

ABSTRACT

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's controversial book, 200 Years Together¹, 2001-2002, is both a problematic scholarly work on Russian-Jewish history and, perhaps more importantly, a particular ideological statement. This analysis explores the methodology and presentation of Solzhenitsyn's research in order to test its scholarly qualities and the premise of impartiality repeatedly asserted throughout the text. Working primarily with the secondary literature and rather tendentious primary sources, Solzhenitsyn not only fails to deliver "a path-breaking" treatment of the history of Jews in Russia that he and his publishers promised, but also consistently manipulates historical evidence to support his own conservative nationalist viewpoint. The second part of this paper analyzes the passionate public debate unleashed by the publication of each volume, that owes its poignancy not only to the ever-sensitive subject of the book and the particular political and intellectual context of contemporary Russian society, but also to the moral authority that Solzhenitsyn still enjoys in Russia. It is Solzhenitsyn's reputation and the moralizing role traditionally bestowed upon writers in Russia that seem to have eclipsed for many of his readers (and for a large part of the liberal intelligentsia in particular) the chauvinistic overtones in much of his oeuvre. The range of the issues that are at stake in both the work itself and its public reception touches upon the notions of identity, memory, history, and repentance, and thus has little to do with the "Jewish question," while everything to do with the "Russian" one.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's latest book on the history of Russian-Jewish relations, *200 Years Together*, began to make the headlines long before its actual publication, and has enjoyed unprecedented attention from the media and general public ever since. The choice of subject matter was sure to stir up agitation in the media. As the release date drew closer, some came to contemplate the reasons that might have prompted the 83-year old writer to embark on research in a field of which he had only the most rudimentary knowledge—field, we might add, guaranteed to make his book the target of a most passionate debate.

In an interview with the editor of the liberal weekly, *Moscow News*, on the eve of publication, Solzhenitsyn seemed to anticipate such questions and provide the background for his undertaking. While conducting research for his epic cycle of novels, *The Red Wheel*, set during the Russian Revolution, Solzhenitsyn recalled encountering what he defined as "Russian-Jewish issues" in much of the archival material. The relevance of the "Jewish question" to some of the central events of

¹ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *200 Years Together*. Vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkii Put', 2001); Vol. 2 (Moscow: Russkii Put', 2002).

the Russian pre-revolutionary history came as a revelation, but was too significant to be accommodated within a book that did not deal specifically with the subject. “Working it into *The Red Wheel* densely and in detail would have been a great mistake,” he explains, “because that would have given *The Red Wheel* the wrong slant, the wrong emphasis—as if all the events were attributed to *Jewish meddling*. [italics mine, Ks.P.]”². A product of twelve years of research, the first volume of the 1,100-page manuscript was finally presented to the public at a special event organized by the *Russky Put’* [Russian Path] publishing house. Solzhenitsyn’s wife, Natalia D. Solzhenitsyna, to whom the enormous task of editing, proofreading, and verifying the sources had fallen, called upon the critics to approach *200 Years Together* as a work of historiography, rather than a literary production.³

Note the phrasing employed by Solzhenitsyn in describing his subject matter, and Natalia Solzhenitsyna’s anxiety to position the book as serious scholarship. The book’s ambivalent discursive orientation, I argue, is largely responsible for the controversy it generated, but is in itself an incentive to reflect on several critical issues. By analyzing the methodology employed by the author, the agenda behind the creation of the book and the various public responses to its thesis, I hope to expose a broader ideological and intellectual context of today’s Russia. Both the book and the ongoing debate pose important epistemological questions about the nature of historical craft, its position *par rapport* of different public forums (political, educational, etc.), and more importantly, about its ethical and professional responsibility.

This essay will not address the actual (mis)representation of historical events as they appear in Solzhenitsyn’s work. Professional historians commenting on this work were quick to note numerous errors, omissions, distortions, and even outward fabrications.⁴ Some even developed their criticisms into full-length

² Viktor Loshak, “Раскаленный вопрос” [Burning question]. Interview with Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Moskovskie Novosti*, no. 25, (19-25 June 2001): 8-9, quoted in English in *Current Digest* 53, no. 30 (2001): 7.

³ Editorial page, *Kommersant*, 11 June 2001, 4.

⁴ See for example, Leonid Katzis, “Jewish Encyclopedia – An Antisemitic Source?” («Еврейская энциклопедия – орган антисемитской мысли?»), *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 12 June 2001; Gennady Kosturchenko, “From Underneath the Century’s Rubble: On the Second Volume of Solzhenitsyn’s Book” («Из-под глыб века. О второй книге Солженицина» hereafter Kosturchenko, “From Underneath the Century’s Rubble”-2], *Rodina*, no. 7 (2003); Mark Deuch, “A Shameless Classic” («Бесстыжий классику»), *Moskovskii Komsomolez*, 26-27 Sept. 2003; Johann Petrovskii-Shtern, “The Fate of the Middle Ground” («Судьба средней линии»), *Zhurnal’ny Zal: Neprikosnenny Zapas*, no. 4

books, which have since been published.⁵ However, those misrepresentations and methodological flaws are not merely the indicators of the work's problematic scholarly quality, but are the byproduct of the particular system of thought espoused by the author. The richness of the historical material assembled in his book has been largely borrowed from other well-known secondary sources. The abstract reasoning, which introduces new themes and concludes each chapter, is nothing more than an attempt to create a politically correct, impartial tone. It is the *interpretation* of those sources and facts, I will suggest, which allows for a deeper understanding of the author's vision of history, memory, nationhood, and belonging. This "ideological" entity, the thoroughgoing "Vision" of Russian-Jewish common history, which manifests itself in Solzhenitsyn's latest book, presents the major analytical challenge.

CONCEPTION

Solzhenitsyn's book is not a history of amalgamation as the misleading title of his book would imply. Nor does he attempt to produce a cohesive and all-embracing narrative of Jewish (and Russian) cultural, social, and economic interaction. Indeed, a closer look shows that his objective is conspicuously ahistorical. Lamenting the absence of a well-balanced dispassionate account of Russian-Jewish relations on the one hand, and the accumulation of "bad feelings and resentment on both sides"⁶ on the other, Solzhenitsyn intends to remedy the lacuna by providing an objective account of mutual wrongdoings and "the share of both sides in the common sin."⁷ By making the 1917 coup d'état (that "ultimate sin") and the preceding subversive revolutionary activities the main point of reference and the eventual moral and ethical hub of his work, against which all other historical events are evaluated, Solzhenitsyn sacrifices historicity for the sake of moralizing. We shall shortly see that the centrality of the communist putsch for the social, analytical, and philosophic understanding of Russian history runs through most of Solzhenitsyn's oeuvre and, thus, is in no way specific to his book

(18) (2001); Semen Reznik, "Alone or Together?" («Вместе или врозь?»), *Vestnik*, no. 8 (293) (15 Apr. 2002) [hereafter Reznik, «Alone or Together?»] (*Vestnik*).

⁵ See, for example, Semen Reznik, *Alone or Together: Notes on the Margines of Solzhenitsyn's Book (Вместе или врозь? Заметки на полях книги Солженицына)* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2003); or Vladimir Opendik's, *Two Hundred Year-Long Pogrom (Двести лет затяжного погрома)* (New York, 2003).

⁶ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *200 years Together*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Russkii Put, 2001), 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6; quoted in English in Richard Pipes, "Solzhenitsyn and the Jews," *New Republic* (25 Nov. 2002).

on Russian-Jewish relations. His earlier works, however, were free of scholarly pretensions and, therefore, should not be subjected to the same requirements and methodological questions as *200 Years Together*.

The idea of a revisionist history-telling as a tally-keeping is exciting enough to reflect on it in a context of other nations' modes of dealing with their ambivalent collective memories, but it threatens to shift the focus of this work from its immediate subject matter. Suffice to note that the redeeming and reconciling mission that might possibly be accomplished through the mutual settling of accounts and revision of conflicting representations of the past implies an above-the-fray vantage point for the mediator. A detailed look at the composition of *200 Years Together* discredits Solzhenitsyn's pretensions for such a role. His is not an objectifying voice in the complex historical material he presents. What is it, then?

The assemblage of conflicting views and a gigantic reference apparatus, which comprise the factual fabric of the book, seem to obscure the narrator's voice, an impression further aggravated by the unintelligible stylistics of the text itself.⁸ One of the most perceptive reviewers of the book, historian Gennady Kostyrchenko, regards it as a conscious camouflage on Solzhenitsyn's part: the writer's desire to cloak his own ideological engagement in a garb of false diversity and pluralism in the opinions he cites.⁹ By securing for himself the role of *interpreter*, Solzhenitsyn gets a free hand in arranging the facts in the manner that best fits his design, while remaining seemingly objective and impartial under the cover of all the "evidence" amassed to substantiate his argument.

But what is that ideological design? The very fact that such a suspicion arises in the analysis of the historical research, which claims to be academic — i.e., unbiased and non-subservient — casts doubt on Solzhenitsyn's scholarly ambitions. Viewed within the context of his earlier works, *200 Years Together* is in no way foreign to the rest of his thought — which can best be defined as fervently anti-communist and nationalistic. Solzhenitsyn himself, however, would probably prefer to be regarded as a Russian patriot, although one wonders whether the term is not negatively charged even more in the contemporary Russian political argot. Solzhenitsyn's literary experiments, especially his fascination with the Old Slavonic roots of the Russian language, dislike of foreign linguistic borrowings (the butt for

⁸ To be fair, some have praised the author for his "linguistic inventiveness." See Geoffrey A. Hosking, "Russia and the Jews," *Times Literary Supplement* 27 Feb. 2002; or Lev Annenskii, "From Two Sides" («С ДВУХ СТОРОН») in 22 (2001).

⁹ Kostyrchenko. "From Under the Century's Rubble"-2.

numerous jokes by his critics), and his public persona, have led many to consider him a spiritual heir to the Russian Slavophile tradition.¹⁰ I employ the term "Russian patriot" while aware of its limitations, for lack of a better concept equally meaningful and entrenched in the Russian philosophical and historiographic canon. The history of Russian political ideology does not correspond to the Western dichotomies of a liberal Left and conservative nationalist Right. One has to distinguish between conservative and romantic nationalists, the official ideology of nationality espoused by the Romanovs, between the Slavophiles and Pan-Slavists, and so forth. Add to this an array of pro-western thinkers, some of whose ideas were not dissimilar to the most traditionalist agendas of the Slavophiles, and the Russian ideological landscape would look fairly Byzantine (the pun is intended.) And so is the history of the Russian nationalist thought, of which Solzhenitsyn is a remarkable representative. To avoid a lengthy and nuanced description of each of the ideological positions, I will discuss in the final section of this paper only the crystallization of conservative and "liberal" ideological platforms in post-1860s Russia and the role of the "Jewish Question" in polarizing different strains of Russian political thought. But to begin I will relate Solzhenitsyn's nationalist views within the broader ideological context from the late eighteenth century onwards.

Comprising diverse opinions and stemming from the ideals of German romanticism (Friedrich Schelling was one of its most pronounced influences), Slavophilism has undergone substantial mutation since its emergence in the 1830s. By the late nineteenth century an internal division within the ideology (no longer referred to by its original name by that time) could be discerned, with the more "liberal" faction represented by such thinkers as V. S. Soloviev, N. A. Berdiaev, L. P. Karsavin and C. L. Frank; while C. N. Bulgakov, P. A. Florensky, and L. A.

¹⁰ Writes Tatyana Tolstaya: "Solzhenitsyn gradually acquired the attributes of a quasi-mythical figure. Indeed he was transformed into one of those immortal, omnipotent, and often ornery old people who lives in a distant, inaccessible place, on an island or a glass mountain or an impenetrable forest, once upon-a-time-in-a-far-off-kingdom. The famous writer came to be imagined rather like the ancient characters Koshchei the Immortal...or Baba Yaga, a powerful old crone who lives in the forest behind a pike fence decorated with human skulls.... In Russia it was claimed that the Solzhenitsyn estate in the woods of Vermont was high and impenetrable topped with barbed-wire snares, like a labor camp. It was whispered that the gates were guarded by vicious German shepherds that did not understand either English or Russian, but only Old Slavonic (the sacred church language); in mythological terms, that is, the dogs responded only to certain magical formulas." "The Future According to Alexander Solzhenitsyn," in *Pushkin's Children* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2003), 62-63.

Tikhomirov among others, promoted a defensive-organic [охранительно-почвенническую] stance towards “Russianness.” Solzhenitsyn, it should be noted, has always shown more affinity for the latter trend albeit in its modern Soviet-Russian version.¹¹

Some contemporary Russian intellectuals and culture makers subscribe to the romantic notion of the Russian *Volk*, proclaiming the spiritual superiority of Russian values over the pragmatic West, and insist on Herder's idea of the organic connection of the people and the land. They can be found all along the political spectrum, from ultra-conservatives, “patriots,” communists, and Orthodox nationalists, up to the ultra-right-wing fascists. This is not to say, however, that the term's less rigid political articulation has destroyed its force to organize fields of cultural production and ideological strife. We shall see later how Solzhenitsyn's public affinity with some of the most outspoken Russian nationalists and anti-liberals (such as I. Shafarevich, V. Rasputin, or A. Prohanov), has cost him the sympathy of the liberal pro-western intelligentsia, which is not prepared to indulge the antisemitism and chauvinism found among those “literary talents.” The core elements of the Slavophile doctrine (and of ethnic nationalism in general) are defined by its rejection or abridgement of the liberal understanding of individual autonomy, critique of modernity, unconcern for civic rights and liberties, and a holistic understanding of the “Nation” and its interests as having priority over the rights and interests of the individual.¹² Crucial for our analyses of Solzhenitsyn's work is the peculiar socio-political vision of the Slavophiles (“почвенники”), which blurs the conceptual boundaries between “the political” and “the spiritual.” An ideal political organization of the society, in this view, is not the result of the social contract between those in power and the populace, but is an organically grown entity of “the cultural” and “the political,” a holy alliance between the people and the regime that gains legitimacy by the very virtue of being “Russian,”

¹¹ For an illustration of Solzhenitsyn's views see his *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and tentative proposals (Как нам обустроить Россию?)* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1990; English ed., New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1991); or idem, *The Russian Question at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995).

¹² The basic distinction between the “liberal” civic nationalism and the “not-so-liberal” ethnic one is, of course, not sensitive to the multiplicity of “shades” in between the poles. Neither are there “pure” cases of either. Attempts are made by contemporary political philosophers to bridge the two by proving the compatibility of the ethnically codified public sphere with the liberal — i.e., inclusive — understanding of citizenship (see Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). I am using here a generic concept of ethnic (also known as organic, or tribal) nationalism.

and not in proportion to its human rights record or allegedly enlightened character.

German romantic nationalism, which inspired and served as a model for its Russian counterpart, was primarily a reaction to French "influences" and the first exposure to modernity in early nineteenth-century German society. Some Slavophiles, too, advocate isolationism as a protective measure, while its major ideological rivals, the westernizers, see in Russia's *rapprochement* with the West a critical prerequisite for the country's successful modernization. By conceptualizing Russia's *Sonderweg* as a communion of Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian *Volk*, the Russian breed of organic nationalism sees most Western influences as corruptive and alien to the spirit and body of the "People." In this system of thought, the acquisition of Polish Jewry after the partitions of Poland in 1772–1795 (i.e., the acquisition "through the Western gates of the country"¹³) would be naturally translated into almost mystical terms: an alien growth on the body of the "indigenous" people.

The liberal (Western) tradition, in contrast, defines nationhood as a civic institution based on the popular consensus about the major principles and values that govern it, on the commonality of language and territory, but most importantly, on the shared political framework. "The political" and "the rational" — i.e., the democratic consensus — the definition goes, typically allow for a wide maneuver for the constituencies in the realm of their cultural and religious life. A clear-cut separation between "the public" and "the private" is supposed to leave the public sphere unaffected by state regulation, and allows for a democratic negotiation of its cultural content. At least on the ideological level, the proponents of civic nationalism avoid essentialist arguments when defining the national character of the state. For them, ideally at least, there is "neither Greek nor Jew." Not so for the Romantic Nationalists.

The idea of a "Nation," or rather a "People" as an organic community with an unalterable "spiritual" core is central to Slavophilic thinking today, as it was 180 years ago, and will help us to clarify Solzhenitsyn's approach to the Russian-Jewish relations. An all-inclusive and rigid understanding of the nation's *ontological* essence produces an "exclusionist" discourse, with an explicit divide between "us" and "others." The external, separating boundary is usually more significant for the nation's self-awareness than internal cohesiveness, which may well be minimal, whereas the "other" is usually perceived as a homogeneous inflexible mass.

¹³ Kosturchenko, "From Under the Century's Rubble"-2, 5.

As elsewhere in the book, Solzhenitsyn's characteristic word-choice helps to bring home the point. Speaking about the economic interactions between the Jews and the Poles before the partitions, Solzhenitsyn refers to the Polish Jewry as a "lump in itself" [ком в себе], never fully diffused within its environment. Throughout the rest of the book this holistic and reductionist conceptualization of Jewry remains intact, whether as an isolationist *kahal*, a Christ-defying community, or as a segment of population insufficiently loyal to the motherland, but always bound by collective solidarity, always cognizant of its own specific position in the majority society and mindful of its corporate interests.

Consistent with this view is Solzhenitsyn's analysis of the dynamics of inter-communal relations, which he portrays as a "dualistic struggle, fought between us (Russians) and them (Jews)...a zero-sum game, where the success of one – usually the Jews – can only come at the expense of the other."¹⁴ One need not ponder long as to which part the "referee" associates himself. Indeed, John Klier's apposite summation is aptly illustrated by Solzhenitsyn's not infrequent resort to the first person plural within his moralizing digressions. He would typically expose Jewish dynamism, entrepreneurship, and solidarity as instructive for "us, Russians."¹⁵

Provided that the country in which that "dualistic struggle" between Russians and Jews unfolds is not ethnically or religiously homogeneous and has a long record of colonialism (which the national historiography continues to euphemistically describe as "exploration of territories", at best as annexations, with no mention of the indigenous peoples, Solzhenitsyn's reading of Russian history seems highly problematic. Ignoring all other national groups comprising the multiethnic empire and completely overlooking the complexity of the ethnic, religious, and cultural makeup of the country, Solzhenitsyn fails to engage in a comparative study of imperial Russia's treatment of other nationalities. A comparative analyses of tsarist policies with that of the Habsburg empire would also have been extremely illuminating, as the political theoreticians and intellectuals of Austro-Hungary came to grips with the same challenging questions that their Russian counterparts largely ignored. The Dual Monarchy of the Habsburgs, that ideal of the well-organized and well-run police state, which the Romanovs' Russia sought to emulate, recognized the importance of elaborating a multi-ethnic "garb" to accommodate the discontent of its imperial subjects, at

¹⁴ John Klier, "No Prize for History," *History Today* (Nov. 2002): 60.

¹⁵ Solzhenitsyn. *200 let vmeste*, 1:33.

least symbolically. For all the pitfalls of the Jew's status in Austro-Hungary, Jews there were among the most ardent and patriotic adherents of the regime, proud to fight for their Emperor in 1914 and not ambivalent in their loyalty.

What Solzhenitsyn fails to acknowledge, or rather, what he consciously neglects, is, in fact, the core factor in the matrix of Russian-Jewish (as well as Russian-Polish, Russian-Finnish, Russian-Armenian, etc.) relationships. Russian political thought, even in its liberal faction, had never seriously challenged the regime's "Russo-centric obsessiveness,"¹⁶ which alienated not only the Jews, but other minority groups as well. As Solzhenitsyn approvingly notes, the imperial state saw its mission in safeguarding the economic and cultural supremacy of the titular nationality.¹⁷ This imperial "statement of purpose" attests like nothing else to the government's fundamental apprehension and anxiety about the capacity of the Russian people (who remained illiterate, unenlightened, and un-urbanized up to the fall of the Romanovs) to take the lead in the economic and cultural life of the country.¹⁸ Corollary to the zero-sum principle endorsed by Solzhenitsyn, this could be attained only by curtailing the political, economic, educational, and residential (in the case of the Jews) freedoms of non-Russian groups, ostensibly to provide opportunities for the Russians.

Solzhenitsyn devotes ample space to the discussion of numerous policies and regulations designed by the authorities to combat Jewish isolationism,¹⁹ economic parasitism, and exploitation of the peasantry.²⁰ He amasses substantial evidence to illustrate the harmful role of the Jewish tavern-keepers in promoting alcoholism among the rural population of the Pale, conveniently omitting, however, that the ultimate beneficiary of the alcohol trade was the government itself, which encouraged drinking by manipulating prices and levying taxes on the sales of liquor.²¹ He is also explicitly sympathetic with the government's efforts to

¹⁶ John Klier, "No Prize for History," 61.

¹⁷ Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:147.

¹⁸ Many contributors to the Seventh (Count Bludov's) Committee on the Jewish question maintained that Jewish equality should be preceded by the amelioration of the cultural and educational levels of the "local" population.

¹⁹ Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:55, 88, 131, 164, etc.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39-47, 69-70, 127-30.

²¹ For more on Jewish alcohol trading see a perceptive essay by famous Russian writer N. S. Leskov, *Jews in Russia: Several comments on the Jewish Question* (*Евреи в России. Несколько замечаний по еврейскому вопросу*) (St. Petersburg : 1919), which he presented to the Panin Committee in 1883. Analyzing the sources of alcoholism, which plagued the Russian countryside in his time just as it does today, and the role of Jewish tavern-keepers in stimulating alcohol consumption, Leskov convincingly exposes

“introduce the Jews to universal culture” (“приобщить к...общечеловеческой культуре”),²² by which he certainly means Russian high culture, thereby denying the Jewish tradition of universal appeal and value, an assumption not at all alien to his overall conception. The lengthy discussion of the government’s deliberations on the “Jewish Question” and a string of confusing measures, edicts, initiatives, and restrictions are concluded with a sorrowful verdict: the Jews sabotage those “good intentions” and remain largely unproductive, clannish, disloyal, and not socialized into mainstream Russian society.

What this description intentionally leaves out is the underlying perception by the authorities and the populace of the Jews as aliens (иностранцы), the term preferred by Solzhenitsyn himself. It is this detrimental principle that ultimately guided the governmental attitude and practice towards the Jews. Solzhenitsyn’s concentration on the economic facet of the “Jewish Question” intentionally reversed the cause-and-effect relationship between the Russian belief that Jews are non-natives, and the Jews’ specific economic, legal, social, and public standing. As an example, in his analysis of anti-Jewish violence, Solzhenitsyn attributes the pogroms to the Jews’ involvement in revolutionary, “subversive” activities, their alleged conceit and lack of respect for all things sacred to the Russian/Ukrainian/Moldavian) peasantry — “the imperial throne and the ‘Little Father’” in St. Petersburg.²³ This convenient explanation stops short of the official version, which blamed the victims (and their exploitative economic ways) for the violence, and it also entirely disregards the legal aspect of the problem: the discriminatory legal status of the Jews that effectively placed them outside the law, making them an inviting target for abuse in the eyes of townsfolk and the peasantry.²⁴ Solzhenitsyn’s indignation against “Jewish disloyalty” and arrogance, which infringed on the peasant’s sensibilities, also reflects his fundamental consent to the imperial version of the events: Jews are not *entitled* to be critical of the regime as this is the prerogative of the *native* population. As we shall see elsewhere, it is a recurrent theme throughout the book: “Jews would do better by staying out of that” he says of the Jewish communists participating in the anti-religious

the government’s strategies of gaining revenue from it, while presenting Jews as an ultimate scapegoat against which the public anguish was effectively channeled.

²² A. Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:164.

²³ Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:185-211; J. Klier, “No Prize for History,” 61.

²⁴ See J. Klier and S. Lambrosa, *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Jewish History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.)

campaign of the early 1920s, implying a different moral dimension for the "local" population involved in the same activities.²⁵

I have emphasized earlier the significance of the metaphysical terms in which a "people" is conceptualized in the Slavophile system of thought. I have also argued that Russian absolutism never developed an inclusive and accommodating policy for grappling with the ethnic, religious, and cultural polyphony of the country, preferring a coercive Russification instead. It is also important to reflect on Solzhenitsyn's own understanding of "Jewishness," nowhere explicitly formulated until the preface to the second volume, and even there obscured by the array of citations and the lofty pathos. His is definitely not a liberal interpretation of "nationality" ("национальность" in Russian parlance), the term that I shall use here to escape the trappings of the worn-out concept of "identity" and to capture the particular Russian connotation of the word. We shall see further in the book (especially in its second volume, which deals with the Soviet period) how consistent Solzhenitsyn is in identifying the Jewish origins of the revolutionaries, Bolshevik leaders, officers of the NKVD, GULAG functionaries, members of the "servile" Soviet intelligentsia, and so forth. Ironically enough, unmasking Slavic pseudonyms and pen-names and revealing the Jewish-sounding patronymics — an endeavor strikingly similar to the infamous anti-cosmopolitan campaign of the late Stalinist period — Solzhenitsyn occasionally attributes Jewishness to non-Jews. A. Shlihter, who supervised the expropriation of crops in Ukraine in 1919; afterwards in 1921 appointed chief of the district Communist committee in Tambov, where he mercilessly cracked down on the peasant uprising, was of German origin.²⁶ The same goes for the famous film maker Sergei Eisenstein whom Solzhenitsyn accuses of slandering pre-Revolutionary Russia in *The Battleship Potemkin*, and of being instrumental in perpetuating totalitarian propaganda in *Ivan the Terrible* (Stalin's most beloved movie — its first part, of course).²⁷ In order to create the impression of Jewish omnipresence in the rank-and-file of the NKVD and among the Bolsheviks in general, Solzhenitsyn lists the conspicuously non-Russian names of the NKVD *nomenklatura*, and conjures up the Jewish roots of a Latvian I. Purnis, of A. Shanin

²⁵ A. Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 2:96: «тут и русские...расстарались...Но евреям постоять бы в стороне.»

²⁶ Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 2:132.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 267.

(Russian), V. Lazarevich (Russian), L. Zaharov-Meir (Russian, who adopted the last name of his friend who perished in the Civil War).²⁸

This is not the place to deliberate on whether those mistakes are caused by the “insufficient knowledge of the facts” as some of the reviewers apologetically suggested. I would argue that they are meant to generate a certain emotional reaction with the reader. By selecting the most notorious biographies of the communist activists and by coupling them with a Jewish-sounding last name, Solzhenitsyn alludes to the ubiquity of the “aliens” among the destructive forces who brought about the post-1917 disaster. This obsession with the racial origins of the communist “villains” and the author’s idiosyncratic manner of tracking them down among the assimilated Jewish communists is thus supposed to accomplish an important task — to portray Russian communism not as an organic outgrowth of the national mentality and the critical systemic flaws of pre-1917 Russia, but as an alien, imported project of the foreign making (thus — “the Jewish *meddling*,” which I cited in the introduction). That would explain the disproportionate amount of time and space that Solzhenitsyn devotes to the Jewish participation in various revolutionary groups, blatantly asserting that “the Marxist movement in Russia originated in the Pale of Settlement among the Jewish youth.”²⁹ No wonder, then, that N. Berdiaev’s most disquieting book *Istoki i Smysl Russkogo Komunizma* (The origins and meaning of Russian Communism), is not even once mentioned by Solzhenitsyn.

Admitting that the absolute majority of the Jewish revolutionaries had no connection to the Jewish milieu and conceived of themselves as “internationalists” — to borrow Trotsky’s famous claim — Solzhenitsyn is, nevertheless, remarkably insistent on identifying them as Jews. Hence, neither Judaism, nor any secular connection to the Jewish people through language, culture, and traditions exhaust for him the meaning of Jewish identity. This leads me to conclude that his working definition of a “Jew” is essentially wrapped in racial terms, irreversible by any conscious attempt of a person to opt out of her Jewishness. To be sure, an

²⁸ Ibid., 292-93, 296, 300. For more on “non-Jewish Jews” in *200 let vmeste*, see Kosturchenko, “From Under the Century’s Rubble”-2; Johann Petrovskii-Shtern, “The fate of the middle ground”, *Zhurnal’ny Zal: Neprikosnovenny Zapas*, no. 4 (18) (2001); Reznik, “Alone or Together?” (*Vestnik*).

²⁹ A. Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:242. The idea of Judeo-Bolshevism has long been a staple of ultra-nationalist and fascist propaganda. Its less extreme version was also adopted by several Russian nationalist writers in the context of the search for the “Russian Idea.” It’s worth mentioning, however, that Solzhenitsyn’s is not a literary production, but a work of explicitly declared scholarly pretensions, and should thus be viewed within a different moral and ethical framework.

open commitment to such a doctrine would seriously undermine one's ethical and moral credentials, and Solzhenitsyn is perfectly aware of that. Hence, his focus is not so much on the physical characteristics of the Jews, but on their *ontological* "otherness," a set of psychological and spiritual characteristics which makes their complete merger with the Russians hardly plausible. Therefore, the assimilation, which Solzhenitsyn seems to persistently advocate as the most adequate solution to the "Jewish Question" even in its most rigid and illiberal form – as conformity to the Russian cultural and linguistic mainstream – is nothing but a sham, because it does not touch upon the unredeemable Jewish "foreignness" to the Russian soil and soul.

One cannot fail to notice that the factual canvas of his narrative is structured around a set of persistent dichotomies. These are the ways in which the Jews, as a quintessential "Other," are symbolically and cognitively coded and juxtaposed with the Russians. The multiple readings of the Jewish "essence" may vary, depending on the context in which they are constructed. They are also extremely revealing of the strategies employed by the nationalist thinkers to piece together a cohesive and holistic national *self*, which gains additional credibility when played against its opposite.

Thus, for instance, speaking about Jewish tavern-keepers and their rural clientele, Solzhenitsyn reduces the complexity of their interaction to the crude conflict between the sophisticated cunning and money-grubbing on the one hand, and innocence and self-indulgence, on the other. Solzhenitsyn's discussion of Jewish prominence among the industrialists and monopolists in a predominantly rural Russia constructs another binary opposition: that of the technological, industrial society and the underdeveloped agricultural country side, of modernity versus tradition. Both of the abovementioned examples depict Jews as a thoroughly mercantile people, while the Russians are alien to the lure of the material world. Hence, Jewish materialism is effectively contrasted with the Slavic idealism and spirituality.

Circulating in the larger context of a traditionalist society facing the challenges of modernization, those "representations" were certainly extrapolated to other non-Russian groups. Thus, the Germans, who played an important role as agents of modernization from the time of their arrival to Petrine Russia, are also traditionally seen as pragmatic, hardworking, ambitious, overly rational and not prone to sentiment, which the famous dialectical couple of Oblomov and

Shtolz reflected so accurately.³⁰ This theme of modernization and its discontents is critical for the current analysis and is unfortunately neither sufficiently nor objectively explored in *200 Years Together*. Solzhenitsyn is right to observe that much of the anguish directed against the Jews evinced the deep social anxiety and torment in the face of social and economic reforms of the 1860s and the advance of capitalism in a society largely unprepared for such a transition. He is certainly wrong not to read through this as yet another construct of the hostile “Other,” which overlooks significant socio-economic distinctions within Jewry, which was by far less affluent and influential than it was assumed to be.

However, the association of the Jews with the western and foreign influences does not exhaust the multiple ways that some Russians conceived of Jewish difference in a dialectical opposition to their own national essence. Throughout the book Solzhenitsyn perpetuates the image of the Jewish peddler, petty trader, or moneylender. In the Russian system of values those were and still are seen as disgraceful unproductive occupations with a distinct Oriental flavor (as opposed to the blood and sweat of toiling and working the land) — hence, Solzhenitsyn’s passionate account of the government’s unsuccessful attempts to resettle Jews in agricultural colonies in the New Russia from 1827, which supposedly failed because of the Jewish aversion to manual agricultural labor, and proclivity to commerce.³¹

The example of agricultural colonies and the juxtaposition of the hard-working peasant with the idle *luftmenschen* has an additional dimension and introduces a yet another binary opposition. Romanticized peasantry occupies a

³⁰ The Germans, however, as fellow Christians (albeit not Orthodox Christians) did not suffer from the same discriminatory legislation as did the Jews, although they too faced the resentment of many Russians, who loathed their competition. The Baltic Germans were disproportionately represented in upper governmental offices, in the diplomatic service, in the upper echelons of the military, etc., and came to perceive themselves as the ultimate embodiment of the imperial regime. In line with my own argument, Geoffrey Hosking discusses the juxtaposition of the German and Russian national characters, helped to define the essence of the latter as its dialectical opposite: “when Russians try to define their national character they do so in terms which are expressly counterposed to German characteristics. They feel themselves to be warm, humane, informal, chaotic but able to get things done by community spirit, in contrast to Germans whom they see as cool, impersonal, orderly, and addicted to bureaucratic methods. Actually, as Kropotkin realized, this contrast is just as much one within Russians themselves, between the *mirskoi* and *gosudarstvenny* concepts of action and community, between the informal local assembly and the rationalist secular state.” Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 161.

³¹ Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:71-81, 106-16, 152-56.

special position in the system of thought of most nationalist ideologies. Just as modernization is viewed as an assault on the traditional harmonious way of life, which is only possible in the countryside, away from the moral corruption and perils of the city, it is also conceptualized as an advance of cosmopolitanism, which threatens to undercut the national foundations of the society. The reservoir of this authentic national feeling, as nationalist thinkers believe, can be found only in the rural community, since manual work on the land reinforces the sense of rootedness and creates a sacred bond to the soil. Solzhenitsyn compares the meager output of the Jewish agricultural settlements in the south of Russia with the astonishing achievements of the Zionist *halutzim* in the Yishuv, concluding that it was the lack of affection for the Russian land and a deeply felt connection to Eretz Israel, which are responsible for this discrepancy.

This theme of Jewish disloyalty or at best, double loyalty, is remarkably outspoken in *200 Years Together*. Jewish espionage during World War I,³² the transparent innuendos made against the Jewish NKVD functionaries whose ferocity is attributed to their hatred of the country and not to their ideological fanaticism,³³ and most disgraceful of all — claims of Jewish desertion during the Great Patriotic War,³⁴ portray Jews as internal renegades, foreign to the travails of the Russians, and ready to betray the country when the first opportunity avails itself.

Here a short digression is necessary to place Solzhenitsyn's position in a broader context of nationalist thought. The Jews' disloyalty, lack of spiritual bond to the country and the people amongst whom they dwell; their communal solidarity and "clannishness" are standard accusations, a commonplace in both the writings of nationalistically minded intellectuals and the vulgar antisemitic rhetoric on the ground. The exigencies of political correctness and the general sensitivity to the matters of ethnic and religious bigotry of the post-Holocaust era have brought about a certain uneasiness on the part of even the most fervent nationalists about the use of those clichés. But the seemingly gracious form in which those same ideas were revisited and reformulated by the exponents of the "Russian idea" from the late 1960s onwards should not deceive us. For example, one of Russia's most notorious chauvinists, I. Shafarevich, in collaboration with whom (and several other nationalistically inclined writers) Solzhenitsyn published

³² Ibid., 476-98.

³³ Consider, for example, Solzhenitsyn's philippic about Naftalii Frenkel, who supervised the construction of White Sea Channel: Solzhenitsyn. *200 let vmeste*, 2:335-36.

³⁴ Ibid., 358-69.

a collection of essays *Iz Pod Glyb* [From under the rubble]³⁵, is now more cautious about demonizing the Jews than he was previously. Gennady Kostyrchenko³⁶ in his comparative analysis of Shafarevich's recent book on the "Jewish question"³⁷ quotes him as acknowledging Jewish "usefulness" for the country, but demanding that the media, the Church, the government, and the financial institutions be *Judenfrei*. In his earlier study on the situation of the Soviet Jews and post-Communist Russia, which curiously enough was written long before the collapse of the Soviet regime was in view, and which was released shortly before the publication of *200 Years Together*, Solzhenitsyn articulates the same idea, justifying occupational restrictions levied on the Jews by the Soviet regime by their "guest-status" in the country. Only those Jews who would prove their "spiritual Russianess" through self-limitation, hard labor "if even in the wilderness of the North" (!), and suppress their arrogance and disrespect for their host-nation, can aspire for full fledged rights and acceptance after the demise of the Soviet regime.³⁸

The arrogance and contempt that Jews allegedly hold for the Russians is yet another recurring topos, which needs to be addressed here. Bracketing psychological and socio-economic causes of that sensitivity I would like to concentrate on a different aspect of it. Russian Orthodoxy has historically been a powerful agency in generating perceptions, meaning, and values. Despite the Church's actual marginal status from 18th century onwards, Russian Orthodoxy was viewed as an intrinsic element of the Russian "national idea" in both official, conservative, and Slavophile national discourses. That adds a clear eschatological twist to our subject matter. The self-perceptions of the Russian *Volk* as a Christophorian (from St. Christopher who carried Christ) nation — "народ-Бороночеи" clashed with the Jewish claims of choseness, and the robustness of their own belief. A tentative analogy can be drawn with Polish self-perception as "Christ among the nations" — a perpetually suffering people — which also conflicted with the Jew's own victimhood. Just how important that perception is, at least on the rhetorical level, and how potentially mobilizing it can be, can be

³⁵ Solzhenitsyn, *From Under the Rubble* (*Из-под глыб*) (Paris 1974; reprinted Moscow: n.p., 1994).

³⁶ Kostyrchenko, "From Under the Century's Rubble"-2.

³⁷ I. Shafarevich *A 3,000-year-old mystery: The history of Jewry from the perspective of contemporary Russia* (*Трёх тысячелетняя загадка: История еврейства из перспективы современной России*) (St. Petersburg: Bibliopolis, 2002).

³⁸ A. Solzhenitsyn, *Jews in the USSR and future Russia* (*Евреи в СССР и будущее России*) (Slaviansk, 2000), 68-72.

observed from Solzhenitsyn's earlier assertions. Explaining what got him so immersed in the study of Russian Jews, Solzhenitsyn alluded to the emotionally experienced embarrassment in the face of Jewish snobbishness. "It is because of that mute non-repenting haughtiness, which one can often see in Jewish eyes: we are better, we are more talented, *we are the chosen people*, that I have decided, against my own will but *for future cooperation*, to embark on that project."³⁹

I hesitated to employ references to Solzhenitsyn's earlier book in the current work. Its sudden publication was a major embarrassment, primarily to the author himself, and he has never publicly admitted his authorship, while not explicitly denying it either, referring to A. I. Sidorenko, who uncovered this manuscript in the archives and published it, as by a "mentally ill person."⁴⁰ The style of the text, its content, and the dangerous tint of chauvinism running through it, all seriously question both the writer's moral and ethnical integrity and his claims for an academic and unbiased quality of his new work. We have seen earlier, that even without addressing ourselves to Solzhenitsyn's less disguised opinions on the "Jewish question" as they appear in *Jews in the USSR and Post-Communist Russia*, we were able to dissect Solzhenitsyn's real position on the subject of his book, to analyze the particular ideology upon which it feeds, and to challenge its proclaimed objectivity and "good intentions."

³⁹ Quoted from Kosturchenko, "Under the Century's Rubble"-2

⁴⁰ See *Moskovskie Novosti*, no. 25 (19-25 June 2001); no. 50 (21-27 Dec. 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The scholarly quality of *200 Years Together*, certainly undermined by the author's ideological commitment, should nevertheless be subjected to additional scrutiny. The garb of "historicity" and the author's claims for impartiality, makes the message broadcast by the book all the more difficult to discern and thus, highly consequential insofar as the potential reaction of the audience goes. That is why those critics who gave the book positive reviews seemed to be baffled by the gigantic referential apparatus on which the narrative is built, and applauded the sheer magnitude of Solzhenitsyn's research. This, however, is an illusion, and a closer look at the sources, and how they are deployed methodologically will be extremely revealing.

To begin with, the actual source base of the book is strikingly thin. The first volume, which follows the history of the Jews from the partitions of Poland to the fall of the Romanovs, draws almost exclusively on three basic sources: the pre-revolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Brockhaus and Efron, 1906–1913), the contemporary *Brief Jewish Encyclopedia* (Jerusalem: Society for the Study of the Jewish Communities, 1976; only nine volumes have so far been published), and the *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia* (2nd. ed., Moscow 1994). Occasionally he cites the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1970), one of his few non-Russian sources. Relying that heavily on secondary materials, especially as unspecific and general as encyclopedia entries, Solzhenitsyn seeks to create an impression of objectivity, since those sources are "Jewish." Yet encyclopedias are hardly ever used to validate serious academic research, especially that which claims novelty and revisionism, as does *200 Years Together*. Neither are such sources entirely free of their own agendas, which Solzhenitsyn is either unaware of or prefers to ignore. The pre-revolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which has a clear assimilationist overtone, is his major source for the discussion of Jewish isolationism and religious fanaticism, while the Zionist *Brief Jewish Encyclopedia* is repeatedly cited in the analysis of Jewish involvement in the Russian revolutionary movements. From the Zionist standpoint, the Jews' toying with communist ideas threatened to shift the focus from the authentic Jewish concerns to the abstract and unrewarding universalism, and was, therefore, condemned as a dangerous deviation. By calling upon Jewish sources, which share his message, Solzhenitsyn is able to make his own denunciation of the Jewish revolutionaries seem objective, substantiated and endorsed by the Jews themselves.

As a digest of the basic information on the subject, all of those multivolume encyclopedias are now available to the public, as well as a number of primary sources, which Solzhenitsyn quotes as they *appear in the encyclopedias*. A number of historians undertook a painstaking project of tracing and verifying those cross references — as they appear in *200 Years Together*, in the secondary literature from where they are borrowed by Solzhenitsyn, and in the original. To cite one example, historian Leonid Katzis, one of the first and most consistent critics of the book, has established numerous instances where Solzhenitsyn intentionally omits, distorts, or breaks down parts of the primary evidence to fit his argument.⁴¹ Thus, condemning Jewish economic exploitation of the peasantry in the Pale of Settlement, he maintains that the Jews were typically leasing mills, fisheries, bridges, and “even entire mansions together with the serfs and their churches.”⁴² The footnote for that quote refers to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (11:492), which, as Katzis was able to prove, says nothing of this practice. Further in the text, Solzhenitsyn quotes extensively from the works of N. I. Kostomarov and V. V. Shulgin, in which both testified to the omnipresence of Jewish leasers in the Pale of Settlement, “who would often charge the peasants for the very admission to the church and performance of rituals, such as baptism and weddings.”⁴³ An entry in that same *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which Solzhenitsyn cited, describes N. I. Kostomarov’s account of Jewish economic practices in the Pale as biased and heavily influenced by Ukrainian sources, which typically assess the history of Jewish-Ukrainian interaction in the Pale through the prism of Ukrainian nationalism that suspected the Jews of curbing Ukrainian national aspirations. Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s genocide of the Jews in the 17th century is thus vindicated as a riot of the Ukrainian folk against the sway of the Jews in the local economy, their control of the parishes, and their intrinsic disloyalty to the Ukrainian nationalist cause — the motive all too familiar and analyzed at length in the first section of this essay. Solzhenitsyn is perfectly aware of Kostomarov’s presumption, but chooses not to inform his reader of it, abridging the relevant quotation from the *Encyclopedia* to merely contain the evidence that fits him best. Neither does he seem troubled by the notoriously antisemitic creed of yet another of his oft-cited “experts” on the Jewish question — V. V. Shulgin. Even

⁴¹ Leonid Katzis, “Jewish Encyclopedia – an antisemitic source?” («Еврейская энциклопедия – орган антисемитской мысли?») *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (12 June 12 2001).

⁴² Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 67. Solzhenitsyn’s footnote here refers to V. V. Shulgin’s notorious *What Do We Not Like About Them* (*Что нам в них не нравится*) (Paris, 1929), 129.

bracketing Shulgin's shaky moral and ethical credentials and the unreliability of his testimony, one expects the author to at least recognize them by introducing Shulgin's opinion in the context of his overall position on the issue. None of this can be found in *200 Years Together*, as Solzhenitsyn repeatedly cites Shulgin's most notorious antisemitic pronouncements without accounting for their biased agenda.⁴⁴

Similar uncritical compilation and "forgetfulness," when it comes to acknowledging his sources' idiosyncratic stance on the Jewish question, holds true for a number of other thinkers whom Solzhenitsyn cites at length. In the foreword to his work, he stressed his intention to give prominence to "Jewish voices"⁴⁵ such as G. Sliozberg, G. Landau, Yu. Gessen, M. Heifez, E. Bikerman, M. Agurskii, H. Arendt, and the like. While the opinions of those intellectuals and historians echo and support Solzhenitsyn's own uninformed critique of the Jewish traditional (non-assimilated) community, they are certainly not representative of the panoply of Jewish experiences and views. Indeed, Solzhenitsyn's preoccupation with Jewish economic parasitism or, later in the book, with Jews' role in the revolutionary movement seem to entirely eclipse other, and by far more significant, internal developments within Russian Jewry. Out of more than a thousand pages of his study, only seventeen are dedicated to Zionism, and less than a page briefly touches upon *Haskalah* and Hassidism, while Jewish creativity, and internal Jewish spiritual and cultural life are totally overlooked.⁴⁶ Solzhenitsyn's account of the cultural production of the Jews, of their contributions to and participation in mainstream Russian/Soviet culture, is a particularly striking case in point. Nowhere in his work, for example, does he ever mention the names and works of writers like Scholem Aleichem or Mendele Mokher Sefarim. He gives only passing mention of the contributions made to Russian and world culture by Levitan, Shestov, Gershenzon, Rubinstein, and Pasternak. There is only the panegyric about the Jewish vital role in the "barbaric destruction of the country after 1917."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See, for example, Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:67, 237, 292, 302, 403, 414, 437, 447, 464, 478; and 2:126, 133, 135-36, 150, 153, 167, 194, 196, 224, 444.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:5

⁴⁶ True, Solzhenitsyn touches upon the theme of Jewish culture-makers speaking about the Soviet period, but he picks up those who were particularly servile and ideologically indoctrinated, creating the impression that the non-Jewish artists, cinema-makers and writers were not nearly as vicious and untalented as the Jews. Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 2:321.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:99-100.

This dissymmetry in the analysis of the place and role of the Jewry within the broader socio-economic and cultural matrix of the country obviously derives from Solzhenitsyn's ideological stance, as we concluded earlier. It also explains his conspicuous disregard of the Jewish internal sources which would have been useful in establishing the causal relationship between the socio-economic and legal situation of the Jews and their peculiar occupational profile, their migrations and emigrations, their political affinities, and responses to diverse internal and external pressures — the variety and complexity of developments entirely neglected by Solzhenitsyn.⁴⁸ To be sure, he is not a Jewish historian, but this of itself is not a problem. Quite the opposite, Solzhenitsyn's position as an outsider to the well-established paradigms of Jewish historiography could have potentially allowed for a fresh and non-dogmatic view on many of his research questions. Unfortunately, none of this happens in *200 Years Together*.

In fact, there is no trace of the social history of non-Jewish groups in the book. Except for occasional references to the Old Believers and other Christian sects targeted for discriminatory legislation and restricted in rights (but on different grounds and for different reasons than were the Jews), the *people* is conspicuously absent, as certainly is the story of Russian-Jewish interaction, or "togetherness" as the title suggested. In fact, speaking for the Russians and on the part of the Russians, Solzhenitsyn does not seem to realize that his gloomy picture of Russian impotence in the face of Jewish dynamism and entrepreneurship is hardly flattering to the very people he so passionately champions.

In its approach and style, Solzhenitsyn's is an old-fashioned positivist macro-history, insensitive to the nuances of the developments on the micro-level. It relies heavily on the canonical representations of the events (thus, encyclopedias as Solzhenitsyn's key source) The major vector of his analysis points from the top down: from the imperial authorities, with whose futile attempts at social engineering and moral betterment of the Jews we are expected to sympathize, to the Jewish *masses* on the ground whose voice is obfuscated and silenced by Solzhenitsyn's deliberate choice of sources. The multiple levels and arenas on which the Jews interacted with the surrounding populations and with the imperial authorities are thereby confined to the two-dimensional traffic between St. Petersburg and Berdichev.

Furthermore, despite the claims of an above-the-fray vantage point, Solzhenitsyn is hardly an impartial referee in the epic story he conveys.

⁴⁸ Yuri Gessen, Solzhenitsyn's most pronounced "Jewish" voice, had no knowledge of Jewish languages and thus, does not qualify either for an *internal* source.

Throughout the book, especially in the chapters dealing with the pogroms, he repeatedly prefers the official representation of the events (death tolls on both sides, complicity of the local authorities, etc.), discharging any contradicting evidence out of hand as “perpetuating myths and anti-Russian slander.”⁴⁹ Indeed, he appears to be uncomfortable with those deeply entrenched perceptions and stereotypes about the ferocity and scale of the anti-Jewish violence in the Tsarist empire, which came to constitute an inherent part of the Jewish lore overseas, where the Jews fled en masse “from the land of the Cossack whips.” The irony of this “revisionism” is that even if Solzhenitsyn is correct in debunking the often inflated statistics on the number of casualties, his concerns are hardly scholarly, and certainly not humanitarian. The last John Klier, who published extensively on the subject of anti-Jewish violence and whose conclusions similarly challenge the tenets of its conventional representation, was right to suspect that Solzhenitsyn is “more concerned at the use of the pogroms by foreign propagandists to discredit Russia than any impact they might have had on the Jews.”⁵⁰

The fact that Solzhenitsyn feels a need to lay bare misconceptions and to revisit deeply rooted stereotypes, stems from his overall desire to absolve Russia’s history from its shameful episodes, or at least to point at other, equally “guilty” or complicit parties: the Ukrainians, the Moldavians — and the Jews themselves. It also evinces his utter unfamiliarity with the substantial bulk of historiography produced both in Western academe and increasingly in Russia, none of which is biased or “unfair” as he believes it to be.

THE PUBLIC RECEPTION OF *200 YEARS TOGETHER*

The heroic halo around Solzhenitsyn, his idiosyncratic literary style, and assumed posture of a prophetic hermit, all made him an inviting target for ridicule and criticism ever since he was first exiled. Some ascribed to him monarchist views. But it was Solzhenitsyn’s nationalistic pronouncements and a rhetoric of Russian Orthodoxy, “*sobornost’* and *narodnost’*,” that alienated some of his former adherents and made his very name synonymous with the deep ideological rift dividing the Russian intellectual community abroad. In Russia, on the other hand, where only a distant echo of that controversy was heard by the informed few, he was largely

⁴⁹ Solzhenitsyn, *200 let vmeste*, 1:188-92.

⁵⁰ Klier, “No Prize for History,” 60.

perceived as a beacon of liberalism and freedom and the most devoted chronicler of the regime's heinous crimes.

With the collapse of the Soviet regime, the dream of a liberated Russia was unfolding before the very eyes of thousands of Russians who in May 1994 watched the train carrying Solzhenitsyn and his family across the entire country from the Far East to Moscow. With public speeches delivered at every stop and a massive media coverage, this impressive homecoming was meant to symbolically reverse the vector of Solzhenitsyn's exile to the West 20 years before. But it also positioned him as an almost prophetic figure, a living symbol of Russia's true regeneration, whose return was both redemptive and inspirational.

Referring to Solzhenitsyn as the nation's regained moral and ethical conscience, whose very arrival was made possible by the democratic revolution of 1991, the media were clearly showing sensitivity and responsiveness to the regime's desperate need for legitimacy, already badly shattered by 1994. How much of this "prophetic aura" was of Solzhenitsyn's own making (a product of his own ambitions and personal traits), and how much was bestowed upon him by the regime that was pursuing its own pragmatic goals, need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that the initial public excitement soon faded away as the writer embarked on daily TV talks, preaching Orthodox revival, anti-globalization, and the traditionalist Slavophile values. Those TV shows did not survive long, but the name of Solzhenitsyn continued to make occasional headlines in the press, following on the writer's ambiguous hints at the existence of an anti-Russian Jewish conspiracy (prior to the parliamentary elections in December 1999); his public condemnation of the NATO operation of Kosovo (spring 2000), and the establishment of the literary prize awarded by the fund bearing his name in 1996). The choice of the laureates speaks for itself: the late V. Rasputin, notorious for his nationalist views and author of the so-called "village prose," and A. Panarin, an ardent anti-globalist and critic of the West. Solzhenitsyn was also quoted as praising the literary talent of Prakhanov, an ultra-communist propagandist and writer who makes no secret of his anti-liberal, anti-western, and antisemitic views. All of this could not but antagonize Solzhenitsyn's liberal readers, as he came dangerously close to the ranks of ultra-patriots and Great Russian chauvinists. On the other hand, there is little evidence to suggest any real alliance between the communists on the left, nationalists on the extreme right, and Solzhenitsyn, as for them, curiously enough, his views appear to be too liberal in content, not radical enough in form.

Critics like Vladimir Voinovich, *A Portrait Against the Background of a Myth*, focused their attack on the phony pathos and “cult of personality” surrounding Solzhenitsyn.⁵¹ Challenging Solzhenitsyn’s moral and ethical integrity, and the stance he takes on Russia’s national question, Voinovich chose to analyze Solzhenitsyn’s attitudes to the Jews, a litmus test on liberalism for the Russian intelligentsia. Though not drawing directly on *200 Hundred Years Together*, Voinovich claims that Solzhenitsyn’s ambiguous public pronouncements, his friendships with I. Shafarevich and V. Soloukhin (both have well-established reputations as fervent antisemites), and even some of his most widely acclaimed works, cast a shadow on his reputation and reflect badly on his efforts to absolve himself of the taint of antisemitism. Solzhenitsyn, Voinovich asserts, always makes note of his protagonists’ nationality, a fixation which nearly cost him his reputation in the West after the release of *August 1914*. In that book Solzhenitsyn made an equivocal connection between the assassination of Stolypin and the ensuing turmoil of the World War I, which in turn led to the fall of the Romanovs and the communist dictatorship. Stolypin’s assassin, guilty of provoking this chain reaction that led to the ultimate destruction of the country, was a certain Bogrov, whom Solzhenitsyn time and again refers to as “Mordka.” Similarly, in his celebrated *Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn deems it particularly important to single out Jewish NKVD officers who supervised the construction of the White Sea Channel, suggesting their Jewish names be engraved at the memorial stones adorning the banks of that macabre monument to totalitarianism. In the same book, Solzhenitsyn avidly depicts the more “privileged” inmates of the GULAG, whose clannishness helps them to secure more comfortable posts for themselves. Judging by their last names they are predominantly Germans, Latvians, Georgians, or Jews, while the Russian prisoners are doomed to die en masse at the so-called “common labor” – i.e., in the mines and in the taiga.

All those episodes have made it into the second part of *200 let vmeste*, so they did not come as a nasty surprise to those familiar with Solzhenitsyn’s views and impervious to the magnetism of his name. Solzhenitsyn, of course, was one of the first to address the subject of the crimes of Soviet totalitarianism. The question to be asked here is whether the salience of the topic has not stolen the limelight from the chauvinist overtones in much of his work. A thorough analysis of the responses and evaluations reaped by his latest book also demonstrates that

⁵¹ Vladimir Voinovich, “Solzhenitsyn Against the Background of a Myth” («Солженицын на фоне мифа»), *Argumenty i facty* (21 July 2002).

Solzhenitsyn seems to have "much more devotees than readers," who are ready to indulge his magisterial stance with the sheer importance of the themes he raises.⁵² Indeed, a critical reflection on the public reception of Solzhenitsyn's book has probably as much to do with contemporary Russian society itself as it does with Solzhenitsyn's persona. The polemic about *200 Years Together* provides important insights into contemporary Russia's public discourse on matters of identity, history, nationhood, memory, and repentance. Solzhenitsyn's dual revisionist zeal (e.g., to cleanse Russia's reputation abroad and to boost morale at home) targeted both the domestic and foreign public. The ambivalent discursive orientation of the text (that oscillates between the proclaimed scholarly ambitions of the author and his own unredeemable moralizing) structures the body of responses that I shall now explore.

The responses to *200 Years Together* which I had a chance to study can be organized under several rubrics. The first category consists of western reviews, which were largely lukewarm in their reception of Solzhenitsyn's work. Most tended to treat it more as a historiosophical work of a prominent writer, rather than a serious and sophisticated historiographical study. As John Klier reminded us, "Solzhenitsyn received the Nobel Prize for literature, not for history."⁵³ All of the articles I have read so far (with the sole exception of Geoffrey A. Hosking's piece⁵⁴) are critical of both Solzhenitsyn's interpretation of Russian-Jewish history and of his idiosyncratic approach to the historical craft. As a scholar of Russian history, professor Richard Pipes has noted in his exoneration of Solzhenitsyn's work, "[Solzhenitsyn's] history is something more than a personal statement yet less than a work of scholarship."⁵⁵

Domestic reviewers of *200 Years Together* can be divided into those who read Solzhenitsyn's book as a statement of a particular ideology and hence, exposed the political implication of the work; and those who approached the text from the scholarly perspective. The first category of responses encompasses a wide range of reviewers, from political figures to activists of the Russian Jewish community, from journalists and sociologists to literary critics, publicists and members of the so-called Russian creative intelligentsia. Very few of them actually

⁵² Semen Reznik: «У Солженицына в России куда больше почитателей, чем читателей», "Alone or together?", *Vestnik* no. 8 (293) (15 Apr. 2002).

⁵³ John Klier, "Polemics with Encyclopedias: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's 'Dvesti Let Vmeste,'" *Ab Imperio* 2 (2002): 604; idem, "No Prize for History," 60.

⁵⁴ Geoffrey A. Hosking, "Russia and the Jews," *Times Literary Supplement* 27 Feb. 2002.

⁵⁵ Richard Pipes, "Solzhenitsyn and the Jews, Revisited," *New Republic* (25 Nov. 2002).

discuss the work's validity as a historical research. Virtually none subjected the factual basis of the book to any particular scrutiny. In fact this group seems to consist predominantly of people who have not read the book, or at least, have not read it as thoroughly and critically as they would have read a work of historical research. Indeed, the frenzy around it seemed to compel many intellectuals and public figures to opine on its subject and on the "Jewish question" in general, regardless of their previous involvement with or knowledge of the issue. Considering the fact that the Jewish Studies or Jewish historiography in Russia are just recuperating after the 70-year-long Soviet ban, and that contemporary Western scholarship in the field is often inaccessible to a wide readership, Solzhenitsyn's work was bound to draw a lot of attention. However, as I sought to argue earlier, despite the declared ambition to write a path-breaking study, *200 Years Together* is a rather pitiful exercise in an old-fashioned and amateurish macro-history-writing, and the supposedly novel research questions that it poses have long been addressed by leading Western and Russian historians in the field, whose works are never mentioned by Solzhenitsyn, and are most probably unfamiliar to him. They, indeed, seem to be unfamiliar to a good part of the Russian reviewers, which is understandable and forgivable, yet still structures the subsequent debate in an important way. Indeed, the most remarkable feature of the polemics, its common denominator as it were, is that, the few exceptions notwithstanding, it has strikingly little to do with the text itself and the arguments it advances. In other words, the polemicists seem to be concerned much more with the alleged antisemitic reputation of the author, with the tally keeping of historical sins and wrongdoings, and contemporary instances of chauvinism (or Russophobia, depending on the political affiliation) in Russian society. This most basic and speculative level of discussion need not concern us here and I shall merely focus on the reviews that advance a comprehensive critique beyond bare emotionality.

The nonprofessional reviews inevitably constituted the largest segment of the discussion, considering Solzhenitsyn's polemical reputation, and the professional qualifications required for a specialized historiographic analysis. Then, of course, there was the subject matter itself. One cannot help thinking of similar nation-wide debates unleashed by Goldhagen's controversial study *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in Germany,⁵⁶ or the painful revelation of Jan Gross' *Neighbors*

⁵⁶ Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996.)

[about the Jedwabne massacre] for the Polish audiences.⁵⁷ The fact that these books stirred such jingoist passions is an interesting theme for a comparative study, and definitely deserves more attention than I can provide here. It suffices to say that in all of these cases, the public reaction to the "Jewish Question", in an almost proverbial Freudian projection revealed much more about the German, Polish or, in my case, Russian "Questions" (anxieties, obsessions, and frustrations) than it did about the Jews.

The reviews appeared in a variety of media and judging by some of them and the sheer frequency with which the country's dailies mentioned the book in their Op-Ed sections, the very public agitation compelled many to venture opinion on it, because, as one journalist put it, "on the Jewish Question everybody has something to say." Several distinct groups of responses can be distinguished. Predictably, active members of the Jewish community, Russian-speaking publicists in Israel and in the United States, and a good many liberal journalists and intellectuals dismissed the book as a biased, antisemitic account. Several Jewish historians published their own lengthy studies, in which they attacked Solzhenitsyn's work on academic grounds, tracing his citations, revealing his inaccuracies, mistakes, or outright fabrications. See, for example, the study of a Washington-based historian, Semen Reznik, *Vmeste ili vroz'* [Alone or together?] or Vladimir Opendik's *200 let zhatiazhnogo pogroma* [200 years of a prolonged pogrom]⁵⁸ One cannot help but notice the similarity between the scale of public engagement and the seriousness with which many reviewers perceived their mission in regards to *200 Years Together* with the publicity and attention bestowed by academe upon D. J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. One explanation is that both works transgressed the boundaries of a purely academic discourse and sought to appeal to non-professional public audiences. Both made scandalous claims of having revealed hitherto neglected historical circumstances and to having pioneered new approaches to their respective subjects.

Russian academic circles remained conspicuously silent. A rare exception was a review by Boris Mironov, a scholar of Imperial Russia's social history, and not a specialist in Jewish studies. He stressed the importance of Solzhenitsyn's scholarly achievements, supported most of his conclusions, but critically, failed to contextualize his findings within the recent body of relevant Western scholarship,

⁵⁷ Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, 2001.)

⁵⁸ Semen Reznik, *Vmeste ili vroz': Zametki na poliah knigi Solzhenitsyna*. [Alone or together?] (Moscow: Zaharov, 2003); Vladimir Opendik, *200 let zhatiazhnogo pogroma*. (New York, 2003)

thereby reproducing a certain isolated, “domestic” standard of evaluation.⁵⁹ This is all the more ironic, since Mironov himself is a well-established historian who has continuously demonstrated profound familiarity with the newest trends and publications of the Western academe. One can only guess whether the lenient standards he applied to Solzhenitsyn’s work stem from his uneasiness about its sensitive subject, or more probably, from the weight carried by Solzhenitsyn’s name adorning the title page of *200 years Together*.

These two considerations stake out the discussion led by public intellectuals and culture-makers in the so-called liberal media, which bore the signs of internal confusion and ambivalence. The traditional association of Russian intelligentsia with liberalism is short-lived and misleading in our case since the *200 Years Together* controversy reveals long-running ideological schisms within it. A few prominent literary scholars and journalists published congratulatory reviews of the book, in which they applauded the author’s daring in “braving the mine-field of the controversial subject,” awakening the nation to the complexities of its historical record and seeking the path to heal the wounds and achieve understanding.⁶⁰ Liberal critic Marietta Chudakova, for one, drew attention to the literary qualities of the text, to the author’s capacity to “identify with his protagonists, to love and empathize with them” — notably carried away by the poetics of the text and thereby shifting discussion from the scholarly plane to the artistic.⁶¹

The release of the second volume, which treated the subject in the Soviet period, cooled much of the initial enthusiasm as the writer recycled, without much of an effort to document it, most of the vulgar antisemitic clichés about the abundance of the Jews in NKVD, their shirking the military draft during World War II (“fighting the war in Tashkent”), and ideological (communist) fanaticism, “unparalleled among the Russians.” The sheer audacity of much of these claims

⁵⁹ Boris Mironov, “122 Years Apart. On the first volume of A.Solzhenitsyn’s book *Two Hundred Years Together*,” *Ab Imperio* (Feb. 2002): 565; see also Marina Mogil’ner’s editorial note in the same issue of *Ab Imperio* introducing the reviews of Mironov and Klier, “*200 Years Together: A year after*”.

⁶⁰ Lev Annenskii “From two sides” («С двух сторон»), 22 (2001); Marietta Chudakova, “On the knife’s blade” («По лезвию ножа»), *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* no. 4 (18) (2002); Alexander Archangelsky, “A Russian response to the Jewish Question” («Русский ответ на еврейский вопрос»), *Izvestia*, 7 July 2001; and idem «The right not to know?» («Право не знать?»), *Izvestia* 24 June 2001; Pavel Basinsky, “A loophole” («Отдушнина»), *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (2001); Iosif Diskin “Russians ceased to think that Jews are smarter than themselves” («Русские перестали думать, что евреи умнее их») at *Lenta.ru* <http://www.apn.ru/lenta/2001/6/21/3537>

⁶¹ Marietta Chudakova, “On the knife’s blade” («По лезвию ножа»), *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, no. 4 (18) (2002).

provoked an angry outcry in the liberal media. A series of articles followed, exposing the frauds and finally challenging the writer's moral integrity in the context of his entire oeuvre.⁶² All in all, very few were able to treat the book both within the historiographic conventions that it claimed and simultaneously as a distinct ideological statement. Scholarly analysis should have been carried out by professional historians, but as I have said, most chose to stay out of the controversy. The in-depth study of the broader problems that the book raises for society's understanding of its past and present, Russians' tendency to invest its literati with rarely-questioned moral authority, and the responsibility of the literati who take it upon themselves to shape collective memory, should have been the task of journalists and public intellectuals. In fact, these issues were best summarized by a politician, K. Borovoy, who particularly cautioned against possible abuses of the book (due to its scholarly pretensions) by the conservative and chauvinistic groups.⁶³

Borovoy's concerns were indeed warranted. The ultra-patriotic right congratulated Solzhenitsyn on his achievement which showed his ideological proximity to the "Russian patriotic milieu" that had previously been doubted. Even so, Solzhenitsyn's treatment of the Jewish question was not "consistent" enough for some. Michail Nazarov, from the communist newspaper *Zavtra*, criticized him for neglecting "the religious-eschatological" facet of the Russian - Jewish confrontation, and for silencing "the role of the world Jewry" and their world domination.⁶⁴ A journalist of what was at one time a communist — i.e., anti-clerical — newspaper (now mutated into an ultra-patriotic one), Nazarov illustrated his point with numerous quotations from the New Testament, which allegedly refers to the Jews as the "community of the Satan," "the diabolical seed," etc. Solzhenitsyn, Nazarov, lamented, has not been able to take a clear stance on

⁶² David Klinghoffer, "The Changing Face of Antisemitism in Modern Day Russia," *Forward*, 27 Dec. 2002; Mark Deutch, "A shameless classic" («Бесстыжий классик»), *Moskovskii Komsomolez*, 26-27 Sept. 2003; Ilia Milshstein "In the first circle of anti-Semitism" («В кругу первом антисемитизма») at *Grani.ru* <http://grani.ru/Society/Xenophobia/Antisemitic/p.4060.html>; Iosif Grinberg "Two perspectives on the same issue" («Два взгляда на одну проблему»), *Shalom* no. 242 (Aug. 2002): 7; Arkadii Krasilschikov, «On Solzhenitsyn's Book 200 Years Together» («О книге Солженицына *Двесту Лет Вместе*») «O knige Solzhenitsyna 200 let vmeste," *Lehaim* (Jan.2003).

⁶³ Konstantin Borovoy, editor-in-chief of *America*, interviewed at the Jewish portal *Jewish.ru*; Ilia Milshstein, "In the first circle of anti-Semitism" («В кругу первом антисемитизма») at *Grani.ru* <http://grani.ru/Society/Xenophobia/Antisemitic/p.4060.html>

⁶⁴ Mihail Nazarov, "200 Years Together or 200 years of confrontation" («Двесту лет вместе или двести лет противостояния») in *Zavtra*, at <http://zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/denlit/061/41.html>

the crux of Orthodox preaching: “it is not the Russians who fight the Jews, but the Jews who fight Christ.”⁶⁵ What commands our attention, though, is that in the midst of this blatantly antisemitic slander, which recycles both the traditional Christian charges against Judaism, as well as the conspiracy theory and other anti-Jewish clichés, Nazarov appeals to the same Russian philosophers, religious thinkers, and publicists of the nationalistic bent as does Solzhenitsyn in his book. The fact that both are able to substantiate their claims by references to Vladimir Soloviev or Sergei Bulgakov, does not discredit those philosophers but shows just how easily their views lend themselves to the chauvinistic discourse. Indeed, although neither Soloviev nor Bulgakov, and certainly not many of the Slavophiles can be accused of Jew-hatred, the boundary is flimsy between the love of one’s own and disdain for the other.

A more “intellectualized” version of Nazarov’s position, which avoids the conventional antisemitic vocabulary, is that of Vladimir Bondarenko, editor-in-chief of the very newspaper that provided the stage for Nazarov. His article was reprinted in a number of left-wing publications throughout the country and can thus be considered something of an official “press-release” of the Russia’s ultra-patriotic and communist left. Bondarenko was hopeful that *200 Years Together* would attain the status of a national best-seller and become a canonical study on the subject of the Russian-Jewish relationship. Aware of the generally negative reaction to the book voiced in the democratic press, he attributed it to the sensitivity of the subject matter “artificially inflated by the liberals.” It is the liberals, claims Bondarenko, who have traditionally used the “Jewish question” for their own political goals, whether it was to bring down absolutism, or to discredit the Soviet regime, or today, to dishonor real patriots with the accusations of antisemitism.⁶⁶ Therefore, Bondarenko saw Solzhenitsyn’s main objective as protecting Russian Jewry from being enticed into “subversive political games” by the liberals and pseudo-intellectuals [“либеральщина и образованщина” — the latter is the pejorative term coined by Solzhenitsyn himself to describe self-educated intellectuals]. All in all, Bondarenko is sympathetic with the book’s pronounced imperial overtone [«державная направленность»]. He particularly stresses the un-biased portrayal of the Tsarist government’s continuous efforts to

⁶⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁶ Vladimir Bondarenko. “Solzhenitsyn’s reference-book” (“Цитатник Солженищина»), *Sovietskii Sabalin*, no. 157 (29 Aug. 2001); <http://zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/01/398/82.html>

bring the Jews to the fold of the Russian people and its genuine intention to emancipate them in reward for their assimilation.

Bondarenko had a chance to further elaborate his views in an interview with Tankred Ganopol'skii, editor-in-chief of the *International Jewish Gazette* [Международная Еврейская Газета]⁶⁷ Bondarenko was remarkably successful in shifting the focus of this discussion from the books' scholarly flaws and ideological tendentiousness to the issues of "repentance" and recognition of one's sins — i.e., to the declared agenda of *200 Years Together*. Demagogically sophisticated, he cites numerous examples of Jewish "wrongdoing" in contemporary Russia, which he calls on Ganopol'skii to admit for the sake of real reconciliation between the two peoples. His examples parallel Solzhenitsyn's own narrative: he blames Jews for avoiding the draft, for controlling the media, and the liberal professions and for being unsympathetic with the ordeal of the Russians. Ganopol'skii's tentative counterarguments are pathetically impotent against that well-greased machinery of patriotic rhetoric. Bondarenko, it should be noted, is cautious to distance himself from the extremists and nationalists, rejecting the label of "a nationalist" altogether. He condemns Fedor Bramin (a contributor to *Spleznazh Rossii*) and Oleg Gusev (journalist for *Za Russkoe Delo*; both are notorious ultra-patriots), for concocting a Zionist conspiracy theory, which allegedly masterminded the creation of that "pro-Jewish book" (i.e., *200 Years Together*.) As a self-proclaimed patriot, he seems to be most troubled by the liberal intelligentsia, which in his view, continuously slanders the Russian people and uses the Jewish question to undermine the national foundations of the state.

It is exactly this sort of "enlightened antisemitism" — to borrow Ganopol'skii's germane definition — which, as many liberal intellectuals came to fear, would resurface as a result of Solzhenitsyn's publication. Caught between the scholarly discourse and the genre of moralizing essays typical of Solzhenitsyn's earlier works, *200 Years Together* produces a demagogical argument in a pseudo-scholarly garb and, thus, lends itself all too easily to misuse by nationalist ideologues like Bondarenko. With this in mind, one of the most consistent Russian liberals, Konstantin Borovoy, analyses Solzhenitsyn's work against the background of internal developments in the country: the ongoing genocide of the Chechens, the resurgence of the isolationist tendencies in Russia's foreign policy, and the general corruption of mores and ideals in the country overtaken by the

⁶⁷ Vladimir Bondarenko, "Why did Solzhenitsyn raise the Jewish Question?" («Зачем Солженицын поднял еврейский вопрос?»), *Sovietskii Sabalin*, no. 157 (29 Aug. 2001).

former KGB functionaries.⁶⁸ Within the context of the deeply troubled, demoralized, and confused society, maintains Borovoy, Solzhenitsyn seeks to fill in the ideological lacuna, by providing a comprehensive answer to at least one of the two fundamental Russian questions: “Who is to be blamed?” the answer, which most definitely will be appropriated by the conservative, illiberal, and chauvinistic groups.

Alexander Voronel rationalizes that confusing sense of self by elaborating on Russia’s imperial history. The imperial paradigm, he maintains, is the crux of Russian consciousness and national sensibility.⁶⁹ The state’s centralized character and imperial ambitions were able to satisfy people symbolically if not socially. The sense of belonging to something more powerful and significant than one’s belittled self compensated for the absence of liberal freedoms and economic insecurity. With the grandeur shattered and influence on the world politics increasingly challenged if not destroyed, the society is on a quest for alternative “national ideas” to sustain internal cohesiveness and to grapple with the secessionist tendencies of its ethnic constituencies. The search for this idea and reconciliation can only be achieved through the dispassionate and honest revision of Russia’s national history. The settling of scores with other national groups, as advocated by Solzhenitsyn, can hardly bring about anything but further disintegration and internal strife.

⁶⁸ Borovoy interview at *Jemish.ru*

⁶⁹ Aleksandr Voronel, “Two hundred years...” («Двести лет») in 22, No. 122 (2002.)

THE RUSSIAN JEWISH QUESTION

Solzhenitsyn was, of course, drawing from a large pool of metaphors and rhetorical devices invented long before his day and widely employed in the discussion of the Jewish Question in Russia throughout the nineteenth century. Most of them belonged simultaneously to the ideological vocabulary of the conservatives, nationalists, and "liberals," as well as the governmental authorities themselves. Through the use of these rhetorical tropes the Jews, as the quintessential Other, were symbolically and cognitively coded and juxtaposed with the Russians. In order to grasp just what that "authentic" Russianness meant in practical terms for both the liberals and the Slavophiles, it's important to keep in mind that both ideologies were essentially peasant-centered. The multiple readings of the Jewish "essence" may vary, depending on the context in which they are constructed. But they are, nevertheless, extremely revealing of the strategies employed by the nationalist-minded thinkers for piecing together a cohesive, holistic national *self*, which gains additional credibility when played against its opposite. In short, as those dichotomies so potently demonstrate, in the eyes of nationally-minded thinkers, the Jews were everything that the Russians were not, should not be, or can never be, and most importantly, in the words of Geoffrey Hosking, "they have succeeded where Russians have failed: in making the messianic religion the essence of their national identity."⁷⁰

Both the role of the Jewish Question in the official and public discourse and the conceptualization of what constitutes the problem underwent a crucial transformation as a result of Alexander's reforms. And so did Russian Judeophobia. Previously it had been based on objective observable evidence (e.g., the Jews' entrepreneurial spirit, their peculiar occupational profile, their persistence in their faith, etc.). However maliciously misinterpreted that evidence could be, it was incorporated into the mainstream of the Conservative discourse only to be gradually reinforced by irrational or "occult" elements. Most of those arcane and mystical charges, which the Conservatives leveled against the Jews were Western borrowings. Examples include the Medieval Christian obsession with the Talmud as an "anti-Christian document" which supposedly slandered and desecrated the Gospels; the conspiracy theory, which claimed that Jews sought world domination; the blood libel and accusations of Jewish ritual murder, and kidnapping of Christian children. A detailed analysis of that new Judeophobia is

⁷⁰ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 391-92.

too ambitious for this paper, so I will only discuss its role in the development of the Conservative ideologies, particularly its Slavophile trend.

The Great Reforms, which culminated in the crisis of 1878-1882, exposed the failure of the official national ideology to bridge the gap between the state and the people by elaborating a comprehensive national paradigm capable of instilling its heterogeneous constituencies with a sense of shared identity. Furthermore, the consequences of the reforms, in particular the abolition of serfdom, created new social schisms, alienating the nobility as well as the disenfranchised peasantry. The fiasco of russification to provide true “*sblizhenie*” or rapprochement of the nationalities prompted the regime to relapse into its habitual chauvinism, either relying heavily on military intervention or adopting the “divide and rule” principle, as in the case of the Finns, the Poles, and the Jews. As the national fabric continued to disintegrate along social as well as ethnic lines, conservative ideologists, Slavophiles and Panslavists alike, contemplated Russia’s failure to fulfill its messianic task.

German romantic nationalism, which I have referred to before as a pattern-setter for its Russian counterpart, smuggled into the Russian nationalist discourse some of the Germany’s most pervasive antisemitic tropes. The influence of this German ideological import can be observed, for instance, in the works of Ivan Aksakov.⁷¹ German romantics of theological orientation (in particular Friedrich Schleiermacher) downplayed the historical and theological connection between

⁷¹ I. S. Aksakov (1823-1886) a prose writer and a journalist, was not prominent as a Slavophile theoretician (unlike his brother Konstantin or his father, Sergei), but as a successful *homme de lettres* he came to popularize Slavophilism among his readers. Some of the Slavophile ideas were similar to those of their ideological rivals, the liberal left, as they too, advocated the freedom of press, religious tolerance, and sought the welfare of the peasants. However, while supporting Russia’s sectarians and dissenters in a spirit of religious tolerance, Aksakov was not ready to eschew the vision of Russian Orthodox Church as a prop of Russian society and peoplehood for the sake of a liberal secular state. His opinions on the Jewish Question, influential among his contemporaries (like much of his journalistic production), were not always consistent and did not necessarily reflect the major currents of nineteenth-century nationalistic antisemitic thought. He did not share, for example, the perception of the Jews as economic exploiters of the Christian peasantry and was willing to support the abolition of economic restrictions in the area of trade for the entire Jewish population of the Pale. At the same time, his opinion on the Jewish condition in Russia was given shape by his Christianity, as he questioned the compatibility of the Christian and Jewish moral systems (or even, the existence of the latter altogether.) Jews, his argument ran, can never be expected to be loyal to Russia, because their very perseverance in their religious beliefs meant rejection of all things sacred for the Russians. From this there was only a half-step to be made in the direction of conspiracy theories and claims of Jewish subversion. See Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, 126-28.

Judaism and Christianity and generally considered Judaism to be obsolete and abrogated by Christianity. Far from being a mere product of borrowed Western ideas, however, Aksakov's antisemitic career shows a remarkable transformation from seemingly intellectual theological arguments about the redundancy and ethical emptiness of Judaism after the triumph of Christ to the quite unimaginative conspiracy theories he espoused in the later years of his life.

Vladimir Soloviev explained the logical progression in the development of chauvinistic undercurrents in the Slavophile thinking, and in conservative ideology in general:

The worship of one's own people as the preeminent bearer of universal truth, then the worship of this people as an elemental force irrespective of universal truth; finally the worship of those national limitations and anomalies which separate the people from civilized mankind, that is, the worship of one's own people with a direct negation of the very idea of universal truth.⁷²

Just as the acute ideological strife and polarization of the 1860s and the complex socio-economic outcomes of the reforms were instrumental in shaping Russia's public and political discourse in general, so were the Conservative thinkers profoundly affected by the changing political and social climate in the society. The longstanding paradigm of Jewish "otherness" and "aliennes" had already established Jews as a series of interchangeable stereotypes in both public imagination and semi-official rhetoric (e.g., exploiters, enemies of Christ, religious fanatics, etc.), and it easily extended to encompass new constructs so as to cater to the ideological necessities of the day. Throughout the early 1860s, "Nihilism" came to represent for the Conservative the single most dangerous force, which threatened to destroy the foundations of Christian society. Through a complex and gradual process whose intricacies need not concern us here, but which clearly involved the borrowing of a significant degree of foreign, mainly German, antisemitic clichés, most of the conservatives saw Nihilism (and by implication, most of the "leftist" ideologies) as a fundamentally Jewish phenomenon, bred by the Jews' cosmopolitanism, atheism or rejection of Christianity, and their corruption by revolutionary and socialist ideas and other western intellectual fashions. An apposite example of Judeophobia conceptualized as anti-nihilism can be found in Dostoevsky's massive correspondence with V. F. Pustikov, editor-in-chief of the reactionary newspaper *Grazhdanin*. Compare this argument to

⁷² Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teachings of the Slavophiles* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), 197.

Solzhenitsyn's indignation against the "disproportionate" representation of the Jews in Russian revolutionary groups of the late nineteenth century:

Apropos: when will people finally realize how much the Yids (by my own observation) and perhaps the Poles are behind this nihilist business? What a collection of Yids were involved in the Kazan Square incident [1878], and then the Yids throughout Odessa history. Odessa, the city of Yids, is the center of our rampant socialism. In Europe, the very same situation: The Yids are terribly active in the socialist movement, and I'm not speaking about the Lassalles and Karl Marxes. And understandably so: the Yids, have everything to gain from every radical cataclysm and *coup d'etat* because it is he himself, *status in statu*, that constitutes his own community, which is unshakable and only gains from everything that undermines non-Yid society.⁷³

This quote alone, which recycles most of the anti-Jewish clichés discussed above, illustrates the evolution of Russian Judeophobia from the traditional, largely religious antipathy or suspicion of the *inorodzty* or "aliens," into a modern ideological antisemitism, similar to its Western analogues. Dostoevsky's career as a chauvinist underwent a similar evolution: from a relative disinterest in the Jewish Question in his earlier years, occasionally interrupted by the contemptuous remark here or a passing comment there, not too conspicuous if seen within the context of his general xenophobia (with Poles being the ultimate target) to a cohesive ideological antisemitism, which attributed to the Jews all the most egregious sins of the modern world. As David Goldstein so convincingly argues in his study on Dostoevsky's attitude to the Jews:

initially nothing more than object of scorn or derision, a peddler, a small-time money lender, [indeed] was too ridiculous to be really hated. But, by the end of the 1860s, [the Jew] has become a financier and manipulator, the occult master of the stock exchange and state treasuries dedicated to the destruction of the foundations of the Christian civilization. And now [in the 1870s], he had become the nihilist, the driving force behind the revolutionary movement and agent of socialist subversion.⁷⁴

However, as the semantic analysis of Dostoevsky's essays on the Jewish Question shows, and as I have argued in this paper, it would be erroneous to understand the relationship between the earlier manifestations of anti-Jewish antipathy and the

⁷³ David Goldstein, *Dostoevsky and the Jews* (Austin and London, 1981), 151-52.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

later Judeophobic ideology as a rupture, since the latter, more conceptualized form drew from the large pool of earlier stereotypes, attitudes, obsessions and phobias, both domestic and imported.

What strikes anybody familiar with both Dostoyevsky's *The Diary of a Writer* and Solzhenitsyn's *200 Years Together* is the profound stylistic and semantic similarity of tone and content. Both authors feel obliged to avert any accusations of antisemitism: "I am not against the Yids as such, I am against the Yids which exploit the Russian peasants." Solzhenitsyn's indignation against the arrogant Jews, discussed in the first segment of this essay, can be found almost verbatim in Dostoevsky, this time with a clearly pronounced essentialist twist to it:

If their haughtiness, the Jews' eternal "sorrowful squeamishness" towards the Russian folk is nothing but a bias, "a historical excrescence," and does not result from some more profound mysteries of their laws and society, then all the [misunderstanding] should soon evaporate and we shall come together joined in spirit, embrace each other in full brotherhood for the sake of mutual support and in the name of the great deed of serving our land, our state and our fatherland! [emphasis in the original]⁷⁵

Note the lofty pathos of the final lines, so synonymous with Solzhenitsyn's own exaltation. Both writers are extremely mindful of the Western reactions to the instances of antisemitism in Russia and consider accusations of bigotry to be an anti-Russian slander initiated by the hostile West (consider, for example, Solzhenitsyn's insistence on a revisionist version of the 1881 and 1903-1905 pogroms) Both seem to insist on the tally-keeping of mutual wrong-doing, which essentially means establishing a share of Jewish guilt in most of the instances of anti-Jewish prejudice or violence. Dostoevsky suggests:

Perhaps, it is not only the Russian people who are to blame for the existing separation between the Jews and the Russians. Although the motives for this disunion have been accumulating on both sides, it is not altogether certain which side has more of those.⁷⁶

Finally, both advocate or pretend to advocate, a sentimental vision of Russian-Jewish coexistence, based on mutual forgiveness and support.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ F. Dostoevsky, *The Diary of the Writer* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1990), 116.

⁷⁶ In *The Diary of a Writer: Year 1877* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1990), 101.

⁷⁷ Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer: Year 1877*, 114-25 "Yet Viva Brotherhood!" («Но да здравствует братство!») and «The Funerals of the Everyman» («Похороны Общечеловека.»)