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NCSEER NOTE

This paper has been substantially condensed by NCSEER staff, and a long section of it moved to Annex I on page 28. The original version is available upon request from NCSEER (Tel. 202 387-0168).

Nineteen conference papers are listed with brief summaries on page 24, all of which are also available on request.

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Summary

"Occult" means that which is covered or hidden. The term applies to a wide variety of doctrines and practices, ranging from elaborate belief systems such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy to sorcery, witchcraft, and a wide-range of divinatory practices (astrology, palm-reading tarot cards, et. al), and from the seances of the Spiritualists to the orgiastic rituals of certain sectarian cults. Occultism comes to the fore in times of social stress, cultural confusion, and religious uncertainty.

The occult revival of late 19th and early 20th century Russia was a response to the fading credibility of the Russian Orthodox Church, the spiritual/psychological inadequacy of intelligentsia ideologies, the destabilizing effects of rapid industrialization, and continued political upheaval. Interest in the occult cut across political divisions and class lines, but had a special appeal to women. Sophisticated doctrines coexisted, often in the same persons, with ideas or practices taken from Kabbala, Buddhism, Yoga, Siberian shamanism, and practices of the mystical sectarians, and folk beliefs, often taken from the pagan Slavs, in magic and "spoiling."

Occult doctrines influenced the art and thought of late Imperial Russia. Symbolist writers and painters of the era held that there was another higher world which only the artist, with his/her special powers, could perceive. Cubo-futurist and suprematist painters believed that geometric and abstract forms constituted the authentic reality hidden beneath or beyond the illusions of empirical reality. Occult emphasis on mind-body interaction, parapsychology, and hypnotism helped set the agenda for the new science of psychology. Occultism blended with apocalypticism, and with radical political doctrines which preached the dissolution of the (egoistic) self in a larger macrocosmic Self. On the right, all sorts of demonic conspiracies were attributed to Jews and freemasons. " Occultism reached the highest circles of the Imperial Court; Rasputin was but the tip of an ice-berg.

Occultism was an element in Soviet culture as well. The line between magic and science disappeared in the utopianism of the early Soviet period. Hopes formerly invested in religion and magic were transferred to technology and science. Stalinist political culture utilized ideas taken from the occult elements in its attempt to influence the masses. Stalin's name assumed incantational significance.

Contemporary Russian occultism is fueled by destalinization, the collapse of communism, and the resulting spiritual/cultural confusion and economic chaos. There are marked parallels to the New Age Movement in the West, but on the far right, a occult variant of Russian messianism, seems to be developing.

The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture

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Introduction

The occult means "that which is covered or hidden."¹ The term applies to a wide variety of doctrines and practices, ranging from elaborate belief systems such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy to sorcery, witchcraft, and divinatory practices of all sorts, and from the seances of the Spiritualists to the orgiastic rituals of certain sectarian cults. Philosophically, occult systems are a way of ordering the world, a search for the unifying principles that underlie apparently disparate phenomena. They reflect a desire to go beneath or rise above empirical or material reality and to deal with intangible essences such as mind, soul, or spirit. Some modern occult systems use the terminology of science and try to prove that their doctrines are scientific, but their quest for a higher knowledge is fundamentally extra-rational.

In addition, most occult doctrines assume rejection of material in favor of spiritual reality. Even if occultists share some methodological elements with science, their original premises and ultimate goals are diametrically opposite. There is also a practical side to the occult---attempts, by means of black and white magic, fortune telling, (astrology, palm-reading, tarot cards, et. al.), to control nature and/or to enlist invisible or supernatural forces, divine or diabolic, for personal goals, such as wealth, health, and love.

Occult is often used interchangeably with esoteric, "that which is designed for and understood by the specially initiated alone, as doctrines or rites limited to a small circle of adepts and initiates."² Esotericism has been described as a type of thought, an attitude to the world, that is associated with a particular cluster of ideas. Also common to many

¹George Riland, The New Steinerbooks Dictionary of the Paranormal (New York, 1980), p. 208. I am indebted to Maria Carlson for this reference.

²New Steinerbooks Dictionary, p. 90.

esoteric doctrines is the assumption of sacred numbers and of the magical powers of The Word, and the use of Gematria, calculating the numerical value of words, frequently for divinatory purposes, e.g. to calculate the date of the Apocalypse. Esoteric also pertains to texts which contain a hidden or inner meaning, in addition to their "exoteric" or public meaning.

The "Occult" overlaps with mysticism, but is not synonymous with it. To draw a hard and fast dividing line between them, is both artificial and impossible. Yet certain distinctions can be observed. In Western Europe, mysticism tended to deepen or supplement official theology; it was expressed within the Church and in deference to religious authority. Occultism was an extra-Church, though not necessarily an anti-Church phenomenon. Most practicing occultists considered themselves Christians. Church authorities often condemned occultists as Satanists or heretics, as much for political reasons, the desire to be the sole interpreter of doctrine as for religious ones. Mystical experience is open to all; it requires no special training. Occult doctrines emphasize esoteric knowledge or practices which must be learned. This secret lore, with its potential for power, is revealed only to adepts, in a special chain of transmission from master to disciple. Some occult doctrines and practices are confined to secret circles, cults, or sects. Medieval occultists typically secluded themselves and eschewed political or social stands. From the late medieval period on, occult doctrines became intertwined with utopian visions of all sorts, and with millennialism, messianism, and mystical revolutionism. Taking on this-worldly goals, some occultists hoped to use their special powers to create a new world.

Occult as Symptom of Social and Cultural Stress

The occult is as old as history itself, indeed older, but interest in occult beliefs and practices has waxed and waned over the centuries, typically reaching a crescendo in periods of religious uncertainty and cultural confusion. At such times, for various reasons, old values and beliefs lose their credibility; a rapidly changing political, economic, or social reality gives rise to new questions that the established religion does not answer and/or to spiritual yearnings, which the institutionalized church does not satisfy. Until a new consensus takes root, the occult, with its vision of an immutable world, deepens or supplements the

verities of established religion, and seems to offer stability and salvation. Examples in early Modern Europe include Renaissance Italy, torn between medieval Catholicism and revived paganism, and seventeenth century England, disoriented by the new science, the emerging industrial order, and beset with political and religious conflict. The discovery of a new world (America), Renaissance humanists' use of critical reason, confidence of human powers stimulated by the scientific revolution, and apocalyptic expectations caused by the date 1666 (666 is the number of The Beast) stimulated hopes of a new era and called into question conventional Christian notions of good and evil, virtue and sin. Philosophic and practical occultism, sophistication and superstition, rarefied theory and black magic, coexisted in different sectors of society and even in the same persons.

The occultism of such periods is typically syncretic, for despite their ancient lineage, occult beliefs and practices are neither monolithic nor unchanging. Rather, at any given time or place, the ancient lore is adapted to contemporary personal and social concerns and to the particular cultural and religious heritage. Old beliefs are rediscovered, recycled, overlaid with new elements, and applied to current issues. The Age of Reason was also the age of Emanuel Swedenborg, Cagliostro, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, Franz Anton Mesmer's hypnotic cures. Discomfort with the claims of reason and science led to the recirculation of old prophecies and the dissemination of new ones. Mystical freemasons preached reform by a dedicated self-perfected spiritual elite.

Nineteenth and twentieth century occultists sought to reconcile religion and science, humanize an increasingly impersonal world, and harmonize an increasingly fragmented society. That All are One is a tenet of many occult doctrines, which also, paradoxically, emphasize discovery of one's true self, understood as individuality, as distinct from egoistic individualism. We find a scientization of the occult, transfer to science and technology of hopes formerly invested in religion or magic.

By the 1890s, the impersonality of the burgeoning cities, the perceived threat of mass democracy to culture and higher values, increasing class conflict and ethnic strife, combined to foster rejection of liberalism, rationalism, materialism, and positivism by an ever growing number of artists and intellectuals. Occult ideas combined with radical political doctrines of both left and right, with apocalypticism both Christian and secular, and with the anti-

rationalist philosophies of Nietzsche, and to a lesser extent, of Bergson, fostered contempt for the "bourgeois values" of peace and prosperity. These trends sprang forth with even greater vehemence after the Great War, and continued through the 1920s. Indeed, in the eyes of many people, including occultists, the Great War confirmed the bankruptcy of rational civilization. Occultists had a natural affinity for extreme political doctrines. That Naziism had occult roots is generally known, but occult doctrines and beliefs entered into Bolshevism and Stalinism as well, as we shall see. The Nazi mystique of blood and soil was bound up with Blavatsky's idea that certain "root races," in which she included Jews and Gypsies, were obsolete. She did not say that they should be exterminated, but some German occultists did. Some French occultists had demonized Jews as well. Just as the French Revolution was labelled a masonic conspiracy, the Bolshevik Revolution was attributed to a "Judeo-Masonic conspiracy."

The Great Depression and Hitler's coming to power fostered a change in the social mood. In reaction to the blatant irrationalism of Fascism and Naziism, liberals and radicals emphasized reason and science as the only way to solve problems, and associated occultism with superstition and reaction. In the 1960s, however, interest in occultism revived, and has grown steadily ever since.³

The Occult in Late Imperial Russia.

1. Background

Occultism in Russia was part of a larger cultural tradition that was philosophically reinforced from within. Russian Orthodoxy did not discourage personal religious experience; it tolerated gnostic speculations by clerical and lay theologians that would have been condemned as heresy in the Roman Catholic Church. Gnostic elements became embedded in Eastern Orthodox theology in the 6th century and were reinforced in the 16th century by the thought of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme, then popular in the Orthodox seminaries. Boehme's thought (very likely in combination with mystical Freemasonry) influenced the

³For a more detailed description of nineteenth and early 20th Century occultism in Western Europe see Annex I, page 28.

reformer, Count Mikhail Speransky, the Slavophile Ivan Kirrevsky, whose father was a Mason, Vladimir Odoevsky (author of Russian Nights), and also Alexander Golitsyn and Rodion Koshelev, both close associates of Tsar Alexander I.⁴ Boehme also influenced Russia's greatest philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, sometimes called "the last Gnostic," and through Soloviev, the art and thought, including religious philosophy, of the early 20th century.

On the popular level, the dvoeverie (dual faith) combined pagan pantheism with Christianity. Pagan rituals designed to assure a good harvest, prevent harm, restore health, or harm an enemy, survived well into the 20th century. The basic distinction of the dvoeverie was not between good and evil, but between clean and unclean. In Medieval and Early Modern Russia, people of all classes turned to witches and sorcerers to prevent "spoiling," ward off the "evil eye," and cast spells on enemies and rivals. Witches and sorcerers, incidentally, were often male. As late as the 16th century, the oath of loyalty to the Tsar included the renunciation of sorcery. The peasant's universe was populated by all sorts of nature spirits, e.g. rusalki (mermaids), wood sprites, creatures who inhabited house and barn, and had to be propitiated. Peasant nannies regaled their charges, the children of the more privileged, with folk beliefs and legends. The writings of Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Sologub, and, surprisingly, Chekhov, contain many examples of occult or supernatural images and themes, especially of the "unclean force." Tolstoi's essay, "The Fruits of Enlightenment," ridiculed such beliefs; in his novels, he depicted seances and alluded to freemasonry and numerology. These beliefs were not part of a coherent system but their emphasis on invisible forces and other worlds created a mind-set receptive to the sophisticated occult doctrines described below.

As Western occult systems were introduced into Russia, their structures and forms were adapted to indigenous predispositions, needs, and movements, including political protest. Masonry was introduced into Russia in the 18th century. Such Russian masons as

⁴Zdenek David, "The Influence of Jacob Boehme on Russian Religious Thought), Slavic Review, March 1992, pp. 43-64.

Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818) stressed a personal morality that went beyond external adherence to religious law. In Russia, where civil liberties were unknown, the secrecy of the masonic lodges facilitated discussion of controversial issues. That very secrecy led Catherine the Great to regard the lodges as covers for political sedition. Frightened by the French Revolution and by rumors that her son and heir Paul was associated with the masons, she suppressed the lodges and arrested Novikov. Masonry revived in the reign of Alexander I. Some scholars claim that Alexander himself was a member of the Lodge Astrea, where he and persons close to him discussed projects for reforming Russia, including the abolition of serfdom. But Alexander too, became frightened and turned against the Masons in 1812. The extent to which members of the lodges took the occult teachings seriously differed greatly. For some, occult language and rituals were a means of organization and contact, for others much more. D.S. Merezhkovsky (himself a mason)⁵ insisted that the Decembrists idealism derived from mystical freemasonry, not from Enlightenment rationalism.

For most of the 19th century, interest in the occult by the Russian elite was confined to a few circles, but in the 1880s the cultural climate began to change. The fading appeal of the official Orthodox Church, the spiritually unsatisfying atheism and positivism of the intelligentsia, the destabilizing impact of the rapid industrialization of the 1890s, political upheaval, cultural disintegration, and the association of rationalism and materialism with the West, combined to create a climate of personal confusion and religious quest which was receptive to the occult. New occult systems attracted many serious and dedicated adherents from among the intellectual and artistic elite. Spiritualism, for example, was introduced into Russia in the 1860s by A. N. Aksakov (1823-1903) and A. N. Butlerov (1828-1903), both University Professors, who claimed that the doctrine was a science. Spiritualism attracted so many adherents (seances were even held at the royal court), that a special commission, headed by the famous chemist Mendeleev, was named, in 1874-75, to test its claims. Not surprisingly, the commission found against it. Nevertheless, Spiritualist experiments in mental telepathy and parapsychology aroused interest in psychic phenomena and in mind-

⁵I am indebted to Stanislav Dzhimbinov for this information.

body interaction; later these subjects were pursued by early Russian psychologists. By 1881, Spiritualists were able to form their own Journal Rebus (1881--1917; the title is the same in Russian); it featured articles on spiritualism, astrology, palm-reading, mystical freemasonry, vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, Theosophy, and experiments in psychic research, mental telepathy and hypnotism in particular. The spiritualist seances were not open to the public, but invitations were not difficult to obtain. At one time or another, the famous philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, his brother Vsevolod Soloviev, and the symbolist poet Valery Briusov, were interested in Spiritualism.⁶

2. The Russian Fin de siecle

As the spiritual/cultural crisis intensified, some Russians who wished to deepen, supplement, or reinterpret Russian Orthodoxy, became interested in the mystery religions of pagan antiquity, yoga, Buddhism, and the Jewish Kabbala. Vladimir Soloviev was particularly interested in the latter; mainly through him, the Kabbala, albeit in poorly understood or even distorted form, became part of the general legacy of the Russian occult. Russian writers and artists who visited Paris learned about French fin de siecle occultism, French Symbolism, and Nietzsche, and introduced them into Russia. Particularly important was D. S. Merezhkovsky, popularizer of French symbolism and Nietzsche, advocate, after 1900, of a "new religious consciousness," based on the assumption that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent, and, after 1905, of a "religious revolution," which would establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. He and his circle were called "God-seekers." The "God-seekers" tended to idealize Classical Athens and Medieval Western Europe as organic societies, in which artist and people were united. They hated the new forces of capitalism which were transforming Russia, destroying old elites to which some of them belonged.

The Symbolists believed that art had theurgic powers, that they could literally create a new world by means of art. They also believed in the "magic of words" (title of an

⁶Thomas Berry, Spiritualism in Tsarist Society and Literature (Baltimore, 1985); Maria Carlson's essay in this volume.

important essay, 1909 by Andrei Bely), a belief that can be traced back to Ancient Egypt. The Egyptians believed that the word creates all things and that it has supernatural effects. Invoking the name of the gods, for example, gives the invoker power over them, but it must be spoken with correct intonation and rhythm, that only the priests know. Symbolist occultism was part of a complex weave that included, in various degrees depending on the individual, Apocalyptic Christianity, Nietzsche's Prometheanism, Wagnerian aesthetics, Soloviev's philosophy, especially his doctrine of Sophia, and Fedorov's hope of resurrecting the dead by means of science. With the exception of Fedorov (see below), Russian occultism (and also mysticism) is characterized by its emphasis on a female principle, on the Great Mother, for example.

Theosophy was particularly attractive to artists and intellectuals seeking a new unifying principle, a way to reconcile religion, art, and philosophy.⁷ It provided a structured world view which could also accommodate other forms of mysticism, while its claim to be a world religion meant that there was no need to renounce Christianity. The symbolist poet Andrei Bely, the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the priest Pavel Florensky, were all interested, at one time or another, in Theosophy, partly as a means to supplement or revitalize Russian Orthodoxy. Variations of theosophy developed. George Gurdjieff, in association with Peter Uspensky, a popular Theosophist lecturer and writer, developed his own variant of Theosophy, which included Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Nikolai Roerikh developed Agni-Yoga, a synthesis of European and Asian esoteric and spiritual thought. Agni-Yoga, published in Riga in 1931, also includes ideas on health, education, daily life, and human relationships. Roerikh, Uspensky, and Gurdjieff emigrated after the Bolshevik Revolution. Until recently, their primary impact was in the West but their formative years were in Russia, and there is tremendous interest in them there today.

Interest in the occult cut across political divisions. Maxim Gorky, the famous writer, friend of Lenin, and future architect of Socialist Realism was interested in Theosophy, as

⁷For a complete history of theosophy in Russia, see Carlson, 'No Religion Higher Than Truth'.

was Anatole Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment. Theosophy did not posit a personal God, and the doctrine condemned egoism and accumulation of material goods--elements compatible with socialism, in a vague sort of way. Maxim Gorky was fascinated by Naum Kotik's studies in hypnotism, recognizing their potential as a means to influencing the masses. There are clear occult elements in the poetry and plays of the young Anatole Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment.⁸ Indeed, as late as 1919, when he was already Commissar, he wrote an occult play "Vasillisa the Wise," that was intended to be part of a trilogy. Roerikh asserted that Jesus was the first Communist; he visited the Soviet Union in 1926, and met with Lunacharsky, Chicherin, and Krupskaja. In the emigre community, he was believed to be a Soviet agent.

Gorky and Lunacharsky formulated "God-building," a Marxist surrogate religion (to which Lenin vehemently objected), during the Revolution of 1905, for they recognized the power of religion and myth to inspire people to sacrifice, even die, for their beliefs. "God-building" preached a collective immortality which dissolved the individual in the cosmos, a positivist version of the Gnostic contempt for the material world. Energeticism stimulated "God-builders'" hopes of tapping the latent energy of the masses. In Gorky's novel Confession (1908) an assembled crowd, using its collective energy, heals a paralyzed girl.

On the popular level, there was a surge of interest in the occult. Peasants moving to the cities took their superstitions with them; confused in the new situation, they resorted to fortune-tellers, magic, and faith-healers for help and guidance. So did the intellectual and cultural elite.

The Revolution of 1905 resulted in the partial introduction of civil liberties to Russia, including relaxation of the censorship and legalization of organizations such as the Theosophists. Private quests became public. In some circles the Revolution of 1905 was interpreted as the beginning of the apocalypse that would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Seeking signs and portents of the End, and also trying to orient themselves in a rapidly

⁸A. L. Tait, Lunacharsky: Poet of the Revolution (1885-1907), (Birmingham, Eng., 1984), pp. 31, 35, 62, 64, 101. Kaluga, where Lunacharsky was in exile, was a center of occultism.

changing world, people of all classes turned to the occult for direction and guidance. During the Revolution of 1905, political cartoons featured monsters and demons devouring Russia, personified as a ravished maiden. After 1905, scores of new journals were founded, among them: Vestnik teosofii (Herald of Theosophy), Voprosy psikhizma i spiritualisticheskoi filosofii (Questions of Psychism and Spiritualistic Philosophy) Teosofist (Theosophist), Izida (Isis), and Sfinks (Sphinx). The works of French occultists, e.g. Edouard Schure (1841-1929), Papus (pseudonym of Gerard Encausse), were translated into Russian for a growing popular market, as were new translations of the occult classics of late Medieval and early Modern Europe, e.g. Agrippa, Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg. They appealed to Russian seekers of a higher harmony that could transcend the social fragmentation, class conflict and cultural chaos of their own time.

Intellectuals seeking to bridge the gulf between themselves and the people, began to utilize folk themes in their work and became fascinated with popular legends and with the rituals and practices of the pre-Christian Slavs and the mystical sectarians, which included occult elements. Tapping into the immense reservoir of folklore, they became acquainted with popular beliefs, myths, and unsystematized ideas that are simultaneously archaic and modern, pagan and Christian. This applies not only to the symbolists, but to new schools of art that developed after 1909--futurism, cubo-futurism, suprematism, and primitivism. Dr. Badmaev's "Tibetan powders" were in great demand. Stravinsky's famous ballet, "The Rite of Spring," concludes with the sacrificial ritual of the pagan Slavs. Roerikh wrote the first part, which is quite different in tone; it depicts round-dancing, social harmony, organic union with nature (a kissing of the earth scene). The first futurist group called itself Hylaea, after the home of the Scythians, the fierce nomads of Central Asia. Some intellectuals saw survivals of pagan mystery cults in mystical sectarianism and paradoxically regarded the sects as the expression of authentic popular Christianity, because sectarians rejected the established Church and regarded the Tsar as the Antichrist. Khlebnikov's works draw on a variety of sources: folk magical traditions, e.g. on the power of specific herbs, shamanism, and Paul

Sedirs occult botany.⁹ Writers and artists of peasant origin, e.g. the sculptor Sergei Konenkov (future winner of the Lenin Prize), the poets Sergei Esenin and Nikolai Kluiiev, featured occult images and themes in their work, which was hailed as an authentic expression of the folk spirit.

Coincidentally, in the early 20th century, new studies of Siberian shamanism by writers in political exile in Siberia (V. Bogoraz, L. Sternberg, and V. Iokhelsen) appeared. Shaman stems from the word "to know". The shaman has supernatural powers; he leaves his own body and, in a trance, proceeds to other worlds, by way of his drum, to learn how to heal this world. Shamanism fascinated the creative intelligentsia. Peg Weiss has depicted its impact on the painting of Kandinsky, who was a trained ethnographer.¹⁰ Images of the dvoeverie appear in his paintings as well. Kandinsky and other modernist painters viewed the artist as a kind of shaman, a healer of Russia. The incantational language of the Shaman was one of the sources of the futurist concept of zaum (transrational language); another was the glossolalia (speaking in tongues) of the mystic sectarians.

The occult, again blending with other ideas, especially Nietzsche's "beyond good and evil," was a factor in intellectuals rejection of traditional norms of morality and behavior, especially as relates to sex and the family. Gurdjieff believed that evil was an illusion, manifest to those mired in the chains of this world. As in Western Europe, the ideal of androgyny was used to justify bisexuality, homosexuality, and lesbianism, but with a twist unique to Russia--arrangements, including menages a trois, based on the mystical significance of the number three.¹¹ Fedorov preached sexual abstinence; he thought that people should

⁹On the latter, see Henryk Baran, "Khlebnikov and Magic," paper presented to conference.

¹⁰Peg Weiss, "Kandinsky and Old Russia: An Ethnographic Exploration," in The Documented Image, Gabriele Weisberg, Lavrinda Dixon, and Antje B. Lemke, eds. (Syracuse, 1987). See also her Kandinsky and Old Russia, forthcoming, Yale University Press.

¹¹Examples include the Merezhkovskys (Dmitri, his wife Zinaida Gippius, and their friend Dmitri Filosofov), Mayakovsky, Lili, and Osip Brik; Berdyaev, his wife, and his sister-in-law. Berdyaev never consummated his marriage, but may have had an affair with his sister-in-law.

devote their energies to resurrecting the dead fathers rather than continuing the endless chain of procreation. Berdyaev specifically opposed the family as tying men and women to this-worldly concerns. Preaching sublimation without actually using the term, he also believed that wasting the male seed weakens the individual and blunts creative powers, a tenet found in many occult doctrines.

The occult, combined with apocalyptic Christianity and radical political ideas, anarchism as well as Marxism, helped foster a kind of mystical revolutionism. During the Revolution of 1905, the symbolist writer Vyacheslav Ivanov and the anarchist George Chulkov, future author of The Veil of Isis (1908), preached mystical anarchism, by which they meant revolt against any and all constraints that are external to the individual, including government, law, morality, and custom. They opposed individualism but championed individuality, creativity and self-expression. Love and a new religious synthesis, a new myth, would unite the new society. Occult beliefs, mingling with the Joachimite idea of a Third Revelation, led Merezhkovsky to believe that the Revolution of 1905 was the beginning of the Apocalypse that would usher in the new heaven and the new earth.

A similar cluster of ideas led a group of writers called "The Scythians," to accept the Bolshevik Revolution, even though they opposed Marxist materialism. Bely, regarded the Bolshevik Revolution as the negative apocalypse and expected a positive apocalypse, a third spiritual or cultural revolution, to follow and complete the political and social revolution. The influence of Anthroposophy and other occult doctrines is clear in the writings of Bely, and in those of Ivanov-Razumnik, the organizer of The Scythians. Haters of rational bourgeois civilization, they regarded capitalism as the embodiment of the forces of evil.

Occult beliefs and practices played a prominent role at the Imperial Court. The influence on the royal couple of the faith-healer Rasputin is well known. Robert Warth has shown that Rasputin was preceded by a long chain of charlatans and mystics, including a Baron Phillippe, from France. In 1902, before Rasputin's arrival at court, Baron de Rothschild told Serge Witte, then Russian envoy to France, that "great events, especially of an internal nature, were everywhere preceded by a bizarre mysticism at the court of the ruler." He may have had in mind the popularity of Mesmerism and of charlatans such as

Cagliostro in prerevolutionary France.¹² In any case, Rasputin was the symbol of a malaise that would soon lead to revolution. Mircea Eliade's observation also holds here: "as in all the great spiritual crises of Europe, once again we meet the degradation of the symbol. When the mind is no longer capable of perceiving the metaphysical significance of the symbol, it is understood at levels which become increasingly coarse."¹³

Occult beliefs permeated the growing anti-semitism of the period. They contributed to Sergei Nilus's dissemination of the notorious forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion."¹⁴ Rabble-rousers such as Iliodor and John of Kronstadt blamed the ills of the era on demons, whom they equated with Jews. The Beilis Case, the frame-up, by the government, of a Jew, Mendel Beilis for the ritual murder of a Christian boy, was a consequence of the demonology of the right. Occultism and anti-semitism connect in the writings of the occultist Vladimir Shmakov, who even served as a volunteer attorney for the prosecution, and in Vasily Rozanov's articles on the Beilis Case, which were so scurrilous that even the reactionary newspaper Novoe Vremya refused to print them. Rozanov misused the Kabbala to 'prove' that ritual murder was inherent in Judaism. Emigre writers perpetuated the idea of the Bolshevik Revolution as a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy; their works entered into Naziism and are circulating in Russia today.

Occultism in The Early Soviet Period.

The Bolshevik Revolution did not end occultism. Occult beliefs and doctrines, mingled with other ideas taken from apocalyptic Christianity, Nietzsche, Wagner, anarchism,

¹²Robert Warth, "Before Rasputin: Piety and the Occult at the Court of Nicholas II," The Historian, vol. XLVII, no. 3, pp. 323-37.

¹³Mircea Eliade, Mephistopheles and the Androgyne (New York, 1965), p. 100

¹⁴On this, see James Webb, The Occult Establishment (LaSalle, IL, 1976), pp. 213-74, 275-344; see also Michael Hagemester, "Wer war Sergei Nilus?" Ostkirchliche Studien, vol. 40, no. 1 (March, 1991), pp. 49-63.

and Marxism, fostered the Utopianism of the period. The Free Philosophic Academy (Volfila) in Petrograd and the Moscow Spiritual Academy provided forums for the discussion of Theosophy, Anthroposophy, and other occult ideas. Some Theosophists and Anthroposophists found employment in Soviet cultural institutions, including TEO, the theatrical division of the Commissariat of Enlightenment, IZO, the fine arts division, and Proletkult, the extra-Party organization founded by Bogdanov and his supporters to liberate the Proletariat spiritually and culturally from the bourgeois past. The occult tenet that the individual is a microcosm of the macrocosm and traditional Orthodox injunctions against self-will, led Vyacheslav Ivanov, Sergei Bulgakov, and Pavel Florensky, to aestheticize rather than oppose the Bolshevik suppression of the individual.¹⁵

In 1922, as part of the anti-religious campaign initiated that year, Theosophy and Anthroposophy were suppressed, along with other forms of Idealism (ideas not based on a materialist world view). Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and other leading religious philosophers, were exiled. Occult circles went underground. There are clear suggestions of Anthroposophy and also of Fedorov and Florensky, in the theories of the Soviet psychologist Aaron Zalkind, who believed that a new man with new organs and new sensibilities was being formed.

The new regime itself utilized occult motifs in its propaganda. Posters cried "Purge the Unclean!" a clear allusion to traditional beliefs. The very word purge (chistka) implies a ritual cleansing of unclean forces. References to the "many-headed hydra" of reaction connote old folk monsters. Lenin decried vampires and bloodsuckers. Leon Trotsky was certain that Zinaida Gippius, an enemy of Bolshevism, was a witch, but admitted ignorance as to the length of her tail!¹⁶ The Russian text of the document which formed the Communist International (Comintern) prohibited former Masons from joining the Communist Party,

¹⁵For details, see my article, "Sobornost': The Utopia of the Religious Renaissance," forthcoming in Russian History.

¹⁶Lev Trotsky Literature and Revolution (Ann Arbor, 1960), p.51; see pp. 51-54 for his attack on Anthroposophy.

probably because of the threat posed by their secrecy. Leading members of the Provisional Government, including Kerensky, had been masons.

In the villages, peasants continued to resort to faith healing and magic rather than consult doctors. Indeed much of our knowledge of the occultism of the 1920s stems from Soviet ethnographic expeditions and from the reports of political activists, especially members of the Komsomol (Young Communist League), complaining about the prevalence of superstition. To the latter, of course, Christianity itself was a superstition. Yet, even the Bolsheviks were not immune, especially those who grew up in the countryside. During the Civil War, for example, according to a Soviet source, a Commissar confiscated grain from a reputed witch, when she was not at home. After finding out who did it, she confronted and then cursed him. Although a young man, he withered and died within the year!¹⁷

Occult motifs permeated Soviet culture of the 1920s and became embedded in later Soviet culture. The decision to embalm Lenin reflects the abiding influence of occult doctrines which trace their origins back to Egypt and of Fedorov's belief in resurrection through science. Leonid Krasin, a formulator of the Lenin Cult was an open admirer of Fedorov. The Lenin Mausoleum was shaped like a cube, symbol of eternity to Malevich who designed it. The occult novels of Vera Kryzhanovskaia, e.g. Death of the Planet (1925) who began her career before the Revolution, enjoyed a wide audience. All sides in the artistic and literary wars of the 1920s acknowledged the incantational and theurgical properties of the Word--at issue was whose Word would prevail. Numerological codes and gematria appear in the writings of early Soviet writers. They are important in Boris Pilniak's The Naked Year (1919), which can be read as an allegorical meditation upon the Revolution's meaning or lack thereof.

A major source of early Soviet ideology that has been neglected until recently, is the philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov (1828-1903). Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, and Gorky had esteemed him and his ideas before the Revolution, as did certain symbolists and futurists but his greatest influence was after 1917. Fedorov spoke in the language of science, but the major

¹⁷Linda Ivanits, Russian Folk Belief (Armonk, NY, 1989).

sources of his vision can be traced to the occult. Arguing for a kind of "right" to immortality, Fedorov maintained that the "common task" of humanity was to resurrect its dead fathers from particles scattered in the cosmic dust, a kind of transmutation in which science replaces the alchemist's philosopher's stone. Fedorov also advocated colonizing space in order to make room for the enlarged population, solar energy, controlling the climate, and transforming nature by means such as irrigating Arabia with icebergs hauled from the Arctic. According to V. V. Ivanov, Fedorov set the agenda for Soviet science.¹⁸ Svetlana Semenova, the leading Soviet student of Fedorov, interprets him as a theorist of love and cooperation. Bolsheviks and Stalinists, however, discerned and perpetuated the authoritarian and totalitarian implications of his philosophy. Trotsky's labor armies stems from Fedorov's idea of a 'common task'.

The illegitimate son of Prince Gagarin, Fedorov lived on the family estate, but, probably through his mother, identified with the Russia of poverty and hardship, and with the "unlearned to the learned." He never married and, so far as it known, never had a sexual relationship of any kind. Throughout his work the sex drive is treated as a negative, natural force that must be regulated by man. He is the most patriarchal of Russian thinkers: unity, order, control, regulation, restoration, autocracy, strict devotion to the narrow task, return of the past--these are his passwords. Fedorov's visions, interpreted as the conquest of nature, appealed to worshippers of technology inside and outside the Communist Party.

In the utopian atmosphere of the 1920s, the boundary between magic and science disappeared. Technology became the force that will rescue Russians from poverty and backwardness, build socialism, create a beautiful, happy, and prosperous new world. Magic and fantasy are prominent in the writings of Yuri Olesha, Vsevolod Ivanov, Marietta Shaginian (also a former associate of the Merezhkovsky circle), Olga Forsh, Andrei Platonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Alexis Tolstoi, especially his novel *Aelita* (1925) about space travel. In Marietta Shaginian's novel *Mess-Mend* (1926), for example, the evil occult forces of capitalism are defeated by the benevolent occult forces of Soviet technology.

¹⁸V. V. Ivanov, remarks at conference

After the Revolution, all sorts of epithets, neologisms, and new contracted compound words were formed, and key words changed over time. The political police, first known as the Cheka, was renamed GPU, then NKVD, then MGB, and finally KGB. The name of the ruling Party also changed. "To the ordinary Russian, this all sounded originally like nonsense language, devoid of meaning yet portending something mysterious and sinister, since certain letters threatened life while others constituted its foundation, like some magic formula for reality."¹⁹ Sinyavsky may well be picking up an occult sub-text for this phenomenon--the Kabbalistic practice of Notarikon, which Agrippa also used--and which pertains to abbreviations in which each letter of a word is the initial of another to constitute talismans or magical formulas and/or to conjure up a new reality. This is not to imply that all acronyms derive from the occult, but rather than in the minds of ordinary people they acquired occult force.

The Stalinist Assimilation of the Occult.

The official culture stressed rationalism and science, but elements from the occult were put to practical political use. The prominence given to the "conquest of nature" in the First and Second Five Year Plan and the post World War II attempts to transform the climate of Soviet Asia, reflect, partly, the ideas of Fedorov, some of whose admirers reached high positions in the Soviet regime. Stalin insisted on making lemon trees grow in the cold Russian climate. The occult themes of Soviet literature of the 1920s were transformed into magical or fantastic elements that Western observers have noted in Socialist Realist painting and literature. Gorky's insistence on optimism in literature and art was partly inspired by early twentieth Century studies on hypnotic suggestion and mental telepathy. Failures of the five year plan were blamed on "wreckers and saboteurs," an industrial version of the peasant belief in "spoiling." The fantastic scenarios of the show trials dispensed with empirical evidence on the innocence of the accused and constitute a corruption of the occult belief that empirical reality does not exist.

¹⁹Andrei Sinyavsky, Soviet Culture (New York, 1988), p. 193.

Lev Kopelev alludes to the incantational quality of Stalin's speeches; "and these results he repeated--insistently, laboriously, monotonously, like the mumbo-jumbo of a shaman."²⁰ Stalin's ban on hypnotism, in 1948, suggest that he was aware of its power and that the incantational quality may have been deliberate. Mediums such as Wolf Messing and Mikhail Kuni continued to operate as entertainers, all during the Stalin era. In tacit acknowledgement of the "magic of words," language was tightly controlled. Newspapers went through several proofreadings and the permissible vocabulary was sharply circumscribed.

Stalin himself was invested with magical powers. "Stalin waves his right hand--a city grows in a swamp, he waves his left--factories and plants spring up, he waves his red handkerchief--swift rivers start to flow."²¹ The entire culture stressed the miracles and marvels being achieved by socialist Construction. The Stalin Cult included a mystique of his name and its incantational powers. Aviator heroes claimed that Stalin's name gave them courage and protected them from danger. Soldiers charged into battle with the words "For the homeland! For Stalin!"

The Current Scene

Destalinization and the collapse of Communism created favorable conditions for the occult revival that is so prominent a component of the current scene. Old beliefs have been rediscovered; underground groups that somehow survived the Stalin years have surfaced, and new strains are proliferating.

Post Stalinist literature was one of the first venues for the open expression of occultism. In On Socialist Realism (written around 1956, published 1959), Andrei Sinyavsky stated that realism of any kind is inadequate to describe the Soviet present; for that some sort of phantasmagoric art is necessary, a type of art "that will teach us to be truthful with the aid

²⁰Lev Kopelev, The Education of a True Believer, (New York, 1980), p. 262.

²¹Frank Miller, Folklore for Stalin (Armonk, NY, 1990), p. 81.

of the absurd and the fantastic."²² As models, Sinyavsky offered Hoffman, Dostoevsky, Goya, Chagall, and Mayakovsky. In his short story, "Liubimov" (1962-63), published as "The Make-Peace Experiment," time and space cease to be stable categories; a small Russian provincial town suddenly steps into a different dimension and becomes the arena of all sorts of occult happenings. In "Good-night" (1983), the ghost of Stalin appears in a labor camp. Occult themes, often mixed with Christian, appear in Fasil Iskander's Sandro of Chegem, Yuri Trifonov's Another Life, the works of the "village prose" school, and the films of Andrei Tarkovsky.

The fading credibility of official ideology, combined with a feeling that Russians have been cut off from their spiritual and cultural roots, led to a rediscovery of prerevolutionary and Soviet writers whose work is permeated with occult themes. Circulating first in samizdat and then in official editions, the work of symbolists and "God-seekers," and of suppressed Soviet writers such as M. Bulgakov, provided additional conduits for the transmission of occult ideas. The Tartu School pioneered in new readings of such writers. Regularly scheduled "Fedorov readings" are held in the Lenin Library, but the interpretation has changed. Based on his statement that nature is a temporary enemy but an eternal friend, Fedorov is now regarded as an ecologist. Cosmism has become a prominent components of the contemporary occult scene, often with new elements such as UFOs. Russian translations of Latin American magical realist writers provided another source of occult images and themes.

Open interest in the occult surged in the Gorbachev years (1985-1991), triggered, perhaps, by his call for new thinking, and has grown steadily since the failed coup (August, 1991). Tengiz Abuladze's film Repentance (1980-81, released in 1987) utilizes symbolism, surrealism, and the occult to depict Georgia in Stalin's time. Moskovskaia Pravda went to

²² Andrei Sinyavsky, On Socialist Realism (published together with The Trial Begins) (New York, 1965), pp. 218-19. On Socialist Realism was written around 1956 and first published in Paris, in 1959.

far as to publish Gorbachev's horoscope (he's a Pisces).²³ On September 10, 1989, The New York Times introduced its readers to Dzhuna Davitashvili, the faith-healer who had tended Brezhnev, and to Anatoly Kashpirovsky whose prime time-TV program (now off the air) included faith-healing at a distance.²⁴ A Soviet scholar told me that Brezhnev's enemies managed to have Davitashvili's Moscow residence permit revoked, and that bereft of her ministrations he died. On (October 14, 1989) The New York Times editorialized that the "long suppression of religion. . .has given Russians a particular fondness for the supernatural;" the writer was not familiar with the long history of the occult in Russia. There are also pragmatic reasons for the interest in psychic healing--the scarcity of medicine and the poor quality of medical care available to ordinary people. In 1991 a second edition of Eremei Parnov's The Throne of Lucifer: Critical Sketches of Magic and Occultism was published.

Theosophists, Anthroposophists, and followers of Gurdjieff and Uspensky began to emerge from the underground. Publication of Vestnik Teosofii resumed publication in 1993. New occult systems such as that expounded by Daniil Andreev in The Rose of the World, arouse widespread interest. Andreev's book, conceived while he was in the Gulag, circulated in samizdat in the 1980s and was published legally in 1991. Roerikh's ideas have spawned an authentic movement. There are at least 500 Roerikh societies in Russia today. Gorbachev himself publicly endorsed the "Roerikh idea" (apparently, a kind of spiritual communism) in 1987 and helped establish a major Roerikh center in Moscow to be devoted to Roerikh studies, conferences, and exhibitions.

Esotericism has gained scholarly respectability. The Institute of Philosophy in Moscow hosted a conference on it, on March 17, 1993. Papers were presented on alchemy, Chinese mysticism, esoteric aspects of ancient philosophy, esoteric interpretation of the Holy Trinity, and esoteric elements in Russian Sophiology. The Academy of Sciences will publish

²³Reported in The New York Times, January 11, 1989.

²⁴The article was titled, "Around Gorbachev, Centrifugal Forces." On October 12, 1989, The Washington Post did the same in an article titled "Soviets Under a Spell."

Sergei Vronsky's book on astrology and a book on Russian Cosmism has already appeared. There is a pragmatic reason for this---perestroika and economic austerity reduced or eliminated government subsidies, and the occult sells. Books and pamphlets on astrology, yoga, UFO's, tarot, palm-reading, numerology and interpretation of dreams, are prominently displayed on bookstands in the metro stations and on the streets, along with Russian translations of Western authors, e.g. the shaman Carlos Castaneda, favored by the New Age movement, whose antecedents can be found in the student revolt of the 1960s. The Russian rejection of rationalism, materialism, and science has a nationalistic subtext, because they are regarded as Western innovations, alien to the Russian soul.²⁵

Some Russian occultists are developing a new form of Russian messianism, an occult version of "The Russian Idea." Steiner's appeal to Russians, it will be recalled, was that he assigned a special role to Russia in the new era. Roerikh once stated that the new Russian spirituality will benefit the whole world. Russian astrologers often quote the American astrologer, Alice Bailey, who stated that "out of Russia will emerge [a] new magical religion."²⁶ Valentin Kuklev maintains that "the roots of the new age movement are undoubtedly in Russia." He predicts a "third culture" that is different from and superior to Marxism and liberalism.²⁷ Such views recall the Slavophile position that Russia must follow its own path, rather than imitate the West, but they are also disquietingly reminiscent of Italian Fascist claims to have found an alternative to both communism and capitalism.

Indeed, a politicized occultism of the far-right has emerged. Reprints of emigre literature of the 1920s and '30s, which blamed a "Judeo-Masonic" conspiracy (for which no evidence exists) for the Bolshevik Revolution, and by implication for Russia's current

²⁵On this see "Anti-Science Trends in the USSR," Scientific American, vol. 265 (Aug. 1991), pp. 32-38. I am indebted to Robert Randolph for this reference.

²⁶Henry Glade, "The Occult Scene in Moscow," Planet Earth Magazine, vol. 9, no. 11, pp. 6-30.

²⁷Valentin Kuklev, paper presented to conference.

problems are circulating.²⁸ Many are poorly printed on cheap paper, but an illustrated attractively presented new journal--Aleksandr Dugan's Dear Angel (Mili Angel)--began publication in 1991. It features thinkers such as Joseph de Maistre, Nietzsche, and Julius Evola (a minor theorist of Fascist Italy, popular in neo-Fascist circles today), and assorted occult myths and legends. Anti-Jewish, contemptuous of liberalism and democracy, Dugan is in contact with his ideological counterparts in Western Europe, some of whom sit on the Editorial Board, and who may even be providing him with funding. The Russian far-right includes former Communist apparatchiks. Grigorii Klimov, for example, the author of Red Kabbala, identifies himself as an emigre and a former KGB agent.²⁹ Klimov claims that "Hitler's [secret] Politburo" was actually comprised of Zionists who instigated anti-semitism as their means of controlling the world.

Contemporary Russian occultism is a highly variegated and diffuse phenomenon. If history is any guide, some trends will prove to be ephemeral once stability is restored. Others will lie dormant until the next spiritual crisis, while still others will be incorporated into, or themselves become, the established truths of a new era. Just as Chemistry grew out of Alchemy and astronomy grew out of astrology, advances in medicine, psychology, parapsychology,³⁰ and ecology, may well come out of the new occult movements. Magical or shamanistic techniques that work, for reasons we do not yet understand, are dismissed or ignored because they do not fit into current medical or scientific paradigms. In the Soviet Union, Kurlian photography (photographs of the aura) is used for medical diagnosis and

²⁸Two examples are V. O. Ivanov, Pravoslavnyi mir masonstvo, (Harbin, 1935, rpt, 1992); Grigorii Bostunich, Masonstvo i russkaia revoliutsiia (Novyi sad, 1922, rpt, nd.).

²⁹Grigorii Klimov, Krasnaia Kabbala, ([n.p.] 1992) .

³⁰ Parapsychology is not necessarily beneficial to humanity. The KGB has a long-standing interest in mind control and behavior-altering drugs. For a discussion of parapsychology, including its occult elements, see Martin Ebon, Psychic Warfare: Threat or Illusion? (New York, 1983), and "Psychic Studies: The Soviet Dilemma," in The Skeptical Inquirer, Vol. 10, pp. 144-52.

techniques that derive from the occult were used to train Soviet athletes for the Olympic Games. In the West, attention being paid to the mind-body interaction, has resulted in the use of biofeedback and other effective techniques. Occult doctrines fructified 19th and 20th century art and literature and may do so again in the 21st century. The approach of the millennial year 2,000 may serve as the signal for new fusions of the occult, apocalypticism, and radical politics, left or right.

Politically, the occult is dangerous. In prerevolutionary Russia, the idea that all are one, that the individual is but a microcosm of the macrocosm, fostered an indifference to legal rights and guarantees that protect the individual from other people and from the government. The same tenets could support a view that each individual has a unique, irreplaceable role in the cosmic order, but in Russia it did not work out that way. Contempt for material reality induced aesthetic escapism and militated against the very rational, pragmatic mind-set necessary to solve the all-enveloping crisis. Attributing control of human destinies to occult forces facilitated demonization of Jews in late Imperial Russia and of Old Bolsheviks, saboteurs and wreckers, in Stalin's time. All sorts of conspiracy theories were invented and could not be refuted, because empirical reality was merely an illusion. The occult was one factor in the creation of "a will to cult" (my phrase), a search for a new Messiah/Magus who could rid the world of demons and accomplish miracles. Whether Russians will learn from their own history, and whether other peoples will learn from the Russian's experience, only time will tell.

The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture.
Summary of Conference Papers

Occult doctrines and beliefs were a major influence on late Imperial Russian and early Soviet Culture. A response to the upheavals (political, social, cultural, religious) of these years, they underlay the art and thought of this period and helped foster the mystical revolutionism of 1905 and 1917. Occult beliefs contributed to the Utopianism of the early Soviet period and were incorporated into Stalinism. The current occult revival is a response to destalinization and the collapse of Communism.

The following nineteen papers are the product of a conference held at Fordham University in the summer of 1991. The papers are available from the National Council (Tel. 202 387-0168) upon request.

Michael Agursky. *The Occult Source of Socialist Realism: Gorky and Early Twentieth-Century Theories of Thought Transference.*

Maksim Gorky, the writer and future architect of Socialist Realism was deeply impressed by early 20th Century studies of mental telepathy and extra-sensory perception. He was attracted to such studies, which seemed to validate the existence of thought transfer, because they provided revolutionary intellectuals with a potentially powerful means to sway the masses. He adapted these findings to his own agenda, which ultimately sought to create a political system that would permit the circulation of only "pure thoughts" and would defend its members from "dark forces".

Valentine Brougher. *The Occult in the Prose of Vsevolod Ivanov.*

Ivanov, best known for his story, "Armored Train, 1469" (1921), about a group of Red Partisans in the Civil War, was deeply interested in the fantastic, the supernatural, the mystical, and in oriental religions. His semi-autobiographical Tales of a Fakir and other works reflect these interests.

Maria Carlson. *Fashionable fin de siecle occultisms.*

Of the fashionable fin de siecle occultisms, Spiritualism had the most adherents, but Theosophy was the most influential, attracting major artists and thinkers who perpetuated its themes in their work. Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and mystical Freemasonry, also had their adherents, many of whom were interested in several occult systems.

Mikhail Epstein. Materialism, Sophiology, and the Soul of Russia.

An unabashed admirer of Daniil Andreev, Epstein describes the nature and function of Sophiology in Andreev's new occult system, The Rose of the World. Conceived in the Gulag, the book circulated in samizdat in the 1980s, was published legally in 1991, and enjoys a wide readership today.

Kristi Groberg. Satanism in Fin de Siecle Russia.

Fascination with the image of Satan in fin de siecle art, literature, and music was a prominent feature of the occult revival in late Imperial Russia. Satanic imagery expressed political protest against the bloody suppression of the Revolution of 1905, and was also imbued with complex psycho-sexual motifs.

Irina Gutkin. The Magic of Words.

Socialist Realism drew on symbolist and futurist poets' belief in the magic of words. The symbolists hoped to enchant their audiences, by making poetry into music. The futurists' attempted to develop a transrational language (zaum), drawing on the glossolalia (speaking in tongues) of the mystic sectarians and on Siberian shamanism. Socialist Realism used words to conjure up visions of a higher reality and to inspire people to create miracles.

Michael Hagemeister. Russian Cosmism in the 1920 and Today: Its Connection with Occult and Mystical Tendencies.

Russian Cosmism reflected and contributed to the Utopianism of the 1920s. The boundary between magic and science disappeared. Ideas such as the resurrection of the dead by means of science, conquest of nature, and space travel were perpetuated by Fedorov's admirers and by persons who developed similar ideas independently.

Linda Ivanits. The Peasant Occult in Modern Russian Literature.

Peasant beliefs in harmful spirits, spoiling, and sorcery were inherited from paganism and coexisted with Christianity in a dual faith (dvoeverie). These beliefs were part of high culture as well, as we see from the works of Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Bely, and Solzhenitsyn.

Edward Kasinec and Robert Davis. Russian Occult Journals of the Early 20th Century and Emigration.

This is a guide to the rich corpus of literature produced by occultists in Russia and in emigration, much of which is available at the Slavonic Collection of the New York Public Library, where the authors are employed.

Judith Kornblatt. Russian Religious Thought and the Jewish Kabbala.

Vladimir Soloviev's interest in the Kabbala stemmed from his desire to apply occult teachings to confirm Christian truths, and from his appreciation of the active nature of Jewish mysticism and of Jewish culture as a whole. His successors misused Kabbala to justify anti-Jewish positions.

Svetlana Kulyus and Irina Belobrovtsseva. The Master and Margarita as an Esoteric Text.

Bulgakov's masterpiece, written in the 1930s, and not published in the Soviet Union until close to thirty years later, is a coded commentary on the first years of the Stalin era. It can be read on three levels, all of which correlate with one another: magic, alchemy, and freemasonry.

Hakan Lovgren. Sergei Eisenstein's Magic Circle.

The great Soviet film director was interested in the occult, as well as in ritual and myth. In 1918, he was initiated into the Rosicrucian order, and this experience is reflected in his film, "Ivan the Terrible." His private drawings and doodlings contain many Alchemical symbols, as possible clues to transforming (transmuting) consciousness.

Renata von Maydell. Anthroposophy in Russia.

Anthroposophy, an explicitly Christian form of Theosophy, assigned a special place to Russia in the new world order that was being born. Anthroposophists regarded the revolutions of 1917, including the Bolshevik revolution as part of an eschatological transition. Some of them worked in early Soviet cultural agencies until the society was suppressed in 1922.

W. F. Ryan. Magic and Divination--Old Russian Sources.

The occult legacy of the Russian people stems from ancient times and from numerous sources. This paper treats one aspect of that legacy--magic and divination--showing how they stem from Pre-Christian Russian, Byzantine, Jewish, Oriental, and Western sources.

Dmitri Shlapentokh. Fedorovian Roots of Stalinism.

Like many thinkers, Fedorov can be read in different ways. Stalinism incorporated the nationalist, conservative, and authoritarian elements of Fedorov's views. The emphasis on the conquest of nature in the first five year, and the miracles and marvels to be accomplished by technology, stem partly from Fedorov.

Holly Denio Stephens. The Occult Scene in Contemporary Russia.

The Occult Scene is fluid and changing. The occult systems of the late 19th and early 20th century has been revived and new movements, centers, and prophets, and healers have appeared. To predict which will prove to be ephemeral and which will last, is impossible at this time.

Anthony Joseph Vanchu. *The Magic of Technology in Early Soviet Literature.*

Soviet literature of the 1920s reflects the transfer of hopes formerly invested in magic or religion to science and technology. In Yuri Olesha's works, technique or technology replaces magic; in Andrei Platonov's, it replaces religion, and in Marietta Shaginian's adventure novel, Mess-Mend, the beneficent occult forces of communism defeat the demonic occult forces of capitalism.

George Young. *Fedorov's Transformations of the Occult.*

Fedorov disparaged the entire esoteric tradition, but shared its goals and concerns, including: the notion of a hidden reality, orientalism, the transformation (transmutation) of matter, timelessness, recovery of the lost knowledge, and restoration of ancient power centers in the Pamir mountains.

Wojtich Zalewski. *The Constantinoff Collection of the Stanford University Libraries.*

The curator of Stanford University's Slavic Division introduces scholars to the materials available in the newly acquired Constantinoff collection.

ANNEX I

Nineteenth and twentieth century occultists sought to reconcile religion and science, humanize an increasingly impersonal world, and harmonize an increasingly fragmented society. That all are one is a tenet of many occult doctrines, which also, paradoxically, emphasize discovery of one's true self, understood as individuality, as distinct from egoistic individualism. We find a scientization of the occult, transfer to science and technology of hopes formerly invested in religion or magic. The occult was assimilated to other ideas, the philosophy of Schopenhauer (a believer in the supernatural) for example. Nietzsche was taken up by occultists as one of their own. Occultists perceived the scientific theories of Richard Avenarius, Ernst Mach, and Wilhelm Ostwald, which dematerialized reality as confirming what occultists had believed all along--that the material world is maya, illusion. Avenarius and Mach denied the existence of an objective reality and claimed that human beings can know only their own sensations. Ostwald regarded all aspects of matter in terms of energy or transformations of energy. Energeticism, the discovery of x-rays and radio waves, new theories of the atom--all invisible to the naked eye--were taken as empirical proof that normal optical experiences are illusory, that the authentic reality lay beyond or beneath matter, as occultists had been saying all along, and that authentic reality was accessible only to the artist. Some psychologists posited the existence of n-rays, a mental counterpart to x-rays, as the mode of thought transfer. Claude Bragdon, an American architect and Theosophist, and Charles Hinson regarded the fourth dimension, mathematical concept, represented by the cube, as our higher and immortal self that exists in a world beyond death, hence is the key to immortality. Subjects such as mental telepathy, formerly associated with the occult, began to be studied by serious scientists. Psychologists hoped to transcend the mind-body duality and fathom the nature of psychic phenomenon. Wilhelm Wundt, for example, claimed that sensations are physiological, i.e. material, but of a kind that act upon a persons soul or psyche either subliminally when the sensations are weak or directly when they are stronger. Charcot studied hypnotism as a possible cure to mental illness. Theorists of society, aware of the limitations of reason in cementing the social order, became interested in the archaic layers of the human psyche, as expressed in myth, religion, and magic, which in turn led to research on tribal rituals, shamanism, and related phenomena.

New occult doctrines appealed to people unsatisfied by institutional religion, but uncomfortable with a purely secular world view. Spiritualism, one of the most important occult movements of the 19th century, was born in England, home of the industrial revolution and of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which seemed to contradict Biblical theories of creation, deny personal immortality, and reduce humankind to a species in the animal kingdom. Janet Oppenheim has argued that Spiritualism, which affirms the continued existence of the dead and the ability of the living to communicate with them through specially gifted mediums, achieved tremendous popularity because it

answered the unmet spiritual needs of people of all classes. She also shows that spiritualism accommodated a wide range of political and social views, including vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, and socialism, the later Utopian Socialism of Robert Owen, for example.³¹

Theosophy was founded by Elena Blavatsky (1831-91) and Henry Olcott in New York, in 1875. According to Blavatsky, one eternal truth, The Secret Doctrine, was given to humankind at the creation, but over time it had fragmented into different religions, and become adulterated by materialism. Theosophy would reconcile them. She claimed to have learned of this truth from Mahatmas living in the Himalayas. Theosophy focused on Christianity and Buddhism, but tilted more and more to Buddhism. In 1908, Annie Besant (Blavatsky's successor as head of the Theosophical Society), proclaimed a young Hindu boy, Krishnamurti, as successor to Christ. Shortly after, Rudolf Steiner, founded a new movement, Anthroposophy, which held that the birth of Jesus was the central event in the evolution of the entire cosmos, an evolution which he saw in physical and spiritual terms, unlike Charles Darwin's theory. Steiner also called Anthroposophy Spiritual Science and claimed to reconcile religion, philosophy, and science. As these doctrines spread through Europe, and through North and South America, they were assimilated to the particular national culture. Steiner, for example, placed great emphasis on Goethe's Faust. He regarded Goethe, not only as a writer, but as a great scientist, whose findings surpassed Newton's mechanistic world view. Goethe incidentally, was interested in alchemy, and believed in correspondences. Faust says, "All that exists is but a symbol.")

The center of the mid-19th century occult revival was, surprisingly, France the most politically unsettled nation in Europe (with the possible exception of dismembered Poland), and the cultural capital of Europe. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic era, the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Paris Commune, unabated culture wars between supporters and opponents of the very ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity, created a climate of psychological and spiritual unrest in which occultism flourished. There are clear occult elements in the fantastic cosmogony of the Utopian Socialist, Charles Fourier, in the doctrines of the St. Simonian, Prosper l'Enfantin (especially his doctrine of a female Messiah), and in Auguste Comte's worship of the divine feminine. Persons alienated from the system, including socialists and nationalists, tended to cluster together in what James Webb calls a "progressive underground." "Constantly," he states, "we find socialists and occultists running in harness." Webb calls the occult "rejected knowledge," whose advocates are

³¹Janet Oppenheim, The Other World (Cambridge, Eng., 1985).

united by their opposition to the "Powers That Are."³² Polish exiles living in Paris introduced their hosts to Kabbala. The central figure of the French occult revival, Eliphas Levi (pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant, 1804-1875), had started out to be a priest, but left the Seminary, was briefly associated with the Saint Simonians, and was romantically involved with Flora Tristan. His major works were on magic, alchemy, and kabbala, but was a life-long Catholic. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, whose members included the Irish poet William Butler Yeats and the scholar A. E. Waite, built on Levi's works. The English magus, Aleister Crowley, dubbed 'the beast', claimed to be Levi's reincarnation. French translations of classic works of Hermeticism and new French works on the occult were in turn translated into other languages. In some circles, occultism included black magic and devil-worship as inversions of Catholicism and/or the use of drugs to induce new sensations and enter into a "higher reality." Mircea Eliade asserts that the French occult revival constituted a rejection of the religious and cultural values of the West, not only Judeo-Christian but Greco-Roman as well.³³

Occult doctrines and beliefs had a major impact on 19th and 20th century art and literature. Romanticism and Symbolism were pervaded with the occult idea of higher reality and of the artist as magus or theurgist. Blake, Baudelaire ("We walk through a forest of symbols"), Goethe, Novalis, the English pre-Raphaelites, The Nabis, Wagner, and many other artists and writers, were indebted to the occult in one way or another. The cubes, squares, and other geometric forms represent the authentic reality that abstract painters believed underlies the visible world. They regarded color as formless energy, as dynamic.³⁴ Occult ideas in Surrealist painting and literature, and in the architecture of the Bauhaus movement.

Occult movements had a special appeal to women, partly because of the male dominance of the Christian Churches. Women predominated among the Spiritualist mediums; they were thought to

³²James Webb, The Occult Underground (LaSalle, IL, 1974), pp. 340, 192, respectively. The phenomenon was by no means confined to France or to the 19th century. For a discussion of the importance of Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Freemasonry to the Nicaraguan revolutionary Sandino, see Donald C. Hodges, Intellectual Origins of the Nicaraguan Revolution (Austin, 1986), pp. 23-71.

³³Mircea Eliade, Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions, (Chicago, 1976), p. 52.

³⁴See, The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890-1985, ed. Maurice Tuchman and Judi Freeman, New York, 1986.

have a special gift for it. Mediumship enabled women to voice their inner experience and to be heard in a male-dominated world.³⁵ Theosophy was founded by a woman, most circles were run by women, and Theosophy was closely connected with the woman's movement. Annie Besant (1874-1933) combined Theosophy and feminism with Fabian socialism. Theosophy esteemed intuition and its imagery revolved around the moon. Steiner's Anthroposophy reintroduced the male principle (Jesus Christ); his quasi--scientific-philosophical approach appealed to young men looking for a strong masculine role model.³⁶ Even so, Steiner's emissary to Russia, however, was a woman (Anna Mintslova). Victoria Woodhull, Lilly Braun, the German Marxist, and Margaret Sanger, the American birth control advocate were all interested in the occult. Margaret Sanger used astrology to guide her life. Victoria Woodhull, President of the American Association of Spiritualists in the 1870s, was a committed socialist; in 1872 she published the first English translation of The Communist Manifesto and tried to persuade Karl Marx that the goals of spiritualism were the same as those of the International Workingmen's Association. Also stressed by many occult doctrines were the healing powers of women and interest in alternative (natural) medicine, especially homeopathy.

On issues of sex and the family, there is no uniform occultist view; some occultists preached abstinence and self-control, but others urged sexual self-expression. The ideal of the androgyne as the perfect human being, found in Plato, some forms of Gnosticism, neo-Platonism, and Jacob Boehme, supported rejection of traditional male and female role models, and in some cases bisexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism.

³⁵On this see Alex Owen, The Darkened Room (Philadelphia, 1990).

³⁶Maria Carlson, 'No Religion Higher Than Truth': The Russian Theosophical Movement 1875-1922 (Princeton, 1992), p.