequently appeared in the newspapers, with readers and journalists protesting at 'the paradoxical situation that while the shelves are breaking under the books, there is nothing to read'.<sup>101</sup> Studies of readers and library stocks have found much evidence to substantiate these complaints.

Some of the major library studies have looked closely at reader dissatisfaction. One of the first, in 1969-73 (before there were many press complaints), surveyed 19,000 library members, and found that over half of them were dissatisfied with the fiction stocks. In non-fiction, history attracted the most complaints, followed by art, sport and literary criticism.<sup>102</sup> The large scale rural reading study in the early 1970s also indicated serious gaps in library collections, with 58% of library members naming individual works of fiction not held by their local library, 59% of them mentioning popular science titles and 23% production-related literature. The researchers also examined the unsatisfied request files of the local libraries, and found that 25% of requests for modern Soviet and 30% of requests for modern foreign novels could not be met, and that 23% of history books and 30% of war memoirs requested were not available.<sup>103</sup> More recently, it has been officially reported that sociological studies in 1978-81 found that 52% of library members were dissatisfied with their stocks. Most complaints related to fiction, children's books and reference works.<sup>104</sup>

These figures suggest that readers' satisfaction with library stocks has certainly not improved over the last twenty years; indeed anecdotal evidence in newspaper and journal articles suggests that getting 'good' books from the library has become more difficult and that readers turn more and more to private collections, to home libraries.

Two examples from newspapers over recent years suggest how readers have become disillusioned with libraries. In 1975, a worker from the Karaganda Metallurgical Works told one survey team:

I would love to re-read works by Zola, Dreiser, Aldington, Simonov, Maupassant. But where can I get them? The best novels have been read till they fall apart. There's just no Maupassant in the libraries.

Apart from fiction, I love autobiographies and books from the series 'Lives of great people'. I read (...) the reminiscences of Zhukov, but I don't know where to get those by Vasilevskii and Shtemenko (...) But I am particularly sorry for our young people. My son is 15 now. At that age you have to read the novels of Fennimore Cooper, Maine Read, Walter Scott, Mark Twain, Jules Verne. Afterwards its too late. How many times have I seen him get hold of a tatty copy from one of his pals and sit up and read it almost all night ... 105

In the early 1980s, the Party Secretary of a kolkhoz in Volgograd oblast' told a reporter that, while he had got used to the difficulties of daily life there, 'I cannot get used to the book famine. We receive miserly parcels once a month, largely of specialist agricultural literature'. In this oblast', even the raion libraries had only worn-out pre-war editions of such standard authors as Tolstoi, Kuprin, Chekhov, Dostoevskii, Gor'kii, Sholokhov and Serafimovich. In this area, apparently, specialists and party and soviet activists had largely given up using the state libraries in the villages, knowing how poorly stocked they are, and relied on their own sources instead to get reading matter.<sup>106</sup>

These complaints by readers that 'there are no good books in the library', 'you can't get good books anywhere' or 'there's no point going to the library, you won't find anything there' need to be considered against the background of an analysis of mass library stocks.

#### LIBRARY STOCKS

##### Library stocks: quantity

In quantitative terms, the stocks of Soviet mass libraries have increased substantially over the last twenty years, from about 883 million items in 1960 to 1945 million in 1982.<sup>107</sup>

The number of books per head of population has also increased steadily, from 6 in 1974 to 7.2 in 1982. Provision does vary in different areas of the USSR. In 1974 (the last year for which complete figures appear to be available), provision ranged from only 2.69 in Tajikistan, 2.8 in Turkmenistan, 2.83 in Uzbekistan and 3.69 in Kirghizia to 6.17 in Estonia, 6.44 in the RSFSR, 7.19 in Latvia and 7.56 in Belorussia. In 1982, number of books per head had increased to 9.9 in Latvia, 9.6 in Belorussia, 9.2 in Lithuania, 8.3 in Estonia,

7.8 in the Ukraine and 7.4 in the RSFSR. Provision in Turkmenia, Uzbekistan and Kirghizia had improved but clearly these republics were still below average. Within republics which are generally well provided with books, there are areas where provision is low. For instance in the north of Tyumen' oblast' in the RSFSR there are between 0.5 and 2.5 books per inhabitant and in many new towns provision is as low as 0.2 per head.<sup>108</sup>

Further improvement in the number of books per head of population is likely to be slower, as the rate of increase of mass library stocks is declining. Figures for the RSFSR show that while during the Ninth Five-Year plan (1971-75) the average mass library's stocks grew by 630 volumes per annum, the growth rate had fallen to 362.5 per annum in the early 1980s.<sup>109</sup> While some decline in annual growth rates may be accounted for by the weeding of the stocks through centralisation, Bachaldin (Head of the Library Board of the RSFSR Ministry of Culture) is clearly extremely concerned by this sharp reduction in growth rates, and does not argue that it has been accompanied by an equivalent improvement in the quality of the books available, or more effective use of resources.

In attempting to assess the effectiveness of library provision, two quantitative measures are often used by Soviet librarians. These are chitaemost' (the average number of books issued per registered reader each year) and obrashchaemost' (total number of issues per annum divided by the number of volumes in the collection). The first is seen as a measure of reader activity, the second as an indicator of how effectively the stock is used.

In the USSR as a whole, issues per reader have increased steadily from 19 per year in 1960 to 21 in 1975. However, in some republics, issues per head have not grown at all; in Uzbekistan 14 books were issued to each reader in 1960 and in 1975. In certain republics, issues per reader have fallen, including Moldavia (from 19 to 17), Tajikistan (from 17 to 13), Armenia (from 21 to 18), Turkmenistan (from 17 to 15) and Azerbaijan (from a very high 29 in 1960 to a still above average 25 in 1975). In the RSFSR, issues per reader increased from

19 in 1960 to 21 in 1975;<sup>110</sup> in 1980 they reached 22.1.<sup>111</sup> The interpretation of these figures requires some care however; high average figures can conceal the fact that some registered readers make very little use of the library while others are extremely active.<sup>112</sup> In the Soviet context, the figures may have been further distorted by the introduction of open access to the bookstacks in many mass libraries during the 1960s, which would have reduced the number of loans officially recorded, as readers have been able to browse more. In addition, it is possible to achieve quite high issue figures through the intensive use of only a small proportion of the stock.

Obrashchaemost', the indicator relating the number of issues to the size of the library stock, can also be difficult to interpret. There are as yet no Soviet library standards indicating the optimum ratio of loans to stock,<sup>113</sup> and similar figures may arise out of rather different levels of actual library provision and real reader satisfaction. A low ratio may indicate that library stocks are artificially large, because there are too many duplicates and obsolete books in the collection. On the other hand, many rural libraries have low ratios because they are fairly small collections serving scattered communities; the number of readers is small, but a basic selection of books still has to be provided in a quantity which, in a different pattern of rural settlement, would serve a larger number of readers. A high ratio of loans to stock is also not necessarily a healthy sign. In 1950, for instance, the national ratios were 2.6 in rural libraries, 3.2 in raion libraries and 4.3 in town libraries, which reflected the poverty of Soviet library stocks after the devastation of the Second World War,<sup>114</sup> and hence heavy pressure on remaining book stocks and very little choice for the readers. In the 1950s and 1960s, the ratio dropped rapidly as a result of the state's investment in new libraries and the influx of books into the libraries, which was not matched by a corresponding growth in the number of library members, so that by 1971 the figures were 1.2, 1.8 and 2.1 respectively.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, even though the ratio of loans to total stock may suggest that the stock is being used intensively, it may in fact be

the case that a relatively small part of the stock is being used very heavily, and part not at all. (Unused books are discussed in more detail below).

Clearly, although the ratio of loans to stock and the number of loans per reader do have some value as quantitative indicators of library performance, a real assessment of the effectiveness of library's service to the reader must attempt to find qualitative indicators. Since the late 1960s there has indeed been an increased awareness among Soviet librarians and library administrators of the need to study the quality of the book and journal provision in mass libraries. It seems to have been realised that, in some cases at least, high figures for stocks of books and periodicals were maintained at the expense of regular weeding of the stocks of obsolete or tatty books and by obtaining literature which was not needed for the readers of that particular library. Librarians became aware that, although library stocks were continually expanding, the number of readers who could not get what they wanted from their library was not declining.<sup>116</sup> Reader studies published from the early 1970s onwards drew attention to the number of readers who could not get the books they wanted, or even information on subjects which interested them. And from the mid-1970s onwards, newspapers regularly carried articles and letters critical of libraries' performance. Therefore, librarians have attempted to analyse more closely readers' dissatisfaction with library stocks, and to find meaningful ways of establishing the quality of library provision.

#### Quality of book stocks

Soviet researchers have adopted a number of approaches to assessing the quality of library stocks. One method is to examine the extent to which mass libraries acquire the books recommended by the Lenin Library for purchase by mass libraries. As part of the study of reading in small towns, acquisitions by all the mass libraries in the town of Ostrogozhsk were studied in 1968-69, and it was found that in all they received less than half of some 3,000 titles recommended by the Lenin Library.<sup>117</sup> Using the slightly less clear category



of 'recent popular' books - possibly Lenin Library recommendations over the previous few years - acquisitions of socio-political literature were analysed. The town's raion library had not received 48% of recent popular books on Soviet pre-war history, 46% of those on World War II, 42% of those on moral and educational topics, 33% of those on international affairs and life in foreign countries and 45% of those on general history and the history of pre-Revolutionary Russia.<sup>118</sup> Another study, covering 300 mass libraries, found that of a list of 1586 books 'in demand' (however defined) nearly a half were absent from the stocks of 80% of rural libraries and 45% of town libraries.<sup>119</sup> In a more recent study in the RSFSR, a list of books intended for the general reader was checked against the stocks of certain mass libraries, and it was found that on average up to 45% of them had not been acquired.<sup>120</sup> It seems probable that the general figures given by Arest and Bachaldin conceal considerable variations between libraries, and for different categories of books. Clearly, though, many of the books which libraries ought to be able to offer their readers are not available.

Another approach is to analyse existing library stocks, either by checking for individual books which ought to be widely available, or by comparing the proportion of the stock in different subject areas, over time. As part of the RSFSR study of mass library stocks in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the researchers made a detailed study of non-fiction provision in 244 libraries. They found libraries well supplied with marxist-leninist literature. Most had either the complete or selected works of Marx and Engels, and virtually all had a set of Lenin's works. However, some libraries were found to have inadequate coverage of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, but were, we are assured, able to fill this gap in their holdings soon after the survey, when new editions of many of Lenin's works were reprinted for the centenary of his birth. The libraries studied were also generally well stocked with CPSU materials. All other non-fiction sections were less well stocked. Some examples of books checked gives an impression of the gaps. 84% of rural libraries, 25% of raion

libraries and 5% of town libraries had no copies of Ozhegov's Slovar' russkogo yazyka; 60%, 20% and 10% lacked the major orthographic dictionary, 92%, 65% and 70% lacked the Malyi atlas mira.<sup>121</sup> These are all the sort of reference books which ought to be available in virtually every library. Since then, of course, many important reference books have been reissued. Yet in 1984 Fonotov (by then retired from the RSFSR Main Library Administration) complained that many rural libraries still did not have either the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia or the Shorter Soviet Encyclopaedia; some even lacked the Agricultural Encyclopaedia.<sup>122</sup> There are also continued complaints about shortages of popular non-fiction books in all subjects.

Most of the complaints, though, concern fiction. The RSFSR study in the late 1960s and early 1970s (before the 'book boom' really got under way) found libraries generally adequately stocked with the classics studied in school, but rather poorly provided with books by non-Russian Soviet writers and, in particular, foreign authors. Poetry of all periods and all nations was inadequately represented.<sup>123</sup> However, other studies found the classics, both Soviet, pre-Revolutionary and foreign, were not readily available. One study of 169 rural libraries checked their holdings against a list of 734 'best books'. Not one had the full set. In another study, about half the rural libraries studied had no copies of such standard and popular novels about the war as Chakovskii's Blokada or Bondarev's Goryachii sneg. The small towns study examined not the availability of individual publications but of groups of novels. Around half the requests for novels on themes such as the Revolution and Civil War, World War II or historical novels were not satisfied. School children in the small towns studied even had to copy out by hand the selections of poetry by writers such as Ryleev, Baratynskii, Blok and Mayakovskii needed for exams.<sup>124</sup>

Since the mid-1970s, the provision of fiction has not improved, despite official attempts to improve supply through the library collectors, the publication of the 'Bibliotechnaya seriya' and the more rational provision of library

materials in centralised library systems. There are complaints from librarians in the press, as in this comment from a librarian in Ufa:

We are given fewer and fewer popular publications each year. All the most significant books go to the shop. Recently we had a consignment of 200 books, and there were only ten fiction books in it. I think the planning organisations ought to take into consideration the fact that a home library book has two or three readers, but a public library book - hundreds. 125

This complaint, and others like it in the library press, are borne out by official statistics for the RSFSR, which show that from 1975 to 1980 the stock of belles-lettres in the RSFSR's mass libraries actually fell from 322.3 million copies to 295.6 million, and as a proportion of total stocks belles-lettres declined from 50% to 39.8%.<sup>126</sup> It does not appear that the quantitative decrease resulted from removing unused books from the collections and their replacement with popular new books, albeit in smaller numbers, or by the more effective use of novels already in stock or circulated from the central library in a centralised system, as during the same period issues of belles-lettres decreased slightly in real terms and, as a proportion of the total issues, dropped from 56% in 1975 to 43.7% in 1980.<sup>127</sup> In other republics, the stocks of fiction have reportedly been halved since 1975, and issues have decreased accordingly.<sup>128</sup>

These studies all show that readers have real cause to be dissatisfied with the books stocks offered them. Yet libraries have large quantities of books and journals. This problem is largely one of unused or underused books.

#### Unused books

One approach to identifying the reasons for reader dissatisfaction in the face of apparent plenty is to attempt to isolate those parts of the stock which have not been used at all. A major sample survey of this type was carried out in 1978 by the USSR and RSFSR ministries of culture and covered 420 state and trade union mass libraries. Of the books examined, 6% had never been used at all; broken down by type of library these figures showed that 7.5% of books in raion libraries, 6.8% in rural libraries, 5.1% in trade union libraries and 4% in town libraries had never been used. Broken down by subject, unused books

comprised 11.6% of the stock in agriculture, 9.6% in technical subjects, 8.8% in the natural sciences and 3% of belles lettres. The amount of socio-political literature never used varied considerably in the different types of library, ranging from 10.7% of holdings in that category in raion libraries, 10.25% in rural libraries, 6.9% in town libraries and 6.4% in trade union libraries. Even in rural libraries, 14% of the stock of agricultural material had never been used.<sup>129</sup> As these figures relate to books never used at all, it is likely that the collections surveyed also contained a large number of books which had been borrowed only once and had since been gathering dust. Following this study, a member of the staff of the Lenin Library stated that between 30% and 60% of stocks in libraries of all types under various authorities are unused;<sup>130</sup> this figure must be based on a different definition of unused than that used in the 1978 survey and most likely relates to books no longer in active use as well as those never used at all. In some libraries, the proportion of under used books is huge. For instance, a study of the trade union library at the Karaganda Metallurgical Works found that of the 100,000 volumes in the library's stock, only 500 were really used.<sup>131</sup>

A more recent, more damning and more publicised study of unused and under-used books in Ministry of Culture libraries was carried out in the second half of 1982 by the People's Control Commission. They visited 430 libraries in the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kirghizia and examined nearly 5 million books. 17% of these books had never been used at all, and a further 23% had been issued just once. Thus, 40% of the books examined were virtually unused. In some areas the situation was far worse than this - the most extreme figures relate to some rural branch libraries where 70%-90% of the stock fell into this category. By subject, 50% of socio-political books, 46% of natural science, 48% of technical and 52% of agricultural books had never been issued or had been issued only once. Nearly a third of the fiction examined had not been issued, partly because there were too many copies of some titles, partly because the

fiction was kept in the central library's reserve store.<sup>132</sup>

Although some of the unused or underused books are older books which perhaps ought to have been withdrawn, many recent books do not attract readers. For example, a study of rural libraries in the RSFSR in the mid-1970s found that 40% of their new acquisitions had not been read within two years following their purchase; in other republics the percentage varied from 26% to 56%.<sup>133</sup> The study of reading in small towns, which took place in 1969-71, examined books published in 1968 and 1969 which had been acquired by the raion library in Ostrogozhsk, which was one of the main centres for the research. Their investigations showed that in the eighteen months to two years since acquisition, 54% of the books had been borrowed at least once. Broken down by subject, 79% of belles lettres, 42% of socio-political, 35% of technical and only 20% of agricultural books had been read.<sup>134</sup> The People's Control Committee study in late 1982 found that over a quarter of the books acquired in 1980 and 1981 by the libraries examined had not yet been issued.<sup>135</sup> These studies all make it clear that although Soviet mass libraries are, quantitatively, well stocked, and some appear to be heavily used, in fact a significant proportion of the stock is just 'dead weight'.

Attempts have, of course, been made to discover why books are not read. Fonotov (the Deputy Director of the Libraries' Board of the RSFSR Ministry of Culture), discussing the results of the 1978 survey mentioned above, reported that a quarter of the unused books were duplicates, held in more copies than demand could justify. 11% were on topics not relevant to the interests of readers in that library. 12.1% were obsolete or worn out and ought to have been withdrawn. 3.9% were unread because they were badly printed or unattractively designed. 28% however were unread because they had been 'undeservedly forgotten' by the library staff and 20% had not been used for 'other reasons' - generally because they were too complex or specialised for the readers in that particular library, although in Fonotov's view librarians could still have made

some use of them. Nearly one third of the unused socio-political literature had been 'undeservedly forgotten',<sup>136</sup> and over a quarter of the unused fiction was also in this category. The books in this group in certain libraries included such standard works as Uncle Tom's Cabin, Furmanov's Chapaev, Herzen's Byloe i dumy and books by S.T. Aksakov and N.G. Garin-Mikhailovskii<sup>137</sup> - just the sort of works librarians elsewhere were keen to acquire. It seems likely, though, that in most libraries the kind of fiction no-one read was material in the 'non-book' category, what Pervoushina and Gorodetskii have condemned as 'grey primitive productions from beyond the boundaries of real literature'.<sup>138</sup> The 1982 study laid much of the blame for the build-up of little-used books on the abuses in the acquisitions system, described earlier. The waste of resources these figures demonstrate is clearly worrying librarians, and angering readers.

#### Withdrawals

Another aspect of the problem of library book stocks is the withdrawal of books. Procedures for this, especially politically motivated 'purges', were discussed at length in chapter two. In the recent library literature and newspaper articles about library problems, two rather contradictory concerns are expressed. First, there are complaints about the amount of out-of-date, duplicate and inappropriate books held by mass libraries, discussed above. Second, librarians are criticised for withdrawing too high a proportion of the stock. The 1982 People's Control Commission study found that the number of items withdrawn by their survey libraries over a two and a half year period was equivalent to over half the number of items acquired in the same period.<sup>139</sup> In some libraries, such as a Kaluga branch library, the number of books acquired annually (2,000 items) usually equals the number withdrawn, so that the total stock does not increase at all.<sup>140</sup> There have been periods when the number of books withdrawn from libraries has actually exceeded acquisitions. This has not been limited to 'purges' after the fall of a particular leader - the intensive reviews of library stocks before centralisation in the late 1970s

meant that in Kazakhstan and Turkmenia, for instance, library stocks actually fell in number.<sup>141</sup> Even after centralisation, in 1982, there are reports of TsBS withdrawing nearly as many, or more, books than they acquire each year.<sup>142</sup>

Some withdrawals are required to remove out-dated material, old newspapers and timetables, etc. However, the high rate of withdrawals also conceals, in some cases, large numbers of books which readers fail to return, or books 'lost' from stock, presumably stolen. But perhaps the main reason for the large numbers of books withdrawn is the in-flow of books which will either have to be written off because they are intended to serve short-term political campaigns and so have a short 'shelf-life', or else were incorrectly supplied - 'dumped'. Thus, the 1982 People's Control Commission study found that a large proportion of the books withdrawn in their survey libraries were recent publications (issued 1970-1980), and that many librarians were writing off as 'worn-out' and sending for pulping books which had never once been used. 10% of the so-called 'worn-out' books had in fact been published within the previous five years. For example, one apparently typical library withdrew and sent for pulping 1500 socio-political books in 1982, of which 75% had never been used.<sup>143</sup> Clearly a lot of the books libraries acquire are destined not to be read and will be withdrawn and pulped after a decent interval.

Sometimes, though, librarians withdraw material they feel could still be useful. This particularly applies to back runs of journals, especially those containing stories and novels by popular writers. Under the old regulations, journals had to be discarded after a set period, but the 1978 regulations on stock 'weeding' permit libraries to retain issues of journals which contain useful local studies material or belles lettres in demand. Some librarians cut these articles out of journals and get them bound up for loan. However, some libraries are very short of space and so do not retain back runs of journals at all. Paradoxically, libraries could be withdrawing material readers need in order to create space for items they will never read.

### Old and new publications

At the same time, libraries intended to serve the general reader do need a steady inflow of new books, a balance between older books and up-to-date non-fiction and the latest novels. By the late 1970s about half the stock of mass libraries in the USSR as a whole consisted of books published during the previous five years. Overall, about 9-10% of the books in mass libraries were acquired in the last year, but the percentage varies from 5% to 20% according to type of library and the republic.<sup>144</sup> Bookstocks are renewed particularly slowly in the Central Asian republics and Transcaucasia; this can be explained in part by the fact that a high proportion of the holdings of the libraries in these republics, especially in rural areas, consist of books in the minority languages, where the number of new books published for mass readers each year is relatively small.<sup>145</sup> Another factor is the higher number of rural libraries; in the country as a whole, urban mass libraries have a higher proportion of new books in their stocks than do rural and raion mass libraries.<sup>146</sup>

### Binding and repair

Another problem affecting the quality of library stocks is the difficulty of getting books bound or repaired. In Britain, libraries make extensive use of commercial or in-house binderies to rebind books which reach the library as paper-backs or inadequately bound. This considerably prolongs the life of the book. Binderies also repair books damaged and worn during heavy use. In the USSR, books are often not very well bound when they leave the factory and a considerable number of books are issued in paper covers, without the hard-cover or library edition available in the West. However, there is an acute shortage of enterprises able to undertake binding, re-binding and repairs for mass libraries. Many large libraries, such as the Lenin Library, have their own in-house binderies, but mass libraries generally have to rely on assistance from voluntary helpers to repair and bind books. Many libraries have no allocation of funds which can be spent on repairs or on purchasing materials for volunteer



book repairers. Even in a major city like Leningrad there is only one small book repair and binding factory, but all its work is carried out by hand and its capacity is small; furthermore, in 1976 it charged 70k-1r per book,<sup>147</sup> an amount similar to the purchase price of the book at that time. These difficulties explain why Soviet mass libraries often appear rather drab and unattractive to Western visitors. Having to withdraw books because of their poor physical condition increases Soviet libraries need for regular supplies of new editions of popular works.

### Thefts

Another factor increasing libraries' demands for new publications and seriously damaging the quality of their stocks is the number of books stolen by readers. Thefts have increased dramatically in recent years with the development of home libraries and the growth of the black market. Soviet mass libraries suffer both from outright theft of books, particularly from open access collections, and from readers who refuse to return books borrowed legally. Some examples of readers stealing books for sale on the black market were given in the previous chapter. The extent of the damage deliberate fraud can do is indicated by just one case which came to court recently, in which a reader took over 90 popular books in good condition from 27 different libraries. The total cost of the books lost was almost 1,000 roubles, but the books were virtually irreplaceable.<sup>148</sup> In another case, a man cut about 150 articles out of journals in Frunze City Library. They were all popular novels and stories which he wanted for his collection. He was sentenced to 1½ years imprisonment.<sup>149</sup> However, the majority of thefts go unpunished, as in many cases the cover price of the book is so small that the local militia will not bother to pursue the case. For libraries, outright thefts are probably not as damaging as readers who borrow books but refuse to return them, or claim to have lost them. Librarians spend a great deal of time going to readers' homes trying to recover missing books, often without success. Until recently, libraries had the right to claim from the delinquent reader a sum

equivalent to five times the cover price of the book; the 1984 Library Law raised this to ten times the cover price. However, the library has to collect the fine from the reader's pay-packet, through his or her employer. To do this, it has to establish where the reader now works (often not easy), and then pay a notary to arrange the necessary paper-work. Even after all this, the fines are often not collected - in 1982, one Moscow library took action against 283 readers with seriously overdue books, but received the money from only 95.<sup>150</sup>

It is difficult to judge just how serious the problem is, but clearly books not returned by readers are a major element in the overall totals of books formally withdrawn from library stocks - back in the early 1970s, when the problem was not as serious as it is today, nearly a fifth of books withdrawn from library inventories had been lost by readers.<sup>151</sup> A journalist's description of the files of overdue books in one Moscow library suggests that there are hundreds and hundreds of books more than a year overdue,<sup>152</sup> and another newspaper article reports that large mass libraries each have up to a thousand delinquent readers.<sup>153</sup> To put this figure into context, the average urban library had 2,600 registered readers in 1975.<sup>154</sup> However, the heart of the problem is not so much the number of books which are not returned, but their quality. Popular novels are the most often affected. In many libraries, librarians have become so concerned by their losses that they have withdrawn popular novels, especially collections of works by favourite authors, from the open shelves. In some cases, readers can read them in the reading room. In others, the librarian allows only known and trusted readers to borrow these books, in contravention of library regulations. Obviously both the losses and thefts, and the restrictions librarians introduce to contain them, seriously restrict readers' access to popular fiction in their local libraries.<sup>155</sup>

#### INTER-LIBRARY LOANS

Finally, in considering the mechanics of book provision to Soviet readers, the inter-library loan system ought to be mentioned. Although specialists and

scholars were able to make use of other collections through inter-library loan networks in the pre-War years, mass libraries were involved to a very limited extent. The 1959 Party decree on libraries encouraged mass libraries to make fuller use of inter-library loans and in 1969 regulations were introduced setting up an All-union integrated inter-library loan system. The right to make use of the inter-library loan system is available to all readers registered with a library, but in practice many mass libraries seldom use it. Two of the most heavily used categories of literature - textbooks and belles-lettres - are excluded from the inter-library loan system, unless they are required by specialists or for industry. The inter-library loan system in the USSR does not only deal with requests for specific items not available in the reader's local library system; it can also deal with requests for material on a specific topic. Staff in the receiving library select appropriate literature on the basis of the information about the reader's needs sent by the requesting library.<sup>156</sup> Such a service could be a great help to readers in rural areas and in new towns, where library services are often poorer and librarians lack adequate bibliographical sources. However, articles in the Soviet library press give the impression that in practice these services are not widely used by ordinary readers. Given Soviet librarianship's emphasis on purposeful, guided reading and the accessibility of reading matter, it is surprising that inter-library loans have not developed further. Possibly the rapid development of photocopying and micro-filming will make the service quicker and more efficient, and hence more appealing to readers whose needs are not fully satisfied by the stock of their local library.

#### LIBRARIANS AND BOOK STOCKS

This discussion of the provision of reading matter through libraries has demonstrated the difficulties librarians face in acquiring new publications and replacing old ones, and shown how libraries are affected by pressure on the retail trade from people purchasing books for their home collections when many

popular books are published in editions too small to satisfy demand. However, librarians themselves are also held to be responsible for readers' complaints about their bookstocks. Fonotov and Bachaldin, both senior library administrators, stress that librarians are sometimes too passive in their relations with the library collector, do not get to know thoroughly the collections of books and journals at their disposal and are unable to assist readers as they should by guiding their reading and encouraging them to make full use of the material which is available in their library.<sup>157</sup> In an article emphasising Brezhnev's words at the November 1979 Party Plenum about the need to make full use of reserves and existing resources, the Director of the Lenin Library has criticised those librarians who complain about book shortages. He asserted that the supply of books to readers could be improved without additional investment. Librarians should pay more attention to publicising books and winning back readers, They could fulfil far more readers' requests if they made full use of the potential benefits of centralisation of mass library stocks and the inter-library loan system, and overcame inter-departmental barriers to library cooperation. Librarians had to take up their wider responsibilities to the reader by guiding their reading and developing their tastes: 'For libraries are not only a source for satisfying mass demand for books, but also the means for instilling a highly cultured approach to collecting them'.<sup>158</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

This survey of mass libraries' acquisitions problems and book stocks has shown that Soviet readers do have good cause to complain about what is offered to them. Libraries do not get priority in the allocation of books in demand. As a result, as a Lenin Library researcher has observed, the number of books in those sections which least interest readers has increased, while at the same time the number of books in those sections which readers most often request, read most, particularly fiction, has actually decreased.<sup>159</sup> To the outside observer, it seems obvious that the book trade is dumping on libraries books which both

book-sellers and librarians know will not be read; these are mainly current political books and pamphlets. At the same time, there have been genuine efforts to improve the supply of books to mass libraries, for instance by confirming in law their right to priority supplies, by publishing special series of books for them, by trying to define the subject assortment of the books library suppliers sell them. Nevertheless, under pressure from the retail trade for popular books, and under pressure to dispose of 'non-books', the book trade does not have sufficient incentives to radically improve the supply to libraries.

The analyses of book stocks demonstrate the simultaneous build-up of unused books and the writing-off of books which should have never been in the libraries in the first place, combined with a decline in the availability of books in demand. As a result, many readers have lost faith in the library. Many no longer bother even to look for good books in their local library. These low expectations have reduced the status of the library in the community. As the prestige of the library falls, so people seek more and more to buy books for themselves, or to borrow from friends,<sup>160</sup> and a vicious circle develops, in which people try to buy books because libraries cannot supply them, which in turn makes it harder for libraries to buy books.

Why has this happened? It may be that, despite nostalgic reports of how the library used to be the centre of cultural life and the librarian a much-respected adviser on what to read, Soviet mass libraries have always had significant gaps in their collections. Certainly the small collections in many rural areas in the 1950s must have had difficulties in satisfying anything but the most limited needs. It does seem that, in the past, many people, adults and children alike, were content to read in library reading rooms, whereas now they expect to be able to borrow books to take home. This both removes books from circulation longer than reading room use does, and increases the risk of theft. Possibly the inadequacies of the stock were less obvious when most libraries did not allow open access to the shelves, and inexperienced readers

would more often ask the librarian to select 'something interesting'. Readers in the 1970s and 1980s are better educated, less willing to seek out or accept the librarian's advice, more demanding. It seems likely, too, that the range of books suitable for ordinary readers has improved in the last ten or fifteen years, and that Soviet publishers have issued more of the fiction which appeals to readers - not just light entertainment, but also more demanding works which are nevertheless accessible to the ordinary reader. It is obvious that libraries are unable to compete on equal terms with private purchasers.

Many Soviet readers no longer see mass libraries as their primary source of reading matter, particularly not of popular books. Our study suggests that they are largely justified in this opinion.

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CHAPTER FIVEWHO ARE THE READERS?Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how reading is affected by various socio-demographic factors - education; age, sex and family position; occupation; place of residence; material position; party members and elite groups. This analysis is limited to how long people spend reading and the proportions in different groups who are regular readers or do not read at all. The content of people's reading is considered in later chapters. Particular attention is given to the relationship between television and reading.

TELEVISION AND THE OTHER MEDIA

Media use is now the most important element in the leisure budgets of most Soviet people. In the late 1960s workers spent between two-thirds and three-quarters of their leisure on the media,<sup>1</sup> and later studies show that this proportion has increased over the last decade. Generally, the amount of time people spend on the media has increased sharply since television became widely available. TV has not only increased total time spent on the media, but has altered the structure of people's 'cultural consumption'. The TV factor must be borne in mind when comparing studies from the late 1950s, before TV became generally available, with later studies. It is also an important consideration when comparing reading patterns in the USSR with those in Western Europe and the USA, where television became a mass phenomenon at least a decade earlier.

The TV network in the USSR developed unevenly, with major centres of population being the first to have good reception. Indeed, some

rural and remote areas are still beyond the reach of the transmitters. In 1950, few people in the USSR had access to a television, and by 1960 only 8% of families owned one.<sup>2</sup> But by 1965 in a major city such as Leningrad nearly 75% of the population had a set, and by 1967 the proportion had risen to 86%.<sup>3</sup> In the USSR as a whole 74% of families had a TV in 1975, and in 'areas of secure reception' the proportion rose to 95%.<sup>4</sup> By 1977, 89% of families in the USSR as a whole had a TV. In rural areas generally, the proportion owning sets was only 67%, but in rural 'areas of secure reception', the proportion was far higher (for instance, 87% in Leningrad oblast').<sup>5</sup> By 1979, only 4% of households in Leningrad did not own a set; indeed nearly 10% of families owned two sets.<sup>6</sup> The production of colour sets really got under way in 1979 and in that year alone 14% of Leningrad families acquired a colour set.<sup>7</sup>

Television became a mass phenomenon in the USSR just as time budget studies also became widespread. Soviet sociologists have therefore assembled useful data on the effects of TV on people's leisure budgets. Concern has been expressed about television squeezing out or even suffocating other cultural pursuits, such as reading or going to the cinema, but it has become clear that the effect of television on people's leisure budgets and on their attention to the other media is complex, and changes over time. At first, it was assumed that people would watch a great deal of television when they first acquired a set and then, after about five years, settle down to a stable, moderate viewing pattern. However, although the novelty of television does wear off, it seems that the improvements in the quality and variety of Soviet television and the introduction of colour broadcasts have contributed to an increase in



television viewing over the 1970s. The most recent surveys suggest that the time spent watching TV has now stabilized.<sup>8</sup>

A major study carried out at the time when television was first widely available was the 1965-68 survey of industrial workers in four major cities. The men were found to spend an average of about 13 hours a week on reading, watching television and listening to the radio, and the women about six hours.<sup>9</sup> On average, men spent eight to nine hours of this time on watching television, and the women watched for three to four hours a week. However, only about two thirds of the people surveyed had a television at home, and when TV viewing figures for families with their own TVs were calculated, it was found that the men spent eleven hours a week watching television and the women at least six hours.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, at a time when television was a relative novelty for most people, it was the major element in their home-based cultural activities. However, a study of mass media use in Leningrad in 1979 was concerned with people who had long been accustomed to television and virtually everyone had a set. Here, it was found that the average person watched television for 15 hours a week, and three-quarters of the population watched it virtually every day.<sup>11</sup> The researchers carrying out the study believed that the trend was for viewing time to increase as the range and diversity of Soviet television improved and they concluded, not surprisingly, that television had become the dominant source of information and the major form of cultural consumption for the overwhelming majority of the urban population - even in a city such as Leningrad, which is well-endowed with theatres, cinemas and concert-halls.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, people can not devote this amount of time to television without restructuring their time budgets. A series of studies of

industrial workers and employees in 1963, 1977 and 1980 in the RSFSR gives some indication of where the additional time has come from. The amount of free time available to both men and women increased by around 3 hours during this period, mainly due to a reduction in time spent on household matters. In terms of free time use, the greatest difference is, of course, in TV viewing. For men, it increased from 6.1 hours a week in 1963 to 14.9 in 1977 and 15.4 in 1980; for women the figures are 3.2, 9.4 and 9.7. The time spent reading increased slightly, from 5.2 hours for men in 1963 to 6.1 in 1980; for women the increase was even less, from 2.5 hours to 2.7. The main 'loser' to television were 'other forms of recreation' (presumably card games, seeing friends, just doing nothing) and sport.<sup>13</sup>

Other surveys have found that there are considerable variations between different groups in the population in how they create time for television. Gordon and Klopov found that men with families, and young people, tended to reduce time spent travelling home after work, and slept less. Working women's time expenditure on sleep and travel did not decrease in the same way. However, all women, including those with dependent children, spent two to three hours a week less on housework after acquiring television.<sup>14</sup> As this survey was concerned with primary activities, it seems likely that women with a TV at home quickly got into the habit of doing chores such as ironing and mending while watching TV. Women probably speed up doing the chores even when tired in order to be free to watch a favourite programme. This sort of incentive would not be so powerful for reading a novel or a magazine, as these activities can be postponed in a way a television broadcast can not. Among

older people and the less educated groups, particularly in rural areas, time now devoted to watching television used to be spent visiting friends, drinking, dozing, playing cards and dominoes - or just doing nothing. It would thus be a mistake to assume that before the advent of television people devoted as many hours to reading as they now do to television.

For most people, acquiring a television means spending more time at home; this has been particularly marked in rural areas. When television first becomes available in an area, there is a tendency for it to encourage visiting, as people without sets go and watch TV in the homes of friends and relatives; but when people acquire their own set they prefer to stay at home. Television affects the time spent on cultural activities outside the home and also has a significant impact on home-based pursuits such as listening to the radio and reading. However, the analysis of this impact is complicated by the general increase in 'media exposure' over the last twenty years, and by the tendency for the better educated groups to spend more time than average on the media, but to distribute the time differently.

The following sections explore aspects of media use by different groups, paying particular attention to reading and its relationship to television. Information is provided on how long people in different groups spend reading, the proportions of people in the group who read regularly or do not read at all, and the place television has in their lives.

#### EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational level is probably the most important determinant affecting media use, especially reading. The best-educated groups

devote the most time to the media, and spend a higher proportion of their media time on reading. As educational level rises, both men and women spend longer reading; the rate of increase is greater for women than for men. A higher level of education has a particularly marked effect on the reading of journals, but comparatively little on newspaper reading. It has a clear effect on books. A number of time-budget studies and media use surveys illustrate these points.

The study of industrial workers in four major cities in 1965-68 looked closely at the relationship between educational level and cultural activities. Some of the data from the 'four cities' study are given in tables 1 and 2. Gordon and Klopov found that the least educated group (men and women with up to four years' education) were the least interested in all forms of cultural consumption. They argue that this results from a general lack of adaptation from patriarchal rural ways to a modern urban lifestyle. Most of them were older people, but even the young people in the group spent far less time on reading, TV and the cinema than did better educated young people. They spent far more time just hanging around on street corners and getting into trouble. Married women in this poorly educated group were almost wholly absorbed by housework, child-care and visiting friends and relatives; they spent just over five hours a week watching television and reading. In the month preceding the survey, over three-quarters of the women in this group had not read a book, and 42% of them had not read a magazine. The men in the group spent twice as long as the women watching television and reading, and 79% of them read a newspaper regularly. However, Gordon and Klopov found that these men tended to regard reading the

Table 5:1

Four cities study 1965-68: Proportion of urban workers who had read a book in the month preceding the survey, by sex and educational level. (Figures in brackets indicate those who had read three books or more.)

|       | 4 classes or less | 5-7 classes | 8-10 classes | Secondary specialised & higher |
|-------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Women | 22 (2)            | 46 (4)      | 73 (10)      | 74 (6)                         |
| Men   | 33 (3)            | 47 (12)     | 57 (14)      | 58 (6)                         |

Source: Gordon, L.A. & Klopov, E.V. Chelovek posle raboty. M., 1972, supplement, table 31.

Table 5:2

Four cities study 1965-68: Duration of book reading, by sex and educational level (in hours and minutes per week).

|       | 4 classes or less | 5-7 classes | 8-10 classes | Secondary specialised & higher |
|-------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Women | 0.50              | 2.20        | 2.35         | 1.45                           |
| Men   | 1.05              | 2.05        | 2.10         | 2.45                           |

Source: Gordon, L.A. & Gruzdeva, E.B., 'Rasprostranennost' i intensivnost' chteniya v gorodskoi rabochei srede', In Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniya. M., 1975, pp. 47-64. P. 50.

paper and watching television as mere time-fillers. Reading books occupied an insignificant part in the leisure budget of this group.<sup>15</sup>

About two thirds of the workers in the 'four cities' study fell into the middle educational groups, and had 5-7 or 8-10 years of education. These groups spent more time overall on the media (13-14 hours a week for the men and six to seven hours for the women) but television was the most important element in their use of the media. Family men in the group spent up to 14 hours a week watching TV and up to three hours a week reading the newspapers. Over 70% of the men had read the newspaper in the three days preceding the survey. Although women in this educational group who had dependent children spent longer reading the newspapers than did the least educated women, they nevertheless spent far less time on the newspapers than did married men - barely half to three-quarters of an hour a week. Only 30-40% of the women with dependent children had read the newspaper in the three days preceding the survey. Men and women in the middle educational groups were far more active book readers than those with only four years or less of education. Women in these groups spent longer reading books than did the men, although more men than women had managed to read three or more books in the month preceding the survey. For both men and women, television was the major leisure activity; but for men, second place was taken by reading the newspaper whereas for women reading books was in second place.<sup>16</sup>

The 'four cities' study, being limited to industrial workers, included only a few people with higher or secondary specialised education. However, these 'worker-specialists' did make up 5-10%

of those surveyed. Both sexes consistently spent less time on housework than did the less educated groups, and spent far more time on all sorts of cultural activities, especially part-time study. They devoted up to 30 hours a week to these activities, compared to 20-25 hours in the middle educational groups. Television played a smaller part in their leisure budgets. Even men with families, who watch the most TV in all educational groups, watched for only seven hours a week (compared to fathers with ten classes of education who watched for over ten hours a week). Women and young people with higher or secondary specialised education watched television for only about two hours a week. This reduction in watching television was accompanied by an increase in time spent reading. Most worker - specialists spent 6-7 hours a week reading newspapers and books; however mothers with young children managed to devote only three hours a week to reading. Although women in this group, as in all educational groups, had less free time than men, the structure of their leisure use was far more similar to men's than in the middle educational groups. For example, the men spent more time on books and the women more time on the newspapers.<sup>17</sup>

Before we leave the 'four cities' study, a few further comments on tables one and two are required. It is curious to see that duration of book reading declined sharply for women in the top educational group, and that the percentage of people who read three or more books in a month was highest for those with 8-10 classes of education, not higher and secondary specialised education. A number of explanations can be advanced for this apparent paradox. First, people in this group generally devote much more time to journals and magazines than do people in other educational groups, and women with higher or

secondary specialised education devote more time to the newspapers than do other women. Second, Gordon and Gruzdeva<sup>18</sup> found that reading books was far more intensive among people with ten years of general education than among those who had graduated from secondary specialised schools; they attribute this to the more general and humanist emphasis of the curriculum in secondary schools. Third, men and women with young children in this educational group are far more likely to be studying part-time than are mothers and fathers in other educational groups.<sup>19</sup> Inevitably, they will have little time left for general reading.

The results of the 'four cities' study, together with a more detailed study on Taganrog, suggest that the relationship between educational level and reading is not linear, but passes through a series of thresholds. The breakthrough point seems to come after seven years of education. In Taganrog it was found that 55-60% of those with seven years education were regular readers, and that the proportion of regular readers changed very little in the groups that left school after 8, 9 or 10 classes.<sup>20</sup> There is a further 'leap' with acquiring a higher education. The Taganrog study, which included 'white-collar' workers, found that 90% of women employees who had a higher education were regular book readers, compared to only 70% of those who had been trained at a tekhnikum. For men the difference was less marked, at 80-85% and 70-75% respectively.<sup>21</sup> Grushin's figures in table three confirm this impression, and suggest the particularly strong links between higher levels of education and reading journals.

The findings of these surveys are confirmed by a study carried out in 1971 by Shlyapentokh in urban areas. This study included more



Table 5:3Early 1960s: percentage of respondents who regularly read or watched TV

|  | Newspapers <sup>1</sup> | Periodicals <sup>2</sup> | Books <sup>2</sup> | Television <sup>2</sup> |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Total  | 89.3                    | 72.3                     | 75.3               | 45.3                    |
| Men  | 92.5                    | 73.8                     | 79.7               | 43.0                    |
| Women  | 86.5                    | 71.0                     | 71.2               | 47.5                    |
| Workers                                      | 90.4                    | 67.3                     | 74.6               | 44.5                    |
| Technical intelligentsia                     | 94.4                    | 91.2                     | 86.5               | 54.2                    |
| Other intelligentsia                         | 93.0                    | 82.0                     | 73.5               | 43.2                    |
| Employees                                    | 92.2                    | 86.1                     | 75.5               | 39.0                    |
| Students                                     | 83.0                    | 68.7                     | 85.8               | 51.2                    |
| Pensioners                                   | 83.4                    | 65.4                     | 68.0               | 50.0                    |
| Housewives                                   | 78.7                    | 56.3                     | 73.0               | 45.4                    |
| Moscow                                       | 92.1                    | 81.4                     | 81.3               | 76.9                    |
| Large cities <sup>3</sup>                    | 91.8                    | 75.0                     | 80.2               | 79.4                    |
| Cities <sup>4</sup>                          | 94.1                    | 75.5                     | 75.2               | 47.4                    |
| Small and medium towns <sup>5</sup>          | 83.6                    | 68.1                     | 72.6               | 24.7                    |
| Settlements <sup>6</sup>                     | 91.2                    | 65.8                     | 67.0               | 17.6                    |
| Primary or incomplete<br>secondary education | 82.8                    | 61.1                     | 66.7               | 36.7                    |
| Secondary education                          | 94.6                    | 75.9                     | 81.6               | 49.3                    |
| Higher education                             | 94.7                    | 90.5                     | 82.5               | 55.0                    |
| 16-24 years old                              | 91.1                    | 76.2                     | 88.9               | 47.6                    |
| 25-29  | 98.4                    | 89.2                     | 86.7               | 46.6                    |
| 30-39  | 78.2                    | 63.0                     | 66.6               | 42.1                    |
| 40-59  | 75.5                    | 59.1                     | 58.9               | 42.8                    |
| 60 and over                                  | 81.1                    | 65.7                     | 60.9               | 49.4                    |

Notes

1 At least several times a week

2 At least several times a month

3 Khar'kov and Sverdlovsk

4 Six towns with populations between 100,000 and 500,000

5 Eleven towns with populations of between 10,000 and 100,000

6 Eight settlements with populations under 10,000

[Table based on Grushin, B. Svobodnoe vremya: aktual'nye problemy. M., 1967, p. 81.]

people with a higher education than did the 'four cities' study. Shlyapentokh found that people with higher education generally spent 10% more time on cultural activities and the media than did those with secondary education.<sup>22</sup> His findings, set out in tables four, five and six, demonstrate how media preferences change as educational level increases. People with a higher standard of education spend more time reading and less time watching television, and educational level also affects the amount of attention people give to books, journals and newspapers. People with a higher education were slightly more likely to have read a book or the newspaper on the day before the survey than were people with only secondary education, but 12% more of them had read a journal. Those who read journals the most intensively spent significantly less time reading books. Shlyapentokh accounts for the tendency of this most highly educated group to prefer journals by observing that journals are more up-to-date and provide in-depth information not available in monographs and text-books; also they are directed at specialist audiences and pay particular attention to their needs.<sup>23</sup>

Although there are differences between educational groups in their preference for books, journals or newspapers, the main conflict is between reading on the one hand and television on the other. The impact of television on reading habits has varied considerably in different educational groups. Grushin's findings from the mid-1960s, reported in table three, are unexpected at first sight, in that they show that the groups watching the most television were those with a higher education, and the technical intelligentsia. Later studies show that this arose from the concentration of these groups in the major cities, where television was first available;

Table 5:4

Urban dwellers, 1971. Variations in media exposure patterns by educational level. Percentage of those surveyed who had been in contact with each medium the day before the survey.

| Media      | Up to 7 classes | Secondary | Higher |
|------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| Newspapers | 53              | 85        | 91     |
| Journals   | 28              | 43        | 55     |
| Books      | 28              | 53        | 55     |
| Television | 62              | 62        | 56     |
| Radio      | 65              | 62        | 54     |
| Cinema     | 5               | 16        | 21     |

Source: Shlyapentokh, V.E. 'Rost urovnya obrazovaniya i otnoshenie k sredstvam massovoi informatsii', In Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniya. M., 1975, pp. 89-102, P.91.

Table 5:5

Urban dwellers, 1971. Time spent on the printed word and on television, as a percentage of total media exposure time.

| Media      | Up to 7 classes | 7-9 classes | Secondary | Higher |
|------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|--------|
| Press      | 33              | 42          | 46        | 49     |
| Television | 51              | 44          | 43        | 37     |

Source: Shlyapentokh, V.E. 'Rost urovnya obrazovaniya i otnoshenie k sredstvam massovoi informatsii', In Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniya. M., 1975, pp. 89-102, P. 91.

Table 5:6

Urban dwellers, 1971. Time spent on reading books, journals and newspapers, by educational level (minutes per day).

| Printed media | Up to 7 classes | Secondary | Higher |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| Newspapers    | 18              | 30        | 33     |
| Journals      | 10              | 15        | 19     |
| Books         | 12              | 20        | 21     |

Source: Shlyapentokh, V.E. 'Rost urovnya obrazovaniya i otnoshenie k sredstvam massovoi informatsii', In Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniya. M., 1975, pp. 89-102, P. 96.

their higher incomes and more modern life-style would have made them the first to buy television sets when broadcasting started.<sup>24</sup> As TV became more accessible, the middle and lower income groups came to register the most frequent and heavy use. By the 1970s the pattern had become clear, and people with higher education consistently watched 25-30% less television than the average viewer.<sup>25</sup> As might be expected from these figures, the higher the educational level, the less television has squeezed out reading.

Several studies have examined media exposure patterns before and after the introduction of television, or have compared carefully matched families with and without their own set. One study carried out in the Urals over the period when TV became available found that people with only primary education virtually stopped reading the newspapers when they acquired television, whereas those with seven or more years education showed virtually no change.<sup>26</sup> Another study in the Urals found that people's interest in the printed word dropped by about 10% overall when they acquired a television; however television actually stimulated engineering and technical personnel into taking a greater interest in reading.<sup>27</sup> All groups reduced the amount of time they spent reading fiction, but the reduction was twice as large for people with only a primary education as it was for those with a higher education.<sup>28</sup> A study of kolkhov and sovkhov farmers and staff in 1963 and 1973 found that after television had been introduced, the best educated people continued to spend the most time on the media and cultural activities, but that the overall amount that the less educated spent on these activities did increase considerably.<sup>29</sup> Another study showing the differential impact of television on reading was carried out in

rural parts of Omsk oblast' in 1969 and 1979. Respondents in both surveys were asked which activities they engaged in in their leisure time. Whereas in 1969 only around a third of all respondents mentioned television, in 1979 between 76% and 88% of respondents did. The variation between educational groups was far larger for reading books and journals. Only 43% of those with under six years of education said they read books and journals compared to 82% of those with a higher education and 85% of those with a secondary education.<sup>30</sup>

These various surveys suggest that some people, particularly the better educated groups, are able to combine television with reading. Several studies have found that many people manage to watch a lot of television and also spend a great deal of time reading. The study of reading in small towns in the RSFSR in 1971, for instance, found that a third of those questioned both read books regularly and were keen TV viewers.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, there is evidence that keen readers (whatever their educational level) watch television less than the average person, and are more discriminating in what they watch.<sup>32</sup>

Another aspect of the relationship of television and education is the impact of television on various forms of self-educational activity and part-time education. There is a tendency for those with a high level of education to be more interested in continuing their education on a part-time basis. Better educated people are also more likely to be in jobs where they need to read in order to keep up-to-date with their profession. Several studies have considered the effects of television on reading specialist periodicals and textbooks and taking part in part-time study, and have

generally concluded that acquiring television has relatively little effect on self-education and part-time study.<sup>33</sup> However, Gordon and Klopov came to rather different conclusions. In all groups in the 'four cities' study, people with a television at home spent far less time on part-time study and self-education than did those without a set. This was particularly true of young unmarried men - those without TV spent 15 hours a week studying, compared to just over six hours for those with a set; for unmarried women the figures were nine hours and eight hours.<sup>34</sup> On the national scale, it is possible that the effects of television may have some part in the reduction in participation in evening classes, vocational courses and other less formal types of education since the early 1960s,<sup>35</sup> As Mickiewicz has observed, television may have a negative effect on the poorly-educated, as it reduces their motivation to read and to up-date their skills and in this way exacerbates the differences between them and better educated people.<sup>36</sup>

#### SEX, AGE AND FAMILY POSITION

These three factors are closely linked in their effects on cultural preferences. Given the official insistence upon the equality of the sexes, there have been few surveys concentrating on differences between men and women in this area, and some studies appear to play down this factor. Generally variations are linked to women's heavy burdens of child care and housework rather than to real differences of interests. Although women spend less time reading than do men, reading occupies a bigger proportion of their more limited leisure budgets. Men read the newspapers far more

than women, but the picture for books and journals is less clear. There are many studies of all aspects of young people's lives, for they are the work force and parents of the future, but few of old people and pensioners. Nevertheless, it is clear that older people tend to prefer TV to reading, once they have got used to it, whereas young people read a lot despite television. Parents of dependent children also watch TV far more than they read. These points are considered in more detail below.

### Sex

Women have less free time than men, because they carry most of the burden of child-care and house-work. Naturally, this burden varies considerably at different stages in the life-cycle. On one estimate, women generally spend on household chores and child care some 70% of the time left after work commitments have been fulfilled and personal needs (sleep, eating, etc.) met, leaving only 30% for leisure; men on the other hand spend 70% of the time available after work and personal needs had been satisfied on leisure activities.<sup>37</sup> Over the last 20 years, the time working women spend on housework has gone down by less than 20%,<sup>38</sup> and there has been only a very slight reduction in the gap between men and women in the amount of free time they enjoy.<sup>39</sup>

Women generally spend less time than men on the media, and distribute their time differently. Women spend less time reading the newspapers than do men, often to a very striking degree. Far fewer women read the newspaper regularly, and more admit not reading the newspapers at all.<sup>40</sup> This is true both of busy mothers and of women without dependent children. The higher a woman's

educational level the more she reads newspapers, but even in the best-educated groups women read newspapers less than do men of the same educational level. No convincing explanation of this phenomenon is given by Soviet sources. Probably in the USSR, as in the West, men take the 'important' decisions - like how to reform the economy or deal with China - while women deal with more 'minor' ones like what to have for supper and whether the children have done their homework!

Generally urban women spend a higher proportion of their media time on reading books than men do, although the actual duration of men's reading may be greater, as men spend more time on the media overall. Although both sexes tend to devote most of their media time to the television, newspapers take second place for men and books for women. In rural areas in the mid-1960s, slightly fewer women than men read books regularly.<sup>41</sup> As recently as 1978-80, more women than men in all age groups did not read books at all.<sup>42</sup> Zotova and her colleagues, who conducted this survey, account for this by observing that women in the villages are concentrated in the least stimulating and most time-consuming jobs, which do not encourage a person to read. Further, they make the slightly curious assertion that even today in the village it is not considered proper for a woman over a certain age who has children to care for to be seen sitting reading during the day.<sup>43</sup> This would be consistent with Gordon and Klopov's comment that the least educated people in towns still cling to the traditional peasant belief that people should always be busy doing something.<sup>44</sup>

Comparing reading patterns for men and women, it can be seen that women's reading habits vary much more with changes in educational



Table 5:7

1967: Regular cultural preferences of rural population, by age and sex

| Age groups | Krasnodar krai  |              |          |                | Kalinin oblast' |          |                |              | Tatar ASSR |                |              |          |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|----------|----------------|-----------------|----------|----------------|--------------|------------|----------------|--------------|----------|
|            | Read newspapers | Read fiction | Watch TV | Read newspaper | Read fiction    | Watch TV | Read newspaper | Read fiction | Watch TV   | Read newspaper | Read fiction | Watch TV |
| 16-17      | 48              | 45           | 22       | 46             | 50              | 35       | 72             | 61           | 26         | 72             | 61           | 26       |
| 18-22      | 71              | 67           | 31       | 78             | 52              | 29       | 74             | 64           | 15         | 74             | 64           | 15       |
| 23-27      | 62              | 38           | 28       | 70             | 36              | 45       | 69             | 29           | 11         | 69             | 29           | 11       |
| 28-34      | 65              | 33           | 33       | 75             | 25              | 45       | 62             | 26           | 16         | 62             | 26           | 16       |
| 35-49      | 60              | 28           | 31       | 58             | 20              | 34       | 54             | 14           | 13         | 54             | 14           | 13       |
| 50-59      | 34              | 16           | 25       | 41             | 5               | 24       | 31             | 9            | 10         | 31             | 9            | 10       |
| Over 60    | 30              | 15           | 10       | 37             | 9               | 19       | 18             | 6            | 6          | 18             | 6            | 6        |
| Average    | 56              | 30           | 29       | 54             | 19              | 31       | 55             | 22           | 13         | 55             | 22           | 13       |
| Men        | 68              | 31           | 30       | 74             | 24              | 35       | 65             | 24           | 13         | 65             | 24           | 13       |
| Women      | 46              | 29.5         | 28       | 42             | 15              | 29       | 40             | 19           | 12         | 40             | 19           | 12       |

Source: Extracted from Arutunyan, Ya.V. Sotsial'naya struktura sel'skogo naseleniya SSSR. M., 1971, pp. 180-181, table 51

Table 5:8

Poshekhon'e, 1978-80: Reading books and newspapers in a rural area.  
By age and sex, as a percentage of those surveyed

|  | Under 30 |       | 31 - 40 |       | 41 - 50 |       | 51 and over |       |
|--|----------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|-------------|-------|
|  | Men      | Women | Men     | Women | Men     | Women | Men         | Women |
| Do not read books<br>at all                  | 19.5     | 21.5  | 25.2    | 29.4  | 35.9    | 43.7  | 45.8        | 80.4  |
| Sometimes read 1<br>or 2 books in a<br>month | 43.4     | 38.6  | 37.8    | 51.2  | 38.1    | 45.3  | 34.3        | 18.1  |
| Regularly read<br>1-2 books a month          | 21.6     | 24.3  | 20.7    | 18.3  | 19.9    | 10.1  | 14.5        | 1.0   |
| Regularly read 3<br>or more books a<br>month | 15.5     | 15.6  | 16.3    | 1.1   | 6.1     | 0.9   | 5.4         | 0.5   |
| <hr/>  |          |       |         |       |         |       |             |       |
| Do not read news-<br>papers at all           | 0.0      | 0.0   | 0.0     | 0.0   | 0.0     | 20.6  | 3.2         | 56.6  |
| Read newspapers<br>irregularly               | 22.3     | 26.3  | 32.2    | 47.6  | 10.2    | 39.2  | 12.4        | 24.2  |
| Regularly read<br>newspapers                 | 77.7     | 73.7  | 67.8    | 52.4  | 89.8    | 40.2  | 84.4        | 19.2  |

Source: Zotova, O.I., Novikov, V.V. and Shorokhova, E.V. Osobennosti psikhologii krest'yanstva (proshloe i nastoyashchee) M., 1983, p. 84.

level and in family position than do men's. The differences in the amount and duration of reading between the least educated and best educated women are far greater than for men.<sup>45</sup> It is suggested that a higher level of education to some extent 'inoculates' a woman against excessive concern about housework and, at the same time, makes her more interested in the world around her and more determined to maintain her own educational and cultural interests despite the demands of home and family. The differences between men and women's reading behaviour at different stages in the life cycle will be examined in the following sub-sections.

#### Young unmarried people

Young people of both sexes have the highest rates of participation in all types of cultural activity, including reading. In the 'four cities' study, it was found that cultural activities took up 45% of young women's free time, and over 50% of men's. At later stages in the life-cycle, the figures are 10-20% for women and 30-40% for men. In addition, many young workers study part-time. Although an important element in the cultural activities of this group is going out to the cinema, the theatre or concerts, where they can meet friends and socialise, young people spend longer reading than do the older age-groups. This is to be expected, as reading has a role to play in the socialisation and maturation process.<sup>46</sup> The variation in time spent reading and in reading activity (as measured by the number of books read) between men and women is less in this group than in any other, as tables 9, 10 and 11 show. Unmarried young women were recorded as spending a full hour a week longer reading books, and Gordon and Gruzdeva hypothesize that this may be due to

Table 5:9

Four cities study, 1965-68: Hours and minutes per week spent on various cultural activities, by family position

| Activity                   | Young unmarried people |       | Young couples |       | Parents of children (2-parent families) |       | Older people |       |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|---|-------|--------------|-------|
|                            | Men                    | Women | Men           | Women | Men                                     | Women | Men          | Women |
| Reading newspapers         | 1.15                   | 0.45  | 2.35          | 0.35  | 2.40                                    | 0.30  | 3.00         | 0.45  |
| Reading books and journals | 3.35                   | 4.35  | 2.25          | 1.45  | 1.50                                    | 1.15  | 0.40         | 0.30  |
| Television                 | 4.35                   | 2.15  | 6.40          | 3.00  | 9.25                                    | 4.15  | 11.55        | 4.00  |
| Cinema, theatre, concerts  | 2.55                   | 3.20  | 1.30          | 0.50  | 0.35                                    | 0.35  | 0.25         | 0.20  |
| Hobbies                    | 1.15                   | 1.05  | 0.55          | 2.00  | 0.50                                    | 0.20  | 0.30         | 0.50  |
| Study, self-education      | 10.05                  | 9.05  | 7.30          | 3.30  | 3.20                                    | 1.00  | -            | -     |

Source: Gordon, L.A. and Klopov, E.V. Chelovek posle raboty. M., 1972, supplement, pp. 34-5

Table 5:10

'Four cities' study 1965-68: Percentage of people who had read a book in the month preceding the survey, by sex and family position. Figures in brackets are the percentage of those who had read four or more books.

|       | Total   | Young<br>unmarried<br>people | Young<br>couples | Parents of<br>minor children<br>(2-parent families) | Older<br>workers |
|-------|---------|------------------------------|------------------|---|------------------|
| Women | 58 (7)  | 78 (20)                      | 66 (10)          | 45 (6)  | 36 (5)           |
| Men   | 54 (12) | 71 (18)                      | 56 (14)          | 49 (13)   | 42 (7)           |

Source: Gordon, L.A. and Gruzdeva, E.B 'Rasprostranennost' i intensivnost' chteniya v gorodskoi rabochei srede', In Problemy sotsiologii i psikhologii chteniya. M., 1975, pp. 47-64. P. 54.

Table 5:11

Four cities study 1965-68: Reading and television viewing, by age and family position, within educational groups  
(Hours and Minutes per Week)

|                         | WOMEN                                    |  |  | MEN                                      |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                         | 4 classes or less                        | 5-7 classes                              | 8-10 classes                             | 5-7 classes                              | 8-10 classes                             | 8-10 classes                             |
|                         | Unmarried children<br>Dependent<br>Older | Unmarried children<br>Dependent<br>Older | Unmarried children<br>Dependent<br>Older | Unmarried children<br>Dependent<br>Older | Unmarried children<br>Dependent<br>Older | Unmarried children<br>Dependent<br>Older |
| Read newspapers         | 0.25    0.20    0.25                     | 0.40    0.25    1.15                     | 0.40    2.15    6.0                      | 0.40    2.15    6.0                      | 1.30    2.55    2.05                     |  |
| Read books and journals | 1.35    0.45    0.10                     | 6.10    1.25    1.20                     | 4.25    1.45    1.0                      | 4.25    1.45    1.0                      | 3.20    1.40    0.30                     |  |
| Watch TV                | 5.30    4.40    2.30                     | 1.40    4.10    6.50                     | 5.10    10.45    8.40                    | 5.10    10.45    8.40                    | 4.30    10.10    18.40                   |  |

Source: derived from Gordon, L.A. and Klopov, E.V. Chelovek posle raboty. M., 1972, supplement, table 39, pp. 36-7.

the generally more passive role assigned to girls in social relationships - whereas young men learn about life and relationships through small groups of friends, young women are more likely to turn to vicarious sources of information, such as novels.<sup>47</sup>

The same high levels of reading - of both books and newspapers - can be seen among young people in rural areas. The 1967 study (table 7) shows the 18-22 age group as the one which reads most regularly. In the Poshekhon'e study (table 8) the youngest age group goes up to 30, by which age many people have family responsibilities, so the picture is not as clear as in the 1967 study. Nevertheless, it is still obvious that the younger age groups are the most active readers. Zotova and her team observe that most of the women under 30 who do not read are livestock hands with young families; on the other hand, the young men who did not read were predominantly unmarried drivers and mechanics, who devoted most of their leisure time to listening to modern music on their cassette recorders.<sup>48</sup>

Although the younger generations are the more educated, their higher levels of reading activity are not just a function of education, although of course educational differences must be borne in mind in comparisons across the generations. Young people do read more than older people of the same educational level. This is clearly shown in table 11, where there is a marked decline in reading books and journals with increasing age. However, older men do read newspapers more.

#### Young couples

The next stage in the life-cycle is generally marriage, before the appearance of children. Only the 'four cities' study treated

this group separately (tables 9 and 10). Young couples spent more time on household chores than they did when they lived in a hostel or with their parents. Their choice of leisure pursuits also changed. Visiting friends and relatives became more important. Less time was spent going out to the cinema, theatre and concerts; the drop was particularly marked for women. The commitment to study and self-education also declined, with the reduction in women's participation being twice as great as men's. Young couples spent more time at home than did single people. Although reading is a home-based pursuit, it is not reading but television viewing which assumes greater importance in young couple's time budgets. Although the time men spend reading newspapers increases, the time they spend reading books decreases by about the same amount. Women spend nearly three hours a week less reading books and journals than they did before they were married. It may well be that a shared activity, such as watching television, is preferred to an individual, even isolated, pastime, such as reading.

### The middle years

These are the years when people are often at the most demanding stage of their careers, but are also responsible for a family with dependent children. The 'four cities' study found that men in this group spent about 20 hours a week on household matters and child care, and women over 40 hours, in addition to a full-time job. Both fathers and mothers have less leisure time than people without children. Further, their family responsibilities generally oblige them to spend much of their free time at home. Although time spent reading the newspapers did not decline sharply, there was a marked decrease in reading books and journals. 50-60% of people with young children



had not read a book in the month preceding the survey, compared to 25-30% of young unmarried workers.<sup>49</sup> Only 70-80 of them read journals and magazines regularly, compared to 80-90% of young unmarried workers.<sup>50</sup> However, as Gordon and Gruzdeva observe, the reduction in reading at this stage of the life-cycle is not simply due to the increased burdens of child-care and housework, nor to changes in educational levels.<sup>51</sup> A major factor is the attraction of television. As table 9 shows, men with 5-7 years of education and dependent children spent three and a half hours less on reading than did unmarried men of the same educational standard, but they spent five hours more watching television; for women the figures were five hours less reading and two and a half hours more watching television. The sharp increase in television watching time in families with children was also noted in the 1979 Leningrad survey.<sup>52</sup> This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that television is a good substitute for visually and aurally stimulating events outside the home, such as the cinema, the circus or sports meetings, which people with families attend less frequently. Further, it seems reasonable to suppose that television is popular because it is a more passive and less intellectually demanding activity than reading, and so is a particularly attractive pastime for busy, harrassed parents who want to relax.

Studies in rural areas show the same pattern of decreased reading in the middle years. In Poshekhon'e, for instance, (table 8) only a fifth of those under 30 did not read books, compared to a quarter of those aged 31-40 and one third of the men and nearly half the women in the 41-50 age group. The impact of family responsibilities can clearly be seen in the sharp reduction in the number of women who read books regularly. Where 40.1% of women under 30 regularly read at

least one book a month, only 19.4% of those aged 31-40 did so, and only 11% of those aged 41-50. On the other hand, the percentage of men who are active book readers (3 or more a month) increased slightly in the middle years. Although the differences between the generations in educational level account for some of the decline in reading rates, the differing effects of increasing age on men and on women suggest that changes in family responsibilities lie behind much of the reduction in reading.

#### Older workers

In the 'four cities' study, this group was defined as consisting of older workers without dependent children. Older workers' time budgets showed that they needed longer to rest and recover their energies after the working day. Unlike younger groups, they had no commitment to part-time study or self-education. Although no longer constrained by family responsibilities, they were not keen on going out to the cinema or the theatre. Not surprisingly, home-based forms of 'cultural consumption' were dominant, with reading and television absorbing 90% of the time they spent on culture and the media.<sup>53</sup> Older men with televisions at home spent up to 15-16 hours a week watching television, compared to 11-12 hours for men with young families; for women the figures were eight and six hours respectively. Men without television spent far longer reading the newspaper than did younger men without their own televisions, but all other groups paid less attention to the newspapers.<sup>54</sup> Older workers spent less time reading books and journals - 64% of the women and 58% of the men had not read a book in the month preceding the survey and only 50-60% of them read journals regularly.<sup>55</sup> The

predominance of television in the lives of older workers can partly be accounted for by their lower educational level - 40% of those surveyed had only 4 classes of education or less. However, even when educational level is held constant, older workers clearly spend more time on television and less time on reading than do younger people (table 9). The 1979 Leningrad study made similar findings - people over 50 were the heaviest television watchers, but also the most passive.<sup>56</sup> Older people in rural areas, like their urban counterparts, read less than younger people. This can be clearly seen in the tables for the Tatar ASSR, Kalinin oblast' and Krasnodar krai (table 7). However, the reduction in reading time in these rural areas was not compensated by any increase in television viewing. It seems that older people in the mid-1960s in these areas were not interested in modern, urbanising influences and were probably still following a largely traditional way of life. Although detailed figures are not available for Poshekhon'e, where all those over 50 are in the same category, it seems that the over-50s in that village accepted television as a normal part of life, and watched it a lot.<sup>57</sup> This change must be due in part to the improvements in educational levels over the twelve years between the two surveys, and also simply to greater familiarity with television with the passing of time.

### Pensioners

Men usually have the right to a pension at age 60, and women at age 55. In general, pensioners can now continue to work and still receive their pensions; in 1975 one quarter of pensioners were still in paid employment.<sup>58</sup> Pensioners are not a homogeneous group; some are elderly and frail, while others are robust peasants who have

retired from the kolkhoz to devote themselves to their private plot. Many grandmothers are kept busy caring for their young grand-children while the parents are at work, and many elderly women shoulder much of the burden of shopping and housework to free their children to study and enjoy themselves. Other pensioners are involved in all sorts of voluntary work and hobbies. There are rather few studies of pensioners as a group,<sup>59</sup> and as time budget studies usually concentrate on the working population or on young people, information on pensioners is somewhat scrappy. One important factor in considering the available data on pensioners is the sharp change in their educational level over the last two decades, which must be borne in mind when comparing data from the late 1950s and 1960s with that for the late 1970s. Overall, however, it is still true that pensioners have lower educational levels than the employed population.

Pensioners in rural areas have the lowest educational levels of all. The situation in three areas in 1967 is set out in table 7. Clearly, the majority of pensioners did not read books and newspapers regularly; nor did they watch TV instead. A high proportion were believers. Apart from radio, the modern media largely passed them by. Traditional peasant values and pursuits were clearly more important to these older people than modern urban ways.<sup>60</sup> However, the study in Rostov oblast' in 1973 found a rather different situation. People over 55 spent longer watching television than did any other group.<sup>61</sup> Over three-quarters of the men over 55 and over half the women watched television at least several times a week. Over 60% of the men, but only 13% of the women, read the newspaper every day, and over 37% of the men and 10% of women read journals at least several times a week. On the other hand, 39% of the women and 38% of

the men virtually never read books.<sup>62</sup> These figures suggest that rural pensioners were becoming far more closely involved in the modern media than they had been in the mid-1960s. The materials from the 1979 Poshekhon'e study do not give us as clear a picture of television viewing among older people, but it was found that only just under 10% of those over 51 did not watch films either on television or at the village club or cinema, and as we can assume that older people would not go out to the cinema much, it seems likely that this relates mainly to watching television.<sup>63</sup> Pensioners in Poshekhon'e did watch television regularly, but they seem to read books less than did their counterparts in the Rostov study - over 80% of women and 45% of men over 51 did not read books at all; on the other hand 84.4% of the men (but only 19.2% of the women) regularly read the newspapers (see table 8).

For pensioners in urban areas, Grushin's findings (table 3) give some indication of the position in the mid-1960s. Pensioners were already one of the most television-oriented groups. 83% of them read a newspaper at least several times a week (compared to 90% of workers). The proportion reading journals dropped slightly (from 67% to 65%), and the number reading books at least several times a month dropped from 74.6% to 68%. The 1979 study of mass media use in Leningrad found that pensioners were very keen television viewers.<sup>64</sup> Another study in Leningrad in 1977-78 found that over half the pensioners surveyed spent two hours or more watching television each day (compared to 33%-40% of workers in the same study). Reading was said to be the most important leisure pursuit for the pensioners in this survey, but unfortunately it is not clear whether this refers to prestige, participation rates or

duration. Women generally spent more time reading than did the men, but the men, as usual, were keener newspaper readers. Over 98% of the men and 93% of the women pensioners in this study still read the newspapers reasonably regularly - very high figures compared to the working population generally.<sup>65</sup>

It seems reasonable to assume that older pensioners will prefer home-based activities. Their lower educational level and probably a greater passivity in their cultural preferences would suggest that they would prefer television to reading.

#### PLACE OF RESIDENCE

The place where a person lives does affect leisure preferences and reading habits. There are marked differences between urban and rural areas, and clear variations between small and large towns, and different areas of the USSR.

#### Rural areas

People in rural areas generally work longer hours than industrial workers. Their working week is much more irregular, and there are marked seasonal variations. Some groups, chiefly those caring for livestock, work a seven-day week. In addition to their commitment to the farm, villagers devote a great deal of time to their private plots. This burden is heaviest on the women, particularly in summer. Although working conditions in rural areas have improved considerably in recent years, there is still a sharp difference between urban and rural residents in the hours they spend at work, running a home and garden and caring for children, and hence in the amount of free time at their disposal.

People in rural areas structure their free time rather differently. Their free time use has also changed sharply with the introduction and widespread availability of television. This is particularly clearly shown in studies in Rostov oblast' in 1963 and 1973. In the summer of 1963, kolkhoz men spent nearly two and a half hours reading; this had dropped to only just over two hours in 1973. Women's reading increased over the decade, from under half an hour to nearly an hour a week. However, in summer 1973 men kolkhozniki spent nearly seven hours a week watching TV or listening to the radio, compared to under two hours in summer 1963. For women, the increase was even sharper, from under an hour in 1963 to over five in 1973.<sup>66</sup> By 1973, TV occupied from a quarter to nearly a half of the free time of both kolkhozniki and sovkhhozniki, and was for most groups in the population the single most important leisure activity.<sup>67</sup>

Before television became widely available, many people in rural areas relied on radio and the cinema and read very little. Of course illiteracy levels were higher then. In 1967, it was still necessary to call for increased publishing of reading matter suitable for semi-literate people in rural areas.<sup>68</sup> Table seven confirms the impression that a significant proportion of the rural population at that time did not read. About a third did not watch television. The figures from table seven can be compared with those collected by Grushin at about the same time for the urban population. (Table three) Overall, 89% of those in Grushin's survey read a newspaper, compared to only around 55% of those in the 1967 rural study. About three quarters of those in Grushin's study read books and journals at least several times a month, compared to the figures

of between 19% and 30% reading fiction in the rural study. The difference between the TV viewing figures largely result from the uneven television service at that time.

Over the last decade or so, surveys have shown that the media play a bigger part in rural people's leisure budgets than they do in those of urban people. Rural men spend some 70% of their free time on the media (TV, radio, the cinema, reading), and rural women spend of 62%; in urban areas, the corresponding figures are 43% and 40%.<sup>69</sup> TV tends to be more important in villages than in the towns. For example, a study in the Urals in 1969-71 found that urban workers were spending an average of two hours a day watching television, compared to 2.6 hours for sovkhos workers; the intelligentsia in urban areas spent 1.7 hours a day watching TV and their rural counterparts, 2.2 hours.<sup>70</sup> Comparing studies of villages in the RSFSR in 1973 with the findings of Pskov study in 1965, it was found that people in the villages were spending an average of 36 minutes a week longer watching TV and 15 minutes less reading. As these figures relate only to those people who actually reported watching TV or reading during the survey period, these figures are not distorted by the increase in TV ownership in the intervening period. About three quarters of villagers watch TV every day, compared to only a half of those in small towns.<sup>71</sup>

A number of factors other than the amount of free time available underlie the differences between rural and urban areas in their patterns of media use. First, the educational level in rural areas is significantly lower, and the variation in educational standards is far sharper in the villages than it is in the towns. However, the overall gap in



educational achievement between town and country is narrowing as the general educational level rises and the generation of country people with little or no formal education passes away.<sup>72</sup> According to the 1979 census, around a third of the population in rural areas had only a primary education, compared to under 20% of the urban population. Where in 1959 in rural areas only 60 people per 1,000 had completed their general secondary or specialised secondary education, by 1979 218 had achieved this standard. In the same period, the number of people in rural areas with a completed higher education went up from 7 to 25 per thousand, compared to an increase in urban areas of from 40 to 93 per thousand.<sup>73</sup> As was demonstrated above, educational level is one of the most important determinants of media preferences and reading in particular, and therefore some of the differences between town and country can be accounted for by differences in educational level.

A second important demographic difference is the higher proportion of elderly people in rural areas. Many younger people have moved to the towns in search of better jobs and living conditions. Again, as has been shown earlier, once television has become well-established and familiar, older people in town and country alike tend to be the heaviest viewers.

Third, the range of leisure facilities is far more limited in rural areas than in towns. There are far fewer clubs and cinemas and, although some are modern and well-equipped, many are shabby and lack essential amenities. Because of the lack of facilities, farmers' leisure budgets are less varied than those of town-dwellers and, particularly in the past, they tended to report spending far more of their leisure time engaged in 'passive rest' - just doing

nothing. Television has filled this vacuum and so has come to occupy more of the leisure budget than it does in the towns. It provides the kind of audio-visual entertainment which townspeople can also get at live sports events, the cinema, the circus or a variety show. In rural areas, television is a far better source of films than the village cinema, with its often out-dated equipment and old films. Zotova and her colleagues suggest that television is also popular because people can watch it in their working clothes, whereas they feel obliged to dress up if they go to the club or the cinema.<sup>74</sup>

Fourth, the supply of reading matter is worse in villages than it is in towns, whereas radio and television broadcasts are instantly available to everyone within reach of the transmitters, whether they live in the city or a remote hamlet. Many villages do not get daily deliveries of the newspapers, and so are particularly dependent on radio and television for news and current information. Rural libraries are poorly stocked compared to those in towns, and there are also far fewer opportunities to buy books.<sup>75</sup>

Fifth, in rural areas the traditional reliance on oral, personal methods of communication was stronger than in town, and the written word - along with other modernising and urbanising influences - less powerful. This has made television a more acceptable source of information and entertainment than the depersonalised and less immediately accessible printed word. In rural areas, television has not necessarily squeezed out old patterns of socialisation - in the Poshekho'n'e study, for instance, it was found that people without sets of their own - particularly older women - regularly visit the neighbours to join them in watching the television.<sup>76</sup>

To summarise: there is a tendency for television to be more popular in the villages than in the towns, and for reading to be less widespread. This is partly because the rural population tends to have a lower standard of education and includes more elderly people, and partly because the lack of other facilities makes television particularly attractive.

#### Size of town

The size of town does have some influence on how people spend their leisure. Small towns generally offer a less urbanised way of life than do larger towns, with more people having allotments and vegetable gardens to tend. More people live in their own houses, which have to be maintained. The educational level tends to be lower than in the major cities and, as in the villages, many young people emigrate in search of better jobs.<sup>77</sup> Small and medium towns have rather fewer cultural facilities than do major cities, which serve not only their own inhabitants but also those of the surrounding towns. About a quarter of the population of the RSFSR live in small or medium towns (defined as towns with population under 100,000).<sup>78</sup> A study of this group of towns carried out in 1981 noted that clubs and libraries played a far more important role in the life of the town than they did in big cities. Indeed, the study found that libraries in these towns were rated as more effective than those in major cities. However, the work of clubs, cinemas and theatres was generally poorer than in the RSFSR as a whole.<sup>79</sup> 81% of people watched television every day, and 70% read the newspaper daily. Only 2% never watched TV and 7% did not read the newspapers. 88% read books and journals 'reasonably regularly'.<sup>80</sup>

A study of small towns in the early 1970s found that 47% of people read books 'often', 30% read them 'rarely' and 11% did not read them at all; 12% of replies were unclassified.<sup>81</sup> In the 1965-68 'four cities' study, which concentrated on major industrial cities, 51% of men and women read books 'regularly' (defined as at least one book read in the month preceding the survey); 70% of women and 92% of men read the newspaper regularly. By contrast, in the small town of Pavlovskii posad, investigated by the same team at the same time, only 33% of women, but 65% of men read books regularly, and 61% of women and 85% of men read the newspaper regularly.<sup>82</sup> People in Pavlovskii posad spent an average of around three hours a week less on reading and watching television than did their counterparts in major industrial towns.<sup>83</sup> Grushin's findings (see table three) provide information for the mid-1960s on reading and watching TV for Moscow and four other groups of towns. Apart from small and medium towns (defined as populations of 10,000-100,000), a very similar proportion of people in all sizes of settlement reported reading newspapers regularly. Khar'kov and Sverdlovsk had the highest proportions of people who reported reading books and journals and watching TV regularly. The variations between different size towns in terms of TV viewing probably reflect the uneven availability of TV at that time. For reading books and journals, the variation is about 15%; this can largely be attributed to differing educational levels, and to the greater availability of books and libraries in the cities. Studies in the early 1970s compared small towns to villages, and found that reading and films were more popular in small towns, and television in the country.<sup>84</sup> Clearly, small and medium towns occupy a place part way between large cities and villages in their patterns of media use.

In the USSR, as well as long-established small towns, there are many new towns and settlements springing up in areas newly opened up for development, particularly in Siberia and the Far North. There are obviously special problems involved in supplying books, newspapers and films to these remote and often temporary settlements. In these areas, reading and TV (where obtainable) have to substitute for the whole range of entertainment facilities available in towns. Further, many of the people working in these areas are young, and require books and journals in order to continue their education and training, as well as for relaxation and entertainment. Even in some of the more established towns in Siberia there is evidence of discontent with the cultural facilities available.<sup>85</sup>

#### Different republics of the USSR

There are differences in reading patterns between the different republics of the USSR. Some of these variations result from the different levels of development of the republics, in terms of provision of libraries, proportion of the population which lives in rural areas, and educational level. Table 12, which is restricted to the rural population, gives some indication of how reading levels vary between areas, and how educational level affects reading in different parts of the USSR. Even when comparing groups of the same educational standard, there are clear differences. Only 45% of people with a primary education are readers in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, compared to 74% in Siberia and the Far East. Of those with a general secondary education, only 91% are readers in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, compared to 95% in the European part of the

Table 5:12

Rural reading, 1973-75: readers in various parts of the USSR (as a percentage of those surveyed)

|                       | U.S.S.R. |     | R.S.F.S.R. |                      |          | Other republics |                             |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|------------|----------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
|                       |          |     | European   | Siberia and Far East | European | Trans-caucasia  | Central Asia and Kazakhstan |
| Adults                |          |     |            |                      |          |                 |                             |
| Workers               | 91       | 93  | 92         | 93                   | 89       | 82              |                             |
| Pensioners            | 55       | 56  | 52         | 67                   | 54       | 28              |                             |
| By education          |          |     |            |                      |          |                 |                             |
| Primary               | 67       | 69  | 74         | 73                   | 45       | 45              |                             |
| Incomplete secondary  | 95       | 95  | 94         | 96                   | 92       | 85              |                             |
| General secondary     | 94       | 96  | 94         | 98                   | 94       | 91              |                             |
| Specialised secondary | 98       | 100 | 96         | 100                  | 97       | 95              |                             |
| Higher                | 98       | 98  | 100        | 98                   | 98       | 100             |                             |
| Total                 | 87       | 87  | 89         | 91                   | 88       | 81              |                             |

Source: Kniga i chtenie v zhizni sovetskogo sela. vyp. 4: Rasprostranennost' chteniya i pechatnykh istochnikov na sele. M., 1974, p. 26.

RSFSR and 96% in other European republics of the USSR. It would have been interesting to have had more detailed figures giving information on male and female reading patterns, especially in the traditionally muslim areas, as traditional values could explain the lower reading levels in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The importance of traditional attitudes is confirmed by studies of the Russian and Tatar populations in the towns of Kazan' and Menzelinsk, which found that Tatars did lag behind the Russians both in the number of books read and in proportions of people who regularly read the newspaper.<sup>86</sup>

An additional factor affecting reading in areas where Russian is not the native tongue is the availability of reading matter in the local language. This problem has been examined by Rosemarie Rogers and the initial results presented in an unpublished AAASS conference paper. Rogers analysed publishing statistics and census data, and found that 'speakers of the Russian language have a strong advantage over speakers of the other Soviet languages as regards the amount of variety of books to which they have access'.<sup>87</sup> The availability of fiction in minority languages is examined more fully in a later chapter. Clearly, however, it is a factor to be considered in explaining the differences in reading activity of people in different republics who have the same educational level.

More research is needed on how nationality, language, cultural heritage and the pressures of russification affect reading in the union republics.

#### OCCUPATION

The relationship between social class, occupation and leisure has been explored in a number of studies, which use differing

theoretical approaches. Briefly, many studies in the 1960s rested on the assumption of a 'spillover' relationship between work and leisure, i.e. that the character of a person's work largely determines leisure behaviour. According to this view, more demanding and complex types of work promote more varied leisure budgets, with greater emphasis on activities which develop people's abilities and skills and contribute to the creation of a well-rounded personality. Other studies stressed the compensatory function of leisure - i.e. the view that leisure is relatively autonomous and can compensate for the lack of stimulating work experience and provide a sense of satisfaction which can not be found in one's paid work.<sup>88</sup> Thus Pimenova, on the basis of her study of workers at the Moscow 'Krasnyi proletarii' works argued that 'free time may cancel the negative effects of non-creative work on the individual'.<sup>89</sup> Gordon and Rimashevskaya argue that people's educational level is often higher than that required to do the jobs available to them and that this can lead to dissatisfaction and antisocial behaviour. In these circumstances, leisure must provide an area for self-expression, creativity and personal development which is not available in work.<sup>90</sup> Leisure and culture can be seen as a bridge between, on the one hand, the realities of the labour market and the technological capabilities of Soviet society, and, on the other, the cultural expectations of the population, particularly well-educated young people. Other studies go further and see a conflict developing between work and leisure.<sup>91</sup>

Occupation does have some influence on the amount of free time people have. Certain groups work longer hours than average. The non-technical intelligentsia (e.g. teachers, doctors, research



workers) do not work set hours, and generally have a long working week.<sup>92</sup> A study in Sverdlovsk in 1965-7 found that teachers were working 10 to 15 hours a week longer than blue-collar workers. A study of women doctors in Novosibirsk in 1967 found they were working 5-10 hours a week longer than most women industrial workers; they had three to four hours less free time a week than did women workers and employees in the 1965 Pskov study. Studies of research workers show them regularly working 50-55 hours a week.<sup>93</sup> In industry, engineers tend to work longer hours than blue-collar workers; they do not have a fixed working week. The 1959 Krasnoyarsk study found a difference of 2-3 hours a week, a 1966 study of the Leningrad engineering industry found a difference of 7-8 hours. Senior managers in industry work longer hours than ordinary engineers.<sup>94</sup>

However, the amount of leisure time different occupational groups enjoy does not depend only on the length of their paid working week. There are also variations in the time people spend eating, sleeping, travelling to work and doing the housework. Leaving aside the issue of the preponderance of women in certain professions and industries, there is a tendency for better qualified women to spend less time on housework than do unskilled women; this to some extent counteracts the generally longer working hours of women in the intelligentsia groups. The evidence on the amount of leisure time enjoyed by blue-collar and white-collar workers and by engineering and technical personnel is not conclusive.<sup>95</sup> As has been shown in the section above on rural areas, industrial workers have more free time than sovkhos workers and collective farmers, while collective farmers have less free time than sovkhos workers.<sup>96</sup> The different occupational groups on the farm have varying amounts of free time, but the

findings from different surveys are not altogether consistent.<sup>97</sup>

The evidence suggests that occupation alone does not have a decisive effect on the amount of free time people have at their disposal.

There is some correlation between occupation and the content and structure of free time. However, occupation and educational level are closely linked, and it is highly probable that many of the differences observed between occupational groups can be attributed to differences in educational level, rather than the nature of the work undertaken. Engineers tend to have a more active and varied leisure budget than blue-collar workers. For example, in the study of the Leningrad electronics industry (1967-68) it was found that engineers and technical personnel spent at least a quarter of their free time on 'improving' activities - study and self-education, voluntary work, amateur art and creative hobbies, while workers spent only a fifth of their time in this way.<sup>98</sup> The least skilled women in the survey had the most passive attitude to cultural activities, preferring to watch television or visit friends rather than read or study. Highly-qualified women of the same age and family position spent seven times as much of their non-working time on reading and self-education as did women in unskilled manual jobs.<sup>99</sup> In the 1967-68 study of the Moscow factory 'Krasnyi proletarii' an overall 'index of leisure participation' was drawn up for workers and engineers, based on their participation in various cultural and other leisure activities. 65.5% of engineering and technical personnel had 'active' leisure profiles, compared to only 42.5% of blue-collar workers.<sup>100</sup> A more recent study dealt with the most highly qualified group of skilled workers, the so-called 'worker-intelligentsia', whose trades require as a minimum a secondary specialised education.

This group is already highly skilled, but the study at the Moscow AZLK automobile works found that 45% of them were reading technical literature relevant to their job, compared to only 43% of engineers and technical personnel at the same works.<sup>101</sup> However, the 'worker-intelligentsia' group did include more people under 25.<sup>102</sup> Generally, this well educated group of skilled workers used its leisure in ways very similar to the engineering and technical staff supervising them.<sup>103</sup>

According to Zuzanek<sup>104</sup> the gap in educational standards between engineers and workers in the mid-1960s averaged the equivalent of five years' formal education. This, with the findings of the surveys reported above, suggests that the differences reported between workers and engineers are largely due to differences in educational achievement and qualifications, rather than to their social position or the content of their work.

As media exposure patterns are so strongly affected by education, it would be expected that differences between occupational groups in their use of the media would be consistent with their differing educational standards. Grushin's study (table three) shows that the technical intelligentsia are the most active readers of books, newspapers and journals; 86.5% of them read books regularly, compared to only 73.5% of the intelligentsia not employed in production; 11% more of them read journals regularly. Clearly it is essential for all groups in the intelligentsia to read to keep up-to-date with their profession, but the technical intelligentsia probably have more time for this. The non-technical intelligentsia (doctors, teachers etc.) are reported as reading journals more often than workers do, although they read books slightly less.

Netsenko's study of Leningrad electronics factories found relatively small differences between workers and engineering and technical personnel in the amount of time they spent on recreational reading and television. Workers (both men and women) spent a little more time watching TV, and a little less time reading, but the difference amounted to no more than 8 minutes a day.<sup>105</sup> However, Netsenko did find that there were sharp differences between workers according to skill level and the amount of physical energy consumed by the day's work. The least qualified workers spent the least time reading, and the most watching television.<sup>106</sup> The 1966 study of industrial workers in Leningrad was concerned with the differences between workers with different skill levels. Some of the results are set out in table 13. Interest in the newspaper, in reading fiction and in owning a home library can all be seen to increase as the socio-professional level rises. Where 25% of unskilled labourers read no fiction, and 15% of them did not read the newspaper, only 4% of skilled craftsmen did not read novels and a mere 2% did not read the newspaper. In terms of cultural interests there is a far sharper difference between unskilled labourers and skilled machine operators than there is between skilled workers and highly-qualified engineers and designers. A 1970 follow-up study found no noticeable reduction in the number of unskilled workers who never read the newspaper; however 6% more of the skilled machine operators had become daily newspaper readers. Over the five years there was a slight fall in the percentage of top engineers who read the newspaper daily. In both 1965 and 1970 the group which read the newspapers most regularly were the industrial managers. In 1970, the number of respondents who read at least one book a week was down

Table 5:13

Leningrad 1966: Influence of skill and profession on cultural interests (as a percentage of those in the given category)

|   | Reading newspapers |           |            | Reading political literature |           |            | Reading fiction  |                   |                       |            | Ownership of books |            |             |              |               |                |
|---|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
|   | Regular            | Irregular | Not at all | Regular                      | Irregular | Not at all | 1 a week or more | 1-2 books a month | Less than one a month | Not at all | None               | 1-10 books | 11-50 books | 51-100 books | 101-500 books | Over 500 books |
| Unskilled labourers                         | 55.5               | 28.9      | 15.6       | 12.9                         | 23.4      | 63.7       | 20.4             | 32.8              | 21.3                  | 25.5       | 26.9               | 21.9       | 26.9        | 15.6         | 3.2           | 5.6            |
| Skilled workers -<br>machine operators      | 75.2               | 20.6      | 4.2        | 20.9                         | 34.5      | 44.6       | 37.1             | 42.8              | 12.4                  | 7.7        | 16.2               | 23.9       | 37.1        | 13.2         | 7.6           | 2.0            |
| Skilled craftsmen                           | 79.9               | 17.9      | 2.2        | 21.1                         | 41.6      | 37.3       | 33.1             | 46.2              | 16.1                  | 4.6        | 9.8                | 18.8       | 40.8        | 18.2         | 8.6           | 3.8            |
| Highly skilled workers                      | 84.5               | 14.0      | 1.5        | 24.6                         | 40.1      | 35.3       | 33.9             | 30.8              | 29.2                  | 6.1        | 9.2                | 13.8       | 37.1        | 18.4         | 15.4          | 6.1            |
| Highly qualified engineers<br>and designers | 71.9               | 26.7      | 1.4        | 16.1                         | 56.2      | 27.7       | 28.5             | 46.9              | 23.9                  | 0.7        | 3.6                | 6.6        | 21.6        | 27.6         | 33.3          | 7.3            |

Source: Trufanov, I.P. Problemy byta gorod'skogo naseleniya SSSR, Leningrad, 1973, pp 80-81.

on 1965; there was a four per cent increase in the number of unskilled labourers who did not read fiction at all.<sup>107</sup> These changes probably result from the introduction of television. The study of factories in Gor'kii in the early 1970s looked critically at the amount of time workers and engineers spent reading and watching television, and found that in neither group did people spend sufficient time reading technical or economic literature; nevertheless, it is clear that the engineers and technical personnel were more active readers than the workers.<sup>108</sup>

A study in Ufa in 1965 of 2,000 industrial workers and engineers looked closely at the relationship between occupation, education and reading activity. It found that when workers and engineering and technical personnel of the same educational level are compared, there are insignificant differences between them in the amount of reading done, measured in number of books read per month. Indeed, in some groups the workers were more active readers than the engineers.<sup>109</sup>

In rural areas, media exposure patterns vary with skill levels as they do in industry. The study in Rostov oblast' does not provide a detailed breakdown by skill level, but does show a clear difference between collective farmers and the more skilled sovkhos workers, with the latter making heavier use of the media.<sup>110</sup> Sovkhos workers generally tend to possess more books and television sets and to subscribe to more newspapers and journals than collective farmers do,<sup>111</sup> but this is likely to be because of higher incomes, more leisure and better education, rather than an expression of a different relationship to the means of production. The 1967 study of Krasnodar krai and Kalinin oblast' also provided information on how people in different occupational groups used their leisure. Radio was the most widely

used medium of information and entertainment. The figures for regular reading of newspapers and novels show the familiar pattern of a decline from the managerial and professional groups to the least skilled peasants. In Kalinin oblast', only 10% of the least skilled peasants read fiction regularly, compared to 33% of the tractor drivers; in Krasnodar krai the levels are higher and the difference far less sharp (38% and 26%). In Kalinin oblast' 71% of employees read the newspaper regularly, compared to 46% of the least skilled peasants; again, the difference in Krasnodar krai was less sharp (69% and 51%).<sup>112</sup> It seems probable that the differences between occupational groups arise largely from educational differences, rather than content of work as such.

Occupation may also affect leisure activities where a job involves shift work or unsocial hours. People who work at night will miss popular adult programmes broadcast in the evening, and will find cinemas more difficult to attend. One study suggests that reading does not fill this gap - it found that people with awkward shifts, eg in public transport, both watched TV and read less than people with similar backgrounds working more normal hours.<sup>113</sup>

This survey of how occupation affects leisure and media exposure patterns has come to no firm conclusions about the relationship between content of work and leisure preferences. It seems that many of the differences observed can be explained by variations in educational level, by the influence of traditional sex-role expectations and by the impact of poorer facilities in the country areas, rather than by the nature and content of a person's occupation.

## MATERIAL POSITION

Material position includes factors such as monthly income and living conditions. There is some disagreement about the extent to which monthly per capita income affects leisure use and reading. Several studies have shown that people with higher per capita incomes have more leisure time. For instance, a study in Krasnoyarsk in 1959 found that workers and engineers with a per capita income of over 100 rubles a month had twice as much leisure time as those earning only 20-30 roubles a month.<sup>114</sup> Better-off families tend to spend less time on cooking, washing, tending household plots etc. as they are more likely to make use of communal facilities (such as laundries) and are more likely to own time-saving household appliances.<sup>115</sup> People on low incomes are more likely to have a second job and, if they live in a village or small town, to rely on produce from their private plot or allotment for additional food or income; tending the private plot of course reduces the amount of free time available. This principle applies to professional people as well. Studies in the 1960s found that teachers in rural areas (and, to a lesser extent, in urban areas too) had to supplement their incomes by tilling a private plot. Many physicians, whose basic working day is six hours, took on an additional half-time post, increasing their working day to nine hours, but bringing their salaries up to a better standard.<sup>116</sup> In the 1980s, these two groups would probably make extra money by tutoring or private practice, trading off some of their leisure time for additional income or, more probably, payments in kind.

Gordon and Klopov looked closely at the relationship between per capita earnings and leisure use in the 'four cities' study of



1965-68, which was limited to industrial workers. They argued that many of the apparent inequalities in housework and leisure arising from differences in per capita income were in fact largely due to differences in family position. A high proportion of people in families with low per capita incomes were in fact men and women with dependent children, who in any case have the least free time and the most house work. Those with a higher per capita income tended to be young people without children, or mature people whose families had already grown up. They argue that when the effects of family position are taken into account, monthly income can be shown to have a far weaker impact on leisure than other studies had suggested. The only partial exception to this were women with young children; even for them, though, doubling the monthly per capita income led to only a five-hour week reduction in the amount of time spent on housework (from 33-34 hours a week to 28-29 hours).<sup>117</sup> The 'raw' figures for reading do indeed suggest a strong link between per capita income and reading, as in families where the per capita income was under 50 roubles a month, only 37% of women and 46% of men had read a book in the month preceding the survey, compared to 68% and 59% respectively for those earning over 75 roubles a month. Comparing data for the duration of reading, the figures were one hour a week for women and just over two hours for men in the first group, compared to 3.3 hours and 2.6 hours for the second. However, if the comparison is restricted to people with young children, men with incomes of over 50 roubles per capita actually spent less time reading books and journals than did men with under 50 roubles a month. Mothers of families with per capita income of 50 roubles a month or less spent only 0.45 hours a week reading books and journals, while women

with the same family commitments but incomes over 50 roubles per capita a month spent 1.20-1.25 hours a week reading books and journals.<sup>118</sup> It does appear that women with families do use additional income to 'buy' additional leisure time, although Gordon and Gruzdeva<sup>119</sup> argue that these figures demonstrate a comparatively weak link between monthly income and reading.

Although the evidence is not altogether conclusive, it does seem that people with lower incomes spend less time reading. However, given that mass libraries are freely available to all and books, journals and newspapers comparatively cheap, income need not determine access to reading matter. Several surveys have shown that low income families are as likely to own televisions as better-off families, although there have been reports that in rural areas lack of money does prevent people buying televisions.<sup>120</sup> A study in 1981-83 of readers in Kirghizia found that under 10% of those surveyed said that they did not have sufficient money to buy books. However, these respondents were mainly school-children.<sup>121</sup>

Although participation in some leisure activities may be more difficult for people on low incomes, generally it does not seem that reading and watching TV are affected by this constraint. It would appear, then, that people with lower incomes read less because of the competition from other, more urgent chores and the demands of a second (or black market) job.

In the USSR, housing and living conditions do not depend on income to the extent that they do in the West, and so can be considered separately from income as such. There seems to be no disagreement among Soviet researchers that housing and living conditions do have a marked effect on leisure. In the 'four cities' study it was found

that living in accommodation with all amenities - piped water and sanitation, central heating etc. - allowed working women to spend three hours a week reading, compared to only one and a half to two hours for those living in premises with some of these amenities and only one hour for those with none. Women living in communal apartments, even with all amenities, spent only half as much time reading as those living in single-family accommodation. This can be explained by the overall increase in privacy and comfort in single-family housing, which encourages all home-based leisure pursuits, including reading.<sup>122</sup>

#### PARTY MEMBERS

Studies of members of the Komsomol and the Communist Party have shown that they use their free time rather differently to the rest of the population. The Party in particular has a higher proportion of men and the well-educated than in the country as a whole. The commitments of Party membership - meetings, voluntary work and so on - eat into their free time. Party members then spend over 20% of their free time studying, more than twice as much than the average. Nevertheless, they read more books than average and pay more attention to the newspapers. They make up nearly half the subscribers to Pravda.<sup>123</sup> They also differ from non-Party people in what they read; this is discussed in the following chapters.

#### ELITE GROUPS

There is little hard evidence on the leisure of elite groups in the USSR. The higher echelons of party officials, top administrators and senior industrial managers work very long hours. Zuzanek concludes:

There does not seem to be a 'leisure class' in the Soviet society in the traditional sense. The elites in this society work hard and their rewards are probably built into the nature of their work, financial remuneration, power and prestige, rather than into the greater amounts of leisure time.<sup>124</sup>

However, as Hollander observes, the concentration of top party and government officials and other elite groups in Moscow and Leningrad does give them access to the best cultural facilities, and they are more likely to own a dacha and a car, and to have more opportunities to travel abroad. But Hollander agrees that the demands of their jobs mean they have less free time than average in which to enjoy these privileges.<sup>125</sup> However, in the USSR of the 1980s it seems that the children of this group are developing into something of a leisure elite, having both access to scarce resources and the leisure time to make use of them.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Television and reading

The findings of the studies examined in this chapter show how important television has become in the lives of Soviet people of all ages and backgrounds. Concern has been expressed about television squeezing out reading, but this is true only for certain sections of the population. It would be wrong to think that everyone read a great deal before television appeared, and then stopped reading. It is clear that many groups, notably older people, farm workers and the least educated, did not in fact read books regularly, if at all, before the appearance of television. In many cases, acquiring television has meant a significant expansion in the amount of time people spend on cultural consumption and the media, leading to a widening of cultural horizons and more varied leisure choices. On

the other hand, those who had acquired the habit of regularly reading books and journals before the appearance of television have continued to read as well as watch TV; they have generally increased the overall time spent on the media.

Television has had a particularly marked effect on the reading of books, as books require a greater input of time and effort than do newspapers or magazines. People can spend several hours a day watching TV and still manage half an hour for the newspaper, but

not one and a half or two hours for a book.<sup>126</sup> It is only people in the least educated groups who have given up reading the newspaper when television became available.

A number of studies have shown that educational level has a far stronger effect on reading than it does on television viewing. Virtually all groups report watching television, but reading is far more differentiated. Television can be seen as a factor promoting the homogeneity of society, by providing a limited number of choices of programmes, mostly accessible to people with varying educational standards. Reading, on the other hand, encourages diversity, even divergence, of interests. The audience for books and journals is clearly differentiated by education, sex and occupation to a far greater extent than the TV and radio audience.

#### The determinants of media preference

This chapter has considered a number of factors which have some influence on the amount of time people devote to particular leisure pursuits, and on the proportion of those in each socio-demographic group who read and watch television. Educational level is clearly the single most important factor influencing media behaviour.

A higher standard of education enables women to resist some of the pressures of their traditional role expectations. Despite being subject to the disadvantages of rural life, better educated people in rural areas still read more heavily than less educated people. Sex, family position and age - closely related factors - are the next most important determinants of media use, partly because of the impact of family responsibilities on people's time budgets, partly because of the differing needs for educational and professional reading at various stages in the life cycle, partly because of different social expectations and social roles for the two sexes and for people in the different age groups. The lower reading levels and greater popularity of television in rural areas is partly due to the effects of education on the demographic structures of the village; poorer facilities in rural areas, and traditional peasant values also play a part. People in small and medium towns, as might be expected, show reading and media preference patterns part way between those of major cities and the villages. Differences between the republics do exist, and require further exploration. Although occupation and material positions do have some influence on media preferences and leisure use, these factors are not as important as educational level, age and sex, and place of residence. The evidence does not support Moskoff's assertion that 'in the Soviet Union, money buys leisure'.<sup>127</sup>

There are genuine differences between different groups in the USSR in the amount of time they spend reading and watching television, and the importance of reading and watching television have certainly changed over the last 25 years. But it is not only the amount of time which is devoted to these activities that matters. What people

read, the content of their reading, and its quality are perhaps even more important. These issues are considered in the following chapters.

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CHAPTER SIXREADING: VARIETY OF FORM AND CONTENT

The aim of this chapter is to explore how varied Soviet people's reading is. Reading newspapers, journals and books requires different skills, and satisfies different needs. How important are newspapers, books and journals to ordinary readers? The relationship between fiction and non-fiction will also be examined, and some attempt will be made to compare Soviet readers with their British counterparts.

NEWSPAPERS, JOURNALS AND BOOKS

The previous chapter showed how reading books, journals and newspapers varies in different demographic, educational and occupational groups. For instance, men read newspapers far more than women do, and better educated people are the heaviest consumers of journals. The 'ideal' Soviet reader makes use of books as well as journals and newspapers, as each has a different function and makes its own contribution to the reader's development. The major reading surveys have found that the majority of readers do in fact read all three forms of printed matter - in small towns 79% of readers do, in rural areas, 60%.<sup>1</sup> The majority of those who limit themselves to just one form of reading matter read only the newspaper, although there are a few people who devote themselves to books - one assumes to novels - and do not read the newspaper or magazines.

There are distinctive features of the reading of newspapers, journals and books which need to be examined in turn.

## Newspapers

Newspapers are the most widely read form of reading matter. Studies in urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s found that over 90% of the population read the newspaper regularly (at least several times a week), and 78% of rural readers read them.<sup>2</sup> Studies in Moscow in 1980 found that only 2% of adults did not read a newspaper at all.<sup>3</sup> The previous chapter showed how newspaper reading is affected by age, sex and educational level. Clearly, the group which takes the least interest in newspapers is older women, particularly in rural areas. Skilled workers and professional people spend the most time reading newspapers, and read the greatest variety of newspapers. It is striking how many people read more than one newspaper. In the small towns study, it was found that over half the population subscribed to three or more newspapers; in rural areas over a quarter did.<sup>4</sup> In Leningrad in 1979, a fifth of those surveyed read five or more newspapers.<sup>5</sup> As might be expected, far more Party and Komsomol activists, adult education lecturers and other 'committed' people read several newspapers than do the rest of the population.

The newspapers Soviet people read include the weighty central newspapers well known in the West, such as Pravda and Izvestiya, and weeklies such as Za rubezhom and Nedelya, but local newspapers are also popular. They are particularly important in non-Russian areas because they are in the local language. Local newspapers also carry more articles of immediate relevance to their readers and, like local newspapers everywhere, have more stories about people and organisations known to the readers. They have more human interest stories and carry some 'small ads'. In small towns, 60% of newspaper



readers read both the central and the local press; 20% read only the local press.<sup>6</sup> Local newspapers are particularly popular with the older and less educated groups in the population. For instance, a study of collective farmers in Krasnodar krai found that only a third of the women read any newspaper at all; of those that did read a paper, three quarters read only the local (raion) newspaper.<sup>7</sup> Local papers are popular in major cities as well as in the country - in Leningrad in 1968 just over half the population read Leningradskaya pravda and nearly half read the local evening paper Vechernii Leningrad.<sup>8</sup> Although local newspapers are widely read, Mickiewicz has shown that far more people express dissatisfaction with the local newspaper than with central newspapers. Readers criticise local papers for inaccurate and unreliable reporting of events of which they have a personal knowledge. They are also dissatisfied with the high proportion of the space in local newspapers given over to national and international affairs, and call for more articles about local events and local concern, and more practical, utilitarian everyday information in their local newspaper.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to taking a local plus a central newspaper, many people subscribe to more than one central newspaper. Although there is inevitably some overlap in newspaper coverage, particularly of major party and government pronouncements, reports of party plenums or the Supreme Soviet, etc., a number of central Soviet newspapers are directed at particular groups in the population. For instance, there are newspapers for children and young people, for particular occupational groups and professions, and one newspaper devoted just to sport. The weekly Literaturnaya gazeta, as well as carrying articles on literature and the arts, has a lively and sometimes

controversial section dealing with social affairs and the economy, and with international relations. Each newspaper has its own readership. Literaturnayagazeta has the highest proportion of readers with a higher education, (64% in 1977), followed by 47% for Izvestiya and 39% for Pravda (1970 figures). Industrial workers make up over a third of the readers of Trud, but only 12% of the readers of Izvestiya.<sup>10</sup> Sel'skaya zhizn' is by far the most popular central newspaper in rural areas.<sup>11</sup>

What Soviet people read in newspapers has been analysed by several American sociologists, and so newspaper preferences will not be discussed in great detail here. Hollander concludes that:

the audience surveys leave us with the impression that the most popular rubrics are international news, family circle topics and news about accidents and crime (to which newspapers devote very little space even now), and satirical features. Economic news and political resolutions are considered boring and uninteresting by most readers.<sup>12</sup>

Mickiewicz found that articles dealing with international affairs, and human interest stories, were the most popular with all groups in the population, and found that a high priority given to international news was true of both men and women, and all educational groups.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet sociologist Shlyapentokh, who carried out several major surveys of newspaper reading, found that at least three quarters of newspaper readers regularly read political information, official announcements, foreign news and articles on moral themes (i.e. human interest stories). However, he found that education had a marked effect on the reading of articles on economics, science, literature and art. Thus, articles on economics were read by 28% of those with a higher education, 14% of those with secondary education but only 5% of those with only 4-6 years of schooling. The

picture was broadly similar for articles about science, literature and art.<sup>14</sup>

It seems possible, though, that the comments on the popularity of international affairs, described above, relate mainly to the urban population and readers of newspapers such as Trud and Literaturnaya gazeta. The situation in rural areas is rather different. The study of rural reading preferences found that stories about developments within the USSR interested 87% of those surveyed, compared to only 74% who mentioned international affairs.<sup>15</sup> A study of kolkhozniki in Orel oblast' found that women rarely read about international affairs; they were content to hear about them on the radio.<sup>16</sup> Another kolkhoz study, in Krasnodar krai found that although 85% of men read about international affairs, only 65% of women did.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, all the studies do demonstrate a high level of interest in current affairs.

The high levels of newspaper reading in the USSR can be compared with that for the UK. In 1983, 76% of adult men and 70% of adult women read one or more of the ten national daily papers every day; a slightly higher proportion read a Sunday paper every week. About a third of adults read a local evening paper.<sup>18</sup> As quite a few people who read a local paper do not read one of the central papers, daily newspaper reading figures for the UK probably approach those for the USSR, where the figures cited relate to regular reading (at least several times a week). However, the standard of popular British newspapers such as The Sun and the Daily Mirror is rather different to that of even the most light-weight Soviet local paper. Reading any Soviet paper must demand a higher standard of functional literacy than is needed for many British papers.

## Journals

Periodicals too are widely read in the USSR. Many people subscribe to popular magazines, and most professional people subscribe to appropriate specialist journals. Journal reading tends to be under-reported in library-based studies of reader preferences. Although libraries do lend periodicals, many people rely on their own subscriptions or borrow from friends and neighbours. Periodicals were given priority over books in the 1960s and early 1970s in paper allocation<sup>19</sup> and for some years there have been no limits on the number of subscriptions accepted for most magazines, although some are still only available in limited numbers. For this reason, the pattern of journal reading may be a closer reflection of reader preferences than book reading, where supply problems are most acute. As periodicals are delivered direct to the home, they provide a regular supply of fresh, interesting reading matter which is conveniently to hand. Passive readers may well be content with this and not try to go beyond the material which has been selected for them by the journal's editors. The passive reader is unlikely to follow up interesting articles in journals by actively seeking out other material on the topic. People with active interests in a subject are likely to read books on it too.

Reader surveys of the 1960s and 1970s suggest that about three-quarters of adults read journals regularly.<sup>20</sup> As was shown in the previous chapter, people with a higher standard of education tend to make far more frequent and intensive use of journals than do the less educated, and professional people read them more than workers do.

The USSR publishes 1,471 different journals and magazines<sup>21</sup> directed at many different audiences. As well as serious academic

journals and the 'thick' literary journals well known in the West, such as Novyi mir and Neva, there are many journals devoted to various trades and professions, or to workers in particular industries. Some are aimed mainly at engineers and managers, others at rank and file workers. There are a wide range of agricultural journals, some serious and scholarly and intended for agronomists and economists, others directed at ordinary farmers. Many journals are devoted to a particular hobby, including hobbies which spill over into work-related activities, such as journals intended for amateur inventors (Izobretatel' i ratsionalizator), rabbit-breeders (Krolikovodstvo) and magazines aimed at peasants cultivating their private plots. There are journals on natural history, and popular journals on science and technology, notably the interesting and varied journal Nauka i zhizn'. There is a medical journal specifically directed at the general public, Zdorov'e, and a number of current affairs journals intended for a wide audience, such as Novoe vremya. There are women's magazines - Rabotnitsa and Krest'yanka. There are serious political journals, such as Kommunist and Politicheskoe samooobrazovanie. There are also many journals for young people and children, ranging from Yunyi tekhnika - a journal for model-makers and youngsters interested in science and technology through to bright magazines for young children, such as Murzilka. In addition to these journals, produced in Moscow or Leningrad, there are many journals produced in the union republics. Many of these are, of course, in the language of the people of that republic. One of the few 'special interest' groups who do not appear to have any magazine of their own are pensioners and the elderly.

Given this wide range of journals, which do people choose to subscribe to and read? A number of surveys suggest that the most

popular journals are women's magazines, the health monthly Zdorov'e and general science journals directed at the ordinary reader, such as Nauka i zhizn'. Gordon and Klopov, in their study of urban workers in the 1960s, found that about four-fifths of journal subscriptions were for general interest and entertainment magazines;<sup>22</sup> in rural areas nearly three-quarters of the people who subscribed to journals took general journals, such as women's magazines, humour and satire or journals for young people such as Ogonek and Sel'skaya molodezh'. 40% of subscribers took one of the popular journals dealing with science, technology or agriculture.<sup>23</sup> A study of Moscow families in 1980 found that the single most popular journals were Rabotnitsa and Zdorov'e, both of which were taken by about a quarter of the households surveyed. Far fewer families subscribed to serious literary journals such as Novyi mir or Inostrannaya literatura (between 2% and 5%).<sup>24</sup> The small towns study and the rural reading surveys suggest that it is mainly professional people - engineers, teachers, doctors, managers, etc. - who read specialist and technical journals. These people are also the main consumers of heavier social science journals such as Kommunist and Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie. Reading patterns for journals will be considered more fully in the two following chapters.

Reading periodicals in Britain has some parallels to that in the USSR. In Britain too women's magazines are very popular - 46% of women read at least one of the weekly magazines for women, and 19% of women read one of the monthly journals for women. Overall about 40% of the population read a general weekly magazine, but this category is very broad, including New Musical Express, Country Life and Exchange and Mart. The two most popular magazines are

Radio Times and TV Times. Of the monthly general magazines, Readers' Digest is the most popular, being read by nearly a fifth of the adult population. However, in Britain, unlike the USSR, general science magazines do not attract a large readership - only 1% of women and 2% of men read the New Scientist, for instance.<sup>25</sup> There do not appear to be any British magazines on health or on science and technology for the average reader which are as accessible and interesting as Soviet magazines.

### Books

Books are read by far fewer people than are newspapers. The relationship between books and periodicals is less clear-cut. Some surveys suggest that books are more popular than journals, others that more people read journals. These discrepancies can partly be explained by differences between survey populations. Some survey results are distorted by a lack of consistency over who counts as a book or journal reader, and by the desire of respondents to present themselves to the interviewer in a positive light.

Grushin's study in the mid 1960s found that 75% of respondents reported reading books at least several times a month, compared to 72% who read journals; 89% read the newspaper at least several times a week.<sup>26</sup> In the small towns study, 47% of those surveyed read books often (defined as several times a week), 30% read them 'rarely', 12% of respondents did not state how frequently they read books, and 11% admitted not reading books at all. By comparison, over four fifths read journals. 75% of rural readers reported that they read books, but the frequency of reading was not stated; 71% read journals and 79% newspapers.<sup>27</sup> The 1965-68 'four cities' study found that only

just over half the workers surveyed had read a book in the preceding month.<sup>28</sup> A more recent study, in small and medium towns in 1981, found that 88% of the population read books 'reasonably regularly',<sup>29</sup> but did not define the term. The study in Poshekhon'e in 1978-80 included a comparative survey of reading habits of peasants and of workers in nearby towns. This study found that over 21% of peasants, and nearly half the workers, regularly read at least one or two books a month. 30% of the peasants, but under 10% of the workers, did not read books at all. 48% of the peasants and 41% of the workers were considered to be occasional readers of books. Among peasants under 30, however, only 20% did not read books, and a third were regular book readers.<sup>30</sup> Putting these figures together with the data presented in chapter five, it seems reasonable to conclude that between 50% and 60% of the urban population are regular book readers, if we consider book readers to be those who read at least one book a month. In rural areas probably a quarter to a third of the population read books regularly. In both town and country, the better educated and more skilled read books more than the less educated and less skilled, and young people read books more intensively than older people. The difference between men and women in the proportion who read books and the number of books read is less clearly defined, and, as was shown in the preceding chapter, varies considerably with education, age and family responsibilities.

It may help to put these figures in context to note that a survey in the London Borough of Hillingdon in 1972 found that two thirds of the population read books, where book readers were defined as those who claimed to have read a book in the previous six months. 37% of the men and 45% of the women were actually reading a book at the time



of the survey.<sup>31</sup> The Euromonitor Book Reading Surveys in 1980-83 consistently found that about 45% of their samples in the UK claimed to be reading a book at the time of the survey, with women reading books more than men.<sup>32</sup> This is broadly consistent with another British survey of leisure activities, which found that 52% of men and 57% of women had spent some time reading books in the month preceding the survey. As in the USSR, professional people read books far more than semi-skilled or unskilled workers.<sup>33</sup> It does seem that Soviet readers do read books more than the British do, but that the difference, in terms of participation rates, is not very large.

#### RANGE OF READING INTERESTS

How wide-ranging are Soviet people's tastes in reading? How many people conform to the model of the ideal Soviet reader with balanced and well-rounded reading interests? Are the books that people read mainly novels?

What is meant by having 'balanced and well-rounded' reading interests may be clearer if we look at two exemplary readers. One was a foreman from Kuibyshev with technical education to secondary school level. He was a member of three different libraries, and subscribed to two newspapers (Pravda and Izvestiya) and four journals (Kommunist, Partiinaya zhizn, Nauka i zhizn' and Zdorov'e). He had a small home library consisting of technical books. He borrowed library books on his trade, literature to help him teach himself German, popular science books, travel books and books on art, as well as fiction. Another reader, an electrician from Novochoerkassk, wrote in his 'reader's autobiography': 'At the moment I enjoy just about everything. I like serious articles about science (as far as my education permits);

I read both novels and poetry, and satire. I love music, and so I'm interested in the lives of great singers and musicians, also the lives of scientists and explorers'. His library reading record included popular books on the theory of relativity, astronomy and linguistics, as well as books on the tenors Gigli and Caruso.<sup>34</sup>

These readers are not that unusual. The survey in which they took part covered workers and engineers in major industrial centres and found that 42% of workers and 55% of engineers and technical personnel read books and articles in the main non-fiction areas, as well as fiction. As might be expected, better educated people were more likely to read widely, and young people read more widely than did people over 30 of the same educational level.<sup>35</sup> A more recent study of industrial workers in the 1980s found that over a third of the workers registered in state mass libraries borrowed material on the social sciences and science and technology as well as fiction.<sup>36</sup> In the small town study, it was found that 39% of those surveyed read books or journal articles on the social sciences and science and technology as well as fiction; there were considerable differences between professional groups, with 67% of specialists but only 32% of workers and 17% of collective farmers having a wide range of reading interests. However, if newspaper articles are included, the figures are, as one might expect, much higher - overall 71% of those surveyed read books, journal articles or newspaper stories about current affairs, the social sciences, science and technology, and fiction. The sharp differences between professional groups remain, though (95% of specialists, 67% of workers, 51% of collective farmers).<sup>37</sup> In rural areas, just over a quarter of readers questioned read books, journal and newspaper articles on the full range of

subjects,<sup>38</sup> a far lower proportion than in the towns. This must largely stem from the lower educational level and poorer supply of reading material in rural areas.

Not surprisingly, people who are library members are more likely to read widely than are non-members.<sup>39</sup> This is partly because library members are generally more active readers in terms of the amount of time they spend reading and the number of books they read. Also, library members have access to a wider range of material than do people who rely on books and journals they have at home or can borrow from friends and colleagues. Library members will also receive advice and guidance from the librarian, who is officially expected to encourage readers to read widely and not confine themselves to fiction. On the other hand, data from library records are likely to underestimate interest in the social sciences and current affairs, as these interests are the most often satisfied from newspapers. However, several library studies suggest that the proportion of people with broad reading interests is increasing gradually.<sup>40</sup>

Virtually all studies of reading habits suggest that the dominant components in reading preferences are fiction and social science material. However, the interest in social sciences material is predominantly satisfied by reading newspaper articles about current affairs. Thus, in the study of small towns it was found that 93% of those surveyed read material on the social sciences and current affairs, but only 55% read books or journal articles on these themes; 75% of people read about science and technology, but only 57% read books and journal articles.<sup>41</sup> In the large-scale study of rural areas, the difference between reading newspapers on the one hand and books and journals on the other is not shown, but the proportion of

readers interested in different subject areas, whether in books, newspapers or journals, was reported as 99% interested in the social sciences and current affairs, 93% reading fiction, 79% interested in popular science and technology, 51% reading literature on their trade or profession (in this case, primarily agricultural literature), and 28% interested in sport, the arts and literary criticism.<sup>42</sup>

Many readers do not read any non-fiction other than the information presented to them through the newspapers. For these people, reading books means reading novels. The small towns survey found that 27% of readers fell into this category.<sup>43</sup> Several library-based studies have found that between a quarter and a third of library members borrow only fiction.<sup>44</sup> A more recent study, which concentrated on book readers in the age-group 16 - 28, found rather higher proportions of people who only read novels - between two-thirds and three-quarters of those surveyed, depending on their nationality.<sup>45</sup>

Fiction predominates in British readers' choice of books too. In 1982-3, about 60% of public library loans were for fiction,<sup>46</sup> and the Euromonitor surveys for 1980-83 found that about two-thirds of the books people were reading at the time of their survey were fiction.<sup>47</sup> For both British and Soviet readers, then, the main components in their reading preferences are newspapers and novels. Non-fiction books are a minority interest in both countries.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### READING NON-FICTION

This chapter examines in more detail people's reading preferences in non-fiction, considering first the social sciences and current affairs, then science and technology, followed by the reading of work-related ('specialist') material. Finally, reading about the arts and sport is briefly discussed.

#### THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Social sciences literature is consistently the most popular non-fiction area, both in library issues and in surveys. However, this group of subjects - called 'socio-political literature' in the Soviet sources - is very broad. It encompasses such varied activities as skimming the newspapers for foreign news; careful study of Kommunist in preparation for a seminar or lecture; reading articles in Rabotnitsa about exemplary women who successfully combine having three children, a worth-while job and doing voluntary work; reading books and articles critical of the church and religious belief; reading memoirs and biographies of soldiers and generals involved in World War II; studying economics textbooks.

A strong interest in 'socio-political' literature is considered part of being a good Soviet citizen. It should involve not only a keen interest in current affairs at home and abroad, but also in-depth reading on economics, politics, philosophy, history etc. Librarians are constantly exhorted to devote more effort to promoting the reading of social sciences books and journals. As a result, there is a real risk that the reading of social science material is exaggerated or over-reported, both by individual readers and by librarians 'padding'



their issue figures. An example of such exaggeration can be seen in the report on reading in three villages in the Hissar Valley in Tajikistan, carried out as part of the major study of rural reading in the early 1970s. In the text we read that:

'In the rural areas of the Hissar region one can observe the desire of the readers to study the works of the classics of marxism-leninism. Surveys showed rural workers using the Works of Marx and Engels, including 'Capital', Lenin's 'Complete Works' in Tajik, Uzbek and Russian. There was also considerable interest in the collection of Brezhnev's works 'On a Leninist course', in materials on the history of the CPSU, on the Tajik republic, scientific communism, atheism, political economy etc. This gratifying fact is shown in all our surveys'.<sup>1</sup>

The appendices to this work showed that in fact only 10% of library users borrowed any sort of social sciences material,<sup>2</sup> so clearly the actual level of reading such literature is very low.

In fact, not many readers measure up to the standards set by two members of trade union libraries studied by the Lenin Library as part of its detailed survey of industrial workers' reading in the first half of the 1980s. One of them, a lathe operator in an engineering factory, was a Hero of Socialist Labour, a superb tutor to young workers and was heavily involved in voluntary work. Despite all these commitments, he used the library regularly. He read books on international affairs, on the life of the workers today, works on psychology, education and sociology, as well as fiction. He had made a point of carefully studying the 1977 Constitution and worked through it with young workers. Another reader, a machine operator at a Zaporozh'e steel works, was a party member with a full secondary education. He read literature on the life and work of Lenin, on

philosophy, on scientific communism, the Soviet Army, the Second World War, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Careful study of reading surveys and of studies of library issues does give a more realistic picture of readers' interests in social science material. Studies which looked at the whole range of people's reading - books, newspapers and journals - found that very few readers did not read material about the social sciences and current affairs - in the small towns study only 7% did not, and in the major study of rural areas only 1% admitted not reading on these areas.<sup>4</sup> However, more careful study of the figures shows that in many cases their interest in the social sciences and current affairs was satisfied by reading the newspapers - in the small towns only 55% of readers read books and journals in this area, and in villages, only 56% of library members borrowed any social science material during the six-month survey period.<sup>5</sup> The researchers found that only under a quarter of rural library members could be described as regular readers of social science books and journals.<sup>6</sup> These surveys, and the mid-1960s study of industrial personnel, all found that people in the under 30 age group, those with a higher standard of education, and more skilled workers, were more likely to read social sciences books and journals regularly.<sup>7</sup> Further, only a minority of those who borrowed social science books and journals did so spontaneously, out of general interest - 60% of borrowers in the industrial personnel study did so only in connection with study programmes or teaching commitments.<sup>8</sup>

However, there is some evidence that the issue of social sciences material has increased since the early 1970s. A study in a sample of typical mass libraries in 1976 found that 62% of readers had

borrowed social sciences books and journals over the year; however only 19% had borrowed more than 5 items.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, though, a senior official of the Ministry of Culture reported that, nationwide, the reading of socio-political material had almost doubled in the previous decade; in many areas, up to 80% or even 90% of readers borrowed it.<sup>10</sup> In 1983, it was reported that in the USSR as a whole, the issue of 'socio-political' literature had increased by 72% over the previous five years; however, under a third of the social sciences material borrowed was on marxist-leninist theory and CPSU policy, a proportion which was clearly considered to be quite insufficient.<sup>11</sup>

A detailed study of reading in one oblast' of Kazakhstan examined reader records for the period 1977-81 and found a 15% increase in demand for material on marxism-leninism, and a 13% increase in interest in the social sciences generally. Over 55% of 'active' readers borrowed material on marxism-leninism, and 52% borrowed other social science material.<sup>12</sup> At the national level, in 1984 an authoritative report by Golubtseva, a Deputy Minister of Culture, claimed that one in five of the books issued in mass libraries were in the social sciences area; in many areas up to 90% of library members read social sciences material.<sup>13</sup> Even given that the last phrase almost certainly conceals wide regional variations and considerable differences between occupational and educational groups, it does seem likely that there has been a real increase in the issue of social science material. Of course, this does not mean that all the books and journals borrowed were actually read! Unfortunately, survey data from the study of Soviet workers as readers carried out in the early 1980s is not yet available, so library issue figures can not be checked against a broader picture of reading habits. However, it is probable that the increase

in library issues of social science literature can be accounted for partly by the publishing of more attractive, popular books on history, philosophy, life in foreign countries and so on. Also, more efforts have been made to produce lively documentary-style books on topics such as World War II, which are attractive to people who used only to read novels. It is possible, too, that the difficulties in getting hold of many of the most fashionable novels may have persuaded some readers to follow the librarian's recommendations and perhaps read some non-fiction books about foreign countries to supplement reading novels in translation, or to read general books on Russian history as well as historical novels.

Within the area of 'social science and current affairs', what subjects do people like to read about? Many people limit their reading in this field to the newspapers, supplemented of course by television and radio. It would be a mistake to assume that people who do read books and journals on the social sciences and current affairs are necessarily reading Marx, Lenin and Brezhnev, or solid works on the economic reform. As part of the 'small towns' study, a detailed analysis of loan records in the typical Russian small town of Ostrogozhsk was carried out. It was found that 46% of those who borrowed social sciences items borrowed books on the Second World War; 18% borrowed material on pre-War Soviet history and 5% on world history. 14% took material on foreign countries and international affairs, 10% on ethical and educational questions. When people in all the small towns in the survey who were reading social science books at the time of the survey were asked about the subject of the book, it turned out that 57-60% of them were on the Second World War, 18-21% were on pre-War Soviet history, 7% were on foreign countries

and international affairs, and 3-6% were on ethical and educational matters.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, very few of the books being read were on politics or economics. Studies of readers requests in book shops and libraries (which included unsatisfied requests) also showed the predominance of history in readers' preferences in the social sciences.<sup>15</sup>

In the rural reading survey, it was found that 38% of the social science books and journals mentioned by readers surveyed were on history. The interest in history was strongest amongst the least educated (57% of social sciences items mentioned by those with only primary education compared to only 23% of those mentioned by graduates); however, even for graduates history was the most important single element in their reading of social science books and journals. Books and articles on marxism-leninism were being read by 9% of social science readers (for graduates the percentage rose to 13%); only 4% mentioned books on religion and atheism, and only 2% philosophy. 13% of the books being read were on politics; again, as might be expected, the better educated read more in this area, but politics made up only 19% of the material mentioned even by graduates. 10% of responses were for 'other' categories of social science material, 7% for economics, 4% on law and 13% for educational topics.<sup>16</sup> The survey of loans in a sample of typical urban and rural mass libraries in 1976 found that 11% of members borrowed material on marxism-leninism, 16% took books and journals containing CPSU documents and material on party history, 10% borrowed politics, 8% borrowed economics, 13% law and government, 35% history and 6% education.<sup>17</sup> These surveys all show the predominance of history in readers' preferences.

### The activists

The figures given by these surveys cover both people reading non-fiction material about the social sciences and current affairs out of general interest in the subject, and those who read for instrumental, utilitarian motives. Many people have to keep up-to-date with economic and political developments in the USSR because of their work (e.g. managers, planners, officials), their party commitments or because of their voluntary work, for instance as delegates to local soviets. Many people read material required for political education programmes. For instance, the mid-1960s study of industrial workers found that 30% of the workers and 57% of the engineers and specialists borrowed social science material in connection with party work, lecturing, seminars, etc.<sup>18</sup> In the small towns study, it was found that over four fifths of Party and Komsomol activists, adult education lecturers and those with voluntary work commitments read books and articles on the social sciences (broadly defined), compared to only just over a quarter of those who did not need to use social science material in this instrumental way.<sup>19</sup> At the time of the survey, half the books and articles being read by such 'activists', together with students using this material for their courses, consisted of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, party and government documents, and instructional material.<sup>20</sup> An earlier study (1963) of workers borrowing books from the trade union library of a Moscow bearings factory found that Party and Komsomol members accounted for well over half the social science books borrowed, although they constituted only a fifth of the workers surveyed.<sup>21</sup>

Given the prominence of activists in reading social science books, particularly those on politics and marxism-leninism, it is not

surprising that Party and Komsomol activists, adult education lecturers, delegates to local soviets, etc., are the heaviest readers of journals such as Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie, Partiinaya zhizn', Agitator, Kommunist and Novoe vremya.<sup>22</sup> Students read these journals too, but chiefly for their political education classes. Other readers find them too complex and inaccessible.

Some examples of readers who use social science material for their political and voluntary work may be illuminating. For instance the secretary of the shop Komsomol organisation in a Novocherkassk factory reported that he read a lot about the Komsomol in order to improve the work of his organisation. One book had helped him distribute Komsomol duties in the best way, and when he had had to run a seminar on industrial design he made heavy use of books on the topic, such as How the machine became beautiful by V. Brodskii. Another man, a mechanical engineer from Chelyabinsk, was doing voluntary work with the local militia on preventing juvenile delinquency. To help him in this, he read books by Lenin, Krupskaya, Kalinin and Dzerzhinskii on young people and how to bring them up.<sup>23</sup>

In the study of the Gor'kii Automobile Works which concentrated on the workers' interest in reading Lenin's works, a Komsomol activist wrote:

I often have talks with young workers in our section who want to become members of the Komsomol. I'm helped by lots of books about young people, their tasks and role in life. But my favourite, the most important of these books, the first work I turn to, is V.I. Lenin's speech at the Third Komsomol Congress. I consider it a programme for life, a book which every young man and young woman should have with them constantly.<sup>24</sup>

Another young Komsomol activist related how she had first read Lenin's 'Tasks of the Youth Union' when she first went to work at the factory:

I was struck by how simply and accessibly Vladimir Il'ich told young people about their most important task - to learn, learn, learn. Learn to understand life. Learn to work. Learn to build communism. I want to get this book through to everyone, so that everyone understands how important the thoughts of our leader and teacher are, and follows his teaching.<sup>25</sup>

However, not all Party members are keen readers of socio-political literature - a study in 1969-70 of workers in four industrial cities found that, despite the intensive propaganda of Lenin's works leading up to the centenary of his birth, a third of the people who read nothing by Lenin over the year were in fact Party members.<sup>26</sup>

Generally, though, it seems reasonable to assume that most Party and Komsomol members, as well as people involved in voluntary work, teaching adult education courses or involved in the work of local soviets are heavy users of social science materials, and that their interest in this type of material is far from typical of average readers.

#### Social science journals

The 'social science' journals which most people read are not the serious political and economic journals familiar to scholars of Soviet studies in the West. The most popular magazines and newspapers in this area are the two general magazines for women, Rabotnitsa and Krest'yanka, and the humour and satire newspaper Krokodil. Rabotnitsa is directed at urban women, Krest'yanka at peasant women. Both are a mixture of practical advice on home care, sewing, cookery and child-raising, combined with short stories and poems and articles on current political, economic and social problems. There are often features about successful Soviet women, providing a rather different role model to that advanced by British women's magazines.<sup>27</sup> One woman, a worker who had not completed secondary school, spoke of why she liked

Rabotnitsa and Krest'yanka:



I'm a woman, and it's always interesting and useful to read our own magazines. There are lots of interesting articles about everyday life, moral issues, the family, bringing up children'.<sup>28</sup>

Another general journal popular with ordinary readers is Smena. A fitter, asked about the kind of articles he liked to read, commented on a recent article in this journal which had told the story of an ordinary lad who had saved the harvest from fire, but had died of his burns.<sup>29</sup> Such comments suggest that many Soviet readers use popular 'socio-political' magazines in much the same way as do British readers of women's magazines and the popular general weeklies - for practical help in caring for a family, an interest in 'true life' dramas, a need for role models, general curiosity about the world, a desire for entertainment and relaxation. However, it must be remembered that the content of the magazines is generally more demanding and serious than that of parallel British publications.

### History

History is the largest single element in the reading of books and journals in the social sciences. It is particularly popular with older people and the less educated, but for every age, educational and professional group it appears to be the most important element in their reading of social science books and journals.<sup>30</sup> The importance of history as an interest is particularly striking when data for reading non-fiction are combined with information on historical novels, especially on the War. For instance, 46% of rural readers in the major Lenin Library survey of the early 1970s read historical biographies and books on history, but combined with people who read novels and

stories about the Second World War, the October Revolution, the Civil War, etc., well over 70% had an interest in historical themes.<sup>31</sup> Another study in rural areas in the mid-1960s, which combined fiction and non-fiction, found that over half the women and 95% of the men read material on the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> A study in 1969-70 of workers in four cities, which concentrated on socio-political literature, found that 95% of readers expressed an interest in history books, both fiction and non-fiction, and 74% of library users in the town had borrowed it. Many readers read heavily in this area - 39% of those surveyed had read over 10 history books in the previous year.<sup>33</sup> The strength of the interest in the Second World War revealed by the small towns survey has already been noted; the study of industrial workers in the mid-1960s also found that over half the workers and engineers surveyed read historical material, with the War the predominant theme.<sup>34</sup> In rural libraries, books on the War made up well over half the social sciences issues, and just about 10% of all books being read at the time of the survey were military memoirs or biographies.<sup>35</sup>

The popularity of books on World War II is not surprising, given its importance in Soviet history and its devastating impact on those who lived through it. Memoirs of leading generals, biographies, documentary accounts of a particular battle, the progress of a particular division, the partisans are all very popular with people who were directly involved in the War, whether in the front-line or working in factories and farms in the rear. A fitter who had read Marshal Zhukov's memoirs said:

'I fought alongside him. We took Berlin. You need to think over the events you took part in. You want to look at that period through someone else's eyes. It's now clear why they abandoned the cities, why everything happened the way it did...The role of the party in the war years is made very clear'.<sup>36</sup>

A woman metal worker who had read Smirnov's book about the siege of Brest in the early days of the war said:

'The book made a great impression on me. It shows us how our fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers fought and died, tells us about the heroic, splendid struggle of our people. How bravely and stubbornly they fought! Smirnov describes just how it all happened. A vague legend was transformed into real people, who became part of our lives, our friends. This book is one of the best documentaries.'<sup>37</sup>

Young people, who were not directly involved in the war, mainly read documentaries and journalistic accounts, rather than biographies and more detailed histories.<sup>38</sup> These books, although factual, are often gripping and full of incident, and must often be read more as adventure stories - thrillers even. However, they do usually have positive heroes and provide models of courage and steadfastness, and are therefore seen to play an important role in the political acculturation of young people and the instillation of patriotic values. The huge number of novels and non-fiction books being issued for the 40th Anniversary of VE day in May 1985 are evidence of the government's continued intention to provide people with plenty of books on the Second World War. Librarians, too, continually promote material on the war and pay particular attention to ensuring that children and young people are kept fully aware of the sacrifices made by their parents and grand-parents, and of their heroism.

The bulk of the remaining historical books people read in the 1960s and early 1970s were concerned with the Revolution and Civil War, and the early years of Soviet power. Many readers enjoyed biographies of early Soviet leaders published in the popular series 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei'.<sup>39</sup> There were also some readers interested in archaeology and local history.<sup>40</sup> It is quite likely

that more recently the interest in reading about pre-Revolutionary Russia has expanded, as more good popular works on medieval and Tsarist Russia have been published. This would link in with the increased interest in the Russian heritage and Russian culture, apparent in Soviet fiction in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, one publisher is trying to educate its readers by combining fiction and non-fiction in one volume. This is the successful series issued by Molodaya gvardiya called 'Istoriya Otechestva v romanakh, povestyakh, dokumentakh'. One volume of it, for example, combined Shukshin's enormously popular novel about Stenka Razin, Ya Prishel dat' vam volyu, with a little-known account of the period written by Grigorii Kotoshikhin, who had been in service to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich.<sup>41</sup>

Soviet readers are generally interested in Soviet history far more than in the history of foreign countries. The study of readers' preferences in socio-political literature found that up to four-fifths of the history books they borrowed were on the history of the Soviet period, although a quarter of respondents in this study did express interest in the history of other countries.<sup>42</sup> The study of young workers in 1963 draws a similar picture.<sup>43</sup> Although this reading pattern may be linked to the good supply of non-fiction books about World War II, the Revolution and Civil War, it is possible that another factor is accessibility. To read and enjoy books about the history of other countries requires a fair amount of background knowledge, which ordinary readers would not have acquired at school.

In publishing good, readable material on Russian and Soviet history, Soviet publishers both satisfy, on the one hand, the desire of the government and Party to promote patriotism, courage and other positive traits, particularly in young people, and, on the other, the desire

of many readers to find out more about the history of their country and, in particular, to read more about World War II, whether because of its impact on their own lives, or as a way of satisfying their taste for adventure and drama.

#### International affairs and foreign countries

A high proportion of Soviet readers mention an interest in reading about international affairs, but this interest is largely satisfied through reading newspapers and, to a lesser extent, journal articles. It seems that Soviet people are far more interested in international affairs and foreign countries than are average readers in the West, where foreign news is generally given little space, particularly in the popular press. This high level of interest can partly be explained by the fact that so few Soviet citizens have the chance to travel abroad, particularly outside the Eastern bloc. People are intensely curious about the capitalist countries in particular, partly because their way of life is so often compared with that of socialist countries and depicted in a negative light, partly because of the appeal of Western pop music and consumer goods. Also, Soviet people, especially those who experienced the last war, are fearful of a third World War, and so are intensely concerned about the intentions of the US in particular, and about the prospects for nuclear disarmament. Such interests in current affairs are, naturally, primarily satisfied through television, newspapers and journals.

There is comparatively scanty information about the reading of books and journals on foreign countries and international affairs, although from reading guidance articles for librarians we know what the government and party would like them to read. The Lenin Library's

study of industrial workers and specialists in the 1960s found that 21% of the workers and 27% of engineers and technical personnel read books and journals on foreign countries and international relations.<sup>44</sup> In small towns, 14% of library members borrowed books and journals in this area, and 7% of the social science books being read at the time of the survey were on international affairs or foreign countries.<sup>45</sup> The major rural reading survey does not provide separate information on reading books and journals in this area, but a study in the early 1970s in rural parts of Latvia found that nearly a third of library members read books about other countries.<sup>46</sup> It seems likely that with the improvement in publishing of popular books and pamphlets about foreign countries during the 1970s the proportion of people reading such material has increased. The small towns survey, for instance, where the number of people reading books in this area is rather small compared to the number of people who regularly read about international developments in the newspapers, found that people experienced considerable difficulty in either buying or borrowing books on foreign countries and international affairs.<sup>47</sup> The same was true of young workers in large towns in 1963.<sup>48</sup> Given this unsatisfied demand, it seems likely that when more books became available, people would choose to read them.

What sort of books and journals on international affairs and foreign countries do people read? The weekly newspaper Za rubezhom was mentioned in several surveys, but the more strident weekly news magazine Novoe vremya (published in English as New times) appears less popular. Journals such as Problemy mira i sotsializma would only appeal to activists. The study of industrial workers in the mid-1960s gives some information about books on foreign countries which people read. From the list provided, one gets the impression

that people are particularly interested in books on the USA and other Western countries, often written by Soviet journalists who have been based in the country. We are also told that

In connection with the rise of fascism, with the unmasking of intrigues by foreign spies, many books have been published calling on people to be more watchful, to fight against those who would instigate wars.

These books are very popular with all groups of readers<sup>49</sup> - not surprising, given that such books may well be quite racy in tone and give a fascinating insight into Western lifestyles and high society.

Books about life in the West published in the USSR are, to a greater or lesser extent, designed as part of the propaganda war against 'bourgeois ideology' and the idealised image of a free and prosperous capitalist world which enter the USSR through mediums such as the BBC, Radio Liberty, foreign tourists and publications from abroad. Librarians are encouraged to make full use of pamphlets issued by publishing houses such as Politizdat and Molodaya gvardiya, often in series such as 'Po tu storonu' (On the other side), 'Vladyki kapitalisticheskogo mira' (Rulers of the capitalist world) or 'Imperializm: sobytiya, fakty, dokumenty' (Imperialism: events, facts, documents).<sup>50</sup> A series of articles in the librarian's journal Bibliotekar in the early 1980s with the title 'We condemn imperialism' and 'In the front line of the ideological struggle' gave librarians indications of the kind of books and articles they should encourage their readers to use, covering such topics as apartheid in South Africa, lack of real freedom of the press, unemployment and corruption in the 'pop' world. I doubt whether such books are popular with ordinary readers, but they are probably much used by lecturers and party propaganda workers.

## Economics

Reading material on economics is not very widespread. The survey of industrial workers in the mid-1960s found that only 6% of workers borrowed books on economics; however the researchers felt that this was partly due to the shortage of good popular books and pamphlets on the subject.<sup>51</sup> Only 10% of the social science loans in Ostrogozhsk were for economics material, and in the rural reading survey only 7% of reader demand in libraries was for economics.<sup>52</sup> Much of this interest was linked to study courses or professional needs, as 53% of the material used was textbooks or specialist texts; only 28% of the economics items borrowed were popular or agitational works. A study of the time budgets of staff of a number of enterprises in Gor'kii in the early 1970s found that over a quarter of the engineers and technical personnel did not read economics literature at all - for women in this professional group, the percentage was even higher (over a third).<sup>53</sup> Even economists and planners do not always read economics literature - a study in the mid-1960s found that only 64% of them read Ekonomicheskaya gazeta or economic journals.<sup>54</sup> A more recent study of reader demand in a number of typical mass libraries found that only 8% of readers borrowed books and journals on economics.<sup>55</sup>

The CPSU Central Committee Resolution 'On improving workers' economics education' in 1971 was followed by increased publishing of popular economics literature, often in series of pamphlets such as 'Ekonomicheskie znaniya - trudyashchimsya' (Economic knowledge to the workers). There appear to be no nation-wide figures to show whether this has resulted in a real expansion in reading economics literature. However, libraries in Kursk oblast' in the late 1970s



did make great efforts to promote reading economics literature. They were hampered by poor library stocks - each raion library had on average only about 300 books on economics, and libraries in the oblast' lacked from 20% to 50% of the economics books and pamphlets recommended for rural libraries. They were however well stocked with serials - they all took Ekonomicheskaya gazeta, Ekonomika sel'skogo khozyaistva, Voprosy ekonomiki etc. After the librarians' attempts to encourage the reading of economics material, nearly 15% of the oblast's library members borrowed books and journals on economics.<sup>56</sup>

There has been a further increase in publishing popular economics literature with the introduction of new methods of labour organisation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as the 'Shchekino Experiment' and the 'Brigade System'. Librarians in trade union libraries, particularly in factories, have been encouraging the workers to read material on these innovations to help them understand and implement the new system. Quite possibly this will result in increases in the issue of such material, but not necessarily in the number of people who actually read economics books and articles!

### Politics

Although enormous amounts of material are published in the field of politics - including Marxism-Leninism, history of the CPSU, party and government documents - average readers do not generally read them out of choice. People satisfy their interest in current political developments mainly by reading the newspapers, listening to the radio and watching television; comparatively few readers follow this up by reading books and journal articles. As was shown earlier,

in the section on 'activists', the people who read political literature are, firstly, active members of the CPSU and Komsomol, delegates to local soviets and people involved in adult education work, and, secondly, people who need to study this material in connection with political education courses at work, school or college. This group sticks mainly to textbooks and study aids, and generally makes little use of the pamphlets and books on current political issues published for the mass reader.

Librarians are under constant pressure to improve their issue figures for publications on political questions and the history of the CPSU. It may be that, as these publications have become more sophisticated and more attractive in recent years, the number of people reading them has increased. However, it seems likely that the general reader remains largely indifferent to these publications.

#### Religion and atheism

Encouraging the reading of material on religion and atheism is another important part of the librarian's duties, although the amount of emphasis given to it varies according to the current official attitude towards the church and religion. There are few facts about how many people read such material; the study of young workers in 1963 reported very little interest in it,<sup>57</sup> and in the survey of industrial towns in the mid-1960s, about a quarter of workers reported reading books on religion and atheism. These included translated books such as Bertrand Russell's Why I am not a Christian, as well as popular Soviet anti-religious pamphlets.<sup>58</sup> In the major study of rural areas in the early 1970s, it was found that only 4% of the social science books being read at the time of the survey were in this field.<sup>59</sup>

Articles in the library press show the effort some librarians devote to promoting atheism, but there is little indication of how effective this is. It seems that whereas in the past believers would be pressed to borrow books denouncing religion, or journals such as Nauka i religiya, librarians are now expected to adopt a less direct approach, by encouraging religious readers to read widely, particularly books on science, philosophy and moral values. It is argued that this approach will promote a rational, scientific world view and so 'squeeze out' religious belief. In some libraries, files are maintained on religious families.<sup>60</sup> Individual readers are encouraged to get interested in atheist books. For example, the staff of a library in Latvia knew of an elderly pensioner who was a believer. He visited the library rarely, and then only borrowed books on history. The librarians knew he loved plants, and started to send him notes about all the new books on plants and medicinal herbs. From this, he went on to enjoy more general books about natural history and, when the staff recommended it, took Yaroslavskii's The Bible for believers and non-believers. After that, he read copies of the annual Atheist Readings, aimed at ordinary readers, and continued to read widely, including atheist books.<sup>61</sup> However, the cynical Western observer may wonder whether he really did abandon his religion. Or did he just enjoy the preferential service earned by borrowing - but not necessarily reading - the books the librarians pressed on him?

It is quite possible that some anti-religious literature appeals to readers, particularly younger people, because it is irreverent and iconoclastic in tone, often satirical and comical in approach.<sup>62</sup> It may be enjoyed for its satire and humour, but have little impact on the reader's deeper religious beliefs.

### Other social science subjects

Reading non-fiction about the law does not appear to be very widespread, although there are a number of series of pamphlets designed for the general reader. However, the journal Chelovek i zakon was reported to be one of the most heavily read journals in rural libraries.<sup>63</sup> It is apparently held by most mass libraries in the country.<sup>64</sup> It is popular because of its combination of 'real-life' stories of crime and detection, discussion of social and legal problems, legal advice and fiction.<sup>65</sup> Recently, though, it has come under attack for its coverage, and has been accused of giving 'a distorted picture of the ethical and legal principles characterizing our socialist society'.<sup>66</sup>

The study of reading in industrial towns in the mid-1960s found that about a quarter of workers and engineers and technical personnel read books and articles on philosophy. Many just read textbooks in connection with study courses, but there are others who borrowed Descartes and Spinoza.<sup>67</sup> None of the later surveys reported such large numbers reading philosophy. However, the researchers who carried out the "Sovetskii chitatel'" survey were confident that if more literature on philosophy for the general reader were published, it would find an audience.<sup>68</sup> More recently, Mysl' has started to issue a series called 'Thinkers of the past', which consists of biographies and summaries of the works of people such as Spinoza, Socrates, Hegel and Voltaire; this series is apparently popular with the readers.<sup>69</sup>

### The social sciences: conclusions

It would appear from this survey of the social science material which Soviet people read that their reading habits do not conform to

what Party ideologists would like. Despite the enormous number of books, pamphlets and journals on politics and economics which the USSR produces, most people do not read them. However, for a limited number of people - the 'activists' - reading such material is extremely important. Most people are keen to read lively and accessible accounts of life in foreign countries, well-written books on Russian history intended for the general reader, memoirs and books on World War II. There are many people, like readers in British public libraries, who enjoy biographies of a whole range of interesting people, whether prominent people in their own country or foreign notables. The dominant feature in reading in the social sciences, however, is the interest in current affairs and international relations, the curiosity about life outside the USSR, the need to know about developments within their own country. However, for most people newspaper articles, radio and TV satisfy this interest, without creating a need for the in-depth coverage available in books and journals.

#### GENERAL SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL LITERATURE

This section is concerned with reading general scientific and technical literature, whether out of a broad interest in developments in science and technology or for utilitarian reasons. The use of literature to help in one's work will be considered in the following section, although there is some overlap.

General scientific and technical literature includes not only material for the general reader on mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural history, the exploration of space etc., but also popular books and journals on medicine, hobbies, geography and travel. The reading of popular science and technology books and journals has not

been accorded as much attention as have the social sciences and work-related material in Soviet studies of reading preferences. However, familiarity with such literature is considered to be important in developing a scientific approach to life, encouraging people to take an interest in science and technology, and raising their general educational standards. Books and articles on science and technology written for the general reader are also used by specialists who wish to keep abreast of developments outside their own particular field, or are involved in inter-disciplinary work.

The Lenin Library's study of industrial personnel in major centres in the mid-1960s found that 81% of workers and 90% of engineering and technical personnel were interested in general scientific and technical literature, although only 64% of both groups actually read it during the survey period. However, over a quarter of the workers and nearly a third of the engineering and technical personnel read 3-5 books during the six-month survey period. As one might expect, better educated people and those with more skilled jobs tended to read this material most. Only among the least skilled workers did the interest in general scientific and technical material decline sharply in the older age groups.<sup>70</sup> The study of reading in small towns found that 74% of those surveyed were interested in this material. As in the earlier study, people with higher levels of education showed the most interest (91% of those with higher education, 74% of those with secondary education but only 41% of those who had only a primary education). 93% of specialists read general scientific and technical material, compared to 78% of employees, 71% of workers and only 49% of collective farmers.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, the study of reading in rural areas

found a slightly higher percentage of people overall interested in science and technology (79% of readers surveyed),<sup>72</sup> than did the small towns study; however, these figures appear to include people using work-related literature as well as those interested in science and technology in general. The study of mass library users borrowed books and journals on science and technology 'regularly', while only about a fifth never borrowed it. Age had little effect on borrowing levels, but education had a marked impact - over 40% of those with post-school education read it regularly.<sup>73</sup>

#### Range of interests

Some information is available on the subjects which people like to read about. The study of young workers in 1963 found, not surprisingly, that many used books on science and technology mainly in connection with part-time study courses. When they read books and articles in this field out of general interest, they tended to prefer material about the exploration of space, the peaceful use of atomic energy, and medicine.<sup>74</sup> Many also read for their hobbies, mainly radio and television construction, but there was also much interest in all forms of transport.<sup>75</sup> Only a small proportion were interested in reading about geography or plants and animals.<sup>76</sup> The study of industrial workers in the mid-1960s found a rather similar pattern. 13% of the workers and 17% of engineering and technical personnel borrowed mathematics, physics and chemistry, 8% and 6% took out material on space and rocketry, and 32% of workers but only 18% of engineering and technical workers read geographical material, mainly travel books. The workers tended to read more than the engineers in certain areas (such as maths), because the latter had had the

opportunity to study the subject at college. About two thirds of those surveyed used science and technology books and journals in connection with hobbies such as radios, cars and motorbikes or photography.<sup>77</sup> Curiously, this study does not report interests in medical literature. In the small towns study, however, material on medicine was the most popular sort of scientific literature, followed by travel, space, biology and gardening.<sup>78</sup> The study of rural areas in the mid-1960s found that few people read general material on science, although farmers did make use of journals and books in caring for their private plots.<sup>79</sup> The later large-scale study in rural areas found that 27% of readers who read material on science and technology read about nature, 27% about medicine, 36% used material on gardening, fishing, hunting, home maintenance and cooking, and 46% read general material.<sup>80</sup> However, a later comment on the same survey stressed that farmers' interests in science and technology were very utilitarian in character, with few people reading books and articles which would broaden their minds or raise their general educational level. They preferred books and, in particular, journals dealing with their hobbies or private plots, medicine, child care, household matters.<sup>81</sup>

### Newspapers

Newspapers are not a popular source of information on science and technology. In the small towns study, it was found that under a third of readers read the articles on science and technology in the newspaper.<sup>82</sup> Shlyapentokh in his study of the urban population in 1971 found that only 6% of those with 4-6 classes of education read articles on science, compared to 20% of those with secondary education;



however, even only just over a third of graduates read articles on science in the newspapers.<sup>83</sup>

### Journals

The most important format for reading about science and technology is the journal. In Ostrogozhsk, for instance, it was found that 68% of those who used science and technology material used only journals; 21% read both books and journals. In the survey towns generally, it was found that 84% of those reading material on science and technology at the time of the survey were reading a journal article.<sup>84</sup> The popularity of journals is not surprising, as they are the ideal medium for publishing articles on new developments and can include plenty of illustrations and diagrams. The USSR publishes a number of good popular science and technology journals. They are generally highly accessible, attractively produced and presented and varied in content. They combine articles treating subjects in some depth with short items, often humorously presented. Some also include science fiction (e.g. Znanie-sila) and more general articles on the world about us.

Probably the most important and widely read of these journals is Nauka i zhizn'. In the mid-1960s study of industrial towns, it was read by over a third of the workers, and nearly half the engineers surveyed.<sup>85</sup> In small towns, nearly a quarter of those who read science and technology material read this journal.<sup>86</sup> Some indication of its popularity is given by the fact that when the number of subscriptions to it were no longer restricted, the number of copies printed rose from 425,000 to 3,600,000 over a four year period.<sup>87</sup> Other popular journals on science and technology are Znanie-sila,

Vokrug sveta and Tekhnika - molodezhi; the latter is particularly popular with younger workers. Many readers also read journals relevant to their hobbies, such as Radio, Za rulem (Behind the wheel) and Konstruktor-modelist (Model-making); interest is particularly strong among younger people.<sup>88</sup> In rural areas and small towns, journals on gardening and bee-keeping are popular.

However, the single most important popular journal in the science and technology area is Zdorov'e. This is a slim monthly magazine on all aspects of medicine and healthy living, including child care, coping with stress, nutrition and marital problems as well as detailed information on coping with various diseases, preventative medicine, the organisation of health care and so on. It was read by nearly half of all those who read science and technology journals, according to the small towns study. Several other studies have indicated its importance.<sup>90</sup> However, few readers of Zdorov'e appear to follow up this interest by attending lectures on medicine and health or by watching TV programmes on the subject.<sup>91</sup> Studies in mass libraries show comparatively few people reading popular medical books, for example, only 12% in sample mass libraries in 1976.<sup>92</sup>

### Books

Between a quarter and a third of readers of general science and technology literature read books on the subject.<sup>93</sup> However, some readers read a lot of popular science books - for example, a fitter in Chelyabinsk read over 20 books on mathematics, physics and chemistry over a 10 month period. These included works on the history of mathematics, biographies of scientists, collections of mathematics, inventions and space.<sup>94</sup> However, other studies have suggested that

reading popular science books is often rather intermittent,<sup>95</sup> and that the books are often selected randomly and read by chance - often because they were brought home by another member of the family and happened to be at hand. Many people in the small towns survey who were reading science and technology books at the time of the survey had gone to the library in search of a novel, not found one they wanted, and had taken a popular science book only because it was recommended by the librarian or they noticed it on the returned books shelf. 72% of the science and technology books borrowed in the libraries of Ostrogzhsk were taken in this way, rather than as a deliberate choice.<sup>96</sup> It would be interesting to know whether the borrowers actually read such books, and whether they enjoyed them!

Use of books in the science and technology field is often utilitarian in aim - for instance using a cookery book for recipes, or a home encyclopaedia for hints on cleaning or dress-making. Many people use home reference books to help with gardening or caring for livestock, or for advice on hobbies such as photography or fishing.

There is evidence that some science and technology books intended for the ordinary reader demand too high a standard of education. A study by the Lenin Library of ten years' output of popular science books found that a third presented difficulties even to people who had completed their secondary education.<sup>97</sup> Some series, apparently intended for the general reader such as the 'Novoe v zhizni, nauke, tekhnike' series issued by the publishing house Znanie, or the 'Popular science' series put out by the Academy of Sciences' publishing house, Nauka, were in fact only suitable for highly skilled workers, specialists or lecturers preparing talks on scientific themes for general audiences.<sup>98</sup> Ordinary readers tended to prefer books which were more like fiction in

their layout and style, such as many travel books and biographies in the series 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei'.<sup>99</sup> There are frequent calls for authors and publishing houses to pay more attention to the level and presentation of popular science books.

There is also a real shortage of reference books in this area. People want to buy books on cookery, home maintenance, gardening, medicinal herbs and so on for themselves, but, as was shown in the discussion of the 'book deficit', the production of such home reference books is insufficient to meet demand. Libraries too are often insufficiently stocked with such material. In the small towns study, for instance, it was found that of nine books on medicinal herbs (a very popular subject in the USSR) only two had reached Ostrogozhsk. All copies of one were bought by educational establishments in the town, and so were not available to the ordinary reader. Only three copies of the other book reached the town, and they were all snapped up by individuals. So the town's mass libraries had none.<sup>100</sup> Significantly, in rural areas far more librarians (59%) complained of shortages of popular science books than reported shortages of fiction.<sup>101</sup>

### Conclusions

For many people, reading about science and technology means reading journals, predominantly the popular health magazine Zdorov'e and the general (but often high quality) science and technology journals. Far fewer ordinary readers, mainly the better educated, go on to develop their rather vague interest in 'How to keep healthy' or 'What's new in science' by reading more specialist articles or books. The reading of books on science and technology intended for the general reader is also restricted by shortages of suitable books at the right level.

As in Britain, many people who do use books and journals in the broad area described as science and technology do so not so much out of a desire to improve their general knowledge, but for practical ends, such as cooking and gardening, or for hobbies.

#### WORK-RELATED READING

Promoting work-related reading - usually called 'special' or 'professional' reading in the Soviet sources - is given high priority by Soviet librarians in their work with readers. All groups of workers - from doctors and engineers through to shop floor workers, sales assistants, shepherds and farm labourers - are expected to read books and journals related to their work. Reading literature about one's job, trade or profession is considered to be an indication of a positive socialist attitude towards one's occupation, part of being a conscientious Soviet worker. Self-education through reading is an important element in the continuing professional development expected of all Soviet workers. Ordinary workers are expected to use their free time for study courses to a far greater extent than in the UK. In addition, there are programmes of in-service training for all sorts of trades and professions. For some professions, regular attendance at such courses is a requirement. Many workers benefit from participation in training courses, as a higher skill grading means better pay.

There are several different types of work-related reading. First, people may read textbooks and set texts as part of formal study programmes. These may be correspondence courses, or evening classes run locally, perhaps by the factory at which the reader is employed. The material being read may be designed to give the necessary training

for advancement up the skill ladder, or provide broader knowledge about a particular industry or profession. Secondly, outside these organised programmes, people are expected to read to keep up-to-date with developments in their trade or profession, to refresh their basic theoretical and practical knowledge. In particular, they are expected to find out about new developments in their field, study reports of new working practices, new labour-saving devices, methods of conserving energy and scarce resources and so on, which they can introduce into their own work-place. People also turn to books and journals when they have to move into some new area of activity or solve a problem at work, or when they need to prepare for conferences and seminars. Finally, 'work-related reading' also includes consulting reference works to deal with everyday queries - such as a secretary checking the correct spelling of a word in a dictionary, a chicken farmer looking up feed mixes or a turner checking measurements in a pocket handbook.

Considerable emphasis is placed on producing the right sort of 'mass' work-related journals, textbooks and popular pamphlets which will interest and teach ordinary workers and farmers. Librarians are constantly exhorted to improve the 'propaganda' of technical and agricultural literature, to ensure that everyone - not just engineers, doctors and agronomists, but also milkmaids, clerks and train drivers - reads material that will help them do their job better.

How successful are they? This research is mainly concerned with 'mass' readers, and so will not discuss in detail the work-related reading of specialists (engineers, doctors, teachers etc.).<sup>102</sup> Like professional people everywhere, Soviet specialists do make heavy use of books and journals for their work. The Lenin Library's study of engineering and technical personnel in major industrial centres found

that virtually all of them made use of this material,<sup>103</sup> and the small towns study found that 99% of teachers, 91% of medical personnel and 86% of engineering and technical personnel and agricultural specialists did.<sup>104</sup> A large-scale study of readers in factory libraries found that over 90% of specialists borrowed work-related material, and most of those who did not borrow had specialist books and journals at home.<sup>105</sup>

A study of factories in Gor'kii in the early 1970s drew a rather less rosy picture of work-related reading by engineering and technical personnel - under a third read specialist books and journals regularly, and a fifth admitted never reading them.<sup>106</sup> In rural areas, even the more qualified groups read work-related literature less than comparable urban groups - the major Lenin Library survey of rural reading in the early 1970s found that nearly a quarter of specialists did not read it at all.<sup>107</sup>

The extent to which ordinary workers and farmers read work-related literature is closely linked to educational level and the nature and content of their job. Reading surveys consistently report that the more skilled a person is, the more likely he or she is to use books and articles relating to their work. Unskilled factory workers, and field workers on the farms (especially the women) read it least.<sup>108</sup> Skill levels are of course closely related to education, but detailed studies in Estonia in the 1960s and 1970s concluded that the content, character and complexity of a person's work had more influence on reading work-related literature than did educational level.<sup>109</sup> It is also true, though, that the higher a person's existing educational level or skill grading, the more likely they are to feel the need to upgrade their skills and the easier it will be for them to maintain the habit of continuing education.<sup>110</sup>

The findings of most of these surveys suggest that ordinary workers mainly use work-related literature in order to raise their qualifications or to check a particular fact; the number who read generally in order to keep abreast of developments in their field is rather more limited. For this reason, the material used tends to be textbooks and technical documentation, or handbooks and manuals, rather than specialist journals or popular pamphlets.<sup>111</sup> Thus, in the study of industrial workers only a third of those who used work-related literature read journals such as Mashinostroitel' or Neftyanik.<sup>112</sup> In small towns, only 18% of workers and 42% of employees read journal articles related to their work; in fact, a number of these came from more general journals such as Za rulem (Behind the wheel - a journal for drivers), rather than specialist journals. An exception to this were builders, who read their own newspaper, Stroitel'naya gazeta, and a popular trade journal Stroitel' (The Builder). Shop workers mainly used the trade newspaper Sovetskaya trgovlya and, to a lesser extent, Novye tovary, an illustrated monthly describing new products.<sup>113</sup>

Some workers do make heavy use of books. A study over two years at the Rostsel'mash factory library found that only under 10% of readers did not borrow any work-related books, and a similar proportion borrowed 8-10 items. Many of those, particularly the younger workers, who did not borrow work-related literature turned out to have it at home.<sup>114</sup> To give an example of one keen user of professional books: a lathe operator from Dzerzhinsk wrote: 'I always enjoy reading all that's new about lathes and about progressive working methods, as I use some of these improvements in my own work'. He had read 21 books on lathes and metal working in six months. He read methodically,



using bibliographies, and purchased reference books for his own home library.<sup>115</sup> Such readers are, however, unusual.

The situation is rather different in rural areas, where journals appear to be more important than books. The major study of rural reading in the early 1970s found that the number of people who read journals for their work was double the number who used books.<sup>116</sup>

This rather unexpected finding can be partly explained by the lack of suitable books in rural libraries; they are particularly short of material for unskilled and semi-skilled farm workers.<sup>117</sup> As a result, there are not enough textbooks and handbooks for farm workers.

(Specialists probably have their own.) Journals, on the other hand, are not in short supply and are delivered to the reader's home. A surprisingly high proportion of rural families - about a quarter - subscribe to a work-related journal. However, only three quarters of rural specialists, and only a quarter of other workers in rural areas, actually read work-related journals.<sup>118</sup> Also, it seems that the 'mass' journals published for some groups of farm workers are particularly well attuned to their readers' needs - the tractor drivers' journal Sel'skii mekhanizator has been particularly praised.<sup>119</sup>

### Conclusions

Although educational level and the content and nature of one's work clearly influence the extent of a person's commitment to reading about his or her work, a number of other factors are involved. For instance, people in different jobs have varying opportunities for introducing new ideas and new work methods. Field workers, it is suggested, read very little partly because the nature of their work gives them far less scope for initiative and personal responsibility

(and credit for achievements) than, say, a tractor driver. If an engineer or an agronomist wants to introduce a new idea, it may involve getting the plan changed or acquiring special equipment; a doctor, on the other hand, can often change treatment methods without encountering these external constraints and so has more incentive to read professional literature in order to innovate.<sup>120</sup> Workers and engineers involved in rationalisation and innovation schemes are particularly heavy readers of technical literature, presumably because they too expect to be able to introduce into their work some of what they learn through reading.

The researchers who were involved in the major sociological studies of reading in the 1960s and 1970s all suggest that the reading of technical and agricultural literature would increase if more suitable material were available. They point to the popularity of the journals for tractor-drivers and for builders, mentioned above, as proof that working people in 'mass' professions do read accessible, interesting and relevant journals where they are available. There are frequent calls for more detailed, practical and clear textbooks and manuals. It is also possible that insufficient work-related material is available in languages other than Russian, which would particularly hinder the spread of such material in the non-Russian parts of the USSR.

In general, one has the impression that the level of interest in work-related books and journals is high in the USSR compared to the West. However, to some extent this is due to the demands of the education and training system in the Soviet Union. As in the West, it is mainly professional people who are sufficiently interested in their work to read broadly in their own time; most people in other groups either read because it is required for courses for promotion, or in response to immediate practical needs.

ART AND SPORT

Some information is available on the reading of literature about the arts and sport. The major study of industrial workers in the 1960s, and the study of young workers in 1963, both found that about a third of those surveyed read books or journals on the arts. The most popular journals were Sovetskii ekran, Iskusstvo kino, Teatral'naya zhizn' and Teatr. Overall, books and journals on the cinema were by far the most important element in reading about the arts, although a small number of people also used material in connection with amateur theatricals, choirs, etc.<sup>121</sup> In rural areas at the same period it was found that few people read about the arts at all.<sup>122</sup> The large scale study of rural reading in the early 1970s found that interest in the arts was concentrated in the better educated and more skilled groups in the population.<sup>123</sup> In the newspapers, people generally ignored items about cultural events in the cities, such as new plays or art exhibitions, but did read reviews of new films and other articles about the cinema. This is obviously because they have a better chance of seeing new films than getting to new exhibitions or plays. Journals were more popular, notably Sovetskii ekran; however, only a third of rural libraries subscribed to any arts journals at all. Many people read articles about the arts in magazines such as Rabotnitsa and Sel'skaya molodezh'. Reading books on the arts was largely limited by the poor selection available in rural libraries, but biographies such as those in the series 'Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudei' and 'Zhizn' v iskusstve' were very popular.<sup>124</sup> A later sample survey of library issues in urban and rural areas in 1976 found that 14% of library users borrowed material on the arts during the year.<sup>125</sup>

There is little detailed information on reading about sport in the USSR. The study of young workers in 1963 found that 37% of workers and 26% of engineering and technical personnel liked to read about sport, and the level of library requests for material on sport was fairly high.<sup>126</sup> The 1976 library survey reported that 7% of library users borrowed books and journals on sport,<sup>127</sup> but other studies of reading do not give so detailed a break-down. Probably most sports fans content themselves with the newspaper devoted to sport, Sovetskii sport, and the sports sections of other newspapers. However, in recent years - particularly at the time of the 1980 Moscow Olympics - the production of popular literature about sport and sports stars has been stepped up, and readers have probably increased as a result.

#### READING NON-FICTION: SOME CONCLUSIONS

Reading non-fiction books is a minority pursuit in the USSR, as it is in Britain. Most adults learn about the world about them from newspapers and magazines, or from TV and radio, rather than from books.

People's preferences in non-fiction books are in many ways similar to those of British readers. In the USSR, for instance, biographies are very popular, whether of artists, scientists or statesmen. In both countries, there is a large audience for good popular books on historical themes. There are similarities in the use of home reference works - cookery books, DIY manuals and so on, and in the use of manuals and handbooks in the work-place. In both countries, women's magazines occupy a prominent place in the reading habits of adult women. There is no British magazine on health which is as important as Zdorov'e is in the USSR. Soviet readers also benefit from the range

of serious but accessible science and general knowledge magazines published in the USSR; there appears to be no British equivalent to Nauka i zhizn', for example.

Soviet readers differ from British readers in the priority they give to international news and developments in foreign countries in their newspaper reading, and in their sustained interest in life in other countries. This thirst for information about foreign countries must partly stem from their lack of opportunities for foreign travel. Another area of difference is the importance attached to work-related reading in the USSR; it seems unlikely that ordinary British workers spend as much time reading about their trade or the industry in which they work as Soviet workers do. Soviet readers are also expected to devote a proportion of their time to reading political and economics literature; however, the information assembled in this chapter confirms that most people are largely indifferent to books and journals on these subjects. They are read intensively by a small group of committed activists and a larger group of unwilling students.

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CHAPTER EIGHTREADING FICTION

This chapter is concerned with what the Russians call 'belles lettres' - novels, short stories, poetry and drama. To the English speaker, the term 'belles lettres' sounds somewhat pretentious. However, to refer to imaginative writing just as 'literature' can be ambiguous - one also refers to 'social science literature' or 'medical literature'. For this reason, the term 'fiction' will often be used in this chapter, even though it does not normally include drama and poetry.

SOURCES

There is a great deal of information about what novels and types of fiction people like. However, much is of limited value. Many surveys set themselves the goal of demonstrating the high cultural level of the ordinary Soviet worker or farmer, and the questions asked tend to elicit responses which support this view. For instance, given the high prestige of the Russian classics in the Soviet Union, and their extensive coverage in the school syllabus, most readers will reply 'yes' if asked directly if they like Pushkin, Tolstoy and Chekhov. It would be very 'uncultured' for a Russian to admit to being indifferent to Pushkin!<sup>1</sup> This results in some overstatement of the popularity of the classics. Many responses are in stereotyped language, clearly reflecting what people were taught at school about a famous writer. For instance, in the rural reading study a third of those who claimed they read pre-Revolutionary Russian works could not name a single author or title in this category. The researchers suggest that this is because they had not, in fact, read any since they left school.<sup>2</sup> Clearly if people are asked to name their favourite authors, they may well just rattle off

the names of Russian and Soviet classics studied at school, plus a couple of other famous writers. People who read for entertainment and relaxation, who just want 'a good read' often do not remember the names of writers. In the same study, a third of the people who said they read modern Soviet literature could not in fact name any individual authors or titles. The researchers suggest that this does not mean that they do not in fact read such novels; rather that their reading is so superficial that they do not remember details such as authors and titles.<sup>3</sup> The small towns study found a similar picture.<sup>4</sup> This means that surveys which ask for lists of favourite authors will tend not to reflect the true pattern of reading, as readers will have forgotten the names of authors who write undistinguished but enjoyable detective or love stories.

However, if people are given a list of genres (detective stories, about love, about the War, etc.) and asked to indicate those they like best, they are likely to indicate more genres than if they were just asked to state their preference without prompting. This approach was used in the Lenin Library's rural reading study. It is possible though that more people would tick detective stories if they were on a questionnaire than would volunteer that they liked them, because such escapist reading is rather frowned upon. On the other hand, the small town study asked people to name the book they were currently reading, the last book they read, and the book they planned to read next. While this method gives a more accurate picture of actual reading, it does not take into account the extent to which reading habits are distorted by problems of supply. What people are actually reading may well not be what they would choose to read.

Other studies are library based, and use library issue statistics as a guide to reader preferences. While this method is informative, it has the drawback that it tends to be restricted to the more active readers (about half the USSR's adult population do not use mass libraries). Also, particularly in recent years, library stocks have been shown to be lacking in many of the most popular books. Ideally, analysis of library issues should be combined with analysis of 'refusals' and reservation lists. Library issue statistics may well also underestimate the extent of reading of the classics, as people tend to buy the classics - Russian, Soviet and foreign - for their home libraries, their children.<sup>5</sup> Books borrowed from friends and colleagues, and one's own books, are as important as library books in supplying reading matter.

Many other studies, on a smaller scale, are carried out by librarians or writers' organisations. These are often concerned with showing how well local cultural organisations are working, and generally tend to paint a very rosy picture. Often one or two readers whose reading habits are exemplary will be described at length, with the implication that they are typical of the readers at large; such studies arouse scepticism. As ordinary Soviet readers pay very little attention to literary criticism, it can not be used as evidence of what people actually read, or what they would like to read. Rather, it indicates what other people think they should read.

There have been two studies by Western scholars which have looked at Soviet readers' tastes in modern Soviet fiction. Klaus Mehnert, a very experienced German journalist, born in Moscow before the Revolution, visited the Soviet Union three times in 1981-83 in order to talk to book-lovers about their favourite books. He talked to a wide range of



people about the books they liked, drew up lists of favourite authors, and asked ordinary readers, librarians and book-sellers to mark the most popular names. He met with a warm and enthusiastic response from ordinary readers and from professionals. On the basis of these interviews, he drew up a list of the 24 favourite modern Soviet authors, which was broadly similar to those produced by the Lenin Library's studies. Mehnert then read all the books recommended to him and in many cases interviewed their authors too. He then describes each author, his life and his approach, and summarises his major or most popular novels and stories, conveying the flavour of the book, its plot and characters. He concludes with an impressionistic but perceptive analysis of why particular books are popular.<sup>6</sup> Mehnert's approach yields many valuable insights, which have been drawn on in preparing this chapter. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that his respondents have tended to concentrate on 'good' books - even the detective stories, thrillers and science fiction mentioned are all by acknowledged masters of these genres, who write books which have gained the approval of the critics as well as of the ordinary reader. Maurice Friedberg, in a report which unfortunately does not appear to be generally available,<sup>7</sup> made a particular study of books which ordinary readers liked in the late 1970s. Unlike Mehnert, he approaches the issue as a literary scholar, and is rather more cynical about Soviet readers' tastes. His work too has been most useful.

Nevertheless, despite the insights which these Western studies provide, the main source of information on Soviet readers' tastes in literature will be the detailed large-scale studies carried out by the Lenin Library. They often draw a far from rosy picture of readers' preferences and appreciation of literature, and are frequently very candid about the problems of book supply and the quality of books

published. Although their findings need to be interpreted with care, they can be used to provide a reasonably honest picture of readers' tastes in fiction.

#### WHO READS FICTION?

For most Soviet readers, reading a book is virtually synonymous with reading a novel. A very high proportion of the Soviet adult population do read fiction, although not always very regularly. Both the study in small towns and the large-scale study of rural readers in the early 1970s found that around 90% of readers read fiction.<sup>8</sup> Reading fiction is popular in all social and educational groups, with men and women and people of all ages. There are differences between groups, some of which were explored in chapter 5. People with a lower standard of education, for instance, are more likely to have stopped reading novels when television became available, and are more likely to read fiction to the exclusion of other types of book. On the other hand, the most highly educated groups, and people in demanding professions, may well read novels less than the average, because they have to spend more time on work-related reading. Soviet researchers appear to pay very little attention to differences between men and women in their reading of novels. However, the time budget studies discussed in chapter 5 do suggest that young women read novels far more than young men do. Older women spend less time reading than do men, but are more likely to pick up a novel than the newspaper when they do have time to read. Differences in the genres they choose to read have apparently not been much researched.

Young people tend to read fiction more than do older people - not only because they have more leisure time, but also because the functions of fiction are different at that stage of the life-cycle. Young people use novels and short stories as a 'textbook for life' (uchebnik zhizni) far more than older people do. Interestingly, though, there have been suggestions in the Soviet press that young people today are reading less fiction than they did in the past. Various explanations are advanced for this. One is that young people are discouraged by the poor supply of the novels they want to read - in one study, it was found that two thirds of the teenagers who asked for a specific novel in their local library were refused it. Another factor is the pressure on young people to do well at school and get into university - under this sort of academic pressure, novels become merely something one has to read in order to pass the literature exam. Other young people only want to read material of immediate practical benefit, and reject novels, short stories and poetry which would aid their emotional maturity and their aesthetic development. Another commentator suggests that 'satiety' is to be blamed, apparently meaning by this the notion that if people are well supplied with material goods they are less concerned about the spiritual, moral and ethical issues raised in good imaginative writing.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, young people almost certainly do still read more than older generations.

#### WHAT NOVELS DO READERS PREFER?

People's preferences in fiction can be approached either by looking at the genres they read - detective stories, historical novels, science fiction, etc., or by classifying authors by their period and origin, i.e. into the pre-Revolutionary classics, foreign novels (modern and/or classical), Russian Soviet and non-Russian Soviet. The various studies provide varying degrees of information on readers' preferences according

to these classifications. This chapter will consider, first preference according to period and origin ('type' of novel) and secondly by genre, Obviously the two classifications overlap.

There are four major surveys which provide information on adults' reading preferences. These are the Lenin Library's study of industrial workers and professionals in major industrial centres and of peasants and students in 1965-67, the RSFSR small towns study of 1969-71, the rural study of 1973-75 and a USSR-wide longitudinal study of mass library membership and issues, which started in 1975. The first three studies make use of survey data; the fourth is of course restricted to library users. It would have been useful to have had access to the results of the massive study of Soviet urban workers' reading habits recently completed by the Lenin Library, but so far only snippets of information appear to be available.

The findings of the four surveys relating to the type of novel people read or say they prefer to read are set out in table one. Although the results of the four surveys are not directly comparable, given the differences in the conduct of each study, a reasonably consistent picture emerges. In all four, Soviet fiction is clearly the most important element. Foreign novels took second place in three of the studies, but were in last place in rural areas. Books by non-Russian Soviet authors were more important in rural areas; this can be explained by the fact that this survey included eight union republics in addition to the USSR, whereas the others concentrated on the Russian Republic.

Table One. People who read each type of novel; four major surveys (in %)

|                             | Mid 1960s: Industrial centres <sup>1</sup> |               | 1969-71: small towns <sup>2</sup> |               | 1973-75: rural areas <sup>3</sup> |                | 1975-7: mass libraries <sup>4</sup> |      |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|------|
|                             | Workers<br>Survey                          | Issue<br>data | Survey<br>data                    | Issue<br>data | Ostrogzhsk<br>bases               | Other<br>bases | RSFSR                               |      |
| Pre-Revolutionary<br>Russia | 70   | 22            | 70                                | 16            | 10                                | 10             | 28                                  | 25   |
| Soviet Russian )            |  | 89            | 72                                | 89            | 65                                | 62             | 64                                  | 85   |
| Other Soviet )              |  |               |                                   |               | 9                                 | 9              | 21                                  | 44   |
| Foreign classics            | 60   | 38            | 63                                | 22            | 11                                | 13             | )                                   | )    |
| Modern foreign              | 39   | 47            | 39                                | 65            | 5                                 | 6              | ) 18                                | ) 49 |

Notes: only the percentages for small towns in column two add up to 100%.

1. From: Sovetskii chitatel': opyt konkretno-sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya. M., 1978, p. 93. Survey data - people's responses when asked directly if they read certain types of novel. Issue data - from mass libraries in the survey towns. Percentage of readers who borrowed each type of book.
2. From: Kniga i chtenie v zhizni nebol'shikh gorodov. M., 1973, p. 78. The percentages relate to the books respondents were actually reading at the time of the survey.
3. From: Kniga i chtenie v zhizni sovetskogo sela. M., 1978, p. 166; Kniga i chtenie v zhizni sovetskogo sela. Vyp. 7: Literatura po razlichnym otraslyam znaniya v chtenii zhitelei sela. M., 1975, p. 35. Respondents were asked to state which of these types of novels they most often read.
4. From p. 137 of Reitblat, A.I. 'Osnovnye tendentsii razvitiya massovogo chteniya v SSSR', in Tendentsii razvitiya chteniya v sotsialisticheskikh stranakh. M., 1983, pp. 119-145. This is a summary of several years' results of a detailed longitudinal analysis of urban and rural mass libraries' issues. Figures relate to percentage of readers who borrowed each type of book.

The figures on reading the Russian pre-Revolutionary classics are rather less clear-cut, but apart from rural areas, they appear to be the least read, although scoring well in terms of readers' stated preferences, as expressed in the survey data in column 1. People's choice of type of novel will now be discussed in more detail.

### Soviet fiction

These surveys show that people generally read Soviet fiction more than anything else. In the RSFSR (and certain union republics) this means works by Russians; reading books by non-Russian Soviet authors will be discussed later. Many people read only Soviet fiction, ignoring other types - over a third of those surveyed in small towns fell into this category. People in all socio-demographic groups read Soviet literature, although several studies suggest that better educated people tend to show a greater preference for it than do less educated groups.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately (but not unexpectedly) the surveys do not provide information about people who do not read Soviet fiction at all.

The popularity of Soviet fiction may surprise those who believe that it is all rather dull, didactic fare. Yet, as Vera Dunham has shown, even when Soviet literature was its most 'banal, dry and tendentious' in the period 1946-53, it did still mean a great deal to the reader. Topical novels were the main way in which ordinary readers could find out about the changing society about them and could think over ethical and moral issues. 'In this petrification, the novel substituted for the reader's sense of participation in the social process'.<sup>11</sup> In many ways, novels of this period were often quite unrealistically optimistic and gave a totally false impression of Soviet life. But, as Dunham wisely observes:

It can not be assumed that all readers objected to these lies. Some did, no doubt. Others did not. The thrust of such fiction brought solace. And there were those who craved hope more than they craved truth.<sup>12</sup>

Soviet fiction of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s is very different to that of the Stalin period. It takes far more account of people's desire to read for relaxation and entertainment. Not only is more light reading published. Although socialist realism is still officially dominant, the range of topics which can be discussed is now very wide, and many (but not all!) controversial issues are debated. Nevertheless, it continues to have a utilitarian as well as an aesthetic role in people's lives. Perhaps because of the importance of literature in the nineteenth century as a social messenger and organiser, fiction has traditionally played a significant part in debates about important issues in the USSR. It is possible to raise in novels, plays and poetry issues which can not be discussed frankly and openly in newspapers and magazines. Readers are still adept at reading 'between the lines'. Literature has a role in both moulding and expressing public opinion far beyond that which it plays in the West.

Soviet readers tend to use fiction as a 'textbook for life' (uchebnik zhizni). Modern Soviet novels help them to understand themselves, to find role models and compatible standards and values, and to understand the society around them and how it developed. They use fiction for the kind of information and understanding which people with different traditions find in popular sociological or psychological works. Many Soviet readers clearly like Soviet fiction because it is based on the kind of life they know, describes characters to whom they can easily relate, deals with

issues that are familiar to them. They want to read books which relate to their own experience of life. This they find in Soviet fiction, not in books by foreign (particularly Western) authors, or in the Russian classics. Typical comments on Soviet literature in the small towns study were: 'Soviet literature is closer to life, more truthful, gives a deeper account of how people live. It's our own!'<sup>13</sup> Some readers find it difficult to distinguish between real life and fiction, and treat characters in novels as if they were real. (This phenomenon is not of course restricted to the USSR, although in Britain it is most often observed in relation to television 'soap operas'). Shurtakov, for example, describes how one woman who read one of his stories believed the main character to be her feckless, defaulting husband and begged the author to tell her where her husband was; on another occasion he wrote a story from the first person about a son who abandoned his mother, and found that many intelligent and well-read acquaintances firmly believed that the story was autobiographical, and shunned him.<sup>14</sup> Several studies have suggested that Soviet readers are not as enthusiastic as Western readers about novels which take them right away from their everyday concerns into exotic settings, nor do they use novels purely for escapism to the same extent.<sup>15</sup> Mehnert suggests that Soviet readers may enjoy 'escapist' foreign novels, but that in Soviet novels 'because of their own experience of life, they feel drawn towards characters with problems even when reading for relaxation'.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, many readers do read Soviet novels mainly for entertainment and relaxation.



### Russian Classics

As the figures in table one show, Russian pre-Revolutionary literature (the Russian classics) appears to be read less than other categories of fiction, except in rural areas. Even in rural areas, it seems that actual reading is far lower than these figures imply. Column one of table one shows marked discrepancies between the number of people who say they read the classics and library issues recorded for the classics. Some of this discrepancy can be accounted for by the fact that people do tend to buy more classical than modern literature for their home libraries, and hence people are more likely to have personal copies of the classics, or to borrow them from friends. However, the low proportion of people actually reading the classics at the time of the small towns survey suggests that even when personal books are taken into account, actual reading of the classics does not approach the figures suggested by the survey data in column one of table one.

The Lenin Library surveys thus draw a rather different picture of Soviet readers' attitudes to the classics than that found in the work of a number of authoritative Western researchers of the Soviet literary scene, all of whom see the Russian classics as Soviet readers' preferred reading. Maurice Friedberg, in his Russian classics in Soviet jackets asserts:

Conversations with scores of Westerners who have visited the Soviet Union since Stalin's death support the conclusion one reaches from an examination of Soviet publishing statistics - the Russian classics continue as the favorite reading of Soviet citizens.<sup>17</sup>

Friedberg's views on the popularity of the Russian classics are partly based on his study in 1950-51 of the reading preferences of former Soviet citizens who did not return to the USSR after World War II. They

thus refer mainly to the later 1930s and early 1940s. He found that:

Russian classics were the most popular category among the belles lettres. They were read and re-read, sometimes for the third and fourth time, by old and young, university professors and collective farmers, engineers and labourers.<sup>18</sup>

He concluded that the Russian classics were popular partly as a means of escape from Soviet reality and partly for purely aesthetic reasons. Also, pre-Revolutionary authors were believed and trusted, unlike many of the Soviet writers discussed by the respondents.

For his 1962 study, Friedberg had no survey data on readers' preferences. He based his argument on an analysis of publishing figures and on comments and observations from Western visitors. He believes that the fact that modern Soviet literature is usually published in relatively small print-runs demonstrates that there is little public demand for it. The Russian classics, on the other hand, are published in large editions as so many people want to buy them for their home libraries. For instance, Pushkin and Leo Tolstoy have been published in millions of copies, while only Sholokhov of Soviet writers has been issued in really large editions.<sup>19</sup> However, it seems to me that to use print run as a measure of the real popularity of publications in the USSR is very unwise. Expected sales have only a limited effect on print-run in the USSR. Further, new Soviet works are often first published in journals, with the books following some time later. Overall, far more Soviet authors are published than classical, although the print runs are smaller. Inevitably, the classics, which have withstood the test of time, are likely to sell more copies than new novels, particularly by less well known authors. Further, many copies of the classics will be bought in connection with school work, for children to read, rather than by adults who intend to read them themselves.

Friedberg offers a number of explanations of why people in the USSR are fond of the Russian classics. First, the classics have traditionally been greatly loved and respected in Russia, and this tradition has been maintained throughout the twentieth century to a greater extent than in the West. Second, many people choose to read the classics because they find many features of Soviet literature distasteful. Friedberg characterises Soviet fiction of the 1950s and early 1960s as 'lower middle-class, pretentious, respectable and rather tedious'. As a result:

The serious reader who does not get any new Soviet literary fare that would appeal spiritually to him seeks refuge in the old books that were written on a much higher intellectual level, books that do not treat their audiences as children to whom everything must be explained, and whom one must constantly teach the virtues of hard work and devotion to one's country and its way of life (...) The discriminating Soviet reader rereads the masterpieces of the past and seeks out the less familiar and half-forgotten works and authors to get away from the intellectual adolescence and drabness of the great bulk of newer Soviet literature.<sup>21</sup>

He argues that many readers turn to the Russian classics because they are 'permeated with tolerance and understanding, compassion and pity', and deal with real moral problems. Readers can find in the classics an assertion of the value of the individual against the state, of people's 'right to fight for their little personal happiness, even if this conflicts with duties imposed on them from above'. Russian classics deal with the tragic elements in human destinies which Soviet fiction of that time did not.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, Friedberg concludes that the Russian classics are 'the spiritual mainstay of the more disaffected section of the population', although he notes that less serious-minded readers may prefer the classics simply because they find Soviet fiction so dull.

Paul Hollander, writing a little later, also asserts that the Russian classics are very popular, but sees them as being the favourite reading of a rather different group - rural readers, particularly older kolkhozniki, who enjoy them out of nostalgia for the past.<sup>23</sup> Gayle D Hollander, in her 1972 study of reading as part of Soviet political indoctrination, asserts that: 'the Russian classics are the most popular form of content'.<sup>24</sup> This assertion appears to be based on a limited number of studies of cultural preferences, including Gur'yanov's study of reading at a major Moscow factory. This study reported that Soviet novels were read far more than the Russian classics (3525 as against 301); however, when people were asked to name their favourite authors, they tended to list Russian classics. Hollander concludes from this that 'Undoubtedly this reflects the fact that Soviet books are more available to the reader, although they may not be as satisfying as the old favourites'.<sup>25</sup> However, as was noted earlier, asking people to name favourite authors always elicits high-status names well-known from the school syllabus. Unlike Paul Hollander, Gayle Hollander believes that the main adherents of the classics are people in urban areas. She suggests this may be a result of higher educational level or a family environment which encouraged reading the classics. People in rural areas generally became literate later than in towns, and for many of them the first books they encountered would have been by Soviet authors. Hollander also suggests that rural people place greater stress on wanting to read fiction which depicts their own way of life and speaks to them through their own experience.<sup>26</sup>

Klaus Mehnert, starting his study in 1981, found that:

there was not much point asking people to indicate their preferences among the Russian classics: they made three pluses after most of the nineteenth century authors on my list, only a few received less. Russians would read all of the old classics if they could get hold of them.<sup>27</sup>

Mehnert found that Pushkin, Tolstoy, Lermontov and Chekhov were the best loved of the classics; Dostoyevsky was less popular, partly, Mehnert suggests because he is harder to read and is also less known, having been under a cloud for many years. Mehnert argues that there are a number of factors which contribute to this affection for the classics. First, they are enjoyed for their beauty, harmony and elegance. Second, he argues that Russians are brought up at school to love the classics, unlike Western children nourished on comics and television. For this reason, Soviet people have a different attitude to the classics. Third, many of the best modern Soviet writers consciously write within the tradition of Russian classical literature, so 'a Russian is doubly exposed to his classics; first directly by reading them, indirectly by finding many of their traits reflected in the writings of contemporary authors'. Last, the values expressed by classical authors, the heroes they choose, their patriotism, all appeal to the modern Soviet reader.<sup>28</sup>

How can these views be reconciled with the findings of the studies carried out by Soviet researchers in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s? The Soviet studies will be considered in more detail below, but the following issues are relevant. First, do people read Soviet fiction because it is easier to obtain than the classics? Second, has there been a real change over time in reader preferences? Do both 'light' and 'serious' readers find more to satisfy them in modern Soviet fiction today than in the past? Third, is it simply that the prestige of the classics is high in the USSR, but people do not in fact read the books

which they hold in high esteem? Are the classics, as Mark Twain once said 'something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read'?<sup>29</sup>

The information to be gathered from Soviet studies on the reading of the classics is, inevitably, sometimes rather patchy. However, a reasonably consistent picture does emerge.

One of the first studies of reader requests carried out in the post-War period was organised by the Lenin Library in two libraries in Moscow and Novosibirsk in 1959. In both, relatively few readers asked for the Russian classics. In one, foreign books were the most popular, followed by Soviet novels and then the classics; in the other Soviet fiction was definitely the most popular, followed by foreign novels and then the classics. As these figures relate to demand and not to issues, they are likely to be less distorted by stock deficiencies than issue figures alone would be.<sup>30</sup> Gur'yanov in his study of workers at a Moscow ball-bearing factory in the early 1960s noted a high level of interest in the classics. At the same time, however, the proportion of people who had actually read Pushkin and Tolstoy turned out to be lower than in similar surveys of factory workers in the 1920s.<sup>31</sup>

The Sovetskii chitatel' study of the mid-1960s includes no detailed discussions of workers' engineers' and peasants' tastes in the classics. However, some of the typical readers' comments are revealing, showing that readers do value the classics for their use of language, their humour, skilled characterisation and so on. A gas worker from L'vov, for instance, said:

My appreciation of belles lettres has changed over the years and is still changing. While I was at school I read the Russian classics only out of duty, learnt off 'types and images' by heart without any interest. Rereading the Russian classics now, I felt great pleasure, above all from the works of such authors as Leo Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov.<sup>32</sup>

A 24 year old tractor driver with seven years' schooling commented:

When I was at school and we did Pushkin, I didn't like him, but then recently I came across him again and read him. It turned out that 'Onegin' was really good, and I read more. I liked his fairy stories, and then 'The tales of Belkin' - that was really interesting.<sup>33</sup>

However, it is clear that most of the books read fell into the category of Soviet literature.

The same study also examined students' reading preferences, in a wide range of vuzy across the USSR and in all subject areas. Students were clearly shown to prefer the classics to other types of novel, particularly Soviet fiction. 78% said they read pre-Revolutionary Russian literature, compared to only 56% for Soviet fiction, 59% for modern foreign works and 73% for foreign classics.<sup>34</sup> For many students, their interest in the Russian classics took the form of re-reading works they had read at school, but without any real interest or enjoyment. From their comments, it appears that while at school they were only interested in the story-line, but now appreciated the classics in a different way, exploring the thoughts, psychology and philosophy of the authors and their characters, the social conflicts portrayed, the moral issues raised.<sup>35</sup> Thus students appear to have rather different reading preferences to the rest of the population.

Students' interests also appear to be rather different from those of young workers. For instance, a small study of Leningrad public libraries in 1970-71 found that only 4% of the fiction borrowed was classical Russian. Many of these readers had lost interest in the

classics while still at school, and their 'reading autobiographies' showed that many had, in fact, never had much enthusiasm for the classics. Their indifference to the classics and ignorance about Russian pre-Revolutionary authors clearly worried the researcher, who argues that a knowledge and love of the classics is essential if readers are to develop a real aesthetic sense and fully appreciate modern authors.<sup>36</sup>

In the small towns study, when people were asked to name the books they were currently reading and the last book read, only 10% mentioned Russian classics.<sup>37</sup> The researchers comment that the proportion might have been still lower had films of Anna Karenina and War and Peace not recently been shown on TV or at the local cinema. The researchers compare this finding with those of earlier surveys which had reported that up to 80% of readers said they read Russian classics. They argue that this shows the importance of the question posed to people about their reading of the classics - few people will answer in the negative if asked directly if they read pre-Revolutionary literature or love Russian classical authors such as Pushkin and Tolstoy. The Russian classics still command great authority and love, although some people may pretend they feel this way because they fear it would lower their status in the eyes of the interviewer if they admit that they are, for instance, indifferent to Pushkin. However, this affection and respect does not mean that people actually choose to read the classics in preference to modern novels. Partly, people want to read books about the times they live in, about people like themselves. Also, they know that the classics will always be there, and they believe that they will one day get round to reading them. Meanwhile, new novels and stories are published every day, and people choose to devote their limited reading time keeping up-to-date.



The study of rural reading in 1973-75 does not provide much comment on reading the Russian classics, beyond the comment reported earlier in this chapter about people who said they liked to read the classics but could not in fact name any author or title in this category, presumably because they had in fact not read any since leaving school.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, figures relating to the classics from the Lenin Library study of urban workers in the 1980s are not yet available, but one of the researchers involved in the study has mentioned that only 5-6% of readers read the classics 'regularly'.<sup>40</sup> Another recent study (1978-80) looked at the attitudes of Soviet readers who were not ethnic Russians towards Russian literature, both classical and modern. The report shows that while people tended to mention pre-Revolutionary authors most often in their lists of favourite authors, most people actually read and planned to read Soviet books.<sup>41</sup> The 'top five' authors - Leo Tolstoy, Pushkin, Lermontov, Chekhov and Turgenev - are all included in the Russian literature syllabus of the republics studied, although a number of authors not on the school syllabus were also mentioned.<sup>42</sup> Although the report mentions that some rural libraries in the union republics are poorly supplied with the Russian classics, whether in Russian or in translation,<sup>43</sup> generally people who do not read Russian fluently are better supplied with the classics than they are with modern Soviet or foreign novels in translation.<sup>44</sup>

An analysis of these Soviet surveys does provide some explanation for the findings of the Western surveys described earlier. It does seem unlikely that people - in any case from the late 1960s onwards - do not read the Russian classics because they are harder to obtain than modern novels. Both Friedberg's publication figures and more recent complaints about library stocks suggest that the classics may

well be easier to find and read than modern Soviet novels and foreign fiction. Indeed, in recent years there have been suggestions that the market for many of the better known classical authors has been satisfied. It seems unlikely that poor availability plays an important part in the low levels of actual reading of the Russian classics. However, it is absolutely clear that the prestige of the Russian classics is very high, even among people who have not read a classical author since their school days. The enormous affection and respect for the classics certainly comes across to Western visitors. It is quite possible, though, that Westerners' views have been coloured by the limited range of Soviet citizens most of them encounter. Many foreigners have contacts mainly with students, and as the *Sovetskii chitatel'* survey showed, they have rather different preferences to those of the population as a whole. Further, Western visitors tend to attract people who are dissatisfied with the Soviet system, and are likely to express critical views of Soviet fiction, and admiration for foreign and pre-Revolutionary works, which are not shared by the population at large. For ordinary Soviet readers, though, it seems that while the classics are respected and loved, readers do not generally choose to read them in preference to new books.

At the same time, it is quite possible that there has been a real change in reader preferences over the post-War period. The classics may well have been far more important in the 1940s and early 1950s than they are now. Although even in those years Soviet fiction did satisfy some readers' needs, many people found Soviet literature dull and unrewarding. Readers then - particularly the more discriminating - probably did rely on the classics for aesthetically satisfying, thoughtful reading. But with the wider range of Soviet literature in the

1960s and 1970s, the greater concern for real moral issues and human values, the need to turn to the classics must be much less. Further, far more translated foreign fiction is now available, and this increases the range of non-Soviet fiction which can give variety to the Soviet reader.

An additional factor which may have reduced the reading of Russian classics by adults is the rise in educational standards. Before the war, many people received only minimal schooling, and the education of a whole generation of Soviet children was disrupted by the war. Clearly, these people would not have been exposed to the Russian classics at school to any great extent. Therefore, when they were adults, they might well want to fill in gaps in their education and read the classics for the first time. Friedberg suggests that the school syllabus concentrated on the Soviet classics, and that people went back to the pre-Revolutionary classics after school.<sup>45</sup> Nowadays, though, the school syllabus, even in non-Russian schools, devotes considerable attention to pre-Revolutionary classics. The way in which Russian literature is taught does not always nurture in children a genuine appreciation of the classics. However, it is quite likely that people who have had a better grounding in the classics while at school do not feel the same need to read them when adults as did people in earlier generations, who had not studied them at school.

As reader studies for the 1940s and 1950s are not available, these explanations for the different perceptions of the classics must remain speculative.

It does seem reasonable to conclude that while the status of the Russian classics is high, they are not much read by ordinary Soviet readers. However, the situation may well be different in intellectual and dissident circles.

### Foreign Books

Foreign novels - both by classical and by modern writers - are the second most popular type of novel in the USSR as a whole, with the exception of the rural areas. For most people, this means reading novels in translation, although more and more Soviet readers know foreign languages and can get access to a wider range of foreign material. The biennial Moscow International Book Fair (held since 1977), with its displays of foreign books from all round the world, has been a great stimulus towards reading books in the original language.<sup>46</sup> Foreign books, including those from the West, can now be purchased at selected bookstores in major cities, although prices are very high.

A wide range of foreign novels is available in Russian translation and, to a lesser extent, translated into the languages of other peoples of the USSR. The availability of translated fiction in the USSR in the post-Stalin period has been thoroughly explored by Maurice Friedberg in his A decade of euphoria;<sup>47</sup> the treatment of American novels in the Soviet Union up to 1960 has also been examined by Deming Brown in his Soviet attitudes toward American writing.<sup>48</sup> Both these authors give some indication of the range and variety of authors published, and it would be superfluous to repeat their findings in any detail. However, it should be observed that the amount of material available is rather larger than might be expected. For instance, of the French classics,

not only Jules Verne, Dumas and Zola appear in large editions; Stendhal, Balzac and Maupassant are also popular. The Soviet reader's love of Dickens has often been commented on, but Fielding's Tom Jones, Oliver Goldsmith and George Eliot have also been published. Several of Thomas Hardy's novels have been published in large editions, and even Oscar Wilde has Soviet fans - although nothing is said about his homosexuality! Probably the best-loved classical English writer of all is Conan Doyle. Of American classical authors, Jack London has always been popular with the reading public. He is admired for his ability to dramatise courage, perseverance and strength, his love of life, his vigour and his optimistic outlook.

More modern authors published in the USSR include, for instance, detective story writers such as Agatha Christie and Georges Simenon, science fiction and thrillers (all discussed further below). More serious writers who are well-known to Soviet readers include C.P. Snow, J.B. Priestley and A.J. Cronin. Graham Greene has been published in the USSR too.<sup>51</sup> Scott Fitzgerald's Great Gatsby was published in 1965, and Tender is the night in 1971.<sup>52</sup> Ernest Hemingway has long been popular with Soviet readers. Even Franz Kafka was published in the USSR in the mid-60s, and although he was little known in the USSR at the time, his books rapidly commanded very high prices on the black market. Friedberg observes that Kafka's world must have seemed very familiar to Soviet people at that time, when so many were returning from the camps.<sup>53</sup>

As well as a wide range of authors from the USA and Western Europe, the USSR also publishes translations of many novels from third world countries, and, of course, from the rest of the socialist bloc. Very

recently, Japanese fiction has become more widely available, and has acquired a keen following in intellectual circles. People who are seriously interested in foreign literature - mainly the intelligentsia and students - keep up with new trends in foreign literature by reading the monthly journal Inostrannaya literatura, which publishes translations of a wide range of foreign novels, poems and plays, either in full or abridged. It has a circulation of around 400,000 copies.<sup>54</sup> The range of foreign fiction available to the Soviet reader continues to expand - for instance, although D.H. Lawrence was translated in the 1920s, little has been available since. However, new editions of some of his works have been announced for 1985. Tolkien's The hobbit has been published, and a translation of The lord of the rings is in preparation.<sup>55</sup> Arthur Hailey, for instance, has been published in large editions and is extremely popular. At the time of Mehnert's study, his Airport was very frequently mentioned. The reasons people gave for its popularity were very similar:

"For a long time", people said, "we used to think that novels about the economy were rather boring exhortations and generally poorly written to boot. Then along came Hailey and proved that it was quite possible to write a book about an economic topic in a fascinating and, at the same time, informative way. In our country, we have millions of airplane passengers, but not one of them ever knew what happens behind the scenes at an airport. Now Hailey has told us. In addition we have learned a lot about that strange country, America. Entertainment, suspense, information - these three make Hailey's novels some of our favorites."<sup>56</sup>

Recently, foreign historical novels have become popular too - for instance, Sergeanne Golon's romantic, fast-moving and dramatic Angélique saga has been announced for publication in 1985 in an edition of 120,000 copies.<sup>57</sup>

Probably the average Soviet reader has more opportunities to read translated fiction from all around the world than does his counterpart in the UK, although some foreign writers, especially the more difficult or controversial ones, appear in rather small editions.

However, some writers are unlikely to be published in the Soviet Union today. Friedberg thinks that Henry Miller, for instance, is probably condemned forever because of his lack of basic human ethics and his explicit sex and violence.<sup>58</sup> Other writers may be repugnant, such as Samuel Beckett, criticised because he wallows in human bleakness and refuses to link it to specific socio-political conditions or accept the possibility of reform, ie he rejects the ability of marxism to change mankind. Nevertheless, some excerpts from his work have been published, and Waiting for Godot appeared in Inostrannaya literatura in October 1966.<sup>59</sup> The Soviet authorities dislike of 'modernism' and 'formalism' has restricted the publication of other writers. Henry James - whose works were considered to contain the seeds of future modernism - was not published at all in the USSR until 1973.<sup>60</sup> Virginia Woolf is not available at all.<sup>61</sup> Surprisingly, perhaps, James Joyce and Marcel Proust were published in the 1930s, but not since. Their style and manner is considered incompatible with a Soviet content, and the authorities are apparently fearful of Soviet authors copying their style.

Although a wide range of authors is available to the Soviet reader, the text may well be cut or adapted, often to a very considerable extent. For instance, anti-Soviet comments will be excised, as will explicit sexual material, swear words and some religious material. Whole chapters may be excised, not so much because they are objectionable

but because the censor or translator considers them superfluous.<sup>63</sup>

The reader is not informed that the work has been cut. Novels in translations are sometimes also equipped with introductions, notes and commentaries which aim to enable the Soviet reader to interpret the work 'correctly', as well as helping to explain unfamiliar customs or concepts. Until the USSR signed the copyright convention in 1973, foreign writers did not know when their works were published in the USSR, let alone whether they had been altered in translation. Since 1973, unauthorised alterations should have stopped, but apparently has not. However, foreign authors are now paid royalties for works published in the USSR.

The extent of the publication of foreign literature in the USSR has always been carefully monitored by the Central Committee of the CPSU and writers' organisations. From time to time, individual journals and publishing houses are criticised for the amount and quality of the foreign literature they put out. In Friedberg's words, Western material is attacked because it:

disseminates alien and hostile ideas among the population, wastes paper that might have been used to print good Soviet novels, displaces Soviet plays and films from the country's stages and movie houses, and last but not least exerts a definitely harmful influence on Soviet authors and artists themselves.<sup>64</sup>

Western literature is viewed with suspicion because - even when it is written by left-wing authors - it may well propagate a world view hostile to that of the USSR, be permeated with bourgeois ideology, which can corrupt Soviet readers, present too favourable a view of Western societies. Western writers are traditionally critics of their own societies, and the Soviet authorities are apparently uneasy about this, because Soviet writers do not have the same latitude in writing about the USSR.



Why then, does the USSR publish so much translated fiction? There are several reasons. First, as Friedberg observes,<sup>65</sup> it is part of the USSR's cultural diplomacy. The USSR is keen to have its best cultural works disseminated abroad, and the publication of Western works in the USSR is evidence of continued Soviet goodwill. The USSR has made much of the large number of translations it publishes when the cultural provisions of the Helsinki Agreement are under discussion. Secondly, there are influential internal pressure groups who are keen to have more translations available. For instance, translators (who can command high fees in the USSR), and theatre and cinema managers who know that Western imports have box office appeal and will enable them to easily meet their planned profit targets. For Soviet journal and book publishers, publishing translations is often a balancing act between ideological acceptability and healthy sales and circulation figures. Friedberg notes that many journals, notably the more conservative ones, regularly use translations to boost flagging circulation figures.<sup>66</sup> An additional factor may be the belief that providing a sufficiently varied range of new and stimulating foreign works takes some of the steam out of the pressure for cultural liberalisation from the intelligentsia. Also, it is quite possible that the cultural authorities do recognise the valuable role that fiction can play in satisfying people's desire to find out more about foreign countries, and in pleasing readers by providing more relaxing and entertaining light reading.

Soviet surveys of reading preferences, and Mehnert's study, all show that foreign novels are indeed popular in the USSR. As might be expected, the best known books are the classics who have long been familiar to the Soviet reader - Jack London, Charles Dickens, Jules Verne, Dumas, Conan Doyle. Many more recent foreign novels provide

stimulating and challenging ideas, and deal with issues and problems which are also present in the USSR, but can not (yet?) be tackled by Soviet writers. Other readers turn to foreign novels for escapist reading, the chance to read novels which are entertaining and free of didacticism. The most popular genres with ordinary readers are probably detective and adventure stories, science fiction and family sagas and historical novels.

While people in all groups in society do read foreign literature, there is some evidence that better educated people, and those with higher skill levels, tend to read it the most.<sup>67</sup> The Sovetskii chitatel' survey of students found that they read foreign fiction far more than did the employed population at the same period.<sup>68</sup> Rural readers probably read foreign fiction less partly because of difficulties with supply.<sup>69</sup> Although it might be expected that younger people would be the keenest readers of foreign literature - both because of their interest in foreign countries, especially how young people live abroad, and their interest in adventure and detective stories - a study of library issues in the 1970s showed little variation by age, although the people who borrowed foreign fiction most were those under 18, and the over-60s.<sup>70</sup> However, it seems likely that different socio-demographic groups have rather differing tastes in foreign fiction. For instance, the study of Soviet workers as readers in the early 1980s found that only workers with a full secondary education, or engineers and technical personnel, tackled such writers as Hemingway.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, detective stories seem to be universally popular, while science fiction appeals to an elite group. (This is discussed further later in this chapter).

There are also differences between the patterns for reading foreign fiction in the various union republics. Tables two and three present

Table Two. Reading preferences in rural areas of seven union republics, 1973-5

|                            | UKRAINE |    | BELORUSSIA |    | UZBEKISTAN |    | KAZAKHSTAN |    | AZERBAIJAN |    | LITHUANIA |    | MOLDAVIA |    |
|----------------------------|---------|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|-----------|----|----------|----|
|                            | A       | B  | A          | B  | A          | B  | A          | B  | A          | B  | A         | B  | A        | B  |
| only native                | 30      | 23 | 8          | 13 | 71         | 50 | 88         | 60 | 93         | 57 | 37        | 31 | 34       | 10 |
| only Russian               | 35      | 30 | 72         | 52 | 9          | 18 | 4          | 16 | -          | 4  | 17        | 10 | 40       | 37 |
| Only other Soviet peoples  | 1       | 2  | 6          | 6  | 3          | 5  | 4          | 2  | -          | 6  | -         | -  | 3        | 3  |
| Only foreign               | 11      | 13 | 12         | 8  | 6          | 12 | -          | 1  | 7          | 12 | 23        | 33 | 6        | 17 |
| Total native               | 46      | 41 | 8          | 23 | 79         | 61 | 92         | 77 | 93         | 75 | 53        | 50 | 51       | 17 |
| Total Russian              | 53      | 53 | 74         | 70 | 18         | 27 | 4          | 30 | -          | 10 | 28        | 19 | 51       | 64 |
| Total other Soviet peoples | 3       | 5  | 6          | 12 | 5          | 7  | 4          | 7  | -          | 9  | 6         | -  | 6        | 6  |
| Total foreign              | 21      | 33 | 14         | 17 | 9          | 20 | 4          | 7  | 7          | 16 | 36        | 57 | 9        | 46 |

A - people of that nationality with primary or incomplete secondary education

B - people of that nationality with full secondary or higher education

Figures relate to percentage of those surveyed who (a) said they preferred to read only one type of fiction, (b) all those who mentioned each type of fiction, whether singly or in combination.

Source: Kniga i chtenie v zhizni sovetskogo sela. M., 1978, pp 34-5.

Table Three. Library borrowers in 5 union republics in 1976: belles lettres

|                              | <u>RSFSR</u> |    |    | <u>UKRAINE</u> |    |    | <u>LATVIA</u> |    |    | <u>GEORGIA</u> |    |    | <u>KIRGHIZIA</u> |    |    | Average for<br>5 Republics |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------------|--------------|----|----|----------------|----|----|---------------|----|----|----------------|----|----|------------------|----|----|----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|                              | U            | D  | V  | U              | D  | V  | U             | D  | V  | U              | D  | V  | U                | D  | V  |                            | AV |    |    |    |    |    |
| Russian<br>pre-Revolutionary | 32           | 20 | 20 | 25             | 21 | 12 | 15            | 17 | 23 | 22             | 10 | 20 | 18               | 19 | 22 | 19                         | 27 | 21 | 18 | 23 | 25 |    |
| Soviet Russian               | 85           | 84 | 92 | 84             | 77 | 55 | 70            | 69 | 72 | 59             | 52 | 64 | 40               | 33 | 46 | 40                         | 73 | 79 | 74 | 75 | 76 |    |
| Other Soviet peoples         | 46           | 43 | 29 | 41             | 62 | 54 | 80            | 66 | 67 | 61             | 77 | 67 | 58               | 64 | 98 | 72                         | 48 | 49 | 55 | 50 | 50 |    |
| Foreign                      | 56           | 48 | 37 | 48             | 54 | 38 | 28            | 42 | 71 | 63             | 74 | 69 | 59               | 61 | 62 | 69                         | 50 | 56 | 44 | 50 | 52 |    |
| Any belles-lettres           | 92           | 90 | 89 | 91             | 90 | 81 | 95            | 89 | 93 | 84             | 92 | 89 | 83               | 87 | 98 | 89                         | 86 | 88 | 91 | 88 | 91 | 91 |

U - Urban libraries

D - District (Raion) libraries

V - Village libraries

Figures are the percentage of library users borrowing each type of belles-lettres.

Source: Dinamika chteniya i chitatel'skogo sprosa v massovykh bibliotekakh, Vyp 2. M., 1977, pp 52-7.

the findings of two studies in the 1970s. In Lithuania (table two), a third of the people surveyed who had full secondary or higher education said they would prefer to read only foreign fiction, and overall more readers in this educational group mentioned foreign fiction than mentioned Lithuanian or Russian literature. Table three shows far more readers in mass libraries in both Latvia and Georgia borrowing foreign fiction than average. The variations between republics can partly be explained by differences in the amount of foreign fiction available in translation into local languages - for instance Lithuanian readers do have a wider choice of foreign fiction than do people who read Uzbek, Kazakh or Azerbaijani, and hence they read it more.<sup>72</sup> However, given that the range of foreign material translated into minority languages is inevitably smaller than that available in Russian, and tends to concentrate on nineteenth and early twentieth century classics,<sup>73</sup> it might be expected that people in the republics would tend to read foreign books less than Russians do. It is possible that people in some republics do read foreign books in the original language to a far greater extent than Russians do - perhaps Latvians continue to have high levels of knowledge of German, and Estonians can fairly easily understand Finnish. People in the Baltic States in particular may well have an affinity for the literature of foreign peoples with whom they have had strong historic or linguistic links. The high levels of interest in foreign novels reported from Georgia, though, do not really fit in with this explanation.

However, some Soviet readers do not like foreign fiction. Some dislike its different world view. One engineer, a graduate, in a small town told the researchers: "What good are foreign books to me?"

I live in a Soviet land. Foreign authors' concepts of life are alien to us". Another commented: "Foreign authors write about the capitalist way of life. What can capitalists teach us? On the other hand, any one of our Soviet books can teach us something". Other readers find them difficult. A woman clerk who had not completed secondary school commented: "I don't read foreign authors much, I don't like all the non-Russian names you get in them. There are words you can't understand at all. And their names are so hard - five minutes just for a name!".<sup>74</sup> Other readers said they didn't like foreign books because they were all about money or full of debauchery.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, such readers prefer to read about people they can identify with and situations familiar to them from everyday Soviet life. They will, therefore, prefer Soviet fiction to foreign novels. Nevertheless, for many Soviet readers foreign fiction is an important part of their reading.

#### Non-Russian Soviet writers

Authors belonging to the non-Russian peoples of the USSR are not particularly popular with Soviet readers as a whole, but there are marked differences between the nationalities. Reading non-Russian Soviet writers refers to two rather different phenomena. First, it is applied to non-Russians reading books by writers of their own nationality. Second, it refers to Russians (and people of other nationalities within the USSR) reading works by authors belonging to any of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR, generally translated into Russian or the local language. Often the term includes pre-Revolutionary writers as well as those writing in the Soviet period. In some studies of reading by minority nationalities, a three-fold differentiation is made, between reading works by writers of the reader's own nationality, by Russians, or by other Soviet nationalities.

Reading fiction and poetry written by authors belonging to national groups other than one's own is officially considered to be an important factor in enabling the various peoples of the USSR to get to know and understand each other better, thus promoting the development of a homogeneous Soviet nation. Critics of the Soviet regime generally view this 'Soviet internationalism' as being largely synonymous with Russification. Obviously, many of the factors which encourage the use of the local language or the adoption of Russian are aspects of Soviet official nationalities policy. These include how actively Russian is promoted in schools, the length of the schooling available in minority languages, pressures on people who want to get a higher education and have a good career to become bilingual, the amount of material published in minority languages, and the extent of broadcasting in local languages and in Russian. Nevertheless, there are many variations between the republics in the extent of bilingualism, the number of children in minority-language schools, the proportion of the newspapers, books and journals published in the republic in the local language, and the extent to which people choose to read materials in Russian or in their mother tongue. The situation is still more complex below union republic level.<sup>76</sup> Although there has been some research on publishing in minority languages, reader preferences have been little studied by Western researchers. This section provides some provisional, preliminary observations on the interest Soviet people generally show in books written by 'other Soviet peoples'. It is followed by a discussion of some Soviet studies which analysed the extent to which readers in the national minorities choose to read 'their own' writers. The following section looks at how interested non-Russians are in reading Russian fiction and poetry, whether in Russian or in translation.

Soviet readers in general The various studies of readers' preferences treat reading of 'other Soviet nationalities' in different ways, which make comparison difficult. Earlier surveys did not differentiate between Russian Soviet and 'other Soviet' writers, although readers did include some non-Russians in their lists of favourite authors. The studies in the 1970s have shown far more interest in this question, and have tended to have better coverage of areas outside the USSR. There have also been several major studies of reading at union republic level, which have not been included in this present study.<sup>77</sup>

The data presented in table one show 'other Soviet' literature to be less popular than Soviet Russian over the USSR as a whole, especially in the RSFSR. In all these studies, and in other studies of reader preferences, the most consistently popular 'other Soviet' writer is Chingiz Aitmatov. He was also one of Mehnert's 'top twenty-four' authors in the USSR in the 1980s. His works have been widely translated into Western languages as well. Although his settings are Kirghiz, he grapples with universal themes concerning the past, present and future of the USSR, including the problems of the Purges and Stalinism. His works are generally sombre and critical in tone.<sup>78</sup> Another writer frequently mentioned is the Belorussian Vasilii Bykov (Vasil Bykau), who writes human, non-heroic books about World War II.<sup>79</sup> A number of other writers are mentioned, but none as consistently as these two, who seem to be popular with Soviet readers of all nationalities.

Readers who want to read novels and poetry by non-Russian Soviet writers whose language they do not read are, of course, constrained by the availability of a translation and by the provision of material in libraries. A wide range of novels, short stories and poems are translated into Russian, and are often first published in literary journals, notably Druzhba narodov, which at one time had the



reputation of being particularly controversial. As Russian is the language used for inter-nationality communication in the USSR, it is not surprising that many non-Russians read Russian translations of writers who write in a language they do not know, rather than wait for a translation into their own language. While the issue does require further research, it does not appear that the supply of contemporary non-Russian Soviet authors in Russian translation is any worse, or at least causes greater reader dissatisfaction, than the supply of new fiction generally.

However, there has been one, albeit rather limited, study of the library availability of pre-Revolutionary and Soviet classical writers from the peoples of the USSR in Russian translation. These were all poets and novelists whose works should have formed the nucleus of a mass library's collection of literature of the peoples of the USSR. The list went back to include Sa'adi, Firdausi and Omar Khayyam (all poets who wrote in Persian and are considered to be Tajiks), the Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli (best known for his epic poem 'The Knight in the Tiger Skin'), the Ukrainian woman poet and dramatist Lesa Ukrainka and post-Revolutionary writers such as the Azerbaijani poet Samed Vurgun and the Belorussian Yakub Kolas. The list was checked against the holdings of Moscow mass libraries. Although all had been published in Russian in the previous few years, 20% of the titles were not available even in district central libraries in the capital. Of those that were held, only 17% were in new editions, with up-to-date translations, commentaries and notes.<sup>80</sup> This survey certainly suggests that works by non-Russian classical writers are hard to find, but the situation may be different for contemporary authors.

The union republics For readers whose mother-tongue is not Russian, reading the works of 'other Soviet peoples' usually means reading poetry and novels written in their own language, by writers of their own nationality. As table two shows, few non-Russians pay much attention to Soviet literature other than their own and Russian. There are considerable differences, though, between the various nationalities in the importance of 'their own' writers. The study of rural readers in 1973-75 made a special study of non-Russian areas, and provides valuable insights into how popular 'home' authors are in different areas. Readers were asked what kinds of books they read, and what they would actually prefer to read. The results were divided by educational level. The full results give several combinations of preferences, but the most significant results are those which relate to (a) the percentage of readers who said they actually read, or would prefer to read, only one type of literature; and (b) the total percentage of readers who mentioned each type of literature, whether alone or in combination. These figures are presented in table two. The survey was restricted to members of the titular nationality of the republic, so ethnic Russians living in rural areas are excluded. The table shows both the very sharp differences between the nationalities, and the effect of education on reading preferences. Reading books by local authors is clearly far more important for Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis and Lithuanians than it is for Belorussians and Ukrainians. Although people with a higher level of education are generally less inclined to prefer their 'home' writers, the pattern is reversed in Belorussia. (Possibly in this republic, which is heavily Russianised, it is the more educated who are becoming aware of the risk of their national culture disappearing, and are trying to maintain it). Although

these rural readers pay little attention to writers from other Soviet minorities, the researchers report that Chingiz Aitmatov, the Lithuanian Vilis Lacis and the Daghestani poet Rasul Gamzatov were mentioned as favourite authors by readers throughout the republics studied.

Comparative figures for the union republics covering urban areas are available in the longitudinal study of mass library issues which started in the mid-1970s. Unfortunately, it appears that only the figures for 1975 and 1976 have been published. The results for 1976 are set out in table three; they are of course limited to the percentage of library users who borrowed certain categories of literature, and do not take any account of the use of home libraries. Nevertheless, some striking differences emerge. In both Georgia and Latvia, in town and country alike, more readers borrowed 'other Soviet writers' than borrowed modern Russian work, whether in the original or in translation. The rural reading survey's findings suggest that these books will be overwhelmingly by Georgians and Latvians respectively. Although this concentration on 'home' writers is particularly strong in rural areas, it is also seen in the towns, where there are more Russians and more bilinguals. In the Ukraine, Ukrainian writers predominated in rural areas, but not in the towns. However, in the RSFSR 'other Soviet' writers were borrowed less in rural areas than in the town - this is perhaps because the survey was carried out in ethnically Russian villages, where the supply of books generally is worse than in the town.

Dobrynina's study in 1978-80 of young adults' reading preferences in a number of national minority areas concentrated on the extent to which they read Russian literature, whether in the original or in translation,

but does include some information on the popularity of 'home' writers. Although she presents many combinations of reader preferences, the number of readers who stated they preferred to read only writers of their own nationality is not given. However, it is significant that 12% of readers did not mention that Russian literature was one of the types of literature they preferred. When their actual reading patterns were analysed, it was found that a third of respondents did not read Russian literature.<sup>82</sup> (However, it is not clear what 'actual reading' means in this context). Dobrynina also found that women tended to prefer their native authors more than men did.<sup>83</sup> Given that Dobrynina's study concentrated on the youngest and generally best educated part of the minority nationality population, the one most likely to be bilingual with Russian, this continued comparatively low level of reading Russian literature, and presumably high levels of interest in their native literature, is interesting.

A number of factors underlie the differences observed between nationalities in their preferences for 'home' or other fiction, set out in tables two and three. First, there is the language factor. Although many Russian books are translated into minority languages, and writers in, say, Latvian, are published in other minority languages as well as in Russian, it is obvious that people who can read in more than one language will have a wider choice of reading matter. This probably means that bilinguals have access to a fuller selection of current bestsellers and the less 'improving' sort of fiction in particular - the rural reading survey, for instance, noted that villagers often did not select the 'best' examples of their native literature, such as those which had won Lenin Prizes, but preferred 'weaker' works, presumably the more entertaining and lighter novels. On the other hand, the

researchers found that the Russian works they read in translation were always of a better standard. This is because only books which have gained critical approval are selected for publication in minority languages in editions large enough to reach rural readers.<sup>84</sup> This does suggest that readers in search of books for relaxation and entertainment may well be more likely to find it in their native literature than in translations. (On the other hand, it might be argued that readers who know some Russian might be encouraged to read more in Russian when they realise that they get access to a far wider range of thrillers, detective stories and romances, both Russian and foreign in translation, if they learn to read the language fluently).

Many Soviet readers can read in Russian - according to the 1979 census, over three quarters of the Soviet population claim to speak it fluently, either as their mother tongue or as their second language.<sup>85</sup> There are some doubts about how much reliance can be placed on the respondents' own estimation of whether they are fluent or not. Nevertheless, there are striking differences between the republics. According to the 1979 census, only 25-30% of Turkmenians, Tajiks, Georgians and Azerbaijanis are bilingual in Russian. On the other hand, only a third of Ukrainians and under a fifth of Belorussians do not speak Russian fluently, either as their mother tongue or as their second language.<sup>86</sup> The urban population has far higher levels of Russian knowledge than the rural. This pattern of language knowledge clearly underlies the high levels of interest in 'home' writers in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and the rather lower levels of the Ukraine and Belorussia, and the differences observed between urban and rural areas.

Knowledge of Russian is of course linked with the language of education. There are considerable differences between the republics in the proportion of children taught in Russian-language secondary schools. In 1980/81 this ranged from 10% in Tajikistan, 11.7% in Armenia and 12.8% in Lithuania to over 44% in Latvia and the Ukraine and 64% - 65% in Kazakhstan and Belorussia.<sup>87</sup> Of course, in some of these republics the children attending Russian-language schools will be ethnically Russian, and the percentage of children of the titular attending schools in their native language will be higher than these figures for all nationalities in the republic suggest. In recent years, it seems that the pressure on non-Russian children who belong to one of the major Soviet nationalities to attend Russian language schools has declined, and there are now more opportunities to go on to higher education in minority languages. However, people belonging to the smaller nationalities are tending to assimilate to Russian or to a larger minority group.<sup>88</sup> It seems likely that people who were taught in Russian, or who have had more years teaching of Russian in secondary school or university, will be less interested in reading their 'native' literature and more interested in the world outside - which includes foreign writers as well as Russians. The changes in reading preferences observed in different educational groups, as set out in table two, bear out this observation, with the exception of Belorussians, commented on earlier.

Reading material in one's native language is also affected by the availability of newspapers, books and journals in that language. Detailed analysis of the ratio of publications in minority languages to the numbers of people who speak the language is possible, and has been done by Rosemarie Rogers and Jonathan Pool for books published in 1970. They found that, in terms of number of copies available, Estonians

and Latvians were rather more favoured than Russians, but that readers who spoke other languages had rather poorer supplies of books.<sup>89</sup> However, this ignores the different rates of bilingualism in different national groups. Further study is needed on the publication of newspapers and journals, but in general the amount of material available to people who do not read Russian is substantial, though not as good as for Russian speakers. The policy on provision of material in local languages has varied considerably at different periods in the USSR's history, but it seems there has been a steady expansion throughout the post-Stalin period in the publication of material in the larger minority languages. Szporluk, however, claims that this expansion came to an end in 1975, at least as far as journals are concerned. It has been accompanied, he argues, by a drive to increase the circulation of central (Russian) periodicals. He notes a decline in the number of journals published in some languages, notably Ukrainian, and a decrease in some print-runs. This has even happened where demographic factors would lead one to expect an increase - for instance, the print run of children's magazines in Tajik, Uzbek and Azerbaijani dropped from 1975 to 1980, at a time when the burgeoning population should have led to an increase in demand for them.<sup>90</sup> Generally, though, in the post-War period the tendency has been for the Ukraine and Belorussia, where a high proportion of the population speak Russian and whose languages are most closely related to Russian, to publish rather less material in their own languages than the republics of Central Asia, whose languages are unrelated to Russian and who have ancient literary traditions of their own. However, the highest levels of publishing in local languages appear to be in the republics of Transcaucasia and the Baltic States. Here there are strong local cultural and nationalist traditions, and many active modern writers.<sup>91</sup> These appear to be the areas where resistance to russification is strongest.

The republics also differ in the standard of their library services, and in the percentage of the population who are library members. This was discussed in more detail in chapter four. However, it is worth recalling that people in different areas have unequal library resources available, and that readers in some republics are more reluctant than in others to make use of what resources are available.

Another aspect of the supply of reading matter to people whose native language is not Russian is the ease with which they can obtain reading material in their own language when they are outside their own republic. As many people move away to continue their higher education or find work, such provision is important for language maintenance. The subject requires further research, but it appears that few Soviet mass libraries have any provision for ethnic minorities living and working in their area. (Of course, Russians living outside the RSFSR are catered for). Both the Lenin Library in Moscow and the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library in Leningrad, and other universal deposit libraries, do collect material in the languages of the peoples of the USSR, but this material is presumably not available for home reading and is probably not made available in a way which would appeal to the ordinary reader.<sup>92</sup> The Nekrasov Library in Moscow does have a branch in Sokol'niki which is devoted to the literature and culture of the peoples of the USSR, but this is probably unique. Republican-level newspapers and journals in minority languages as well as in Russian are available in subscription to readers anywhere in the USSR, but apparently until recently it was impossible to subscribe to more local newspapers and magazines outside the republic of origin.



Conclusions Over the USSR as a whole, readers prefer modern Russian writers to those from other nationalities, taken as a group, although some individual poets and novelists from national minorities are popular all over the country. However, in the union republics the pattern is rather different, although each union republic varies. Many readers, particularly those who are not bilingual in Russia, far prefer to read books by 'home' writers. For readers belonging to minority nationalities, whether bilingual or not, reading literature by their 'own' writers is an important way of maintaining their native language and culture. The main quantifiable variables affecting preference for 'home' writers are linguistic ability, extent of contact with Russians and Russian culture, and the availability of books, newspapers and magazines in the local language. Underlying these, though, are less definable characteristics - cultural traditions, national consciousness, resistance to russification.

#### Non-Russians and Russian literature

Reading Russian literature in preference to one's native writers is, to some extent, an indication of russification. Soviet commentators, though, would see it as, rather, demonstrating an awareness of the common values and common heritage of the Soviet people, part of the process of modernisation and an expression of Soviet internationalism, not russification. There are real differences between the various nationalities in their interest in Russian literature.

Many of the factors underlying readers' choice of Russian literature or works by 'home' writers are the same as those discussed in the previous section - the extent of Russian-language education, the

proportion of people who are bilingual, varying cultural traditions and linguistic similarities to Russian. Further, schools in the republics vary markedly in the amount of time they devote to teaching Russian literature,<sup>93</sup> with Tajik, Georgian and Kazakh children receiving a far poorer grounding in Russian literature, and hence probably having less inclination to read it when adults, than Estonian, Belorussian or Ukrainian children.

There are also considerable variations between the republics in the proportion of their literary output which is devoted to Russian literature, whether in the original or in translation. In 1979 this varied from under 10% of titles in Georgia and Azerbaijan and under 20% in Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Latvia, Tajikistan and Armenia, to around a quarter in the Ukraine, Belorussia, Kirghizia and Estonia and over 30% in Moldavia. Generally the print run of Russian works was larger, sometimes markedly so as in Belorussia, but in three republics Russian books made up a smaller proportion of the total number of copies of belles-lettres printed than they did of the number of titles published.<sup>94</sup> These figures reflect both the number of Russians in the republic and the extent to which the population is bilingual. Some republics, such as Estonia, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia generally publish Russian works in translation, whereas in the Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia, Kirghizia and Kazakhstan they more often appear in the original language. The amount of translated Russian literature thus varies widely between republics, but there is reported to be a considerable unsatisfied demand for popular novels in translation. For instance, at the time of Dobrynina's study in 1978-80 there were constant complaints about how hard it was to find translations of Anatolii Ivanov's Siberian epic novel Eternal call and his Shadows disappear at noon,

or of Proskurin's major family saga, Fate and Thy name. The difficulties of obtaining Russian novels in the local language are much greater in some republics than in others. Dobrynina measured this by comparing the number of people in the republic who did not read Russian easily with the print-run of popular novels in translation. She found that in Uzbekistan, for instance, there was only one copy of Yulii Semenov's popular thriller 17 moments of spring in Uzbek for every 200 Uzbeks who did not easily read Russian, while the comparable figure for Moldavians was 93, Armenians 53 and Latvians 18.<sup>95</sup> In addition to books, journals in minority languages often include translations of novels, short stories and poetry in Russian.

Dobrynina's study found that many libraries in the republics, particularly those in rural areas, were poorly stocked with classical Russian authors, whether in the original or in translation. The provision of modern Russian fiction also needed attention.<sup>96</sup>

All these factors need to be taken into account when considering the proportion of non-Russians who read Russian literature. The rural reading survey studied the variations between the republics, and the effects of increased educational levels, on the taste for reading Russian literature (table two). It is striking that only 10% of well educated rural Azerbaijanis mentioned reading Russian literature at all, and this lack of interest in Russian literature was shared by at least a third of Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Lithuanians, regardless of educational level. On the other hand, over half the Ukrainians and Moldavians, and clearly three-quarters of the Belorussians, said they read Russian literature or liked to read it. In these three republics, the extent of bilingualism in the villages was far higher than in those republics

where Russian literature was read less. Despite the 'common-sense' assumption that people with a higher level of education would show a greater preference for Russian literature, educational levels had no effect on the proportion of readers who mentioned Russian literature in the Ukraine, and in Belorussia and Lithuania people with secondary or higher education were less inclined to read it.

The detailed ~~Long~~itudinal study of library issues also provides information on reading Russian literature in libraries outside the RSFSR (table three). This study covers urban readers as well as rural. Unfortunately, it does not cover the same republics as the rural reading survey - only the Ukraine is present in both. As it only covers library issues, it does not take account of home libraries, and is heavily influenced by the type of fiction available in libraries, which may well be different from what people would choose to read. Despite these drawbacks, some interesting patterns emerge. In the four minority republics covered, the percentage of library users who borrowed Russian Soviet fiction was much lower than in the RSFSR, with the difference being particularly marked in village libraries. Readers in Georgia and Latvia in particular read Soviet Russian literature less than the average, which fits in with the pattern for the Baltic States and Transcaucasia noted in connection with reading 'native' literature.

Dobrynina's study of reading Russian literature by non-Russians was carried out in 1978-80. The nationalities surveyed were the Tatars, the Chuvash, the North Ossetians (all in the RSFSR), Ukrainians, Latvians, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks and the Gagauz (Moldavia). The study also includes Russians in the Moscow region, presumably for comparative purposes. She surveyed people in the 16-28 age group, thus concentrating

on those who have had the most experience of the modernising thrust of the Soviet educational system, and excluding older generations, who are less likely to be fluent in Russian. People in both urban and rural areas were included. Although the study focussed on this group of young adults who had had very similar educational opportunities, it found sharp differences between the nationalities in their reading habits and preferences. For instance, the proportion of people who were 'constant' readers of fiction (apparently defined as those who could name the last novel they read, the one they were reading now and what they hoped to read in the future) varied from only 28% of Uzbeks through 46% of Azerbaijanis and 47% of Tatars to 60% of Ukrainians and 61% of Latvians. (55% of the Russians surveyed fell into this group).<sup>97</sup> When asked about the kind of fiction they preferred, over a half mentioned a range including at least three out of Russian, foreign, native and other Soviet writers. Nearly 90% said they were interested in Russian literature, but only 37% were reading it at the time of the survey. 85% of the respondents had some Russian books at home.<sup>98</sup> The percentage of people who said they read Russian literature was a little lower in the villages than in towns.<sup>99</sup> The Russian classical novels readers mentioned were mainly those included in the school syllabus, but other authors were included in the readers' lists of favourite writers. A wide range of modern Russian authors were mentioned, generally including similar names to those in surveys of the Soviet population at large. Rural readers tended to mention rather fewer authors than those in towns - in villages, twice as many readers had to rely on translations in order to get access to Russian works.<sup>100</sup> It is possible that generally works by Russian writers are easier to obtain than foreign books, books by local writers or by authors from other Soviet

nationalities, in that a mere 5% of those questioned said they wanted to read only Russian works, but the survey found that in fact 27% of them actually read only Russian books. By contrast, 22% said they would prefer to read a mixture of Russian, foreign, native and other Soviet books, but only 1% actually did so.<sup>101</sup> However, it is not clear what the definition of actual reading (real'noe chtenie) was, so these figures must be treated with care.

Although the figures given in the 1978-80 study can not be directly compared with those for the rural reading survey in 1973-75, as the nationality breakdowns are not provided in the same way, the picture which emerges from Dobrynina's study is rather different. Inevitably, a study which concentrates on younger people and includes urban areas will come up with a picture of greater reading activity all round than one which includes more older people. It is clear, though, that Russian literature is more important to these young adults than to older people. Nevertheless, this runs alongside a high level of interest in 'native' literature, as well as in foreign books and, to a lesser extent, works by writers from other Soviet nationalities.

All aspects of reading by Soviet minority nationalities do require further detailed research. However, the findings presented here suggest that some nationalities at least are continuing to maintain high levels of interest in their 'native' fiction alongside reading Russian novels. It would be incorrect to depict readers from minority nationalities as being subject to uniform russification, or losing interest in their own national culture and literature.

### FAVOURITE GENRES AND TOPICS

A number of studies give some impression of which genres Soviet readers like best. Obviously the classification of books by genre is often rather rough and ready. Many fine serious novels do not fit easily into any category. This analysis focusses on those genres which have attracted most attention in Soviet studies of reading. In many cases, the kind of novels which ordinary readers, particularly young people, favour are not those which have won the approval of the literary critics. Therefore this study will tend to focus on lighter forms of reading, rather than works which have won acclaim in literary circles in the USSR and the West.

#### The past

Historical novels and plays, stories and poems dealing with World War II have been very popular with Soviet readers throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and this interest is being maintained now, as the USSR marks the 40th Anniversary of the end of World War II. The first reader studies, in Leningrad in the late 1950s, found that it was mainly young people who borrowed books about the War. The researchers found that people in older generations still had too fresh memories of the War and needed time to come to terms with what they had experienced. Also, older people had already read the major novels about the war which had appeared while it was still in progress or just after it, such as Polevoi's Povest' o nastoyashchem cheloveke and Simonov's Dni i nochi.<sup>102</sup> Young workers' interest in novels about the war was also recorded by the major study of their reading interests in 1963.<sup>103</sup> By the time of the 'Sovetskii chitatel' study (1965-67), the range of novels and poems published about the war had expanded considerably, partly in connection with the twentieth anniversary of the ending of the war. Older generations were now taking far more interest in reading about the war, no doubt using novels to relive their experiences, to attempt to come to terms with

the misery and deprivation and heroism, and try to understand why and how the war happened and how victory was won. In the study of small towns in 1969-71, over three-quarters of readers said they liked books about the war.<sup>104</sup> At the time of the survey, of the readers who were reading Soviet fiction, 27% of people in Ostrogozhsk and 17% in other small towns were reading books set in World War II.<sup>105</sup> Over half the people in rural areas mentioned the war as a favourite subject for novels.<sup>106</sup> Interest in World War II is common to people of all nationalities in the USSR - the war brought peoples of all nationalities together to fight a common, external, enemy and must have been, for many ordinary Soviet people, their first real experience of living alongside people of other Soviet nationalities. The study of minority nationalities' reading preferences in 1978-80 found that 70% of respondents (people aged 16-28) expressed an interest in books on the war, and 38% of them were actually reading such material - far higher percentages than for other genres.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, Dobrynina in a more recent study has noted a slight decline in interest in books about the war among young people.<sup>108</sup> Mehnert's study found that books dealing with the war were very popular - 5 of his 24 favourite authors write mainly about the war, and eight others give it a great deal of attention.

Although books about the war are read by young people, who did not directly experience the war, as well as older people who lived through it, they probably read them for rather different reasons, and in different ways. For older people, it was almost certainly the most traumatic period of their lives, one which they need to think through and explore through the imagination and experience of literary writers. Some younger people are drawn to war novels by what the 'small town reading' researchers characterise as 'images of moral strength, models for emulation', while others are attracted by the battles, adventures



and high drama. It is worth noting that about half the books on World War II being read at the time of that survey fell into the category of 'Books about World War II (with an adventure theme)'.<sup>109</sup> Yet despite the fact that some war books undoubtedly appeal more as thrillers and adventure stories, their ethos is rather different to that of many popular British and American war books, which wallow in violence. Mehnert observes that most of the 'favourite' books in his study are in fact 'more anti-war books than war books: the horrors of war far outweigh the glamour aspects'.<sup>110</sup> Some of the consistently popular novelists writing about the war are Aleksandr Chakovskii and his Blokada (on the seige of Leningrad), Konstantin Simonov, first famous for his trilogy Zhivye i mertvye, and a more recent writer, Boris Vasil'ev, best known for his novel about the Brest Fortress V spiskakh ne znachilsya and one about a platoon of women soldiers, A zori zdes' tikhie.<sup>111</sup>

As well as novels about World War II, novels dealing with other periods of Soviet history are also popular. In rural areas, over a quarter of readers liked historical novels, and a further 18% mentioned books set during the Revolution and Civil War. In small towns generally, around a fifth of the Soviet novels being read at the time of the survey dealt with historical themes<sup>112</sup> and over two thirds of the readers said they enjoyed historical novels.<sup>113</sup> In recent years, the interest in historical novels has expanded and the study of the Soviet worker as reader in the early 1980s noted a particular increase in interest in foreign historical novels.<sup>114</sup>

Among the most consistently popular of writers about recent Soviet history is Mikhail Sholokhov, who is repeatedly mentioned in reader

surveys. Mehnert found he was one of the best loved of the 'Soviet classics'. His best work deals with the First World War, the Civil War and collectivisation in the Don Cossack villages. A more recent favourite, who is included in Mehnert's 'top 24', is Valentin Pikul, who has written about such diverse topics as Frederick the Great, the Russo-Japanese War and Convoy PQ17. His most famous - even notorious - novel deals with the end of the Romanov dynasty. Mehnert describes it as fascinating reading, the first exciting fictional account of the end of the Tsarist era available to Russian readers.<sup>115</sup> In a very different way, both Yurii Trifonov and Chingiz Aitmatov deal with historical problems - the issue of Stalinism and the purges. Both writers are included in many lists of popular authors.

Novels on historical themes, like those on World War II, help modern readers to make sense of the past, and hence of the present, to understand how the country came to be where it is today. Perhaps it is only through novels that ordinary Soviet readers can debate and come to terms with Stalinism, the purges, industrialisation and collectivisation.<sup>116</sup> The study of young workers' reading, carried out in 1963, specifically comments on this:

many young readers are now turning to publications which unmask the cult of personality, describe those aspects of reality which used to be passed over in silence - Odin den v zhizni Ivana Denisovicha by A Solzhenitsyn, Granit ne plavitsya by Tevekelyan, Yu. Bodarev's Tishina.<sup>117</sup>

The popularity of historical novels is also linked with the rise in Russian nationalism in recent years (this is a strong element in Pikul's work, for instance). There are also elements of nostalgia for times when life may have been hard, but things were simpler than in today's

busy urban world. Many historical novels are probably read out of sheer curiosity about how one's ancestors lived, what life was like then, to escape into a different and distant world.

One type of historical novel which is particularly popular with Soviet readers is the epic, a long novel spanning the lives of several generations of the same family, tracing their changing fortunes against the background of Russian history, usually of the twentieth century. A recent article by a Lenin Library researcher claims that in the 1970s the epic novel became the most popular literary genre.<sup>118</sup> Consistently popular works in this genre include Georgii Markov's Strogovy, a Siberian saga set in the early twentieth century, and Fedor Abramov's Pryasliny (Brat'ya i sestry), which describes the lives of a family in a village in the far north during and after the War.<sup>119</sup> There are, though, many other epic novels written by less distinguished writers. Foreign novels of this sort are also very much in demand - probably the best-known example is Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga, which appears in several lists of favourite books in the 1970s, after Soviet television bought the BBC serial.

Epic novels - or family sagas - are popular with readers the world over. People enjoy the insights into how earlier generations lived, and find them a palatable way of learning a bit of social history. Many readers enjoy them too, because they usually provide a good long read, give the opportunity to see characters develop and follow their changing fortunes. Good novels of this genre give readers better understanding of the traditions of their own people, and some knowledge of how other nations have developed, in much more vivid ways than a history textbook can.

Village prose

Since the mid-1950s, there has been an upsurge in the popularity of books set in the Russian countryside. Authors such as Fedor Abramov, Vasilii Shukshin, Valentin Rasputin, Vasilii Belov and Vladimir Soloukhin appear in many lists. While the work of the 'derevenshchiki' of course varies, there are a number of features which link them. They deal with the social, cultural and psychological split between town and country and wish to restore a sense of tradition and psychological wholeness, a spiritual integrity which many feel modern urban civilisation lacks.<sup>120</sup> Village prose is often deeply concerned with moral issues, with the search for stable values. The authors are often as interested in conveying the flavour of rural life, the rhythms of rural existence, as in describing events and telling a story.<sup>121</sup> The novels are often profoundly critical in their approach, gloomy rather than optimistic in tone. As Hosking observes, their sense of community derives from the past, rather than from a vision of a truly socialist or communist future.<sup>122</sup> Mehnert attributes the popularity of village prose partly to nostalgia for the 'hard but simple life of the peasant of yore'.<sup>123</sup> People do not, of course, want to go back to the hard work and grinding poverty of the real Russian village; rather they are attracted by 'the romantic image of the village as a refuge offering stability, an unhurried pace, and security, the dream of a closely knit, loving and dependable family...'. Another element is concern for the environment and love of nature. Mehnert believes that another factor in the affection for village prose is the use of colourful, colloquial language, rich in dialect.<sup>124</sup> The rise in Russian nationalism and in interest in the Orthodox faith have also influenced the popularity of village prose. Village novels are also one of the main areas in Soviet literature for 'critical realism', and raise many of the issues which worry thinking people in Soviet society as a whole.

## Science Fiction

Science fiction writers such as Jules Verne, H G Wells and the Soviet novelist Alexei Tolstoy were popular with Soviet readers in the 1920s and 1930s. The genre fell into disfavour during the 1930s and did not emerge until the late 1950s - the Sputnik era. It was in 1957 that Ivan Efremov's famous science fiction novel The Andromeda nebula was published, marking the beginning of modern Soviet science fiction. At about the same time, journals started to publish translations of English and American science fiction again, with Tekhnika-molodezhi (the popular magazine on science & technology for young people) being one of the pioneers in making both foreign and Soviet novels and short stories available. In the early and mid 1960s several publishers started to issue series of science fiction novels and collections of short stories. Translated works have occupied an important place in total Soviet publishing of science fiction - on one estimate, over the last 25 years over 200 British and American authors alone have been translated in the USSR.<sup>125</sup> The most consistently popular foreign science fiction writers are Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C Clarke and the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem. The favourite Soviet writers are Ivan Efremov and the much more controversial Strugatskii Brothers, one of whose novels has only been published abroad.

There is only patchy information available on who the readers of science fiction are, and estimates of its popularity are confused by the widely reported difficulties of obtaining science fiction books and magazines. The first study of science fiction fans appears to have been carried out in 1966-67 by the Commission on Science Fiction of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union. It was not a representative survey, and collected information partly from questionnaires published in a

number of newspapers in different parts of the USSR, partly from surveys in Baku schools and factories, and partly from surveys carried out by the Moscow University Science Fiction Club. The results must be treated with considerable caution. Nevertheless, it is significant that a third of the school children questioned in three Baku schools said science fiction was their favourite literary genre. The breakdowns of all the respondents by educational level and profession indicated a high level of interest in science fiction among school children, students and professionals with a scientific or medical background. Under a third of respondents were women.<sup>126</sup> The scattered information in the major reading surveys of the 1960s and 1970s provide a similar picture. The study of industrial workers and engineers in major towns in the mid-1960s found that about half of those surveyed included science fiction writers among their favourite authors,<sup>127</sup> and a study of vuz students at the same time found that science fiction was popular with them all, but particularly with those studying technical subjects.<sup>128</sup> The small towns study unfortunately does not provide overall figures from reading science fiction, but does report that 3% of the adults in Ostrogozhsk who were reading Soviet fiction at the time of the survey were reading science fiction.<sup>129</sup> However, given that so much science fiction is translated, this clearly understates the total number of people reading science fiction. The researchers also found great enthusiasm for science fiction among teenagers, although only 3.5% of the books they were reading at the time of the survey belonged to this genre, which is attributed to the shortage of suitable science fiction for this age group.<sup>130</sup> Although one study in the early 1970s found no clear link between educational level and interest in science fiction<sup>131</sup> most studies conclude that

they are related. The rural reading survey (1973-5) for instance found that overall 14% of readers mentioned science fiction as a favourite genre, but this was true for only 4% of those with primary education and 8% of those with 6-7 years schooling, compared to 17-18% of those with over eight years schooling and 19% of graduates.<sup>132</sup> Detailed studies in Estonia over the 1960s and 1970s also found that science fiction was most popular with the best educated and more skilled and among people whose daily work involved direct contacts with problems of science and technology.<sup>133</sup> A study of Vologda in the early 1970s observed that science fiction was particularly popular among young men,<sup>134</sup> and several studies have noted that it is a major element in young readers' choice of fiction.<sup>135</sup> It is read by young people throughout the USSR - a study of reading preferences among non-Russians in the 16-28 age group found that 46% mentioned it as a favourite genre, although far fewer could get access to it.<sup>136</sup> Clearly the readers of science fiction are predominantly young people, mainly men, and tend to be better educated and to have a scientific training, Soviet science fiction readers are apparently very similar in background and outlook to their American counterparts.<sup>137</sup>

Although science fiction is clearly very popular with readers, the ideological and cultural authorities, literary critics and librarians have always had rather ambivalent attitudes towards it. On the one hand, good science fiction is encouraged because it is believed to promote a scientific approach to life, encourage an interest in technical problems and their solution, and fire the creative imagination of young people in particular. On the other hand, the authorities are very nervous of science fiction shading off into debates about social utopias and depicting totalitarian states (as in Zamyatin's We, 1984 or Brave New World). Science fiction writers such as the Strugatskii Brothers often raised awkward fundamental philosophical and social questions. Further,

science fiction may depict scientific and technical progress in too negative a light, and indeed question the advisability of further progress. Western science fiction often causes particular concern because it is believed that its often pessimistic outlook will depress and frighten Soviet readers, especially young people.<sup>138</sup>

Science fiction as a whole is frequently mentioned in criticisms of Soviet readers' taste for light, entertaining reading which can be read quickly and easily, although the plots are hackneyed, trite and repetitious.<sup>139</sup>

Science fiction is not fully part of the literary establishment, although there are now councils on science fiction attached to republican writers' unions. It is paid little attention by serious literary critics and there are few books about science fiction for the general reader. Until recently, there were virtually no bibliographies or recommended reading lists to help readers, or assist librarians in reading guidance. Science fiction is not included in the school syllabus, and there is no journal devoted to SF.

There are constant complaints about shortages of science fiction. It is seldom published in the 'thick' literary journals or in Roman-gazeta, and when popular authors are published as separate novels or in anthologies the print-runs are insufficient to meet demand.<sup>140</sup> Science fiction is also often published in journals specialising in science and technology for the general reader, such as Tekhnika-molodezhi, Znanie-sila and Khimiya i zhizn'. Library stocks are often poor, and few libraries keep science fiction in a separate section on the shelves.<sup>141</sup> Some indication of the difficulties in obtaining science fiction through mass libraries is provided in a survey carried out in 18 mass libraries throughout the RSFSR in 1976.



A collection of Bradbury's short stories published in an edition of 100,000 copies in 1975 had reached only six of the libraries, and only five had obtained copies of a science fiction anthology published in the same year with a print-run of 200,000 copies.<sup>142</sup>

A recent article by a senior librarian at the Lenin Library gives some indication both of the shortage of popular science fiction and of the authorities' nervousness about the genre. Mass libraries, in conjunction with branches of the Society of Booklovers and the Komsomol, often run Science Fiction Fan Clubs. The article constantly stresses the need for librarians and other responsible people to control and direct the work of these clubs; we learn that, when not properly supervised, the fans go so far as to write their own stories and plays, compile bibliographies and prepare their own translations of foreign science fiction. All this material they circulate among themselves. Igumnova stresses that all these activities should only be done by professionals or organised amateur writers' groups.<sup>143</sup> The apparently widespread nature of these illegal activities (which demonstrate considerable enterprise and creativity on the part of science fiction fans) suggest both that the fans experience serious difficulties in obtaining the science fiction they want, and that they are dissatisfied with what is officially on offer. Samizdat does appear to be important in disseminating science fiction.

What is the appeal of science fiction? In a round-table discussion on science fiction in Literaturnaya gazeta, it was reported that a 'recent' study of science fiction readers in a large town had shown that for most readers the main interest lay in stimulating new ideas,

reflections about the social consequences of science and 'the logic of discovery' (presumably a reference to the 'quest' motive so common in science fiction).<sup>144</sup> The Al'tov study reported a similar combination of motives, adding to it a concern for the future of society.<sup>145</sup> Four Soviet science fiction writers put forward very similar points recently in Soviet literature.<sup>146</sup> Clearly, for many of its more reflective readers the appeal of good science fiction lies in its ability to raise and discuss ideologically sensitive issues. Equally, others enjoy less challenging science fiction simply as entertaining, escapist reading with a scientific and technical flavour.<sup>147</sup>

### Detective Stories

Since the mid-1950s, librarians and other critical of other ordinary readers' literary tastes have commented disapprovingly on their love of detective stories. Indeed, detective stories were popular with Soviet readers in the 1920s and 1930s - Sherlock Holmes, for instance, has long been a favourite. Yet virtually no detective stories, whether Soviet or foreign, were published in the USSR in the 1940s and early 1950s. However, as soon as they reappeared in the mid-1950s they became extremely popular.

Many popular ~~detective stories~~ are foreign, and a wide selection of authors is available in Russian translation. Many are published in large editions - for instance the annual collection of foreign detective stories, Zarubeznyi detektiv, has a print-run of 200,000 copies. Writers such as Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, Georges Simenon and Earl Stanley Gardner have appeared in this series, and their works are also published as separate books. Favourite Soviet detective story writers include Arkadii Adamov, whose Delo pestrykh was one of the first detective stories

to be published in the 'Thaw', Yu Semenov, author of the famous Petrovka, 38, and the Vainer brothers, creator of the widely-loved detective Tikhonov.<sup>148</sup>

There has been a long debate in official circles about the advisability of publishing detective stories, particularly foreign ones. Many Party pronouncements and literary critics attack foreign detective stories for their lack of any social content or clear moral message, for their bourgeois world-view and their emphasis on the rich, beautiful and privileged.<sup>149</sup> This is surely part of their appeal to the Soviet reader, who enjoys the detailed descriptions of exotic lifestyles and unfamiliar codes of behaviour'. Despite all their shortcomings, foreign detective stories continue to be published, albeit with considerable caution. In 1978, for instance, the Union of Soviet Writers organised a round-table discussion by members of its Council on Fantasy and Adventure Novels and its Council on Translated Literature specifically to debate the problem of imported detective stories. The report of the discussion emphasised the need for very careful selection on both ideological and artistic grounds.<sup>150</sup> Klaus Mehnert has found that Soviet detective stories differ from Western ones in several ways. The amoral and apolitical approach of Western writers is not acceptable for novels by Soviet authors. First, Soviet crime writers have to deal with the need to account for the persistence of crime in a socialist society when, in theory, crime should have disappeared along with capitalism and exploitation. Second, their stories must have a clear moral message and must show, unequivocally, that crime does not pay. Third, Mehnert suggests that the crimes committed in Soviet detective stories tend to be against the state or the collective, rather than theft of personal property. Detective stories must also feature a positive hero, imbued with courage,

devotion to duty, patriotism and other Soviet virtues.<sup>151</sup> Readers may well enjoy reading about such characters when presented in a detective story when they would reject them in other, less exciting, genres. As Heller has noted, Soviet readers also delight in the freedom of the negative characters in detective stories.<sup>152</sup> Detective stories often give detailed and fascinating pictures of everyday life, and may well describe aspects of Soviet life which are not mentioned in more serious books - for instance Semenov's TASS is entitled to declare apparently provides a detailed account of the working methods of the KGB.<sup>153</sup> Recently a commentator in Literaturnaya gazeta praised the way in which current detective stories have given far better descriptions of the works of the police, the procuracy and the courts, and of their professional approach to crime.<sup>154</sup> Another feature of Soviet detective stories which endears them to many readers is their use of colloquialisms and racy style.<sup>155</sup> However, for most readers - as in the West - the real attraction of detective stories must lie in the challenge of solving a riddle, the excitement of the story, pure relaxation and entertainment. Clearly the continued publication of detective stories, both Soviet and foreign, is evidence that the authorities are willing to go some way towards meeting people's needs for apolitical and entertaining reading.

Reader studies in the 1960s and 1970s confirm the popularity of detective stories. It is quite likely that the figures underestimate the popularity of the genre, as readers may well have claimed to prefer more 'elevated' works. The study of workers and specialists in the mid-1960s suggests that rather less than half those surveyed included a detective story writer in their list of favourites. The information on the popularity of detective stories in small towns suggests that between

half and two-thirds of readers mentioned them as a favourite genre.<sup>157</sup> Unfortunately, in the published report of what people in Ostrogozhsk and the other survey towns were reading at the time of the survey, the information on detective stories is limited to those by Soviet authors. As so much detective literature is translated, the figure of 13% undoubtedly underestimates the popularity of detective stories.<sup>158</sup> In rural areas, 26% of those surveyed mentioned detective stories as a favourite genre.<sup>159</sup> Dobrynina's study in 1978-80 of young non-Russian readers found that 57% of them mentioned detective stories as a favourite genre (more than any other genre apart from books on World War II), and nearly a third of respondents had either just read or were reading a detective story.<sup>160</sup> A number of studies suggest that detective stories tend to be preferred by younger people, but are rather less popular among the best-educated sections of the population. Comparing the popularity of detective stories with that of other genres is complicated by the differing classifications used in the various studies, but it does seem that detective stories are consistently one of the top three or four genres.

#### Mysteries, Thrillers and Adventure Stories

Books in this rather broad category do overlap detective stories and science fiction, and share many of the same characteristics. Many of the best-loved books in this category are foreign. Jack London, for instance, has been consistently popular in studies of readers from the 1920s to the present - his stories of courage and adventure in a harsh environment are greatly appreciated. The Western writers Mayne Reid and James Fenimore Cooper have also long been favourites in the USSR.<sup>161</sup> The novels of Alexandre Dumas, with their noble heroes engaged in romantic and improbable adventures, are extraordinarily popular, commanding high

prices on the black market. They are regularly included in the lists of books offered in exchange for scrap paper tokens. Other classical foreign adventure writers widely available in the USSR are, among others, Jules Verne, Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad and H Rider Haggard. Many modern writers are translated and published in the Soviet Union. There are also talented Soviet writers of mystery and adventure stories, such as Yu Semenov, best known for his Stirlitz thrillers set in World War II, and the Vainer brothers, who write novels which are an intriguing mixture of history and mystery.<sup>162</sup> Many novels about World War II are in fact exciting yarns about spies and counter-intelligence and courageous exploits. There are also Soviet equivalents to James Bond, Soviet agents who thwart the attempts of Western spies to recruit agents and infiltrate the USSR. (Interestingly, as Heller observes,<sup>163</sup> Soviet spies are referred to as 'razvedchiki' (intelligence officers), while only enemy spies are called 'shpion'). None of these Soviet thrillers contain the kind of explicit sex and violence found even in Ian Fleming's novels, let alone the more lurid thrillers sold in Britain. Needless to say, there are no thrillers dealing with the occult, or horror stories.

It is perhaps surprising to find that Russian authors in Tsarist times apparently did not write books about the conquest of Siberia (one is tempted to call them 'Easterns') with the universal appeal of the American Western. Nor, as Friedberg observes<sup>164</sup> did they write travel and adventure stories set in the more exotic parts of the Russian Empire, unlike the British who wrote so many novels set in the colonies. (Kipling, incidentally, is popular in the USSR). Possibly there are no 'Easterns' because the conquest of Siberia was more gradual and less bloody than the subjugation of the Indians in the USA and Canada.

There are novels dealing with the opening up of Siberia, but these are mainly concerned with people's struggle against the harsh environment and the excitement of the 'wide open spaces', with the drama of extracting Siberia's rich natural resources, rather than fights against the original inhabitants of the land. The Russians did of course encounter more resistance in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the nineteenth century, and again during the Civil War, but the topic does not appear to form the basis of many novels. Possibly it would be considered impolitic to make too much of resistance to Russian and Soviet rule. Soviet writers do now publish more adventure and travel books using exotic settings abroad. Friedberg comments on their curiously old-fashioned air, reminiscent of nineteenth century British, American and French books in which 'unfamiliar settings and, more importantly, ways of life are viewed from the vantage point of an observer who is firmly convinced of the superiority of his own way of life, his technological skills and of his Soviet values'.<sup>165</sup> Many more novels are now being written with settings in Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Mysteries, thrillers and adventure stories are probably usually read for relaxation and entertainment, as a form of escapism. Just how popular they are is difficult to gauge precisely, as they often appear under more general headings, such as 'classical foreign literature' or 'modern Soviet literature' or 'books on World War II'. Even in the late 1950s, librarians were concerned at how popular books on spies and novels such as Wilkie Collin's The Woman in White were with their readers.<sup>166</sup> The study of reading in small towns did single out 'adventure stories set in World War II' in its classification of Soviet novels being read at the time of the survey, and found that 16% of those being read in Ostrogozhsk, and 9% of those being read in other survey

towns, fell into this category. In both cases, this was the single largest group of Soviet novels.<sup>167</sup> Lists of favourite foreign authors always have Dumas and London near the top, and reports of books commanding good prices on the black market include a wide variety of books of this sort. The survey data available does not support any firm conclusions about who reads thrillers, adventure and mystery stories the most, but there are suggestions that they are most popular with the less educated and with younger age groups.<sup>168</sup> Other articles bemoaning the low level of literary taste among ordinary readers also suggest that young people are the heaviest consumers of these novels.<sup>169</sup>

Official attitudes to this passion for adventure stories, mysteries and thrillers vary. Of the foreign classics, Jack London seems to be above criticism - he combines a good story with a positive hero worthy of emulation by the young Soviet reader, and advocates qualities appropriate to a 'Builder of Communism'. There is however some concern about the popularity of more frivolous writers, such as Dumas, particularly with people who ought to be reading more demanding literature. It is more modern thrillers and adventure stories, particularly those in translation, which are often viewed with great mistrust by the authorities. This is partly because they merely entertain and pass the time pleasantly, without educating or improving the reader in any way, partly because of a fear that, like detective stories, they might inculcate un-Soviet ideas. Librarians and literary critics who acknowledge the strength of the appeal of thrillers, mystery and adventure stories advocate various more acceptable ways of fulfilling people's need for exciting and entertaining books. Some suggest writing more good Soviet novels in the genre, combining a gripping story in realistic Soviet settings with positive heroes and a topic which makes readers aware of



the existence of evil and the need to fight it. The other solution is to encourage readers to read more 'real-life' adventure stories, as varied as Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-tiki, memoirs and biographies of people who led interesting and action-packed lives, such as heroes of the Civil War and World War II, or good travel books set in exotic places.<sup>170</sup> It seems unlikely, though, that these books will replace exciting if rubbishy spy stories!

### POETRY

The Russians have the reputation of being a nation of poetry-lovers. Huge audiences attend poetry readings by Evtushenko, Voznesenskii and Rozhdestvenskii, and the annual 'Poetry Days' in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and other cities regularly attract thousands of people.<sup>171</sup> Collections of poetry by favourite authors rapidly disappear from the bookshops and are snapped up on the black market. Is the love of poetry, though, a largely urban, intellectual phenomenon? How popular is poetry in the country as a whole?

The reader surveys give some indication of the size of the poetry audience in the USSR. The Lenin library's study of workers and specialists in major industrial centres in the mid-1960s found that about half the people surveyed included a poet in their lists of favourite authors. Poetry was more popular with the younger people (those under 28), but there was little difference between workers and specialists. The most popular poet was Esenin, followed by Pushkin and Lermontov. Evgenii Evtushenko and Robert Rozhdestvenskii were the favourite contemporary poets.<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, the study in rural areas at the same time found that very few people read poetry. However, these people who did enjoy poetry were largely restricted to poems published

in journals or newspapers, as very few volumes of poetry were available. In the libraries on which the survey was based, there were no copies at all of Esenin, Demyan Bednyi or Marshak.<sup>173</sup> By contrast, a study also undertaken in the mid-1960s of students in 25 higher educational establishments across the country found that 78% of them read poetry. As might be expected, students studying humanities subjects included the highest proportion of poetry fans, but four fifths of students doing natural science or technical subjects also read poetry. Only in agricultural colleges did the percentage drop, to 58%.<sup>174</sup> Esenin was again the most popular poet, followed by Evtushenko, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mayakovskii and Rozhdestvenskii. The foreign writers most frequently mentioned were the classics - Shakespeare, Byron, Goethe, Robert Burns.<sup>175</sup>

The young workers using Leningrad mass libraries in 1969-70 had access to good collections of poetry, but the general level of interest in it was low. Overall, Esenin was again the poet most frequently mentioned. The group surveyed did include several young workers who loved poetry and had read and enjoyed a wide range of Soviet and foreign poets.<sup>176</sup> In the small towns survey, 45% of the teenagers studied mentioned a favourite poet, compared to 25% of the adults.<sup>177</sup> At the time of the survey, 2% of the people in Ostrogozhsk who were reading Soviet literature were reading poetry;<sup>178</sup> it seems unlikely that the proportion would be much higher if foreign and pre-Revolutionary poetry were included. However, it should be noted that although the percentage of the population reading poetry is very close to that reading science fiction, nearly all the readers who asked for poetry in the libraries were satisfied, compared to only a half of science fiction fans.<sup>179</sup> In the detailed study of rural reading in the early 1970s

10% of those surveyed said that they liked reading poetry; again this proportion is only slightly below that for science fiction. It is quite clear from the figures in this study that poetry is far more popular with graduates (33% of people with a higher education compared to only 14-17% of those with full secondary general or special education); even allowing for differences in age structure, there appears to be a definite relationship between educational level and interest in poetry. An Estonian study of reading throughout the 1970s came to similar conclusions about the link between educational level and love of poetry, and also brought out very clearly the concentration of poetry lovers in the under 30 age group. the study also found that women were more than three times more likely than men to be interested in poetry.<sup>181</sup>

It would appear, then, that poetry-lovers do indeed tend to be concentrated in the younger and better-educated sections of the population. However, there are clearly many ordinary workers who appreciate poetry. Overall the number of people in the USSR who read poetry, listen to poetry readings on the radio or attend concert halls and sports stadia to hear their favourite poets recite their poems must be far greater, per head of population, than in Britain. The Soviet sociologist Shlyapentokh, now living in the USA, has also commented on the far greater interest Soviet professionals in particular have for poetry, compared to their Western counterparts.<sup>182</sup>

How can the popularity of poetry in the USSR be explained? One can not be certain, but a number of factors are probably involved. First, there is a great deal of attractive and enjoyable Soviet poetry for children full of humour and word play, which also appeal to a child's sense of

rhythm and sound. Many talented writers have turned to writing for children when they were under political pressure, and partly as a result, much Soviet poetry for children is of a very high standard indeed. A person who enjoys poetry as a child is surely more likely to maintain the interest in adult life. Second, Soviet schools have traditionally placed great emphasis on the Russian classics, and children have had to learn poetry by heart. While for many this must simply be rote-learning for examinations, others benefit from it and take great pleasure in recalling and reciting poetry in later life. Third, as Maurice Friedberg has observed, 'Verse as a genre is less susceptible to politics than prose, both because of the brevity of most of its forms, and also because excessive ideological baggage runs the risk of reducing it to doggerel'.<sup>183</sup> There is, of course, a great deal of overtly political and tendentious poetry published, but nevertheless poetry can, more than prose, retain a personal and lyrical standpoint, express emotions, consider the eternal truths of life. The great upsurge in the popularity of poetry in the late 1950s came about partly because poetry was 'in the vanguard of the revitalization of cultural life' as de-Stalinization got under way.<sup>184</sup> Fourth, socialist realism has always placed great emphasis on the need for literary works to be accessible to the readers. While this has undoubtedly damaged many writers' artistic development and sadly restricted the range of poetry officially available in the USSR, it does mean that much of the poetry published uses language and imagery that can be understood by the educated reader. Poets who wish to be published can not restrict their dialogue to a small circle of elite poetry connoisseurs. Fifth, there is a wide range of superbly translated foreign poetry available to the Soviet reader. Translating has always been held in high esteem, and is well paid. More importantly, many

good writers under a cloud have turned to translating - for instance Pasternak and Akhmatova.<sup>185</sup>

Whatever may be the explanation for the high levels of interest in poetry in the USSR, there is no doubt that the audience for it is not restricted to the young and to intellectuals. The average Soviet reader is far more likely to enjoy poetry than is his British or American counterpart.

#### Other genres and topics

Drama. Very few ordinary Soviet readers appear to read drama and many of the surveys do not mention it at all. The study of young workers in 1963, however, does mention that there was greater interest in foreign plays than in Soviet.<sup>186</sup> The study of Estonian readers in 1966 and 1971 noted that people in rural areas did tend to read plays more than did their urban counterparts - for them, it was a partial substitute for seeing plays live on stage.<sup>187</sup> Presumably people interested in amateur dramatics also read plays in order to select which ones to perform.

Humour and satire are not treated separately in a number of the surveys, although authors such as Il'f and Petrov, Zoshchenko and O Henry do appear in many lists of popular authors. The study of rural readers in 1973-75 found that only 14% of readers mentioned that they liked such material; the proportion was rather larger in the group with higher education.<sup>188</sup> However, the study of young people from non-Russian nationalities in 1978-80 found that over half said they enjoyed humour and satire (nearly as many as mentioned detective stories); however,

because of poor supplies, only 10% or less of them actually read it.<sup>189</sup>

The newspaper Krokodil, which carries humorous short stories alongside its polemical cartoons, does not appear to rank very highly in lists of newspapers to which people subscribe, or read regularly.

Family and everyday life. This is a large and varied group of novels and short stories dealing with all aspects of everyday life (byt), family life, romance, children and young people. There are many novels dealing with the problems of being a single mother, of the break up of family and marital relationships under the strain of modern life. People seem to like these novels because they are about 'people like us', providing vicarious experience and role models. Novels dealing with these themes are of varied literary merit and encompass a very wide range of authors, and further generalisation about their readers would probably be unwise.

Sex. Soviet novels treat sexual relations in a much more restrained way than do modern Western authors. That rape and extra-marital liaisons occur is not denied, and such matters are reported or hinted at when appropriate. But the mechanics of sex are not described.<sup>190</sup> Pornography and explicit or violent sex do not appear to be an important feature of samizdat either. Some foreign authors translated into Russian do deal with sexual questions, such as prostitution, which are not discussed in Soviet novels. It has been suggested that Maupassant is popular in the USSR just because people find his stories a slightly 'naughty' read. Some Western pornographic material does circulate clandestinely. Erotic works by, for instance, the poet Esenin, Pushkin, Alexei Tolstoy and Polezhaev, which are not generally available because of their lewd language and imagery, are available in samizdat.<sup>191</sup>

WHO OR WHAT INFLUENCES READERS' CHOICE OF NOVELS?

For ordinary readers, the most important sources of advice about what novels to read are their family, friends and colleagues. Librarians and literary critics are far less important. In small towns, for instance, a quarter of those surveyed were reading a novel recommended to them by a friend or colleague, and in the 1973-75 rural study, 35% of novels fell into this category.<sup>192</sup> In rural areas, 9% of readers had relied on the advice of the librarian, and in the small town of Ostrogozhsk only 13% of library members were reading a novel recommended to them by the librarian.<sup>193</sup> Only 3% of library users in small towns were influenced *in* their choice by reading or hearing a review or reading an article by a literary critic, and in rural areas only 2% of readers chose novels on the basis of literary criticism.<sup>194</sup> The only media which appear to have much influence on choice of reading matter are films and television - if a book has been dramatised on TV or made into a film, demand for it soars. Librarians had far more influence over readers' choice of novels before mass libraries went over to open access (mostly in the 1960s). Whereas today readers browse at the open shelves, they had then to ask the librarian for a specific book, or give some indication of the kind of book they wanted. For instance, a Lenin Library study in 1959-60 of libraries in Moscow and Novosibirsk found that in all nearly half the readers were guided by the librarian in their choice of book (this relates to both fiction and non-fiction).<sup>195</sup> Open access had clearly given ordinary readers far more opportunity to exercise their own initiative in choosing books. The influence of friends and colleagues, rather than official sources such as librarians and literary critics, presumably means that people are inclined to read books which are popular locally and are a 'good read' rather than the more challenging or ideologically more worthy books which would be recommended by critics or the librarian.

In their choice of books, and in appraising the appeal of a novel, ordinary readers are primarily interested in the subject of the book - whether it is a book about the war, a historical novel and so on, and in the story. The literary merits of the book are far less important. Indeed, the small towns study found that when readers did comment favourably on a book's style, they usually simply meant that it was easy to read.<sup>196</sup> Many readers assured the researchers that they enjoyed everything they read; only 6% of those surveyed would give negative assessments of novels they had read.<sup>197</sup> Few readers - in the small towns survey at least - attached much importance to aesthetic criteria in choosing books to read. A number of later discussions of ordinary readers' tastes in fiction have commented on the gap between literary critics' assessment of books and that of the general reader.<sup>198</sup> Literary debates in the big cities and in journals such as Novyi mir appear to have little impact on ordinary readers.<sup>199</sup> People who read such journals usually do so because they are interested in new novels and short stories, rather than in literary criticism. Indeed, a significant proportion of the readers who report reading literary materials in journals in fact mean by this that they read the stories in general journals such as Rabotnitsa or Ogonek, or that they read Roman-gazeta.<sup>200</sup>

Clearly ordinary Soviet readers appreciate literature in a way that differs markedly from the approach of a literary critic or a dissident writer in Moscow or Leningrad. Their criteria of what is 'good' or 'bad' in modern Soviet fiction will also differ markedly from that of Western literary scholars.

People's choice of what novel to read is also, of course, heavily restricted by what is available. Book supply has been discussed in more detail in earlier chapters, but the study of reading in small towns



highlights its influence on what people actually read. The researchers deplore the extent to which readers tend to read in a random, unplanned way, but at the same time show that many readers who want to borrow a particular book, or even any book in their favourite genre, can not be satisfied by their local library. For instance, a third of the requests for any sort of book 'about spies and criminals' were unsatisfied. Given the official disdain for such books, this is perhaps not surprising. However, when the survey was restricted to Soviet books, it was found that there were still large gaps between what people went to the library hoping to borrow and what they received - for instance, under a half of the requests for historical novels, detective stories, books set during the Revolution and Civil War or in the modern village, or novels dealing with modern young people or workers today were satisfied.<sup>202</sup> Clearly the problems of book supply must have a marked impact on the differences between what people actually read and what they say they prefer to read.

### CONCLUSIONS

This study of ordinary readers' preferences when choosing fiction suggests that many of them like best books about the modern USSR and about other Soviet people, like themselves. Foreign books, particularly adventure stories, detective stories, science fiction and family sagas, are also very popular. The Russian classics are not widely read by adults, although there is a great reservoir of love and respect for them. In national minority areas, reading books by local writers is an important - often predominant - feature of their reading preferences. People like to read about a wide variety of themes, but the most important are (a) the Soviet experience during World War II; (b) the history of their country, including the problems of Stalinism; (c) family problems,

romance, 'human interest' stories; (d) the Russian countryside, environmental issues;(e) exciting and escapist novels such as detective stories, mystery and adventure; (f) science and technology, chiefly in the form of science fiction. 'Production' and 'Work' novels seem to attract little interest.

Soviet readers, like readers everywhere, enjoy books which enable them to escape from their everyday concerns, provide relaxation and entertainment. Poetry and fiction also provide aesthetic pleasure and stimulation, 'food for thought'. Soviet readers also draw on imaginative literature to learn about the world about them, to understand their environment. For thinking Soviet readers, reading fiction, poems and plays does provide a partial substitute for public debate and contention on important contemporary issues. The intelligentsia in particular use belles lettres as a forum for debate and a means of communication to a far greater extent than do their colleagues outside the Communist world. Probably the audience for serious fiction and poetry is larger in the USSR than in the West.

Nevertheless, there is widespread concern in the ideological and literary establishment about the quality of much of the fiction preferred by ordinary readers. Fears have been expressed about a division opening up between this 'mass' culture and the kinds of books, films and music appreciated by the elite. Although commentators have been expressing alarm at the popularity of light fiction since the late 1950s, if not before, it does seem that the situation is worsening. Television is often blamed - its attractively-packaged presentation of fast-moving sports events and variety shows, its easily accessible dramas and serials, are often thought to discourage people from investing

time and effort in reading longer and more serious books. Also, more light fiction, both Soviet and foreign, is now being published. Inevitably, many <sup>young</sup> people in particular do seem to be reading fiction less nowadays, and to be particularly attracted to the less 'improving' novels.

For most ordinary readers, including those who do read serious books, the aesthetic side of literature is of little interest. People are mainly concerned with what a book is about, its subject and its story line. Literary debates in Moscow and Leningrad, and in the pages of 'thick' journals, do not seem to interest the average reader, and do not influence their choice of what to read. They rely far more on recommendations from friends and family about what to read.

Yet despite people's enjoyment of light, escapist reading, and the criticisms levelled at them by librarians, literary critics and the cultural authorities, it does appear that the novels, poetry and plays they read are generally of a higher standard than those read by their Western equivalents. This is, of course, partly because certain types of 'pap' reading which are published here are not published in the USSR, and so the reader's options are deliberately restricted. Nevertheless, in view of the variety of functions which literature fulfils in the modern Soviet Union, it seems likely that there will always be a large audience in the USSR for serious novels.

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### CONCLUSIONS

This exploration of the Soviet reader has shown that there is some foundation for all the often contradictory stereotypes of readers and reading set out in the introduction, although none gives a full picture. Of course, Soviet readers are a heterogeneous group, with individual tastes and their own reading habits, so broad generalisations can only have limited validity. Despite this, and despite problems with interpreting the sources available to the Western researcher, the evidence presented in this thesis can support some general conclusions about readers and reading in the Soviet Union. Some broad but impressionistic comparisons with the West, especially Britain, can also be made.

The Soviet people are in many ways 'a nation of readers'. In terms of time spent reading, and the proportions of the population who claim to read books and newspapers regularly, they probably read more than do their counterparts in Britain. Although younger, better-educated people in the more skilled and professional groups read most, keen readers can be found in all walks of life and in all age groups. Television has reduced some people's commitment to reading, but this has been most noticeable for those groups which read least before television was available. In other groups, television has become an important means of entertainment and current information alongside books, journals and newspapers.

The range of material available to Soviet readers is more limited than that offered to their Western counterparts. At one end of the spectrum choice is limited on political grounds. Serious writers critical of the Soviet system, of whom Solzhenitsyn is the best-known example, are not published and are even driven into exile. Many topics of concern to the ordinary reader cannot be aired in print, even though they may be widely discussed by individuals between themselves. A wide range of alternative approaches to life are not treated in publications available to the ordinary

reader, for instance popular religious books, works advocating yoga and Eastern philosophies, or material questioning the wisdom of further economic growth and scientific and technical progress. At the other end of the spectrum, the 'pulp' fiction which occupies a conspicuous place in many British book shops is not published either - there are no horror stories, no sadistically violent thrillers, nothing on the occult and no soft pornography. However, Soviet readers are well provided with foreign literature in translation, although some authors may only be available in very limited editions. Probably the Soviet reader has more opportunities than the average Western reader to read novels, plays and poems by foreign writers. In recent years, the supply of the best-loved Russian classical novelists and poets has improved, and it is now far easier to obtain light fiction, whether Soviet or translated. The reader of serious middle-brow fiction - by authors such as Aitmatov and Trifonov - is probably reasonably well catered for, although the books may be published in insufficient quantities. Soviet readers also have access to a good range of non-fiction books written for the educated general reader, and are particularly well-provided with serious but accessible journals dealing with science, technology and medicine. A well-illustrated interesting and informative journal of this standard on history would undoubtedly be extremely popular.

There is a genuine shortage of the books which people do want to buy and read, and the book deficit is becoming a serious problem for readers and policy-makers alike. However, the situation should not be exaggerated. After all, the growth of personal libraries over the last twenty years demonstrates that, despite the complaints, people can and do find books worth buying. The 'book boom' of the last decade has certainly been heavily influenced by fashion and consumerism, but at the same time it also reflects a genuine love of books, a desire to read and to enjoy the simple pleasure of owning the books one loves. The black market and dubious practices in book shops may be reprehensible, but also show how much effort and money



people are willing to expend to obtain the books they want.

The Party leadership and the publishing authorities have responded to readers' demands for more popular fiction and home reference books by taking a number of measures designed to improve the supply of these publications. They have demonstrated considerable flexibility, for instance in encouraging non-fiction publishing houses to issue large editions of favourite novels and in setting up the 'books for scrap paper' scheme, which has made available a great deal of light fiction. However, the publisher's ability to respond to market pressures is restricted by the priorities imposed by the Party. Increases in the production of books for which there is substantial market demand cannot be made at the expense of publications which the Party insists must be widely available. As well as limiting the resources available to print popular books and magazines, ideological controls ensure that Soviet publishers cannot pander to the lowest elements in popular taste, or publish authors who are politically absolutely unacceptable.

The difficulties in acquiring books, whether through shops or in libraries, do affect what people read. In some cases, they may find another book is an acceptable substitute. However, it is also possible that the 'book deficit' has encouraged people to watch more television. After all, everyone with access to a TV can watch a favourite television programme simultaneously, but readers may have to wait months to get a popular novel.

Within the range of material offered to them, Soviet readers can exercise a considerable degree of individual choice over what to read, and can select which articles within a newspaper or journal they want to read. Indeed, people may well have greater freedom of choice over reading matter than in any other legitimate leisure activity. Of course, some people are obliged to read certain types of material, perhaps for political education classes or in connection with their trade or profession. Nevertheless, for most people their leisure reading is an area of personal autonomy, in which individual tastes find expression.

When people read non-fiction books or journals by their own choice, they like history, biography and travel books. They also make heavy use of material of practical benefit to themselves, such as gardening and cookery books, 'Do-it-yourself' manuals, books on sewing, knitting and household management and on medicinal herbs. Magazines dealing with hobbies, with health, with science and technology are popular, and women's magazines have a large readership. A high proportion of the population subscribe to newspapers and read them regularly. However, they are selective in what they read from the newspapers, and pay particular attention to the international news. Many people prefer the limited range of 'human interest' stories and articles on social problems to material on economic achievements or recent speeches by the leadership.

Soviet readers do have a taste for light fiction, such as detective stories, romances and adventure, both foreign and Soviet. Nevertheless, there is also a high level of interest in more serious works, particularly those concerned with World War II and with a wide range of problems of contemporary life. Generally, the fiction people read is probably of a higher quality than that chosen by the average British reader, partly because British readers are often content to read the kind of 'pulp' novels not available in the USSR. Fiction seems to be more important to Soviet readers than it is to their Western counterparts, partly because Soviet readers use novels to learn about the world, and to understand it and their place in life far more than do Western readers. Further, in the USSR novels have a role in both moulding and expressing public opinion which fiction does not have in the West. Poetry does seem to be more popular in the USSR than in Britain or the USA. This can be attributed to the availability of high-quality but accessible poetry and the ability of lyric verse in particular to express personal concerns and eternal values in an apolitical manner.

Nevertheless, despite the place which serious fiction and poetry occupy in Soviet readers' esteem, there is evidence that the preferences of ordinary

readers are rather different to those of the literary elite and the creative intelligentsia. Readers pay little attention to literary critics or to debates in the 'thick' journals. In deciding what is a 'good' book, the average reader is generally not much concerned with aesthetic criteria. The story and the issues treated are far more important. Indeed, the increased demand for light fiction and the popularity of pop music and of sport, thrillers and variety shows on television have led to suggestions of the development of a 'mass culture' in the USSR. Readers may read a lot, but often the quality of what they read does not measure up to the model of the ideal Soviet reader.

There are genuine variations between the nationalities of the USSR in their reading preferences. The topic requires further research, but clearly some nationalities devote far more attention to reading books by authors of their own nationality than do others, and attitudes to foreign literature and to Russian literature vary considerably. For some of the minority nationalities, reading is an area where their cultural autonomy and national pride can safely find expression.

The USSR does have a large network of public (mass) libraries, with large bookstocks, and can take pride in the high proportion of the population who are library members (far more than in Britain, for example). Nevertheless, there is concern over evidence that libraries are becoming less important as a source of reading matter, particularly in large cities and among the adult working population. The decline in the prestige of the library is largely caused by the difficulties libraries experience in acquiring popular books, and the tendency for them to accumulate large quantities of unreadable books and pamphlets. At the same time, readers are becoming more sophisticated, selective and reluctant to accept the librarian's guidance. Mass libraries now have to compete with home libraries which are smaller but carefully selected. Inevitably, a better-educated and more discriminating public with other sources of books will be

less willing to accept substitutes and more willing to criticize library stocks.

The relations between Party and government policy, political controls and the reader are complex. Policies may conflict, and may be inconsistently applied. There are links between political control over reading and the growth of mass literacy. As Roger Pethybridge has observed, the Stalinist regime realised that literacy was a double-edged weapon.<sup>(1)</sup> A literate population, armed with a basic education, was undoubtedly a better recipient of propaganda and potentially a more skilled and productive work-force than an illiterate people would be. However, people who can read have access to a far wider range of material than those who depend on the radio or on word-of-mouth information, and so are potentially exposed to facts and ideas which are not officially approved. They are better able to make their own independent judgements and to challenge official propaganda. In this way, political controls and censorship can be seen as necessary mechanisms for giving the socialist state the benefits of an educated work-force without encouraging independent thought.

However, in the modern USSR the population is better-educated, more heterogeneous and sophisticated than under Stalin. The authorities have recognised that newspapers, periodicals and books have to be differentiated if they are to appeal to various audiences. It is not enough for them to be attractive; they must also be credible. Unless people read and believe the press, it has no influence over them. Mass communications are often viewed as consisting of messages transmitted from the top (whether big business and advertisers in the West or Party propagandists in socialist systems) to viewers and readers below, who are merely passive consumers of what is offered them. This model of how the mass media operate is often seen as an integral part of the totalitarian system. However, a study of Soviet readers shows that they certainly are not malleable sponges absorbing messages from above. They are selective in what they read, and in how they

interpret the media. They approach newspaper articles critically, measuring them against their own experience. They are sensitive to subtle hints in novels. They read certain publications because they are required to do so, but often approach them cynically. Many people recognise that their newspapers do not tell them the whole truth, and so make extensive use of friends and colleagues to supplement the official media. As Shlyapentokh observes, 'The search for reliable information, especially about the intentions of the leadership and about the actual state of affairs in the economy, is an endemic feature of everyday Soviet life'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Party and government policies affect readers not only by reducing the credibility of the media. The requirement that the publishing industry issue large quantities of 'non-books' means that fewer resources are available for the books people do want to read. The imposition of artificial priorities and political controls over the creation and supply of reading matter waste paper, the time and energy of publishers and librarians and the creativity and originality of authors. All this inevitably impoverishes the reader. Nevertheless, Soviet readers do have access to a great deal that is worth reading, and reading is important to them. They really are a 'nation of readers'.

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Nash sovremennik

Nedelya

Partiinaya zhizn'

Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie

Pravda

Sotsial'nye issledovaniya

Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya

Sovetskaya kul'tura

Sovetskaya Rossiya

Sovetskoe bibliotekovedenie

Soviet literature

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