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Reflections of Contemporary Russian Society, Culture, and Values in Iurii Mamin's Film, *Window to Paris*

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"By Nature we are destined here
to hack a window through to Europe."
—Pushkin, "The Bronze Horseman"

"Money—that is what his soul craved!"
—Pushkin, "The Queen of Spades"

In the Russia of today, one can buy a tee-shirt bedecked with an image of the McDonald's arches together with a profile of Lenin and the words, "McLenin's." The "McLenin's" tee-shirt is only the latest humorous commentary on a less than humorous problem that has been plaguing Russia for centuries: how can the country preserve its own indigenous traditions in the face of the influx of Western culture and values?

Ever since Peter the Great first brought Western ideas and innovations to Russia, that country has been both attracted to and repelled by Western European culture. St. Petersburg director Iurii Mamin's 1993 film, *Okno v Parizh* (*Window to Paris*),¹ offers its audience a contemporary cinematic reflection of that theme. From the time that Pushkin wrote "The Bronze Horseman," people have used his words about Peter's opening a "window to Europe," quoted in the first epigraph to this article, to describe Peter the Great's Westernization of Russia.

Western reviews of the movie *Window to Paris* failed to comment on the reference to Pushkin in the film's title, a reference that every Russian would immediately be able to identify.² *Salades russes*, the French translation of the title of the film, eliminated the all-important allusion to Pushkin and to a salient feature of Russian culture.³ Also missing from these Western accounts of the Mamin film was attention to another reference to Pushkin—to the short story "The Queen of Spades"—which Mamin throws to his audience. Yet the references to Pushkin are part of the major theme of a film that seems, at first glance, to be nothing more than a light-hearted, comic, romantic romp through pieces of the lives of several characters in contemporary Petersburg and Paris.⁴ In the use that Mamin makes of the allusions to Pushkin,⁵ as well as in other aspects of the film, the director offers a searing satiric commentary on the directions that contemporary Russian society, culture, and values are taking. Nor do Western society, culture, and values escape Mamin's biting satire in *Window to Paris*.

The film stars Nikolai Chizhov (played by Sergei Dontsov), a teacher of music and aesthetics in a Petersburg business school for the young. From the very

beginning of the film, the audience can clearly see, in less than subtle ways, that the values of the school's administration and of Nikolai are worlds apart. Nikolai reads "The Queen of Spades" to his students by candlelight, in a darkened classroom. He is interested in teaching the students literature, dance, and music. A record player stands in the classroom, presumably so that the students will be able to listen to the Tchaikovsky opera based on Pushkin's story after Nikolai has read it to them. Instead, a man interrupts the reading by bursting into the classroom to deposit a shipment of computers, so that they will not be left in the hallway. Nikolai is furious that the enterprise of teaching has been interrupted. He expresses his wrath by smashing one of the computers. The school administration is more concerned that the computers be protected from possible theft than it is in the cultural education of the pupils.

The school is interested in capitalism rather than culture, in German marks rather than in Karl Marx. On the walls along a corridor in the school hang green banners with slogans such as *Vremia—den'gi* (Time is Money) and *Den'gi ne pakhnut* (Money Does Not Stink), instead of the red banners of Soviet days past, with slogans such as *Vpered k pobede kommunizma* (Forward to the Victory of Communism). Also hanging on the walls are pictures, not of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin, as in the Soviet era, but—in the spirit of the new Russia—of various denominations of hard currency, including German marks and American dollars—also, of course, in green.⁶

As Nikolai is being fired for his act of opposition to the school authorities in the name of the preservation of culture, the administrators tell him that the school is training future businessmen, not musicians. The main subjects are management and marketing, they continue. The administrator who informs Nikolai of these facts is immediately identifiable as a typical Soviet-era *apparatchik* type, by virtue of her self-righteousness, her mouthing of "party-line" phrases, and her holier-than-thou condescending tone. Nikolai comments: "Before, you were building communism. Now, you are building capitalism, but the results are the same."

I am reminded of the old joke from the Radio Armenia series of Soviet-era *anekdoty* (jokes). Radio Armenia is asked: "What is the difference between communism and capitalism?" It answers: "Under communism, man exploits man, and under capitalism, it's exactly the opposite." There is a new series of *anekdoty* in today's post-Soviet Russia, about the *nouveaux riches*, who are called, in Russian, *novye russkie*, the "new Russians." Two "new Russians" bump into each other on New York City's Fifth Avenue. One brags: "Look at my new tie. I bought it for \$500." The other proudly declares: "Oh, that's nothing. Two blocks from here, you can get the same tie for \$600." It is appropriate, too, to mention one of many real-life episodes in post-Soviet Russian life. There is a Moscow journal which, in Soviet times, was called *Zaria kommunizma* (The Dawn of Communism). When the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the journal, with the same editorial board, was renamed *Zaria kapitalizma* (The Dawn of Capitalism).⁷

The window to Paris enters the plot of the movie after Nikolai moves into a

room in a communal apartment. Searching for Maksik, her cat, Mariia Olegovna, the deceased old woman whose room Nikolai now occupies, appears to him and to the other apartment inhabitants after they have dozed off during an evening of drunken revelry. The old woman appears and disappears through a window hitherto unknown to the communal apartment dwellers, which is hidden behind an armoire. Nikolai and Gorokhov (played by Viktor Mikhailov) go through this window and begin the magical adventures that constitute the core of the plot. The window gives out onto a roof, and the roof leads to a ladder that in turn leads to the streets of Paris. By going through the window, Nikolai, Gorokhov, an ordinary citizen who works in the Petersburg piano-manufacturing factory "October," together with a Communist Party member, and others, end up in the middle of contemporary Paris.

As we have already noted, even in the light-hearted comic adventures documented in the film, serious societal issues are often incorporated. For example, when the Russians descend the ladder for the first time, and enter a nearby establishment, they do not realize that they are in a bar in Paris, not in a foreign currency bar in Petersburg. It is true that they are still feeling the effects of their evening of alcoholic excess, yet the fact that they mistake the city, even though the architecture is obviously Parisian, is a telling comment on the rapid pace of change in certain aspects of Petersburg and Moscow life. It simply does not occur to the Russians that they are in a foreign city.

This response, the acceptance as normal of the fact that everything can be instantaneously transformed in one's own familiar neighborhood, is indicative of one of the features of Petersburg and Moscow in the post-Soviet era. (While I was in Moscow in 1993, the same year *Window to Paris* was released, a Russian acquaintance commented that he had read a newspaper article in which Russians were described as being in the unique position of feeling like foreigners in their own country. Everything around them was changing so rapidly that they felt the same kind of dislocation at home that people usually experience in a foreign land.)

In Mamin's film, as in Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades," access to a secret linked to Paris has been gained through contact with a dead old woman. Similarly, there are unexplained mysteries linked to the old woman and to Paris. In a scene that parodies the episode in which Germann attempts to learn the secret from the aged countess, Gorokhov threatens to cut off the testicles of the old woman's cat if she does not tell the secret of the window, that is, how long the window to Paris will remain open. In introducing his audience to the allusions to the Pushkin story, and in pursuing the theme of the deleterious effects of greed, money, and material wealth on contemporary Petersburgers, Mamin, from the beginning of the film, alludes to a story one of whose foci is the destructive effect that the drive for riches has on others (it is Germann's fault that the countess dies) and on oneself (Germann goes mad after he sees that the countess in his vision tricked him and he loses the card game).

Indeed, *Window to Paris* highlights and satirizes a contemporary Russia whose core cultural values have been corrupted by an obsession with greed and money.

When the Gorokhoffs see that Nikolai's room still contains Mariia Olegovna's furniture, they immediately insist that the old woman had bequeathed the furniture to them. Mamin makes it clear to the audience that this assertion is motivated not by truth, but by greed. Once Gorokhov and his family have discovered the window to Paris, the major purpose of their treks to and from that city is to acquire as many material possessions as possible. From Petersburg they take Russian upright pianos and scarves to sell on the streets of Paris as hot *perestroika* items. From Paris, they abscond with an old Citroën and a motorcycle. They want to steal a satellite dish. Russian policemen arrest Nicole (played by Agnès Soral), the French heroine of the film who accidentally goes through the window from Paris to Petersburg. They release her only after Nikolai has promised them a long list of Western goods that he insists she will obtain for them. The police compile a list that includes the usual coveted items—videos, a television, a washing machine, and two cassette players.

Lest members of the film audience conclude that Mamin is a neo-Slavophile, nationalist apologist in his condemnation of Western free-market values, it is important to note that the indigenous features of his own country also come in for biting satire. Part of the chaotic atmosphere in Petersburg is created by a Communist demonstration, with a band playing the Internationale, and by an ultra-nationalist demonstration whose participants carry anti-Masonic and anti-Semitic signs through the streets. As Nicole wanders the night streets of the city, she is witness to incidents that indicate the sorry state of affairs in Russia. A man is walking along the street several hundred feet ahead of her. As he passes a telephone booth, he suddenly stops, without uttering a word. For no reason at all, he smashes the glass of the telephone booth, kicks it, and keeps "fighting" it until it is completely destroyed. He then calmly continues along his way, without having said anything or without explaining his action. As Nicole walks through a courtyard, she is almost hit by some emptied clam shells that have been thrown out of the window of an apartment building. (This incident is vaguely reminiscent of a scene in a short story within the Petersburg literary tradition. In Gogol's *Shinel'* [The Overcoat], watermelon rinds are thrown out of a window onto Akakii Akakevich, as he walks through the city.) Nicole also notices two men urinating in public. People she passes want to buy her clothes and possessions. The Petersburg toilet attendant who gets her drunk in the washroom warns her not to step in the urine on the floor, and protects her from the leering, lecherous looks of men they encounter on their way to the bathroom.

This is the Russia of the present. Chaos and vulgarity reign. Obscene language and crass behavior are omnipresent. The police are corrupt. The citizens are greedy. Westernization as exemplified by Gorokhov certainly provides no answers to the problems facing Russian society, for the obsession with material goods does not, as Mamin demonstrates, lead to a civilized, dignified society.

But Mamin is no gentler to the Communists and their legacy or to the ultranationalists. The Communist Party member who lives in the communal apartment fondly recalls the special food rations that he used to receive in the early 1980s. The only reason for him to meet up with French Communist party mem-

bers in Paris is for them to pay the fare of the Petersburg communal apartment inhabitants who have been driven around Paris for days by taxi so that they can find the ladder back to their window to Petersburg. (The French Communists agree to pay the tab and only then discover how enormous it is. In shock, they ask whether the taxi ride was a ride all the way from Moscow, to which the answer is: "No, from Petersburg.")

In *Window to Paris* it is implied, although not stated outright, that much of the crumbling state of the society—literally crumbling, with respect to the sorry state of Petersburg's buildings and streets, and figuratively crumbling, with respect to the lack of civility and moral decency that permeate life—is directly traceable to life in the Soviet era. The Gorokhov family displays traits of typically Soviet behavior. They use the upright pianos in their apartment as storage space for noodles and other foodstuffs, a fact that Nikolai discovers when he tries to play and then to tune one of the pianos. They dress without taste, even when they buy Parisian clothes. They hang out their laundry on the roof and thereby block the beautiful, romantic view of the Parisian skyline. When Nikolai wants to tune Nicole's piano, which he hears through the window of her apartment, he is so drunk that he ends by trashing the apartment as he falls and knocks over furniture. And Nicole and her friends, not yet having met the strange Russians who have mysteriously, through *their* window, appeared on the roof they share with her, think that the tuning hammer that Nikolai carries is a gun.

The absurdity of Russian life and the existence of widespread ignorance are shown as Nikolai gets Nicole out of a Petersburg jail by telling the police that she is the famous French singer Edith Piaf, who must be released in order to perform at a concert that evening. When asked who he is, Nikolai replies that he is her translator and pianist, Elvis Presley. All the policemen care about is easy access to Western goods; they enthusiastically write up the list of products that they expect as a bribe. A Russian in Paris demonstrates his utter hypocrisy. As he and Nikolai are sitting in a restaurant, he declares that no one in Paris is interested in true art. Nikolai challenges his statement by bringing up Voltaire and Bizet as examples of French cultural figures. Nikolai's Russian companion then criticizes a French couple seated at another table. He states that the French either talk about food or they stuff their mouths with food. Mamin emphasizes the fact that at this very moment, the Russian who has been criticizing the French is stuffing his own mouth with food. What Mamin places on display are the worst features of the greed of the new Russian free-market entrepreneurial spirit, together with the worst features of the Soviet legacy—acquisitiveness, bribery, prejudice, boorish behavior, ignorance, hypocrisy, wild drunkenness, a quest for Western goods, and government corruption. (Of course, part of this stems not only from the Soviet legacy, but also from the pre-Soviet legacy. One has only to read Gogol's *Dead Souls* or *The Inspector General* to observe some of the same behavioral traits.)

We have seen that Mamin points out contemporary Russia's lack of respect for culture. One stark example is the business school, with its worship of money,

management, and marketing. Nor does Mamin shy away from showing his audience examples of the degradation of culture in the West. In the slices of life, Russian and Western, which Mamin presents, the audience can easily conclude that consumer societies are the same wherever they are located, that greed and crudity transcend national boundaries. Thus, in several episodes, Mamin emphasizes that the contemporary West, like present-day Russia, is fueled by greed and boorishness.

For example, a restaurant in Paris has hired a Russian to play the violin, part of the time with the bow between his legs. He moves the violin along the bow with motions that suggest masturbation. Nicole is a sculptress/taxidermist who has stuffed a deceased cat, Adèle, for the wealthy owner of the cat. The owner complains that her creation does not properly capture the expression of the cat's eyes. Nikolai applies for a job as a pianist in a Parisian club. The club's interior looks stately and sedate, with an atmosphere of old-world elegance. Posters announcing performances of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Mozart's *Requiem* are visible. When Nikolai appears for an audition, he is told that the club is a century old, that this club is no Moulin Rouge, and that "we believe in high quality." He is then asked to show his legs by removing his slacks, and is hired. The next scene we see through Nikolai's eyes, as he is about to go on stage. The audience is giving the previous performer, a violinist, a standing ovation. As the violinist bows, Nikolai notices that the man is naked from the waist down and that the audience is made up of nude people. Nikolai says that he refuses to play Mozart without his slacks, that he would rather die under a bridge with his slacks on—and he runs out of the club, which, he has discovered, is a club for nudists. Finally, an incident in Petersburg demonstrates that the French can behave as insensitively as the Russians. When Nicole, in her wanderings through the city, comes upon a group of French tourists getting out of a bus in front of a hotel, she desperately calls out to them, in French, "*Aidez-moi. Attendez-moi. J'arrive*" (Help me. Wait for me. I'm coming). The French tourists pay no attention to her, nor do they come to her aid as she struggles with two policemen who are in the process of arresting her.

In the world that Mamin has opened in *Window to Paris*, is there any hope whatsoever? If so, it lies with Nikolai. When he gets to Paris, he, unlike the Gorokhoffs, is not interested in acquiring material goods. Rather, he drinks in the beauty of the city. He admires a boat (a *bateau-mouche*), with its twinkling lights, romantically floating down the evening Seine. He appreciates the beauty of Paris's female residents too. He wants a French grammar book in order to be able better to communicate with Nicole. He also shows respect for French culture, as when he cites Voltaire and Bizet for the edification of the crass Russian who has declared that there is no true art in Paris. He knows an Yves Montand song. When the window to Paris is discovered, Gorokhov wants to keep the secret to himself, whereas Nikolai wants to inform scientists so that humanity will benefit. Unlike the other Russians who populate this film, Nikolai is educated. Only he realizes that the apartment dwellers have an extra thirteen days before the window closes for another twenty years, because only he realizes

that the written calculations about the window's opening and closing which Mariia Olegovna revealed to Gorokhov are based on Russian pre-revolutionary dates and therefore, on the pre-revolutionary calendar. Nikolai is a cultured person, too. He is almost the only character in the movie who does not use foul language.

At one point, Nikolai treats his former pupils to a trip to Paris, in return for their promise to put an end to their strike against the administration of the business school. The children are dazzled by Paris and decide to remain there, dancing in front of the Sacré-Coeur Basilica in the Montmartre section of the city in order to support themselves. They say that they can earn money by dancing, washing cars, and washing dishes in a McDonald's restaurant. It is Nikolai who makes an impassioned speech to the children in an attempt to convince them to return to their families. He tells them that their parents and grandparents would be unhappy without them. He continues: "You were born in an unfortunate time in an unhappy, ruined country. But it is *your* country. Is it really true that you can't make it better? After all, a great deal depends on you. Believe me. You didn't even try. Is it really true that you couldn't care less? I do care." This speech, the strongest "positive" message of the film, represents Mamin's hope for the future of his country. The young generation, if it is guided by adults like Nikolai who uphold spiritual and cultural values, will be able to build a new Russia. According to Mamin, the future can be promising only if Russians do not spiritually and/or literally abandon their homeland for the sparkle of Western consumer goods.

In this film, Nikolai is shown as a typical member of the Russian intelligentsia, a segment of the population that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries defended the importance of moral values, the importance of a social conscience, and the importance of the preservation and transmission of culture. What Mamin seems to imply is that whether pre-revolutionary or Soviet, the intelligentsia, with its pure cultural and moral standards, with its sense of selfless concern for its country's fate, represents Russia's best hope for the future. Explicitly and implicitly, Mamin shows his audience the tragedy of the new Russia, where a person like Nikolai is considered irrelevant to and even an impediment to society's central purpose, the accumulation of material wealth.

In this respect, Nikolai resembles the so-called *lishnii chelovek* (superfluous man), who has populated Russian literature from the nineteenth century through the present. The "superfluous men" themselves are fictional reflections of the fact that many Russian writers were and are part of the intelligentsia who do not fit into Russian society as a whole because of their values. That is often so because they are dreamers, and more idealistic than other members of society. In these works of literature, the "superfluous" figures can be tragic heroes, who suffer defeat even when—as is often the case—they are the carriers of the moral message of the books. Mamin casts Nikolai in the role of the "superfluous man" in the new Russian society. In fact, throughout the movie Nikolai is constantly trying to tune out-of-tune pianos, in Russia and in the West, as if seeking to bestow harmony upon a culture that is completely out of tune. Yet paradoxically

cally, he also belongs to another tradition, that of the socialist realist heroes and heroines who inhabited many works of Soviet literature, film, and art. In his speech to the children about the need for them to improve their country, Nikolai is the hero who points toward the building of a new society. This model is representative of the scores of socialist realist works that starred heroes and heroines who created Soviet society, sometimes literally, as in the construction of a cement factory in Fedor Gladkov's 1925 proletarian novel *Tsement* (Cement), which is considered a "prototype of the Soviet industrial novel" and of the later socialist realist novels that began to be demanded when socialist realism was proclaimed the official aesthetic during the early 1930s.⁸

Thus, Mamin's film continues certain traditions of Russian literature and culture. Moreover, by using references to Pushkin's story, "The Queen of Spades," and to his narrative poem, "The Bronze Horseman," Mamin alludes to the Petersburg tradition of Russian literature and culture. In 1995, the contemporary writer Andrei Bitov, like Mamin a Petersburg cultural figure, wrote an essay entitled "*O myt'e okon*" (On Washing Windows) (Bitov 1996:81–86), in which he, like Mamin and so many others, referred to Pushkin's image of the window in "The Bronze Horseman." "Strangely enough—despite the existence of an image of its greatness, built up by Peter and Pushkin, despite the whole 'Petersburg line' in Russian literature, culture, and history—Europe is still only dimly visible through this 'window,' and Petersburg is perhaps even less visible from the West. Obviously:[sic] when we look into a window and look out of a window, we see fundamentally different things" (Bitov 1996:83–84). Mamin has seen some of the same qualities when he looks out of or into his "window" to Paris. His movie serves as a serious warning to his countrymen to uphold, protect, and preserve values and a culture which, although they cannot be bought and sold for the cost of a computer or a Citroën, nevertheless constitute those vital invisible threads that keep a society and culture intact and healthy. These qualities, insists Mamin through Nikolai, his mouthpiece protagonist (whose function also resembles the *raisonneur* characters in classical dramas), are the fundamental, but not flashy values that must be instilled in the young. As Mamin looks out of and into his window, he cries out against the degradation of culture. He cries out against the "ideology" of money and greed.

The film *Window to Paris* provides a peek, through a window, at contemporary Russia. It would be useful for citizens of our own country, the United States, to look out of the window that provides a glimpse of Mamin's view of Russia, and then to look into the window that reveals contemporary American society, culture, and values. For the views are remarkably similar. We, too, would do well to absorb the moral and cultural lessons that Mamin teaches in his movie. When, in the United States of the mid-1990s, one cannot go through a single day without hearing about and reading about money; when culture and commercialism go hand in hand, as never before; when journalism is more and more infused with the values of the mega-corporations that own the media; when the ideals of the nation are now conveyed to many of the youth in terms of monetary success alone; when the type of medical treatment available to an

individual now often depends upon cost, as determined by a bureaucrat, rather than upon the medical judgment of a physician, then perhaps it is necessary for all of us, east and west, to take time to reevaluate the ethical, social, and cultural values that make human life truly worthwhile.

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NOTES

¹ The film was a joint Russian-French production, released by Fontaine of St. Petersburg and Sodaperaga of Paris, together with La [sic] Sept Cinéma and Le centre national de la cinématographie. Iurii Mamin and Arkadii Tigai wrote the screenplay. Photography is by Sergei Nekrasov and Anatolii Lapchov, and music is by Iurii Mamin and Aleksei Zalivalov.

² For American views of the film, see Hoberman 1995:47; Elley 1994:36, 46; *Variety* 1995:26; Kehr 1995:67; Bartholomew 1995:69–70; Mathews 1995:B7, B9; Kauffmann 1995:27; Maslin 1995:C6; Thomas 1995:F2; Carr 1994:A10; Stack 1995:C3; Stone 1995:E3; Hartl 1995:H23.

³ For French reviews of the film, see Bouquet 1994:112; Chevallier 1994:56–57; and Derobert 1994:49–50.

⁴ In an interview, Mamin himself has commented that Westerners often see only Russia's gloomy and frightening features, such as crime. He stated that in *Window to Paris*, he wanted to show that there is much *joie de vivre* in Russia and that there are many cheerful Russian people. Mamin added that people in the West do not know about these aspects of the Russian character (Mamin 1994:59). In the same interview, Mamin directed viewers' attention to the film's life-affirming and cheerful, upbeat qualities. These features are certainly present in many episodes of the film. However, in addition to the happy moments in *Window to Paris*, there are, in fact, many painful ones as well. Mamin confirmed the darker side of his satires in another interview. He said that a satirist has the responsibility "to make people laugh at reality before they die of horror" (Stone 1995:E3).

⁵ Russia's love of Pushkin plays an important part in Mamin's 1990 satiric film *Bakenbardy* (Sideburns). *Sideburns* deals with a Russian ultra-nationalist group that resembles the extremist *Pamiat'* organization. Members of the group are all dressed like Pushkin, they all look like him, and they all have sideburns, whence the title of the film.

For a brief summary and analysis of *Sideburns* and other Mamin films from the beginning of his career, in the 1980s, to 1990, see Horton and Brashinsky 1992:201–07.

⁶ Along the same lines, it is interesting to note that one of the paintings by Sergei Mironenko, a contemporary Russian artist, is of an American Express card, and another is of a Visa card.

⁷ In another example from the contemporary life that Mamin is "imitating" in *Window to Paris*, a recent article in *The New York Times* describes a Russian first-grade textbook, *Economics for Little Ones, or How Misha Became a Businessman*, published in 1997. The textbook "tells the story of a simple but industrious bear who opens a honey, berry and nut store in his forest. His sole competitor is described as Winnie the Pooh's overpriced Golden Beehive Cooperative, and Misha soon trades his apron for a three-piece suit and a cellular phone to become the forest's first tycoon. After outsmarting a crude wart-hog monopolist, Misha—now an industrialist, banker and marketing consultant—eventually becomes forest finance minister." The authors of this textbook have also written other textbooks (for older children), *Tales of Queen Economy*, *Evil Inflation*, *the Magical*

Computer and Their Trusty Friends, and *Enterprise for Everyone*, which “reads like an anti-Communist handbook.” Finally, first-grade pupils are now taught the words “profit” and “inventory.” The Coca-Cola Company has begun Coca-Shkola, a program in which schoolchildren are taken on tours of the Moscow Coca-Cola plant and are given many samples of the company’s products. Dmitri Chukseyev, the Moscow Coca-Cola Company spokesman, stated that the purpose of the tours is “to introduce them [the schoolchildren] to Coca-Cola culture and give them a professional orientation.” Chukseyev continued: “We will certainly have them talking to business people, and yes, in a way this is bringing them closer and closer to the capitalist system” (Koenig 1997:3).

⁸ I address the paradoxical link between the tradition of the superfluous man in mainstream Russian literature and the tradition of socialist realism in my book, *Conformity's Children: An Approach to the Superfluous Man in Russian Literature* (Chances 1978: 163–67). In the mainstream tradition, the nonconformist literary protagonists were often literally or figuratively killed off or defeated, while conformist characters were explicitly or implicitly placed on a pedestal. Thus, the framework for socialist realist novels, where the characters who submit to the collective force are praised, whereas those who are strong individualists are criticized, was already in place in major works of Russian literature of the nineteenth century and pre-Soviet twentieth century. See Chances 1978:164.

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