

Samizdat

based on a discussion at the CRCE led by
Dennis O’Keeffe and Helen Szamuely

Samizdat - self-publishing.

Samizdat /'sæmizdæt/ n.
system of clandestine
publication of banned
literature in USSR.
[Russ.] (*Oxford English
Dictionary*)

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About the Authors

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In the 1980s Professor O’Keeffe travelled to several of the East European countries then under communist rule in order to meet dissidents and to teach at the underground universities.

Dr Helen Szamuely is a CRCE Research Fellow. She has written extensively on Russia, Eastern Europe and the European Union. She is the co-author, with Bill Jamieson, of *A ‘Coming Home’ or Poisoned Chalice?* and the author of *A Delayed Homecoming*, both published by the CRCE.

Samizdat

Helen Szamuely: The starting point for this meeting was a conversation in which Lisl Biggs-Davison, Dennis O’Keeffe and I agreed that if nothing is recorded soon about samizdat and the people who were involved with it in the West, then there is a danger that the knowledge will just slip away — although I am delighted to say that there is, at least, one book being written on the history of samizdat. Nevertheless, it was an important part of all our history and it is just going, going, going. The people who remember it may not all be with us for much longer.

I should like to start by mentioning the rather paradoxical attitude towards communism that was seen in the West. Westerners became concerned and horrified about what was going on under communism at a time when it had actually become somewhat less oppressive. Although Brezhnev’s Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia after 1968 and Poland after 1981 was by no means a paradise, compared with the Soviet Union of the 1930s and 40s and Eastern Europe in the 1950s, it was actually fairly manageable. Nevertheless, for all kinds of reasons, that was when most people — apart from a few experts, obviously — became more aware of what was going on. Much of that, in turn, was because there was more literature coming out. Just as revolutions tend to happen not when things are at their worst but when they are actually getting better because people grow to expect more, by the same token information becomes easier to acquire when things are not at their worst. As information is acquired, people become more horrified. Because there has always been more information about other rather awful regimes, we have always been more horrified by, let us say, Nazi Germany and, of course, South Africa than we have about what was going on under communism.

One of the curious after-effects of that became clear just recently when I noticed that the British Heart Foundation was running a

series of advertisements on the London Underground. These were based on constructivist art, with clear references to Soviet posters. There was a red background with people going upwards and onwards — a very communist image. If the British Heart Foundation had commissioned posters that used Nazi imagery of that kind, there would have been the most almighty row, yet it is perfectly all right to use the artistic or propaganda ideas of other regimes that murdered millions upon millions of people.

We have to remember what samizdat is — a Russian word, meaning self-publishing, that has now entered the English language. If you log onto the internet and search for “samizdat” you will find all sorts of odd things. People who do weird art on walls, and journalists who write — shock, horror! — criticisms of the American government, all have the nerve to compare themselves with people who actually risked their lives to write criticisms of the Soviet government. This reminds one of the old joke, which I am sure Leonid Finkelstein will remember, about the Russian and the American. The American says: “Anyone can stand outside the White House and say ‘Down with the American President!’” The Russian replies: “So what? Anyone can stand outside the Kremlin and say ‘Down with the American President’.” So, to some extent, the word samizdat has been reduced to just nothing. Anybody who is slightly off the mainstream can claim to be samizdat.

So what did the real samizdat consist of? In the first place it consisted of a lot of authors who had been around before the Revolution. In the case of the Soviet Union this included emigré writers, people who had not been published like Akhmatova, Mandelstam who did stay in the Soviet Union but who had effectively been banned and went into what was then known as internal exile, as well as other people who had been partly published like Pasternak, whose Zhivago poems became known very quickly. Eventually, however, some translations of foreign works like George Orwell’s novels appeared. These certainly would not have been allowed to be published officially.

Samizdat gradually developed its own literature and became a focal point for dissidents, both in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe — for people advancing their own ideas, challenging the system under which they lived.

If I may just add a curious little thing here, when I was a child in Hungary the word “dissident” meant people who had escaped in 1956. It was only later that, in some obscure fashion that I have never quite understood, the term transmogrified itself into meaning the people who opposed the communist regime.

Then there was the difference between what was happening in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. The main difference was that — apart from a few periods such as after the suppression of the Prague Spring or the suppression of the Polish trade unions — on the whole, Eastern Europe was an easier place to live. Yes, you might be picked up by the police, questioned, or even imprisoned for a few days, but it was unlikely that you would end up in a camp. By the 1970s and 1980s, indeed, the situation was far more relaxed, albeit more so in some countries than in others. In Hungary, for example, things became fairly relaxed after Kádár reversed the old Stalinist saying of “those who are not with us are against us”, his attitude being that those who are not actually against us are for us — therefore, we are going to have people coming and going, those who had left came back and so on. And this, in different forms, is more or less what happened in other countries, too.

Therefore, the dissidents in Eastern Europe had much greater contact with Westerners than did people in the Soviet Union. The contact was not just when you got thrown out of the country, in which case, you had contact with Westerners but lost contact with your own people and country. In Eastern Europe it was possible for people to come here to the West, and for people like Dennis O’Keeffe to go there and teach in self-set-up universities.

There is one more point which is of some interest when you are looking at the Western part of the story. What had happened with samizdat and the dissidents is that in a funny sort of way, it made anti-communism — albeit only for a while and to a limited extent — acceptable to the intellectual elite of the West — the establishment and the media. It was actually possible to say that, well, under communism things are not that good. Of course you could not go too far and even then, a lot of it was twisted in a left-leaning way, so there was far more talk about any group that set itself up as a kind of a revised Marxist group, or anything to do with trade unions. Left-leaning groups always received more publicity on, say, the BBC than did free-market organisations or groups that actually liked the West and capitalism.

It did not take long, particularly in the Soviet Union, for the authorities to work out that they could use this. The role of licensed dissidents was very, very important. The most famous of these were Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, who were endlessly trotted out, saying things that were allegedly very brave — although, noticeably, nothing ever happened to either of them.

One group I was involved with in the 1980s — the Campaign Against Psychiatric Abuse (CAPA) — was very helpful to people who had been locked up in psychiatric hospitals in the Soviet Union. But the organisers were very firm that they were not interested in politics; they were not anti-Soviet, they were not anti-communist, they merely wanted to help those locked up in psychiatric hospitals for political reasons. When I asked why every single person they dealt with was in the Soviet Union and, since then, China, they would say “We do not want to get involved in that. We do not wish to be called anti-communist. We just want to help dissidents.”

In 1979 I was working in the BBC Overseas Service as a scriptwriter, and I claim that I was the first person in the BBC who found out about the Almanac *Metropol'*, which was a sort of transitional publication. What was striking was that although it

was a banned publication, launched under severe curtailment by the police, it had people involved with it who until then had been very much part of the establishment such as Bella Akhmadulina, Vasily Aksyonov (who afterwards left the country), and one or two others. I thought this was extremely interesting and went to my boss and said that we ought to run something about it. So Peter Frankl and Barry Holland quite properly got in touch with the BBC's Moscow correspondent and asked him what he knew about it. “Oh, it is completely unimportant,” said the Moscow correspondent, “but here I have another group ...” The group consisted of two people who were old communists, who said that they were a new group and had a petition asking for a return to communist ideals. The Moscow correspondent of the BBC thought that was important. I cannot remember what the group was called; I cannot remember who was involved in it and I defy anyone else to remember. However, *Metropol'* was, in fact, a very important publication. And to give Peter Frankl his due, he actually overruled the Moscow correspondent, which is quite a serious thing in the BBC — you stand by your own correspondent — and said, “Right, go for it, we shall have a talk about this Almanac *Metropol'*.” But that underscores the difficulties of presenting samizdat in the West. Obviously, this was nothing compared with the difficulties of producing samizdat in communist countries, but there are certain problems which still exist in people's understanding of the communist system and about what it meant to live under it.

Dennis O'Keeffe: I cannot match Helen either in involvement or knowledge and erudition regarding this vast and sorry subject. But I did, from the mid-1980s, have a considerable involvement on the outer edges of the Empire of Evil, making something like thirty trips to Poland, four or five to Czechoslovakia before and after the separation and, I think, one trip to Hungary before the fall of communism. I have also visited many countries in Eastern Europe since the fall of communism.

How did I come to it all? Well, I am a liberal conservative by disposition, and by intellectual conviction and training I am a social philosopher and economist. I was always interested in the politics of freedom — and, by contrast, in the politics of evil. One of the things that emerged in my mind from reading Orwell, Koestler, Karl Popper, Hayek and many other writers was that one way of presenting what happened in the twentieth century, in what was surely a gigantic betrayal of all the best dreams of the Enlightenment, was that evil had become a political category that had actually been instantiated in a political system. Thus there is an unresolved and appalling question as to whether there is one of these evils that is more comprehensive and deadly than any of the others, or whether evil is just a homogenous mass. Indeed, I notice that even in Anne Applebaum's in many ways extremely clever and interesting new book on the gulag, she keeps wanting to talk about the subject and then backing off, partly because it is such a horrendous question: how do you calibrate evil on such a gigantic scale?

Certainly I do not agree with the neo-conservative view that Nazism was an evil on its own. I think Stalin and Mao in some ways surpassed Hitler in the scale of their evil. There is an underlying attitude on the part of the peoples of the Anglophone world — a prejudice — which holds that the Germans are a civilised people and should not have done such terrible things, but that the Russians are barbarians and we cannot expect much better from them. That prejudice governs part of the debate.

Paul Johnson and many other writers who talk about this subject are correct in suggesting that, fundamentally, Nazism was a Marxist heresy. I personally repudiate the Soviet-originated idea that we should simply group Nazism and fascism together in one bracket and call them both fascism. Fascism is, surely, a kind of amateur league. Compared to Hitler and Stalin, Mussolini was a gentleman — a nasty thug, obviously, but a minor league despot. And all the fuss about apartheid in the 1960s, 70s and 80s struck me as hypocritical. I worked for twenty-seven years in an

institution — the Polytechnic, later the University of North London — where the cardinal aspect of political commitment was the decision not to buy South African apples. That was considered to be a kind of a lofty politics of commitment. Well, I did not buy it then, and I do not now.

I had some involvement on the margins of this terrible evil, but when I first arrived in Poland I could see that it was waning; I could see that it was horrible but that it was in something like a terminal decline. You could tell from how much people laughed about it, and the way they mocked it, that it was a doomed system.

On my first visit to Poland, I had been dispatched by Baroness Cox and Roger Scruton with a large sum of money from an anonymous donor intended for the Warsaw underground, as well as a large number of books in Polish — some of them translations into Polish of various texts, some official and some done without permission — including texts by Joseph Wojtyla (John Paul II), and finally a number of discs and videos which I had been given. It was pretty hairy going in. As is always the case with despotisms, the authorities had brought people in from remote parts of the country to carry out the passport controls — people who have no connection with Warsaw and are dragged in from some country district. They keep looking at your passport, looking at lists and picking up the phone. Maybe it is all a mime, for all one knows, or maybe it is all a game, but in any event it is intended to intimidate.

So I carried all this illegal load into Poland. I had been given an address in Warsaw and the name of Zdzislaw Krasnodebski, who is now a very distinguished Polish philosopher. He is professor of philosophy at Bielefeld in Germany. Well, the first thing for which Roger Scruton and Timothy Garton Ash had not prepared me was the immense cold. It was thirty degrees below and I did not even have a hat. They instructed me to travel in a small cab because the big cabs are run by secret policemen. They told me

that I must give as many lectures as possible — samizdat lectures. I would be asked to do more than I could do, but wherever I went, I was to try and do some lectures. At that time I was not yet able to speak any Polish, although I now have everyday, functional Polish — up to a point.

So off we went to Krasnodebski's flat. It turned out to be in one of those gigantic blocks of flats, which I am sure the communists built in order to humiliate and atomize the population. I rang the bell. Nothing happened. And then the door on the ground floor opened and an enormous man, one of the biggest human beings I have ever seen in my life, came shuffling out onto the landing. I was a bit frightened, but then I could see that he was smiling. He said something to me in very jovial Polish that I could not understand. Then he asked, "You speaking English?" I said, "Yes." He told me that he had worked in Chicago where he learned English, and where you could buy anything. In Poland there was nothing.

He must have worked out why I had rung the bell, because he told me that Krasnodebski was not there. He asked me, "Where you going now?" I showed him another address. He walked me across the snow to a taxi stand, where there must have been seventy people in the queue, but he just pushed them all out of the way and got me into the front taxi. I guess he was a shrewd fellow and he figured that I was up to no good — or, rather, up to something virtuous as far as he was concerned — although he asked me nothing about it.

A quarter of an hour later I was drinking wine in the flat of the then librarian to the Warsaw resistance, Anna Zinserling. I gave her some of the things I was carrying. She nearly fainted when she saw the money. I think the amount was something like \$3,000. She said to me, "Never mind about the commissars, there are plenty of people in Warsaw who will cut your throat for that amount of money." Anyway, the next morning Krasnodebski came round, and by that evening I was giving a lecture on George

Orwell. They must have crammed about sixty people into this tiny flat. I had just published a long article with James Macnamara on Orwell in *Encounter*, and they were all quite fascinated. I think they taped it. Although I never saw a copy, I was told that it was later translated into Polish and circulated.

I also discovered the fax, which was the evolving mechanism of freedom at the time. The fax made it virtually impossible for the secret police to monitor intellectuals anymore, just as — for all the ways it might menace us — email now makes it very difficult for despotisms to operate.

I travelled to the Catholic University at Lublin and gave a lecture on Arthur Koestler. I then went to Krakow, where I met a number of people who are still very good friends of mine. I now quite regularly lecture at the Jagellonian but my introduction to my colleagues there was in samizdat lectures. I lectured mostly on Orwell and Arthur Koestler.

I was astounded at the brilliance and intellectual accomplishment of Polish intellectuals. Not only could they operate quite effortlessly in English — most of them could speak French and German, too. Your average Polish sociologist also seemed to take for granted something that I always found impossible to get across in Britain — namely, that if you want to be a proper sociologist you really ought to know something about history and economic theory — otherwise, what are you talking about in sociology? You have nothing to say. It is a difficult challenge, not to know any philosophy, history or economic theory at all, but the average British sociologist rises magnificently to it.

There were some memorable remarks. I think it was Antek Kaminski who said to me in his office in the ulitsa Korowa: "Outside is despotism, inside here we have freedom." I could not help but think of Holloway Road and the despotism that existed in the Polytechnic of North London, while outside on the streets there was London, a free society and a free people. But in Poland

it was exactly the opposite way round. They maintained their university departments in the same way they maintained the flats where they held samizdat meetings — inside were little islands of order and sanity, outside the madness, the chaos, the stasis — the terrible immobility and timelessness of it. Even all the conventional language one had on board seemed to come unstuck. Planned economies, one realised, were not planned. In fact people did far less planning than we do in the free world. They were not controlled, either. We have far more control in a society based on voluntary exchange because we develop a kind of moral consensus.

Over the next few years I made many such visits, usually carrying money but always carrying books and giving lectures. In the twilight days of Polish communism Wayne Shute, a professor of education from the Mormon University of Utah, accompanied me on a visit to Przemysl in south-east Poland, right up against the Ukrainian border. We had some very good adventures on the way. We travelled from the Europejski Hotel in Warsaw and I found that our two return first class tickets from Warsaw to Krakow cost less than a single cup of coffee I had bought at the Europejski. Even a not very economics-minded man like Wayne Shute immediately responded by saying that there must be something wrong with the Polish costing policy.

On the train we met a brilliant physicist, who for some years had been contracted to work on the power stations in Russia and the Ukraine. He was returning to Krakow. He said "I am going to tell you something. I have never had a chance to talk to Westerners before. On the day I was leaving Russia, when my contract was finally exhausted, my driver said to me as he took me to the airport: 'Well, sir, I always brought you to and from the hotel to the airport, to the plant. This time, though, would you like to make a little tour? I will take you to a couple of villages.' As he drove me round these villages, he told me that although he had never been to Bangladesh, this was how he imagined the worst parts of Bangladesh must look. Probably, he said, it would rock

you with horror to understand the conditions existing in these villages." And the driver said to this Polish gentleman: "I have to tell you, sir, that most of Russia is like that — but much of it is even worse."

Well, we did not see anything that bad in Poland, nor would one, but I was told a marvellous story about a man who sets off from Paris to Moscow at the same time as another man sets off from Moscow to Paris — they both get out at Warsaw because they both think that they have arrived!

When we went to Przemysl to give illegal lectures, they very proudly showed us their samizdat publications, although of course I could not read them. We gave lectures on what was then our current obsession, which was the state of British and American education. I think they found it difficult to believe Wayne Shute when he told them that there is a real debate in the United States amongst conservative educationalists like him and Bruce Cooper and others as to whether America has 20 million or 30 million adult illiterates. There is a serious debate and no one really is sure about the answer, as the nomenclature of education in America prevents anyone from investigating it properly. They simply cut off the discussion, just as they are now trying to stop my students in America from studying truancy. They cannot bear to have the eye of truth and reason cast upon socialist education there.

We gave these lectures. They were very well received. I have never seen a small house so packed two nights running. There must have been a hundred people in there. In a way it was heartening — in another way, heartbreaking. It was heartening that they wanted to meet people from the free society, but heartbreaking that this was such a drama for them.

A wonderful thing happened once. For the first time in my life I slept in a bedroom with a nightingale outside singing all through the night. It was right down by the Ukrainian border. At that time it took eight hours to get across the border for people who

wanted to go. I did not want to do so at the time, but while we were walking round Przemysl I asked Wayne — a typically naïve, open-minded American who expects everybody to be nice — “Wayne, have you noticed that there are two plainclothes policemen following us?” At which point our police guide, without turning round, said “Four”.

I shall finish with a hideous story, not about Poland but about the much more frightening state of affairs in Bohemia and Moravia. Roger Scruton asked me to go there once. He asked with some trepidation because he knew my wife Mary would feel nervous about it. “Somebody let us down. Will you take some stuff to Brno?” He went on, “I have got to warn you this is much hairier than going to Poland. This is really nasty.” Then he said: “Get the plane to Vienna, then get a bus. Put all the goodies or the baddies, however you wish to characterise them, under your seat in a black bag so it will not pick up the light. Do not put it in the boot of the coach with your suitcase. Remember that the heavies who get on may miss it. If they find it, they will probably send you on the first bus back. You might have a night in the gaol, in a cell or something like that.” This was, of course, more or less what had happened to him for giving illegal lectures there.

Well, we duly got to the Czechoslovak border and were stopped there. It was extremely cold. I left the bag under my seat and we got out. These awful brutes with Viva Zapata moustaches and huge beer bellies pulled all the trunks, valises and suitcases out of the boot and then made the passengers open them. They threw these girls’ clothes all over the snow. You have never seen such brutal, crude behaviour. This creature came up to me and said “Open this.” And I said “Nyet.” He asked me about ten times. I just said “No.” He could easily have taken a knife and prised it open, but he would have found nothing except my shirts and shaving equipment because he had already missed the things I had left on the coach. The border guards had shone their torches round and missed my bag. So they were not only brutal, but incompetent as well.

We got back on the coach. The girls were laughing. They were rather smart girls and were laughing at the discomfiture of these awful border guards. When I got to the hotel where I was supposed to stay, it was under repair, covered with scaffolding. I thought “Oh my God. Where am I going to go now? Don’t know anyone. Can’t speak the language. Horrible police state.” Then a very smartly dressed girl came up and told me in perfect English, “There is another hotel just up there, you know.” I could never understand how, with so few resources, the girls in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were so often beautifully dressed, but they often were. Human ingenuity, I should think.

Anyway, she told me where the hotel was, so I struggled up with my cases through the snow. It was the local police hotel. They were all in there with their “girlfriends”. It was quite hideous. I thought I had better not rush straight off to bed, as that would be too conspicuous. So I had a glass of wine in the bar. They kept saying things to me that I did not understand. I did not like their faces and their women were not my type, if you know what I mean, so I went up to bed. To use metaphorical language, the very walls seemed to be perspiring with nastiness.

I was under very strict instructions regarding the next morning. “Get the tram at 9.50; be at Jiri Muller’s house at ten o’clock. You come at five to and he won’t let you in, you come at five past he won’t let you in.” It was that tight. So I struggled down through the snow and got onto the tram. When I arrived I found that I was a couple of minutes early, so I waited and then knocked. If you were as good-looking as Pierce Brosnan you could play this James Bond stuff! Jiri Muller came to the door and I swear he and his wife must have spent a month’s allowance on the lunch they laid on for me, with very nice wine and food.

Muller was manifestly a brilliant young man. He had written an article in, I think, an American newspaper, saying that there was, at least, some merit in the Israeli case in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He had the temerity to say that there was something to be said for the Israeli side. For this he lost his job at the university. He was made to work in a fire extinguisher factory. He was told that his children would never go to university. His wife's mother, meanwhile, was dying of cancer in Paris. She had begged the authorities to let her in to see her grandchildren before she died, but they would not.

This was, then, a monstrous regime. Remember, we are speaking here not of Prague but of Brno. Prague is west of Vienna — virtually Western Europe. Meanwhile in London I was working with people who didn't give a damn. They were obsessed with sentimental abstractions about apartheid and so on, but they did not give a damn that this horror was happening an hour and a half's flight away from their own city. Anyway, the visit went well. We had a wonderful day. Very shortly after that, the Communists fell and six months later Jiri was in the government. It is true that he did not last long because the governments there have been like ninepins, but at least he had a chance.

I regarded the whole thing as a very rich and revealing experience, which few of my colleagues shared. I wish I had started it earlier and done it more boldly. I regard it as an enormously fulfilling and privileged thing to have done.

Helen Szamuely: I am going to hand over to Martin Dewhirst. I can safely say, without any fear of contradiction since Max Hayward's death, that Martin is the man who knows everything about the Soviet Union. I cannot, off-hand, think of a subject associated particularly with literature and political writing in the Soviet Union and in Russia since then, that Martin does not know about.

Martin Dewhirst: That's very kind of you, Helen. I am glad that I was asked to attend this session, and amazed that I was invited to speak here. My grasp of economics is not nearly on the level of,

for instance, Sir Alec Douglas Home, who really knew everything about economics in comparison with me!

I went to Glasgow University in 1964 and in fact I am still officially there. That means that I have had to put up with certain things for even longer than Ljubo Sirc, the CRCE's Director, has. Ljubo Sirc has had a really difficult time in certain departments at Glasgow University. It was widely regarded that he was not only politically incorrect in many of his views, but he was also economically incorrect in just about everything he was lecturing on there. So he had to tip-toe through it and he did it magnificently — and, as you see, the experience has lengthened rather than shortened his life. He is still going strong at eighty-four. Let us hope that many of the rest of us will be as well.

I learned Russian in the Royal Air Force. We were forbidden to go to any socialist country, apart from Yugoslavia, for at least six months after we were demobbed — so six and a half months after I was demobbed from the RAF, I went to Russia for the first time. Through a really amazing coincidence, on my very first evening in Moscow in March 1959, I was given some samizdat to take out to the West. I went to a flat belonging to some people who later became quite well known — one of them even won the Booker prize for Russian literature in the 1990s — and I was given a collection of poetry.

As Helen mentioned, this new wave of samizdat really started with literature. This was just after the scandal created by the publication abroad as tamizdat of *Dr Zhivago*. I was asked to take out the authorised version of a cycle of poems written in 1928 by a Russian poet, Nikolai Zabolotsky, who had died the previous year, 1958. A bowdlerised edition had been published at the end of the 1920s, and some of his admirers wanted to be sure that there was a copy of the real thing out in the West. For that reason, after carrying the text around Stalingrad and Leningrad for a fortnight, I brought it out with me. Eventually it ended up in either the library of All Souls' College or the library of the

Slavonic Department in Oxford. That experience rather whetted my appetite for samizdat. On the next few occasions, and I went quite frequently between 1959 and 1964 to the Soviet Union, I made a point of bringing something out and, also, taking something in every time.

In 1962 I was arrested at six o'clock in the morning at my hotel, and then taken over the road where I was interrogated for several hours. On an occasion like that, one has to make up one's mind immediately how to play it. I decided that, because my room was obviously going to be searched while I was interrogated in another hotel nearby, I would take my samizdat, which I had been given late the previous evening, in my briefcase to the interrogation. This worked like a dream, because when I got back to my hotel room I saw that they had given it a good going over. Yet although I was interrogated — and this again was a classic case: there was Mr Nasty and Mr Fairly Nice, both of them were getting at me and hoping that one of them would induce me to confess to doing something wrong — they never found the samizdat that I was carrying.

In point of fact, samizdat in itself was not and is not illegal. It is the content of it, rather than the means of publication, that might or might not be undesirable. There was nothing illegal in circulating unpublished works. Indeed, Soviet writers were encouraged to do that because it was a collectivist society. Before, say, a novel went to the printers, it was thought a very good idea if a writer's colleagues had a look at the typescript and, perhaps, gave some advice on how to improve the work in question. So the actual circulation of literature, especially if it was non-political, was not an offence. I insisted that I had done no wrong. They went on and on, wanting me to confess to the fact that, although I had paid to attend a language course at the House of Friendship, I had not in fact attended any classes, nor had I been given a single hour of Russian tuition. I replied that since I had paid for the classes, it was up to me whether I actually went to them or not.

About three hours passed. All the time I held my briefcase between my legs on the floor, wondering when they would ask me to open it up. But just as Dennis O'Keeffe said a moment ago, these people were tremendously inefficient — unless, of course, the KGB wanted some of this stuff to go abroad. There was lots of talk about that sort of thing. Some people even said, apparently seriously, that there were some liberals in the KGB — for instance, Yury Vladimirovich Andropov, that great lover of jazz and, of course, the person who helped to put down the Hungarian uprising in 1956, being the Soviet ambassador on the spot to give all the right instructions. So, some people felt that maybe the liberal wing of the KGB actually wanted samizdat to go abroad and perhaps be reprinted there, translated into other languages and broadcast back as *radizdat* into the Soviet Union. Indeed, one might speculate that if the censorship had been less restrictive — and if, after the dismissal of Khrushchev in 1964, they had allowed rather more to be published, — then just conceivably the authorities might have been able to control it, in a way that Gorbachev was unable to control it in the 1980s.

However that might be, I managed to get the samizdat in my briefcase to the West. I am not even going to say here how I did it, but I did not take it with me. I was put on the train at the Belorusskii station and told never to come back. Well, I returned a mere 18 months later. It occurred to me that probably they hadn't yet computerised all the lists of undesirables and had not realised that I was the sort of person who should not be readmitted into the Soviet Union. It was not until our group was in Kiev, exactly half-way through the two or three-week visit, that the attitudes of our two official interpreters and guides towards me changed from very warm to icily polite. Obviously, the authorities had at last figured out that there was somebody there who should not have been let in.

This was in September 1964. I had, as usual, brought some samizdat in, as well as other items. I must admit to not being the

bravest person in the world, and on this occasion I was sufficiently frightened as to what might happen that I did not dispense with the rest of my load from Britain, and nor did I take any samizdat out with me. When we were leaving from Leningrad, standing in the queue to go through the final customs and passport formality, I started talking to the Briton next to me to pass the time. The authorities took him, stripped him naked and searched not only all his luggage but all the orifices in his body. In other words, they must have thought they were making a good guess, but as it happened they did not search me at all. Fortunately, I had not given him anything to take out, but he found this a very nerve-wracking experience.

Of course, people who had spent all their lives in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union would probably not have been so perturbed as some of us spoilt Westerners tended to be. My feeling was that the people who were giving me samizdat to take out of the country were risking three to seven or more years in a labour camp, whereas I was risking a much lesser sentence in a rather cushy labour camp like the one that Gerald Brooke was in a bit later. He was a British lecturer from Central London Polytechnic and then Westminster University who served three and a half years in a labour camp but was probably treated better than any Soviet citizen would have been. This is what I imagined might happen to me if I were caught.

This made it easier for me later when I was working for over twenty years, between 1970 and 1990, during the university vacations, in the so-called Samizdat Section of Radio Liberty in Munich, where I was earning very good money — much more than I got from the University of Glasgow — to process samizdat. This did raise a certain moral problem for those of us who were engaged in the activity of re-typing, annotating, checking that what we were seeing was genuine samizdat, rather than something deliberately sent out by the KGB to try to make fools of those people who were taking samizdat seriously. It was quite demanding work and at the same time one was very well paid for

it. In my own personal experience — Leonid Finkelstein may have other things to say about this — I had never come across a single Soviet citizen who actually made money out of re-typing samizdat and selling it to friends and colleagues. Maybe it happened because, of course, once there were four copies or ten copies, samizdat got completely out of control as more and more copies of copies could be made, and perhaps eventually a commercial element came into this somewhere or other. But there was I in Munich, more or less safe, although there was the occasional bomb attack on Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. But certainly one did not feel in much danger there, getting the samizdat from all possible sources and through all sorts of channels to Munich, where it was processed and re-typed and broadcast to the Soviet Union, and taken down there on tape recorders and re-typed and so on. So, you could have samizdat at the beginning of the chain and then it would, after coming to the West and then going back into the Soviet Union, become *tamizdat* if it was printed and sent back in, and then *tamizdat* itself could turn into samizdat if it was re-typed, because there were very few photocopiers in the Soviet Union in those days.

So here was the dilemma. I was sitting there and getting paid by, first of all, the CIA for a year or so after I first arrived, and then by the US Congress. I was paid in Deutschmarks, and the income supplemented my basic university salary to no small extent. I think all the people who worked in this very small Samizdat Section in Radio Liberty worked extremely hard. Possibly we were over-compensating for our guilt complex at having a cushy job, handling works which had been sent out through various channels at considerable personal risk.

Were those channels Soviet — or, should I say, anti-Soviet? Well, were those psychiatrists simply playing naïve when they said they were not anti-Soviet at all, but that they just did not want sane people locked up in lunatic asylums? I really do not know whether to talk about the samizdat of the 1960s, 70s and 80s as Soviet samizdat or anti-Soviet samizdat.

Quite a lot of it came out through East and Central Europe. I don't know whether Dennis O'Keeffe got any wind of that, but I went into Czechoslovakia just a few days after the fraternal aid began to be offered in August 1968. I was in Yugoslavia when it happened. I went up through Vienna into Czechoslovakia without a visa and they were letting just about anybody in on the train from Vienna to Prague. It was the people who were trying to get out who were the problem. There was hardly anybody on that train and I sailed in without any trouble at all, little realizing that it would be much more difficult to get out about three weeks later with a suitcase absolutely crammed, not with Czech samizdat but with Russian-language samizdat. During the Prague Spring a lot of Russian writers thought that there was no hope whatsoever of getting their works published in the Soviet Union, but that it was perhaps possible to have it translated into either Slovak or Czech or both — so that they could see it appear in another Slavonic language in a brotherly, socialist country. In 1968, though, I do not know whether it was the authors themselves or friends of theirs who were sending a lot of good works out to Czechoslovakia. I think this happened to some extent with Poland, too — these being way-stations on the journey from the Soviet Union to the West. It was less dangerous to slip into one of these countries, especially if one was not giving lectures there. I kept an extremely low profile every time I was in Czechoslovakia, for instance, and I picked up, as I say, a whole suitcase full of works like, for instance, Vladimir Voynovich's wonderful novel *The Life and Amazing Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* — a book that is often compared to Jaroslav Hasek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*. It was an incredible experience for me to sit in my cheap hotel room with a Soviet tank right in front of the hotel on the street, at the end of August 1968, reading Voynovich's novel about this Soviet soldier during the Second World War. It was a very surreal experience.

It also raised considerable moral problems later. I managed to get a rubber stamp from the Charles University in Prague before I

had to leave, saying that I had been invited to give some lectures. The rubber stamp took the place of the required visa. I flew back from Prague to London with no trouble at all, although by that time at Prague Airport there were not only Czech security men — who were, of course, unreliable — but Soviet security men as well. But the rubber stamp from the Charles University in Prague got me through and I landed in London with a huge amount of Russian samizdat. All or most of it was subsequently published, including *Ivan Chonkin* and his adventures. As a result, the wife of the author was interrogated. So were her parents, who were both given a real grilling. They both died a few days later. So one was very conscious of the moral responsibility one had in such a situation.

If somebody said that he wanted to send some samizdat to the West but he didn't want it to be published, then that was fair enough. It was put in the huge safe of the Samizdat Section of Radio Liberty in Munich and was not even re-typed. Everything else, incidentally, was re-typed because in those days it was still felt, rightly or wrongly, that every typewriter in the Soviet Union had been checked and that one could have key prints, like voice prints, and furthermore that one could tell from a carbon copy, as well as from the original, on which typewriter such-and-such a work had been produced. So everything was re-typed, except quite a lot of works that were sent out for safekeeping but not re-typed or published. As a result of this, when the Samizdat Section of Radio Liberty was, alas, dispersed in about 1991 or 1992, although my colleagues and I had processed about 6,400 documents, there were several hundred more documents that had never been put into circulation for one reason or another. On two occasions I tried to persuade — as did other people more influential and powerful than I am — Mr Soros to fork out some money so that we could re-type and issue the remaining few hundred samizdat documents that have never been read by anybody in the West apart from a maximum of three people in Munich. These samizdat documents are still, I hope, lying in safe keeping, not in Prague any more but in Budapest at George

Soros's Central European University. I went to two meetings there to discuss what to do with the Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe archives. Alas, no interest was shown.

Samizdat, in my opinion, may well have a future. I say this as somebody who is not himself entirely politically correct and has not fallen all that much in love with Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. Now, there is no doubt about it that samizdat is the answer, or at least an answer, to censorship. Censorship is increasing in post-Soviet Russia. There is no nation-wide free — or even, I would say, semi-free — television station and the question is whether the clamp-down is going to extend to the printed media or not. Good newspapers like Mr Gusinsky's *Segodnya*, I think it was called, have been closed down. This is why I think samizdat may have a future, and why I believe that it would be a good idea to have as many documents as possible in the public domain.

As I was saying, there are about 6,500 samizdat documents available in Russian. Quite a lot of them, of course, have been translated into other languages. In an article in *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Russia*, Peter Reddaway — also a great fan of samizdat — puts the total number of Soviet samizdat documents at about 10,000, but who can tell? Anyway, I think it would be good to have the remaining ones issued in some form or another.

Why do I think that samizdat may have a future? Samizdat has a very rich past in Russia. Of course, the word samizdat is possibly, in my opinion, a calque of the German *Selbstverlag* — self-publishing or vanity publishing. It used to be known in the nineteenth century as “*v spiskakh*”. A lot of Pushkin's works, for instance, were first distributed in handwritten copies because the censor blocked them in the 1820s and 1830s. Thus they were distributed like, for instance, Griboyedov's play *Woe from Wit*, “*v spiskakh*” — in hand-written copies. Old Believers — that is, dissident Orthodox Believers — did the same thing. By the same token, here in London a century and a half ago Herzen turned

Russian samizdat — not that it was called that at the time — into *tamizdat* and used his journal, *The Bell*, to send it back into Russia for further distribution. I would say that samizdat is a real, central feature of Russian culture. I do not see it dying out just yet.

Michael Johnson (journalist & author): I am currently trying to write a book about the Soviet dissidents. One reason I tackled this subject is that I did an informal survey of people in their late twenties a couple of years ago to ask them whether they had read Solzhenitsyn. A girl who was doing graduate work at the University of London — she is a Swede but is studying here — asked “Soldier Nitsyn? Soldier who?” She had never heard of Solzhenitsyn, much less read him. She had never heard of Sakharov either — and I could go down the list with more and more names that she did not recognise. This is more common than you might imagine.

I was a journalist in Moscow for four years from 1967 to 1971. I covered the beginning of the overt dissident movement. One reason I am so interested in samizdat is because in my experience, samizdat became the focal point for the dissidents, although it is very true that we did not know at the beginning what we were seeing. I am most interested in the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the best existing history of that time.

But not to wander around too much in my little intervention, I did want to say that it took a while for us journalists in Moscow to understand what was going on. The early editions of the *Chronicle* had such things as *Open Letters* and public letters to the world, written by people we had never heard of, saying things that were in the realms of *Alice in Wonderland* stuff. So we did not ignore them, but we did not take them very seriously, either. I remember meeting General Grigorenko, a famous and prominent man. I did not know what to think of him. Here was this huge, imposing figure — rather down-at-heel, like everyone in Moscow

at that time — telling me that he had been in an insane asylum in one of the Central Asian republics.

Lisl Biggs-Davison: It was in Tatarstan. He spoke up for the Crimean Tatars, and was sent to a mental hospital by the authorities.

Michael Johnson: But he had been a general in the Red Army. His speciality was *kibernetika*, which did not mean anything to us at the time. It sounded like a fantasy story so we did not know what to do with Grigorenko and his ilk. So for six months or so the editions of the *Chronicle* were treated with some disdain by the foreign press. Then, in January 1968, it all changed because Amnesty International sent an observer team to try to get into one of the trials. Suddenly we realised that outside organisations in the West were taking an interest in what was going on. We, Western journalists, were covering Russia, but within the criterion a newsman applies to this: will anyone be interested? But when Amnesty International turned up we realised that something different was happening here. From that point on, I and everyone else in the press corps started taking it very seriously indeed.

We started waiting for each successive edition of the *Chronicle*. I have studied it in some depth over the years, and now I see it more and more as a mirror or a window into the Russia we were unable to contact personally when we were in Moscow — by the early 1970s the *Chronicles* were from all over Russia. Someone counted ninety-three datelines — ninety-three cities contributing to one issue.

Seriously, this was a phenomenon that we now know was considered very disturbing at the Politburo level. Andropov was making regular reports on the dissidents, and while we cannot claim that they single-handedly led to the disbanding of the Soviet Union, we can say they were important in the elaboration of the perestroika principles under Gorbachev.

This is why, in my book, I am arguing that we must not forget these people. We must not forget Solzhenitsyn or that small group of men and women who risked their lives against huge odds to report the truth. Martin asked whether we are talking about Soviet samizdat or anti-Soviet samizdat. Well, truth here is in the eye of the beholder. If you are sitting at the Politburo level it must have looked very anti-Soviet, but if you were a right-thinking human being with some respect for human rights, it had to be factual reporting. That was the criterion for the arrests. If there was one error — if the KGB could find an error in one issue — then they could claim that it was a fabrication and arrest someone. It is a fascinating subject and I am sure it will not die out. I am sure that samizdat will remain a tool, not only in Russia but in all tyrannical societies — Cuba, China, you name it — Zimbabwe, even. This sort of self-publishing is the way to address the world.

Helen Szamuely: Thank you. Actually, to be fair, some journalists did write about samizdat before 1968. I seem to remember articles in *The Times* by Kyril Tidmarsh, under the name *Monitor*. Kyril Tidmarsh was then, of course, chucked out of the Soviet Union as quite a lot of similar figures were. And, of course, Radio Liberty's articles came through. Certainly, the *Spectator* ran a number of articles about it.

Martin Dewhirst: We also ought to remember David Bonavia.

Leonid Finkelstein (author and broadcaster): Solzhenitsyn once said that if his *Gulag Archipelago* was published in Russia, then overnight there would be a revolution. He was absolutely wrong.

The samizdat phenomenon is very complicated. The samizdat that was written and produced in the Soviet Union had no commercial side. Maybe some typists were paid a little, but they were paid out of the pockets of those who were consuming the literature. So, the samizdat was smuggled to the West and returned to the Soviet Union, on the waves of Radio Liberty, in which Martin Dewhirst played a pivotal role. He was one of the

three most trusted people who dealt with the original samizdat. You see, the original letter, for example, was the most dangerous document. The originals were always re-typed before even I — I used to be the editor of Radio Liberty — saw them. I was never shown the originals and I did not want to see them, because that was a very vulnerable, sensitive thing.

So, samizdat itself did not influence events as much as some people thought. The best proof of this is that after Gorbachev — after censorship was lifted, and after all sorts of publications which would once have been samizdat were openly published — nothing special happened. Public opinion in Russia moved in a certain direction, not necessarily guided by samizdat, and I even dare say that the distribution of samizdat was limited to certain circles of the Russian intelligentsia. In the collective farms the length and breadth of Russia you would find very few samizdat writers or, even, readers.

So what was the great effect of samizdat? To me, it lay in the way that samizdat informed the West of the real situation in the Soviet Union. Of course, again, those people who read samizdat in the West were sometimes considered reactionaries, fascists, right-wingers, whatever. Yet the information filtered through. Even those admirers of the Soviet Union felt a little uneasy after they read these manuscripts that were fresh from Russia and obviously not produced in the West — although in America there were people who, for years, said that Solzhenitsyn did not exist, and that it was probably the KGB that concocted those pieces and sent them to the West to confuse Western public opinion.

So the main impact of samizdat was, strangely enough, outside the Soviet Union. Now, this doesn't diminish that phenomenon. See what happens now. From the end of the 1980s to this day an enormous amount, an avalanche of information flooded into Russia. Now on the internet you can find everything from the Russian past. It seems that samizdat is dead as a dodo. Everything can now be published. Fine. But in fact it is not so.

Over the past five years we have seen a new, slow, very grave assault on the Russian free press. As Martin correctly said, there are no independent television channels in Russia. Several publications were shut down — very cleverly, by the way — on the pretext of bankruptcies, debts or something like that. We now know that there was a special man who was in charge of creating those bankruptcies and debts. His name is General Zaostrovsev, who was the deputy chairman of the Federal Security Bureau (FSB). When it became known that he was involved in everything like that, the *Zavtra* newspaper — which was the most right-wing, the most pro-communist perhaps, pro-neo-fascist — praised him and he was certainly not pleased with it. Once he had become slightly notorious he was moved to one side, although still given a very good job. In other words, this is a slightly disguised, but still obvious, policy of concerted movement against the press.

You can count the real free newspapers in Russia on one hand. There is *Novaya Gazeta*, the only absolutely outspoken newspaper — how absolutely we do not know, but still relatively outspoken — and then there are the partly free *Izvestiya* and the really partially free *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (*Independent Newspaper*). The rest are singing under the baton of the Kremlin administration.

So now it is a very interesting period — a very fluid period — in which we see that samizdat should not be forgotten, because already there are things that cannot be said openly in Russia. These things can be said outside Russia, on the internet. It seems likely that with the advent of the computer, and with the ease of communication it brings with it, samizdat will probably adopt a different role. It will, however, still exist. We have to keep it alive because the situation is not at all propitious yet for a truly free, democratic Russia.

Helen Szamuely: Certainly as things are now in Eastern Europe, we have no real need for samizdat, because those countries have

become free democracies. I think, however, that perhaps there was always a difference. As Leonid said, in the Soviet Union we had a tiny circle who looked at samizdat. Its great importance was that it went to the West. People found out and, then, often, when it was re-broadcast, more people would hear it. Even in the days when broadcasting companies were jammed, people would listen. But in Eastern Europe, it was very different. There you found this stuff absolutely everywhere and lots of people read it. And the walls between people who were accepted intellectuals and dissident intellectuals were far more porous there.

Martin Dewhirst: If I may make a short intervention, the curious thing is that there is samizdat, at least in the sense of *Selbstverlag*, all over the world. Consequently, samizdat cannot stop because everywhere there are vanity publishers. The problem is whether it is legal or illegal. It is legal now, without any doubt, in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Germany, Britain and nearly everywhere else. Of course it is not legal in China. It is possible to publish your own editions in Russia, but I am not sure whether it is quite safe to publish anything and everything that people there might wish to publish. So the point is that samizdat, in the sense of *Selbstverlag*, is with us for ever. It is a fact of freedom. That is why I have always found samizdat not a dreary and depressing phenomenon, but rather a very exhilarating one, because it showed that people were fighting against censorship. This was what one wanted to support and help them do.

This is why, if there were no *Selbstverlag* in Poland and the Czech Republic now, this would be awful. Of course, there is, but nobody gets punished for it, so far as I know — apart from, of course, a case somewhere in the Czech Republic, either in Brno or Prague I think, where somebody published some of Hitler's after-dinner speeches — and, of course, the publication of instructions for making bombs. That sort of thing is a very real problem, because there really are *Teach Yourself How to Blow Up the Twin Towers* books around. In Russia in the 1990s, some people thought that censorship ought to be brought back because there

were books on sale in St Petersburg telling you not only how to grow your own drugs but also how to make your own bombs. So, of course, some sort of restrictions are required.

Leonid Finkelstein: I forgot to mention that there are a few so-called independent states which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics — Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and so forth — as well as Byelorussia. In these countries there is no freedom of publication. In those countries, samizdat must play a greater role.

Merrie Cave (Managing Editor, The Salisbury Review): I would like to ask the panel what they think the role of the computer will be in this new era. It is very difficult to execute tyranny in the age of emails, and I understand that they will be difficult to scan and monitor. And although we know that we are going back to a semi-despotism with Putin, surely as standards of living inevitably rise in Russia, more and more people will be buying computers and using them? This may also apply to other nasty places like North Korea or China or whatever.

Helen Szamuely: I believe you are not actually allowed to have computers in North Korea. Certainly, in China there are internet shops that get closed down when they are about to have an important foreign visitor — something that happens regrettably frequently these days. But of course in Russia, lots of people are already on the internet. You can see the material if you go on the BBC Russian Service website, and you can read the letters. The internet cannot be controlled. What can be controlled, of course, is ownership of computers.

Dennis O'Keeffe: I wonder how big a part fear plays in it all? If they knew any history they would see that free societies in the last five hundred years have prospered more than the other kind.

Merrie Cave: They do not care about that.

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Dennis O'Keeffe: I wonder how big a part fear plays in it all? If they knew any history they would see that free societies in the last five hundred years have prospered more than the other kind.

Merrie Cave: They do not care about that.

Dennis O’Keeffe: I am not so sure. What do they think, then? What is their motive? If they want Russia to be a great society, which it potentially is, they would surely open up. They will lose control of history because they will get outdone by societies that don’t have those restrictions.

Helen Szamuely: But a great society is not the same as a great state, which is what most Russian rulers are after.

Merrie Cave: Yes, and that is what some of the population wants them to be, too. That is why some people still worship Stalin.

Michael Johnson: That is the question — what does the population want? We never had access to any opinion polls in the 1960s, 70s or 80s.

Merrie Cave: But the population hated the post-communists because they were so poor. The actual material standards were worse than anything they had been before.

Helen Szamuely: That actually is not true. I think, for instance, that you could see improved material prosperity in the shops in Russia. There were things for sale there, and people buying things.

[A participant from a government department]: People have awfully short memories about what it was like during the Soviet period and they do think now that they are much worse off, but we look at them and say “But you are not worse off. We remember how it was when you had to queue up for potatoes,” and now they say “We cannot afford it.”

One thing we have not discussed is not so much the people who write the samizdat, but the people who create the market for it. At present I do not see that as widespread in Russia. People do not have the time to read in the way that they used to — nor the energy or even the desire, maybe. They are still struggling to make a living. Samizdat may come in the future when people will have

leisure to think about things, but I do not think that is the case at present.

HS: Not like the vast amounts of leisure they had under the Soviet system. For one thing, they can actually travel abroad. Because that is one thing that has changed in Russia — people do travel a lot. You only have to walk down a London street to see how many Russians there are here. And the fact remains that they can travel, they can buy things, they can buy books, they can take them back — they may not want to but they can. And that has changed a lot. And something else: what started the samizdat — the banned books that were handed round, the poems and so on — well, you can buy them in any Moscow bookshop now.

[Anonymous participant]: But that, after all, is just for the small minority of people.

Bernard Brscic: I have no wish to be a devil’s advocate when it comes to speaking up for President Putin, but if you look at the economic track record of his last presidency and the reforms he has instituted and compare it to the Yeltsin period, it is amazing. A month ago I was in Moscow. When I remember what Moscow was like a decade or more ago, I am quite enthusiastic about what I have seen. If one looks at the economic indicators, the average growth rate in the Putin administration amounts to more than 5 per cent. Also some really impressive free market reforms have been carried out, such as the introduction of a flat rate tax, and other amazing achievements on the economic front.

I agree that the lack of freedom of the press is worrying — and given his track-record in the KGB and FSB, Putin himself is a worry — but then what is the alternative? Before that was the Yeltsin administration, a disgrace that basically produced oligarchs, while the other alternative is the return of the communists.

Helen Szamuely: And the Putin oligarchs. Never forget the people he is putting into place.

Michael Johnson: I think we owe it to Russia to look at what the people there want. And the people are not clamouring for a free press. Yes, maybe this will come later. Democracy is not a concept that most of them are interested in or understand. If you look at the polling results, democracy comes far down the list. First come food and shelter, naturally — that will always be the case in a totalitarian state that has recently been released from oppression. But one must hope that in the lifetime of the younger people round this table, we shall see a demand for freedom of expression in the Western sense. We are not there yet, though. For the moment, for most people in Russia, there are other priorities.

Katharine Szamuely: I was in Russia in 1998, which is a while ago now. At that time, I think, there were a lot more newspapers, but people did not read them. I was in quite a small town — this was in Yoshkar-Ola, in Mari-El, about 500 miles from Moscow — so I do not know what it was like elsewhere, but I found it really interesting. I was brought up with this idea that, finally, the Russians have got freedom of the press — but they really were not all that interested.

[Anonymous participant]: There is a case to be made that economic prosperity must come first, before you get the middle class that has the disposable income which can then decide which newspapers it wants to read. We shall have to wait and see whether the kind of middle class that developed in Western Europe and the United States will develop in Russia once economic prosperity improves, or whether a different kind of middle class will develop. It is not definitely clear which way Russia will develop.

Helen Szamuely: That is an excellent point at which to stop the more formal part of the discussion. On behalf of the CRCE, many thanks to all who took part.