

## REVOLUTION AS THE SLEEP OF REASON: THE TOTAL REDUCTION OF IDEAS

By **VLADIMIR KANTOR**

*In his article, the author poses the question, one of the most important for understanding the catastrophes of the twentieth century: how and why the sun of mind rolled over the world (as expressed by A. Koestler). The rejection of reason meant the rejection of the Christian pathos of life. Since the end of the nineteenth century, God, light and mind were not in favor across Europe. The light of reason was addressed to all people, but the elect who assimilated it were few. And then the whole history of mankind, we see with what incredible effort these chosen mobs pull to the light. In the twentieth century. there was a so-called 'uprising of the masses', accompanied by the destruction of Christianity and the elite, carriers of the mind. But this fall in ideas began with the Russian revolution of 1917. In an era when the world of Russia and the West broke, when after two monstrous wars everything was lost, when Auschwitz and Kolyma (where atrocities were happening that are possible only in horrible dreams) erased all the centuries-old attempts of humanism, when the monsters born from sleep of reason seemed to defeat the world forever, there was still a gap. As the Russian philosopher Fyodor Stepanov wrote, Christianity called upon all of us, young and old, healthy and sick, rich in talents and poor in spirit, to such a great transfiguration of the world, before which the wildest dreams of a revolutionary reorganization of human life fall apart. Only this requires spiritual effort. But the elect have always been few. However, it is they who carry the light into the world.*

Key words: Russia, the West. revolution, Christianity. the revolt of the masses, the gospel, the light of reason

Everyone, I feel, remembers that most excellent Spanish saying 'The sleep of reason produces monsters,' which was used by Goya to title one of his brilliant etchings from the suite of satires *Los Caprichos*. There one has depicted a thinker asleep at a table, over whose head circle bats and various demons personifying the reflections of evil, or more exactly manifesting Nothing in their appearance. If one is to continue the saying, then what is conveyed is that at the moment of sleep fantasy is necessary, fantasy that can aid the genius to create something exceptional. But for Goya, it would appear, he has completely consciously forgotten literally about fantasy, while in each of the subsequent etchings he has depicted the metaphysical horrors of human life. It was already the ancient thinkers who first wrote about the notion of reason and its significance within human life and here with the claim that whomever the gods wanted to die, they would deprive of reason. And

all these debates about reason and its dream I shall explore within a Christian context. For it gives an exact reading in understanding the European catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We also know, as was said in The First Letter of John, 'the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real; indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his Son Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup> (1 John 5:20).

The renunciation of reason represented the renunciation of the Christian pathos of life. Arthur Koestler wrote in his autobiography 'I was born at that moment (1905 r. – V.K.), when the sun had set over the age of reason.'<sup>2</sup> And indeed – for it was just a short distance to Bolshevism, Fascism and National-Socialism. Husserl was to see in this setting of reason the first cause of the European crisis: 'To get the concept of what is contra-essential in the present «crisis», the concept «Europe» would have to be developed as the historical teleology of infinite goals of reason; it would have to be shown how the European «world» was born from the ideas of reason, i.e., from the spirit of philosophy. The «crisis» could then become clear as the «seeming collapse of rationalism». Still, as we said, the reason for the downfall of a rational culture does not lie in the essence of rationalism itself, but only in its exteriorization, its absorption in «naturalism» and «objectivism». The crisis of European existence can end in only one of two ways: in the ruin of a Europe alienated from its rational sense of life, fallen into a barbarian hatred of spirit; or in the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy, through a heroism of reason that will definitively overcome naturalism.'<sup>3</sup>

In place of Being, as Heidegger wrote, there appeared Nothing, and it is *a priori* inadmissible and irrational to struggle with it. But this Nothing conducted a deadly struggle with people, slaughtering whole classes, destroying towns, villages, industry, nations, first and foremost Jews who had brought forth the Saviour, although Paul the Apostle had said that in Christianity there is neither an ancient Greek (Hellene) nor a Jew. The host that came destroyed the world of reason. For that was how it was told by the ancients, whoever God wanted to kill he deprived of reason. And deprived of reason they destroyed the bearers of reason under various pretexts. So that light in the world extinguished and an ancient horror came to the throne.

Strictly speaking, all the words of philosophers on the relevance of thought are trumped by the evangelical words that talk of the creation of thought, that is with the word of peace. For God is the creator of reason, of the word. I shall recall the beginning of the Gospel according to John (J 1,1-5):

<sup>1</sup> *New English Bible*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). All quotations of Bible come from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Koestler, *Arrow in the Blue: An Autobiography*, (New York: Collins and Hamish Hamilton, 1952), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man' in E. Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 191-192.

When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was.

The Word, then, was with God at the beginning.

and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him

All that came to be alive with his life, and that life was the light of men.

That light shines on in the dark, and the darkness has never mastered it.

As wrote the splendid Russian historian and writer Mark Aldanov: 'Cultural progress results in the reduction of the difference in the intellectual growth between the 'crowd' and the 'elite.' But this reduction may be achieved through the raising of the level of the crowd and a lowering in the level of the 'elite.' Unfortunately mankind in recent times is heading along the latter route much more willingly than along the former. All the teachings of Hitler are a lie not standing up to condescending criticism. But he himself is a living truth about the present world, an unconcealed and terrible symbol of the hatred that saturates the Europe of our times. Most characteristic here is that this man was the son of a liberal, one who considered himself a 'citizen of the world.'<sup>4</sup> As D.S. Merezhkovski said justly about the Nazis: it matters not what you conclude about the ideas of the mob: what is in fact new and important is the *temperature* that created by this swarm.

But this lowering of ideas was to have its beginnings with the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Bunin said that the Bolsheviks killed off sensitivity. We suffer as a result of the death of an individual; the deaths of seven – he wrote – is tolerable; it is more difficult but possible to suffer because of deaths of seventy, yet when seventy thousand die the human perception itself ceases to function. He wrote, referring to Wells and his belief in Lenin: 'These Lenins have smothered in Russia the smallest free breath, they have multiplied the number of Russian corpses into hundreds of thousands, they have converted puddles of blood into veritable seas, and out of the richest country in the world, of a nation though ignorant and unstable, for all that still great, having produced in all fields no fewer true geniuses than England itself, they have created a barren churchyard, a valley of death, tears, of a gnashing of teeth; and they have flooded all of this churchyard in thousands of Cheka agents 'crushing the opposition,' the vilest and bloodiest institutions the world has yet known, this is they [...] for a whole three years crushing the skulls of the Russian intelligentsia.' It was the professorial class that was to bear the brunt the most (when compared to other circles within the Russian population). Here the words of the eminent Russian sociologist Pitirim Surokin: 'The death rate among the Petrograd professors during 1918-22 was six times higher than the death rate of peace times, and twice higher than

<sup>4</sup> Mark Aldanov, 'Gitler' in Mark Aldonov, *Kartiny Oktyabr'skoy revolyutsii. Istoricheskiye portrety. Portrety sovremennikov. Zagadka Tolstogo*, (St. Petersburg: RKHGI, 1999), p. 234.

the rate among the rest of the populations of Petrograd in 1918-1921.<sup>5</sup> Pushkin, logical and lucid Pushkin, having created the fundamental senses of Russian culture, wrote in the 1820s a hymn to reason and the light

You, oh holy sun, shine on!  
As this lamp grows fainter  
With the bright arrival of the dawn,  
So the spurious wisdom flickers and smoulders  
Before that sun of the immortal mind.  
Long live the sun, and may darkness vanish!

But the darkness covered Russia in 1917. This renunciation of God led to a renunciation of reason. The Biblical psalms had long ago said: 'The impious fool says in his heart, «There is no God». How vile men are, how depraved and loathsome; not one does anything good!' (Psalms 14:1). And godless was to be the state policy of the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik leader was resolute in his hatred for Christianity: 'Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression (...) religion is the opium of the people. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image (...)'<sup>6</sup> And further: 'any deity is necrophilia... every religious idea, every idea about any deity, every flirtation with a deity is indescribable abomination... the most dangerous abomination, the most vile contagion. Your VI!<sup>7</sup> And already upon taking power he was to commence the relentless physical reprisals with those who believed in God, especially with the clergy: 'At the party congress was concluded a secret meeting of all or almost all the delegates on this issue in conjunction with the main employees of the State Political Directorate (GPU), the National Commissariat of Justice (NKYu) and the Revolutionary Tribunals. At this meeting there fell congress's secret decision that the removal of valuables, and in particular those of the wealthiest monasteries, religious houses and churches, should be conducted with a relentless decisiveness, absolutely stopping at nothing and this was to be resolved in the shortest possible period. The greater the number of reactionary clergy and reactionary bourgeoisie we are able to shoot for this reason the better.' Lenin 19<sup>th</sup> March 1922.<sup>8</sup> They were to shoot poets and professors at the same time.

<sup>5</sup> Pitirim Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolutions*, (Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott, 1925), p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Lenin, 'Socialism and Religion', *Novaya Zhizn*, 28/1905, December 3. See *Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 10, (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1965), p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Lenin, 'Letter to Maxim Gorky' (14 November 1913) in Vladimir Lenin, *Selected Works*, (New York: International Publishers, 1943), p. 675-676. Telling off this eminent writer for divine ingratitude, Lenin concludes the letter 'Why are you doing this? Devilish annoyance.'

<sup>8</sup> Lenin on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1922. I quote from *Izviestija*, 4/1990, p. 190-193.

Then, so that the West did not ultimately consider the victorious demos to be a crowd of cannibals, a few hundred eminent academics and writers were sent to the West (this undertaking now bears the name the 'philosophical steamship'). An intellectual and highly passionate summing up of the existence of a Russian university and Russian professorial circles was conducted by the academic Mikhail Ivanovich Rostovtsev, a historian of antiquity and an archaeologist who fled Bolshevik Russia in 1918. For a start I shall present his literal cry of horror over the fate of Russian professors taken from the article 'Science in Bolshevik Russia' (1921): 'Why do academics die of hunger? I am not here going to present a long list of academics who have died of hunger over the course of the last three years. They are legion. Why do the Bolsheviks not protect academics from being murdered and arrested by the Emergency Commission across the length of the country? [...] Why are hundreds of Russian academics, young and old, fleeing Russia and are living the life of asylum seekers in Western Europe, Japan, China and America? According to my research no less than a third of academics have deserted Russia.'<sup>9</sup> While in another article he attempted to show the ethos of a Russian university, of the Russian professorial class, and how they handled the Revolution. And what the universities and those professors who survived were turned into. I shall commence with his understanding of the university ethos: 'The ideals of Russian universities brought forth universities in constant struggle, internal and external conflicts over decades. Much martyrdom was needed to bring these ideals to life. Regardless of the constant steps backward, we all the same are successively coming closer to their realisation. [...] University will always be for the Russian intelligentsia not merely an institution for the education of youth. This was a thought laboratory, one of academic creation in all its fields. This was the focus where the strivings and aspirations of the better part of the Russian intelligentsia would come together.'<sup>10</sup>

The reason for this strike at higher education was in the renunciation of reason as the basis of the construct of the human world. According to Berdyaev 'Lenin was philosophically and culturally a reactionary, an extremely retarded and backward man, he was not even at the level of Marx's dialectics, evolved through German idealism. This was to turn out to be fatal for the character of the Russian Revolution – a revolution that carried out a genuine pogrom on Russian high culture.'<sup>11</sup>

One may take as a version the considerations of the great Russian philosopher Yevgeny Trubetski: 'The flat, steppe nature of our country has left its mark on our history. In the nature of our plain there is a certain hatred towards everything that outgrows flatness, towards everything that too noticeably towers above the surroundings. This hatred forms

<sup>9</sup> Michael Rostovtzeff, 'Nauka v bol'shevistskoy Rossii', in Michael Rostovtzeff, *Izbrannyye publitsisticheskiye stat'i. 1906-1923*, (Moscow: ROSSP-EN, 2002), p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Rostovtzeff, 'Universitety i bol'sheviki' in Rostovtzeff, *Izbrannyye publitsisticheskiye stat'i. 1906-1923*, p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznaniye*, (Moscow: Kniga, 1991), p. 151.

the bad fate of our lives. It periodically razes to the ground everything that has grown above it.<sup>12</sup> It needs to be said that the subject of landscape and its influence on culture has been expressed in various philosophical works since the time of Montesquieu. And nature and landscape does in fact help in symbolically explaining the lot of a country. Not falling into geographical determinism we may agree with the philosopher that the hordes of wild nomads 'levelled Ancient Rus', that is torched it, destroying, slaughtering; finally the Tatars had levelled everything i.e., they had turned everything into ruins.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless Trubetskoi sees an unexpected way out of this plain flatness: Muscovy was to start its ascent. But equally in this there was manifest this plain tendency. In order to fight against the Tatars threatening from without levelling aspirations, tsarist authority itself had to become the only elevation in the country. Class inequality was still to remain which presupposed points of elevation. Against these were waged terrible peasant wars.

That German of genius Elizabeth II, on becoming a great Russian empress, was to continue the work of Peter the Great and with incredible effort she broke the back of the peasant revolt, strengthening the class inequality legislatively. Quoting the words of Konstantin Leontiev: 'Up until Peter our social picture was more monotonous, there was greater similarity in the parts; after Peter there began to develop a clearer, sharper division within our society, there was to appear a diversification without which creativity in nations is impossible. [...] The despotism of Peter was progressive and aristocratic, in the sense of the foregoing stratification of society. Elizabeth's liberalism had decisively that character. She was to lead Russia to a blossoming, to creativity and to growth. She increased inequality. And in this is her main contribution. [...] from her times onwards the nobility was to become somewhat independent of the state, but as formerly it prevailed and ruled over the other classes of the nation.'<sup>14</sup>

Its destruction was linked to the movement of Russian revolutions when, as he described the spontaneous mass movement threatens to erase from the face of the earth education itself. And then negative universality and equality existed in the form of a completely straight and equal surface. Trubetskoy searches for the antithesis to this phenomenon of the plain and finds it only in the fashioning of a church: 'A church stood above the cemetery – the embodiment of eternally resurrecting life. On our plain this is the only elevation which death hitherto had been unable to raze to the ground. From amongst the periodic destructions experienced by the Russian land only the Church has emerged whole from the flames and again consolidates the national body that has fallen

<sup>12</sup> Jewgienij Trubetskoy, 'Dva zverya,' in Jewgienij Trubetskoy, *Smysl zhizni*, (Moscow: Respublika 1994), p. 300.

<sup>13</sup> Trubetskoy, 'Dva zverya,' p. 300.

<sup>14</sup> Konstantin Leontiev, *Vizantizm i slavyanstvo*, in Konstantin Leontiev, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy i pisem v dvenadtsati tomakh*, t. 7, kniga pervaya, (St Peterburg: Vladimir Dal', 2005), p. 303.

to pieces.<sup>15</sup> Consequently the great equaliser Lenin did not engage in a struggle with Christianity for no purpose.

In Ivan Shmelev's horrific and masterly apocalyptic book 'The Sun of the Dead,' about the Crimea during the period at the very beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution written in 1923, a post office, which is a link that cultured people had with the world, is perceived as a threat to the revolution:

And that drunk Pavlyak, a commissar communist of recent enrolment, would brag:

- Relations with France are to be established... with whomever you please! Let them jot down what they want, show the connection... we'll show them there's no flies on us!..

But Pavlyak could not master the enormity of his powers, jumping from the window, and shattering his skull. And the 'relations' ceased. While the new chief, a ginger-bearded errand-boy, simply growls from behind the grid:

- Whaaat?.. There is no abroad any longer! Only one great expanse ... too little being written to you, eh? Well you obviously had it too good then...

The demos (the people) killed Socrates the intellectual; the confrontation of the *low-brow*, the people of the masses, with what they contemptuously called the *high-brow* is evident across the course of millennia. In subsequent centuries this opposition was to become the subject of specialist investigations. The great French psychologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) was convinced that on the strength of lack of development and a low intellectual level the greater masses of people are governed by unconscious instincts, especially when they find themselves as part of a crowd. Here there occurs a lowering in the level of intellect, a fall in responsibility. And there occurs a contamination by madness, and such a contamination is 'an ability by which people are gifted in such a way as to be anthropomorphous monkeys.'<sup>16</sup>

And there arises a domination of not merely the masses but of the crowd, the human rabble. For here the temperature of the locusts is the same as with the Nazis, it even takes the place of any attempt at thought. In Germany, still at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the German philosopher Wilhelm Windelband in his *Präludiven* drew attention to the growth in the low-brow, calling them the dilettanti; that is those who possess a superficial, amateur notion about everything but hungry for leadership of the world: 'Not being able to control the internal, specific elements of the cultural content of these alien regions, contemporary man runs to the superficiality of dilettantism, which removes

<sup>15</sup> Trubetskoy, 'Dva zverya', p. 300-301.

<sup>16</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *Psikhologiya narodov i mass*, trans. A. Fridmana, E. Pimenovoy, (Moscow: Akademicheskii proyekt, 2016), p. 83.

the scum from all and forgets about the inner content.' This is madness, yet madness is an illness, and consequently infectious. The failed artist Adolf Hitler, having worshiped popular literature, not only considered himself capable of recasting Germany but he did recast it, attempting to annihilate a part of humanity and even though he was defeated, he poisoned the consciousness of millions of people in various countries. And henceforth 'the masses dictate to government its behaviour.'<sup>17</sup> In Germany bonfires of books burnt, on to which were cast the books of great Germans in whom there flowed but a drop of Jewish blood or whom had been noted as being of a liberal bent and mentality. In general anti-Semitism was a blow to the most spiritually developed part of humanity, the former world of the Bible and Christ. The French thinker Jacques Maritain was to write: 'In this is comprised the election: in the person of the Jews - the persecutors of Moses and the prophets, in striving to persecute the Saviour, who had stepped out from the midst of this very nation. [...] Just as they hated Christianity for its Jewish roots, so they hated Israel for its belief in original sin and redemption and for the Christian compassion that came out of Israel. As the Jewish writer Maurice Samuel shrewdly noted, it was not because the Jews had killed Christ that the Nazi anti-Semitic fury was to persecute Jews on every road in Europe but because it was they, the Jews, who had given Christ to the world.'<sup>18</sup>

There occurred what academically is referred to as the Holocaust. Millions were murdered. But it follows to remember that not only people were annihilated – this was the annihilation of a unique local Jewish culture, the annihilation of the memory that this (culture) had been for centuries an inseparable part of the culture of Eastern Europe.

It was no better in Soviet Russia, although here the matter was somewhat different and happened earlier. In 1922, on the order of Lenin, several hundred of the most eminent Russian philosophers, historians, writers and natural scientists were sent to the West on the so-called 'philosophy steamer.' This is a symbolic name, for in point of fact there were two steamers and two trains. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, compiled the Index of prohibited books, which included many Russian classics that did not reflect movement towards a proletariat world outlook. Contemporary historians write about her relentlessness in relation to the printed word. Already in 1920 the Central Political-Educational Committee of the People's Commissariat for Education, on the initiative of Krupskaya sent to the provinces instructions to review catalogues and confiscate 'ideologically harmful and obsolete' literature from public libraries. In 1924 she included in this list the writings of Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer, Leskov and other major writers; something that shocked even Maxim Gorky. Children's libraries were to suffer especially. Confiscated from these, on Krupskaya's instruction, were even folk fairy tales and Aksakov's *The Scarlet Flower*. In total her instructions covered 97 children's writers, including Chukovskii, whose verse she

<sup>17</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *Psikhologiya narodov i mass*, p. 115.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Maritain, 'Tayna Izrailiya', in Jacques Maritain, *Izbrannoye: Velichiye i nishcheta metafiziki*, trans. N.V. Zamonets, (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), p. 418-419.

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described as 'bourgeois rubbish.' The circular signed by Krupskaya outlawed the lending to readers of 'the Bible or any other religious literature.' While the completely crazed young, for as Trotsky said 'the young are the motor of the revolution,' called for the destruction of all world classics. Even that most talented of young men Mayakovski was to write in his poem 'It's too early to rejoice!' (1918):

Find a White guardsman  
And up against the wall.  
And have you forgotten  
Raphael?  
It's time for bullets to pepper  
The museum's walls  
Hundred-throat guns to  
Shoot down the old junk.  
Sow death in the enemy  
Camp  
Don't be hit  
Capital hirelings  
And Tsar Alexander  
There on the square  
The cost of uprisings?  
Take the dynamite right over there  
Set up the cannons along the edge  
Deaf to the white guard  
Kindness pledge  
And why is Pushkin not  
Attacked  
And other generals of classics  
To debark?  
The old junk of art we protect in name

Reprisals rained down on academics and engineers, who were in fact of much use to the young regime, but all were deemed saboteurs, were shot, imprisoned, (I shall recall merely the so-called Industrial Party Trial of 1930). The reason for this seemingly totally pointless reprisal has been expertly elaborated on by Arthur Koestler in *Darkness at Noon*. The investigator Gletkin explains: 'In other countries the process of industrialisation was spread over the course of a hundred or two hundred years, in such a way that the peasantry genuinely and gradually became used to their new life. For us, in Russia, they have to become acquainted with machines and industrial precision within a decade. If we do not sack them and shoot over the pettiest of mistakes then they will not stop sleeping on the machines or in factory yards, a deadly stagnation shall grip the country, that is it

will return to its pre-revolutionary state.' However, from where did this bloody and delirious nightmare of mass sabotage come, one reminiscent of some kind of shamanic rite of sorcery? Obviously it was engendered by the very situation itself, by the peculiarities in the consciousness of the peasantry drawn into industrialisation, and Gletkin deftly elucidates: 'If you say to my countrymen that they are all still backward and illiterate, despite the achievements of the Revolution and the successful industrialisation of the country, no benefit will come to them for such a statement. But if you persuade them that they are heroes of labour and work as efficiently as Americans, but that the country is feverish because of the diabolical sabotage undertaken by its enemies – then this will help in a way. But of genuine veracity is the fact that it is bringing benefit to humanity.' And so were shot the creators of the legendary 'Katusha' rocket launcher. 1937. The heads of the reactive Scientific Research Institute Georgii Langemak and Ivan Kleimenov, without whom there never would have been the legendary 'Katusha' rocket launcher, were shot. For many years the creator of this fearsome weapon was considered to be only Andrei Kostnikov, a Hero of Socialist Labour, a recipient of the Stalin prize, a member of the Soviet Union's Academy of Sciences, who by strange coincidence took over the running of the Institute following the arrest of his colleagues. It is known that their demise was the result of Kostikov's denunciation, who wrote, allegedly, that Georgii Langemak was the son of a priest.

In general it was to be the Orthodox Church and the clergy that were to be mercilessly destroyed. In 1918 passed was the decree on the separation of the Orthodox Church from the state, placing the Church in a position without rights whatsoever. The first practical result of the workings of the decree was the closure in 1918 of the religious seminaries, including any diocesan schools and temples attached to them. From 1918 onwards a total severance with spiritual religious education and any academic Church activity was the norm. The same may be said for book publishing, from 1918 the publication of any Christian literature whatsoever became an impossibility. Only in 1944 on official authorisation was a theological institute opened and pastoral courses conducted, this later to be transformed in 1946 into the Theological academy and seminary. Yet, nevertheless the subject of God and Christ was to sound out, though secretly, even in Soviet literature, where there continued to exist independent creativity; there were the banned works, which are known only in the underground. And there was the so-called Catacomb Church that was to nurture the eminent Church dignitary – Father Alexander Men, around whom gathered free-thinking young people. And above all, one of the most reassuring phenomenon and the sign of inner spiritual health in the same time were the bardic songs of Vysotskii, Okudzhava, Gorodnitskii and others. The light had not extinguished for, in the words of the Gospel 'the light shines in the darkness.'

Today, one would like to believe that the very existence in our culture of thinkers of the ranking of Shpet, Losev, Stepun, Bulgakov and other philosophers of the Silver Age, equally the classics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of the first third of the twentieth, I shall

enumerate a few: Blok, Bulgakov, Akhmatova, Mandel'shtam, Babel creates within Russia genuine preconditions for a Renaissance. In 1921 the bravest of the greatest of the writers of this period Evgenii Zamyatin, having declared the impossibility for creativity in Bolshevik Russia, used such a formulation: 'I fear that there is but one future for Russian literature: its past.'<sup>19</sup> But this formulation was to turn out to be multifaceted. From Chaadaev and Solov'ev through Frank and Stepun no small distance has been covered. Basing oneself on their texts one may fully regenerate the pathos of the search for truth. In other words there is something to be revived.

Philosophers today are ascertaining the absence of an intellectual-moral origin within Europe. Christianity, for the first time for many centuries, is again experiencing the force of Islam. So called regional wars, homosexual marriages, transgender anger – all this increasingly recalls the world of Sodom and Gomorrah. And wait the wrath of God! Mankind is suffering defeat. But is this really the case? For there still is the ray of hope that the Russian thinker Fedor Stepun wrote about: 'how hopeless human history would have been if it had not, almost 2000 years ago, experienced the light that is Christianity. Having revoked through divinely revealed truth all 'merely' human philosophising and having defeated forever through the silencing mystery of the Bethlehem night all the titanic schemes of godless arbitrariness, Christianity has summoned all of us, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, those highly talented and the spiritually meek to such a massive transformation of the world, in the face of which the boldest of dreams for a revolutionary reconstruction of human life will be turned to dust. And even in our day the belief that God will finally be victorious over all the 'heroes' fighting amongst themselves is not lost, with this not being as difficult as it initially appeared to be. In order not to be seduced and tempted by the omnipotence of evil one only has to understand that truth is triumphant equally there where the lie that negates it is, attempting to construct our lives according to its scheme, day by day it merely destroys it.'<sup>20</sup> Yet this requires spiritual efforts. Following the nightmare of Stalinism Russia gave birth to not merely one genius who attempted to drag their country towards the light. The great physicist Andrei Sakharov repented, having become an unshakeable fighter with the totalitarian regime, while he the clergyman Father Alexander Men overcame the servile Christianity in Russia. God was to become for a few the orientation of life itself. As the great Russian bard Vladimir Vysotskii sang: 'I have something to sing about in performing before the Almighty,/ I have something to justify myself before Him.' The chosen were always only a few. But it is they who bring the light into the world.

<sup>19</sup> Evgeniy Zamyatin, *YA boyus'. Literaturnaya kritika. Publitsistika. Vospominaniya*, (Moscow: Naslediye, 1999), p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> Fyodor Avgustovich Stepun, *Byvsheye i nesbyvsheyesya*, (Sankt Petersburg: Aleteyya, 2000), p. 292-293.