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M.G. PAVLOVETS

The School Canon as a Battlefield

A Baptismal Font without a Child

The fierce controversy that has flared up in Russia regarding the composition of the school canon (SC),¹ which is a list of literary works that students are required to study in literature classes, as well as the very need for such a list in the first place has a long history, which goes back to the time of the first scholastic readers from the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the most acute issues that has been raised during these debates relates to what degree the instructor and possibly the students themselves should participate in the creation of such lists, and how the interests and developmental characteristics of children and adolescents should be reflected in the academic curricula. The need to factor in their concerns had been practically forgotten during the late Soviet period. The SC that was used in the final years of high school totally consisted of works that were written during a different historical period and were originally intended for an adult readership, and these works made up a significant part of the

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elementary and junior high school curricula. Both the student and the teacher were deprived of the ability to express subjective preferences: rather, the literature itself, and the Russian and Soviet classics in particular, were believed to be endowed with agency. All students who took literature courses in accordance with the basic secondary grades curriculum were tasked with reading through the “golden list” of classics and then writing essays on what they read. Mikhail Yampolsky comments on this as follows:

The canon is not just composed of masterpieces. It gradually adds them to its list, and it attributes functions to them that cannot be explained by the genius of a particular text. It transforms texts by making them canonical. In other words, it establishes a fundamental difference between the genius of the canonical work and the genius of a non-canonical one that has not yet been included in the canon. [...] A work is not canonized by the author himself due to its originality, but by those who come after him and subject his text to a multitude of interpretations. That is why canonization is not a task for the author himself, but rather for a particular group of artists and critics.²

However, in the late Soviet era the drafting of the SC, and especially its “core” curriculum, was “naturalized.” In other words, it was reinterpreted by its supporters as what naturally and organically grows out of the Russian tradition in accordance with the very mechanisms of national culture. The fact that ideological bodies took an active part in the selection and canonization of the key texts of this culture was hushed up along with the fact that the members of society as well as even ordinary representatives of the educational and professional communities were given little opportunity to influence these processes. They were forced to accept the results of this selection process without being allowed to reflect on them. They came to look on the process as a given (which reinforced the “naturalization” of the processes that determined how the SC was decided upon). For the writer, getting “into the textbook” meant automatic canonization at the hands of state institutions as opposed to cultural ones

(however, it should be noted that the institution of culture was itself at that time largely state-owned). The process of canonization was supported by state publishing policy, scholarship and teaching devoted to the author's works, dramatizations, and film adaptations of certain works by the writer (which sometimes produced some very successful films), and other measures. "Uncanonized" authors as well as the neglected works by authors of "canonical" books were left in the shadows and outside the reach of these programs.

Perestroika and curriculum

The reforms of *Perestroika* brought hope that this paradigm would change. However, changes in school education occurred much more slowly than the ones that were initiated in the publishing of books and literary periodicals. They mostly depended on individual teachers taking the initiative by, for example, bringing the latest issue of a "thick journal" or a new book to class instead of the assigned textbook. The latter were not updated and classes continued to use the old Soviet texts. A new "Literature Curriculum for Grades 5–11" would only appear in 1991. It was prepared by a group of employees at the Institute of General Education under the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR and edited by Tamara Kurdyumova, and it continued to be updated and reissued after 1991. This curriculum was really innovative because, firstly, it included a fairly wide range of authors representing "returned literature" [vozvrashchennaya literatura] (mainly forbidden or unreleased Soviet and émigré literature). Secondly, it did not specify a minimum number of required works. Rather, it respected the principle of free choice, which gave the teacher "the right to choose authors and works as well as ways to study a specific topic."³ The phrase "at the discretion of the teacher and students," which occurs frequently in the said "Curriculum", was revolutionary at the time. Actually, this list of suggested reading allowed teachers to select those works that they were ready to assign to their students in class (and the compilers of textbooks and teaching aids were free to select

relevant passages for inclusion in their publications). As a consequence, the SC began to disintegrate under the pressure of all of the new names and works that were included in the curriculum and added alongside the legacy classics. As Yelena Romanicheva has insightfully noted,⁴ this approach had a significant adverse impact on the way that literature was taught in Russia that has escaped notice: updating the list of studied works began to be considered to be a way of updating the curriculum itself. As a result, a number of curricula appeared that differed only in the particular authors and study that they included while applying the same approaches to the literary study and the subject of literature as a whole.

If the first third of the nineteenth century in Kurdyumova's "Curriculum" is mostly represented by the poets of the "Pushkin Pleiad" [pushkinskaia pleiada] as well as works of foreign literature (and where the traditionally studied works (namely *Eugene Onegin* [Yevgeny Onegin], *A Hero of Our Time* [Geroy nashego vremeni], and *Dead Souls* [Mertvye dushi]) are mandatory reading), then already by the 10th grade students are allowed to choose from among many seemingly well-established classic texts. Thus, instead of Alexander Ostrovsky's *The Storm* [Groza], students may choose his *The Snow Maiden* [Snegurochka] or *Without a Dowry* [Bespridannitsa]. Instead of reading Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* [Oblomov], they can choose the latter's *A Common Story* [Obyknovennaya istoriya]. Similarly, *Rudin* [Rudin], *The Idiot* [Idiot], and *Uncle Vanya* [Dyadya Vanya] are allowed as alternative choices to *Fathers and Sons* [Ottsy i deti], *Crime and Punishment* [Prestupleniye i nakazaniye], and *The Cherry Orchard* [Vishnevyy sad], respectively. In addition, the teacher may choose one of three works from the 1860s to satisfy the requirement for a work to be studied during class (*Mores of Rasteriaev Street* [Navy Rasteryaevoy ulitsy] by Gleb Uspensky, *Seminary Sketches* [Ocherki bursy] by Nikolay Pomyalovsky, or *What Is to Be Done?* [Chto delat'?] by Nikolay Chernyshevsky; though students have traditionally been required to read the latter title, its position as mandatory reading has come under question). In fact, the only truly mandatory works in the

tenth-grade curriculum are *War and Peace* [Voyna i mir] and, in tribute to the spirit of *Perestroika*, *The Story of a City* [Istoriya odnogo goroda] by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin. It should be noted here that most of the works that are listed as alternatives and recommended for independent reading have not been chosen randomly. They had already appeared earlier as selections in textbooks and in previous curricula. These titles are also accorded places that are no less honored and significant in the “national literary canon” (which is something greater than simply the SC).

The proposed list of works for the 11th grade, which certainly cannot be feasibly taught in its entirety, demonstrates how the creators of this curriculum have tried to make many compromises in comparison with late Soviet practice. On the one hand, it largely consists of works that would be familiar to instructors from the Soviet curriculum (only the most cringe-worthy of them have been dropped, such as, for example, Konstantin Trenév’s play *Barren Love* [Lyubov Yarovaya]), and on the other hand the list is significantly expanded by works from the Silver Age, the Russian emigration, and other “returned” texts. By the way, the same principle governed the selection procedure that was used by the first post-Soviet literature “textbook” (or “book for students” to use its exact name) for 11th-graders, *Twentieth-Century Russian Literature. Sketches, Portraits, and Essays*. [Russkaya literatura XX veka. Ocherki. Portrety. Esse]. The publisher Prosveshcheniye issued the first edition of this book at the same time that it promulgated its curriculum.⁵ This new anthology was intended to replace the textbook *Russian Soviet Literature* [Russkaya sovetskaya literatura] that was edited by Valentin Kovalev. The editor of the new book was now Feliks Kuznetsov, who, apparently, was supposed to represent a compromise between the two camps of “liberals” and “patriots.”⁶ He was also supposed to stand for continuity with Soviet literature, in which he played a major functionary role. Feliks Kuznetsov himself observed the following:

Literary and various other kinds of critics, including, on the one hand, Viktor Chalmayev, Aleksandr Mikhaylov, and others

who can conditionally be considered to be statist and, on the other hand, Lev Anninsky, Galina Belaya, Igor Shaytanov, and others who can be called democrats were invited to contribute to the *Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* anthology that was edited as a textbook by E.P. Pronina, an employee at the Prosveshcheniye publishing house.⁷

Thus, the textbook included both chapters on Nikolay Gumilev, Vladimir Nabokov, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as well as ones on Nikolay Ostrovsky, Alexander Fadeyev and even Leonid Leonov, who had been bypassed by the school curricula but was considered important in the worldview of late Soviet conservatism.

If we return to Kurdyumova's "Curriculum," then the most noticeable "legacy" of the late Soviet era that it preserves is the category of "classics," which is reproduced without reflection or consideration ("Our course is based on the Russian classics"⁸). Therefore, for example, the section "Literature of the 1950s–1980s" suggests selections of "poetry that were written in the tradition of national classics." Most of the authors who are listed in this curriculum were successful Soviet writers, which suggests that "classic status" is determined by official recognition and how well the writer addressed the socialist realist criterion of the national literary tradition among other factors. As far as contemporary prose is concerned, then the following claim stands out: "The literature of recent decades" is represented in the personal sections of the curriculum exclusively by authors of "village prose" [derevenskaya proza], who are recognized as the direct inheritors of the classic traditions of Russian literature.

Nevertheless, there was now an awareness that the list of "key texts" in Russian literature that students had access to was much broader than the SC, and therefore it became necessary to look for other ways of organizing the literature curriculum without trying to "grasp the ungraspable" by being overly comprehensive. We can see this in a number of individual course plans that were created on the basis of this "Curriculum." They are interesting in their structure, but they are obviously overloaded with too much material.⁹

The late 1990s and early 2000s

In the late 1990s, “The Mandatory Minimum Content of the Basic General Education Curriculum in Literature” [Obyazatel’nyy minimum sodержaniya osnovnogo obshego obrazovaniya po literature] (Order of the Ministry of Education of Russia No. 1236 dated May 19, 1998) drastically reduced the list of authors and titles that were not only recommended but mandatory for study in the final year of high school. The phrase “at the discretion of the teacher and students” has disappeared. The “required minimum” is based on three major literature programs that had been in use since the mid-1990s.¹⁰ The document turned out to be quite lengthy, and therefore it was poorly matched to the number of hours that were assigned to the subject. The adoption of such a document was prompted by the planned introduction in 2001 of the Unified State Examination (USE) in literature, which students had to prepare for on the basis of a strictly delineated list of authors and texts. Therefore, this prescribed “minimum” was included almost without changes in the document “The Codifier of Content Elements and Educational Requirements Necessary to Prepare High School Graduates for the 2001 Unified State Examination in Literature” [Kodifikator elementov podgotovki vypusnikov obshcheobrazovatel’nykh uchrezhdeniy dlya edinogo gosudarstvennogo ekzamina 2001 goda po literature], and it also became an integral part of the 2004 “Basic Secondary Educational Standard in Literature,” which forms part of the “Federal Component of the State Educational Components of Full Secondary General Education” [Federal’nyy komponent Gosudarstvennykh obrazovatel’nykh komponentov srednego (polnogo) obshchego obrazovaniya] (GOS 2004). The Standard enshrines the following:

Literature as an academic subject consists of reading and studying artistic works that make up the greatest masterpieces of classic Russian literature. [...] The main criteria that are used to select artistic works for study include high artistic value, humanistic orientation, potential to positively influence the student’s personality, correspondence to student developmental goals and

age appropriateness, as well as reflection of the cultural and historical traditions as well as rich experience of Russian education.¹¹

The document does not explain the criteria that have been used to select works: why, for example, Dostoevsky's novel *The Idiot* is less suitable in light of them than the novel *Crime and Punishment*. It is interesting that the declared "variability" is understood here as "expanding the list of writers and works in individual course plans,"¹² but not as an opportunity for the student to explore true variation. One of the main requirements is knowledge of "the content of studied literary works," but the document fails to explain what is meant by such "knowledge." At the same time, it is this knowledge that is considered to be the main outcome of literary education and what should be tested. Therefore, today the "Codifier" is (and will be for at least a few more years before the new educational standards come into full force) the explication of the SC, that is, the notorious "golden list" of canonical works. In essence, the appearance of a "mandatory minimum" in the 2000s implied a return to the late Soviet model for defining the SC and using state instruments to exert pressure on the "large national literary canon," which was supposed to have a certain universal basic "core" that was determined using the "Standard" and the accompanying regulatory documents that were listed in the "Codifier."

The list mania of the 2010s: From supplementary lists of works to single lists

During the 2010s, discussions about how literature should be taught became more embittered. And it is by no means accidental that these debates coincided with the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin. If the president of the Russian Federation did not directly initiate them, then many participants in the discussions appealed to him as the final authority on the subject.

One of the first of these debates was launched in 2012 and early 2013 about the creation at Putin's suggestion of a list of "100 books on the history, culture, and literature of the peoples of

the Russian Federation” (the so-called “Putin’s list of 100 books”). In particular, the relationship of this list to the SC and the principles that should be used to select the works that “every Russian student should read before graduating from high school”¹³ were discussed in addition to books in the SC. Putin had already proposed such a list when he was still prime minister in his article “Russia: The National Question” [Rossiya: natsional’nyy vopros], which was published in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* in January 2012 and which largely defined the cultural program for the third term of his presidency. The article was published under the slogan of the “single cultural code.” The concept of the “cultural (national or spiritual) code,” which was borrowed from semiotics, subjected to a metaphorical transformation, and then redeployed uncritically, was advanced as the main argument of those who supported the idea of leaving the unified list of works unchanged. The “naturalization” of the selection procedure would now receive a pseudo-semiotic rationale: the alleged list appeared as the result of a “nationwide choice,” since the works that were included in it contain the above-mentioned “cultural code.” Without this “code,” which, apparently, can be discovered in the artistic form of the Russian “classics,” it is essentially impossible to understand the proposed national originality of Russian culture. This code promotes national unity and ensures the “unity of Russia’s educational space.”

A specially convened group worked on creating this list. The question of which works should be included in it was discussed at academic conferences, workshops, and seminars. A special issue of the research and instructional methodology journal *Literatura* (2013, no. 1) was devoted to a discussion of the list. A year later, on January 16, 2013, the website of the Ministry of Education and Science published the list, which was then republished on a number of specialized Internet resources. The works in the list largely did not match the contents of the “Codifier of Content Elements for the USE in Literature.” At the same time, the criteria for selecting works for reading outside the school curriculum remained unclear or questionable: it is obvious that when Putin made his proposal, he was in fact referring to a “national literary

(cultural) canon” that is assumed to embed the SC as its core. The president justified his idea by citing the experience of some American universities from nearly a century ago:¹⁴

Certain leading American universities in the 1920s initiated the movement to study the Western cultural canon. Each self-respecting student had to read 100 books from a specially prescribed list. [...] Let’s conduct a survey of our cultural authorities and form a list of 100 books that every Russian high school graduate should read.¹⁵

It is curious that the failure to include almost any of the works of the school curriculum (including not a single mandatory one) in the list of “100 books” seemed to undermine the foundations of the SC that had already been defined in regulatory documents. This was especially true since the list was consecrated by Putin’s name, although it was not issued in the form of an order (the list only represented his wishes). The list was dispatched in the form of a special letter by the Ministry of Education and Science to the regions.¹⁶ Already constantly criticized for being overloaded, the SC was now forced to make room for another 100 books to be read. This approach ignored the importance of allowing students to independently choose their own books for leisure reading. Reading became even more normative, and the size of the list made it impossible for students to fully master it along with the SC. In addition, the list was not differentiated by age appropriateness (Nikolay Nosov’s books about Dunno [Neznaika] and Kir Bulychev’s ones about Alisa were placed side by side with Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot* and Anton Denikin’s *History of the Russian Time of Troubles* [Istoriya russkoy smuty]). It also did not attempt to divide books into fiction and non-fiction categories. (Ivan Ilyin’s book *Three Speeches* [Tri rechi] and Aleksandr Bokhanov’s *Emperor Alexander III* [Imperator Aleksandr III], which are consistent with the recent general conservative trend in the state ideology, but also Aleksandr Goryanin’s frankly opportunistic book *Russia: A Success Story* [Rossiya. Istoriya uspekha] should be classified in the latter category). Not surprisingly, this plan was quickly forgotten, and

it was quickly followed by “alternative lists,” such as, for example, those compiled by experts at the Russian Humanitarian Foundation,¹⁷ the writers Dmitry Bykov,¹⁸ Elena Chudinova,¹⁹ as well as the “Russian Hundred” [Russkaya sotnya] proposed by conservative publicist Yegor Kholmogorov²⁰ among other lists. If the appearance of “unofficial” lists can be seen as a very natural (and positive) reaction, then the official “100 books” have become one of the most typical examples of top-down initiatives that lack any well-thought-out plans for their implementation (or for which none exist whatsoever). They discredit the very idea that the state is able to regulate the field of literary education and enlightenment.²¹

We already discussed the controversy that surrounded the “Model Curriculum in Literature for Grades 10–11” [Primernaya programma po literature dlya 10–11 klassov] (2012), which was developed around the same time by Boris Lanin, Lyudmila Ustinova, and Valentina Shamchikova,²² in our first article.²³ We need only add here that the “Model Curriculum” itself in no way has threatened the adherents of “unified lists” and “classic literature.” It is intended to function as a framework for the creation of course plans that guide instruction in schools, and all of the authors and works that have been traditionally included in the SC are reflected in this curriculum. The works of authors whose names have evoked particular criticism (Viktor Pelevin, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, and Asar Eppel) are listed as recommended and can be chosen at the student’s discretion.

A less noticeable but equally acute controversy unfolded around the “Framework for Language Arts Education in Secondary School,” which was prepared by the Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (ASSUL; 2013–2014). The founding of the Association and creation of the “Framework” were initiated and supported by the Office for Public Projects of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation (and not in accordance with scientific and educational policy, as one would expect).²⁴ The creators of the ASSUL “Framework” were guided by the development of the

“Historical and Cultural Standard,” which, in accordance with the president’s order dated April 18, 2013, was to form the basis of a new generation of history textbooks. (And initially there was talk about a single textbook, but this goal had to be abandoned as untenable under the current conditions, since the principle that education is its own specialized field came under threat.) However, the ASSUL “Framework” was initially accorded lesser status: Duma Chairman Sergey Naryshkin (who was at the same time the chairman of the Russian Historical Society) headed the working group of the Russian Historical Society responsible for preparing a “Framework” for a new research and teaching approach in Russian history. The deputy leaders of the working group were Minister of Education and Science Dmitry Livanov and Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky. Academician Aleksandr Chubaryan, the director of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the co-chairman of the Russian Historical Society, was appointed academic director of the group, and Yury Petrov, director of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and member of the Council of the Russian Historical Society, was appointed head of the team of contributors.²⁵ Notably lower-ranking figures headed and participated in the group that was tasked with developing the framework for language arts education at school level: They included, for example, Sergey Zinin, doctor of pedagogical sciences and professor at Moscow State Pedagogical University (MSPU), who was appointed the head of the working group, and mainly members of ASSUL, such as university instructors, school teachers, and teaching specialists.

One of the main theses of the literature section of the “Framework” is “the recognition that classic literature has a positive formative influence on the schoolchild’s emerging personality.” This justifies the need for a requirement that “works of classic literature should predominate in literature course curricula (when developing thematic course plans, teachers should allocate at least 70 percent of the course time to the study of these works).”²⁶

It is predictable that one of the main subjects of controversy surrounding the ASSUL “Framework” has been the so-called “Appendix 2,” which presents a voluminous list of works of Russian classics that students must read in order to pass their literature classes. However, the list is clearly too long to be studied adequately within the available number of teaching hours. The list was divided into into a basic program and an advanced program, where the latter “in-depth” curriculum only consists in prescribing just as many titles to be read as the document can physically encompass. The stormy debates that were provoked by this list demonstrate that it was perceived to be a key component of the framework, even though it was included only as an appendix. This list has been repeatedly rewritten, shrunk and expanded. In particular, Alexander Radishchev’s *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* [Puteshestviye iz Peterburga v Moskvu], Nikolay Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?*, Mikhail Sholokhov’s *Quiet Flows the Don* [Tikhyy Don], and Saltykov-Shchedrin’s *Story of One City*, which had all fallen out of the curriculum during the post-Soviet period, were restored to the list. As a result, it was proposed that these works be studied in the form of excerpts or as part of an overview. The creators counted on the fact that the document that they prepared would be accorded a special regulatory status. They wrote the following in the section “Program for the Implementation of the Framework and Measures of State Support in Language Arts Education”:

We will largely be unable to make positive changes in language arts education at the school level until the Framework is implemented as a regulatory document in the educational environment. This requires the state to implement its own support measures, including recognition of the document’s status by state agencies and executive bodies.²⁷

Generally speaking, the “Framework” (including the list of books contained in it) provoked a lively debate: on the one hand, it attracted quite a few positive evaluations by the regional divisions of ASSUL (you can read them on the organization’s website).²⁸ However, on the other hand, it provoked many critical comments

by independent members of the educational community.²⁹ The main criticisms of these remarks are as follows: the creators of the Framework had taken an ideological and even doctrinaire approach to literature; they had ignored the freedom of the learner to make subjective choices as a reader; the proposed list is eclectic and contradictory; many of its provisions are declarative in nature; and the creators neither provide an analysis of the real problems of literary education nor any new ways of solving them in light of the obvious ineffectiveness of previous measures.

Another parallel discussion about the “Model Curriculum in Literature: Grades 5–9” was started at the same time (the first half of 2014) that turned out to be closely related to the main debate. The purpose of this document was determined by the Federal State Educational Standards (FGOS), which replaced the previous generation educational standards (GOS 2004), as follows:

In developing their core programs at the stage of basic secondary education, state-accredited establishments shall be governed by respective Model Core Curricular in Basic Secondary Education.³⁰

In other words, the purpose of the “Model Curricula” is to define the anticipated outcomes and course content for each of the academic disciplines based on the general conceptions laid out in the new standard. They determine what the learner should know and be able to do at the end of the course of study and what teaching materials should be used. The educational program of the school and, in particular, the course plans of teachers must be drafted on the basis of these Model Curricula. In order to offer new approaches to the organization of literary education in accordance with the FGOS requirements, the “Model Curriculum in Literature” proposed a compromise option that preserved a list of core required works with a relatively greater degree of variability than was offered in the “Mandatory Minimum” that was found in previous standards or in “Appendix 2” to the ASSUL “Framework” that we have already discussed. The mandatory list consisted of three sublists with varying degrees of flexibility (List A. Works that must be studied; List B. Authors that must be

studied (with a selection of specific works by each author); List C. Topics that must be studied (with a selection of specific authors and works that match the particular topic)). In fact, this list differed little from the list proposed in the ASSUL “Framework,” and even its three-part structure is not inconsistent with this list, which is based on old established educational standards. Nevertheless, it has aroused criticism from those who are in favor of maintaining the traditional SC: most of the criticism has centered around the exclusion of certain works from the list (such as, for example, the Old Russian *Tale of Ersh Ershovich* [Povest’ o Ershe Ershoviche]) and the inclusion of others (for example, Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*). Protests by those who object to the understanding of literary education as the reading of an obligatory list of works and the goal of literary education as forcing students to read all the works in this list were not loudly raised at this time: The “Model Curriculum” with its declaration of allowing the student to choose between alternative options seemed like a step forward in comparison with the strictly regulated approach of previous years. Unlike the ASSUL “Framework,” which was mainly publicly discussed by experts who were loyal to this teacher association, the “Model Curriculum” project was submitted to wide public discussion at the special crowdsourcing resource Wikivote.ru, after which it was substantially revised in light of the received comments and suggestions.³¹

However, if the status of the “Model Curriculum” was understood from the very beginning and defined as a FGOS, then the status of the ASSUL “Framework” was unclear, because no law on education or other state regulations determined the need for its existence or defined its place in the regulatory framework. In attempting to reconcile the existing contradictions, the Ministry of Education and Science directed that these two documents be harmonized with each other.³² To this end, it convened a working group to finalize the draft of the core program for basic secondary education (a model curriculum in the subjects “Russian Language” and “Literature”). The status of the group was quickly raised by the appointment of Lyudmila Verbitskaya, the president

of the Russian Academy of Education, to lead the group. The final version of the “Model Curriculum in Literature for Grades 5–9” and was then approved and added to the register of the “Model Core Educational Curricula of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.”³³ This action was vital, since the time was fast approaching when the first students who had been educated in accordance with the new standards were to graduate from middle school and to enter high school. As far as the ASSUL “Framework” was concerned, it retained its status as an advisory document that was prepared by a non-profit organization.

However, soon thereafter, on April 2, 2015, a “working group to develop a unified framework for the teaching of Russian language and literature at public schools” was established under the leadership of Duma Chairman Sergey Naryshkin. The declared goal of this unified framework was to “identify current problems in how these subjects are taught at various kinds of schools, outline possible ways of solving them, and determine the conditions conducive to the development of the language and literary education of schoolchildren.”³⁴ The use of the very word “unified,” although it has bad associations with the idea of a “unified textbook,” in the draft proposal indicates that the document is a compromise. After all, one of the tasks of the document is to reconcile the contradictions that have arisen and become apparent in the teaching community. At the same time, the creators of the unified concept have focused on the development of the conceptual foundations for teaching language arts in school, noting the fact that “the works that are studied in the curriculum are not always age appropriate for students in a particular grade” and that “there is a discrepancy between the language that is familiar to modern learners and the language of both classical and contemporary literary works.”³⁵

The discussion of the “Unified Framework” took place amid heightened tensions: from time to time, battles erupted around the provocative proposals of Pavel Pozhigailo, a member of the Civic Chamber, who called on others to free the school curriculum from a number of “destructive” literary classics, such as *The Storm* by

Alexander Ostrovsky and *The Master and Margarita* [Master i Margarita] by Mikhail Bulgakov.³⁶ The head of the Duma's security committee, Irina Yarovaya, together with the chairman of the parliamentary committee for education, Vyacheslav Nikonov, submitted a bill to the Duma calling for the introduction of unified basic textbooks in history, literature, the Russian language, and mathematics in all Russian schools, which would entail, in particular, the total unification of literary education throughout the country and a return to the Soviet model of teaching if not the complete collapse of Russian education. Sixty-six deputies voted for the bill. Despite the fact that it was rejected by a number of leading experts in the field of education as well as the government of the Russian Federation,³⁷ as a result of a long struggle (which was not always open to the public) this framework (having already lost the qualifier "unified") was approved by government decree (on April 9, 2016, no. 637-r). It then became a part of a number of similar documents, on which work continues up to the present, including, in particular, the frameworks for geographical education and the teaching of the social sciences. At the same time, the final version of this framework, in contrast to the ASSUL "Framework," did not include either a mandatory or recommended reading list. In fact, there could hardly have been such a reading list considering the genre of the document.

At the same time, Moscow State Pedagogical University Rector Igor Remorenko was overseeing work on the drafting of model curricula for the final years of high school, including the "Model Curriculum in Literature. Grades 10–11," which represents a continuation of the curriculum for grades 5–9. The new agenda that arose in January 2015 complicated this project. The fifth clause of the "List of Orders of the President of the Russian Federation Following the Results of the 'Quality Education in the Name of the Country' Forum of the All-Russia People's Front" (which took place on October 15, 2014) reads as follows:

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation must define the mandatory core curricular, including

in individual academic subjects, in the form of federal state education standards (FGOS) governing elementary, basic secondary, and full secondary education in furtherance of the goal of a unified educational space within the Russian Federation.³⁸

This directive gave rise to a purely bureaucratic contradiction: how should the concept of “the mandatory core curricular” that is used in the president’s address and orders be understood for literature? Should the specific works of the SC be considered such “curricular core,” as the advocates of the mandatory list have insisted on, or does the president have in mind literary topics and phenomena that can be studied through various works of literature (this is one of the views that Igor Remorenko broached back during the discussions of model curricula for high school).³⁹ As a result, an approach was developed that best corresponds to the spirit and sense of the new standards in which curricular content can be interpreted on the basis of the result: the creators of the framework have proposed not focusing so much on the content of the list of works in the SC, but on the issue of what outcomes should be achieved by an education in literature. These results have come to be understood as “competencies,” which high school graduates are expected to have mastered and may be demonstrated through an analysis of material that has not been directly covered during class (for example, the ability to analyze a text on the basis of a short excerpt that a student might only read for the first time on an exam). The draft model curriculum in literature for the final grades of high school included an extensive list of recommended works that included almost all existing versions of the mandatory list, including both the “Codifier of Content Elements for the USE in Literature” and the list from “Appendix 2” of the ASSUL “Framework.” At the same time, it was seriously supplemented by works that formed part of the curricula of previous years and that were distributed over problem and thematic modules.⁴⁰ The draft was uploaded in this form to the Wikivote.ru platform.⁴¹ But this time public discussion transformed itself into heated debates about whether key works in the SC should be demoted from being mandatory works to recommendations, and a petition demanding that “the

draft be declared untenable” appeared on the ASSUL website. The petition reasoned as follows:

The very concept itself of a “mandatory list” or “essential canon” of works of Russian literature is being destroyed. Under this curriculum, it would be possible for students *not to study* the following works that have reinforced the national and cultural identity of Russian citizens for decades: Ivan Goncharov’s *Oblomov*, Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*, Alexander Ostrovsky’s *The Storm*, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Lev Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, and many others. This list *does not even mention* such classic writers as Afanasy Fet, Aleksey Tolstoy, Aleksandr Kuprin, Marina Tsvetaeva, Nikolay Rubtsov, and others. It also fails to include Alexander Blok’s narrative poem “The Twelve” [Dvenadtsat’]. Thus, instead of strengthening the unity of the national education space, the document lays the groundwork for its destruction.⁴²

The expansion of the list and removal of the “obligatory reading” category was perceived by numerous critics of the draft model curriculum as a rejection of the value of reading the classics at all, and in particular this was seen as a threat: allegedly teachers could select only popular and not very high quality works when drawing up their course plans, and therefore schoolchildren would remain ignorant of the best achievements in Russian literature. The question of whether a teacher could be entrusted with the teaching of works whose values he allegedly is not aware of was not raised. Igor Sukhikh, the author of a well-known series of textbooks on literature, proposed his own version of a compulsory reading list for literature classes in the senior classes of high school that is guided by the principle underlying the compulsory list of the model curriculum for high school. After a period of discussion, this list was announced by the Guild of Language Arts Teachers [Gildiya slovesnikov], which, like ASSUL, is another professional association of school and university language and literature teachers. It was established in November 2015. This list was submitted for public discussion, right after the model curriculum.⁴³ However, the discussion that

took place, just like the list itself, did not produce any fruitful outcomes: the list of nineteenth-century works in List A (mandatory works) was no different from the one that had existed 10 or 30 years before, and students could hardly be expected to fully read it. List C (an open list of author names) proposed no nineteenth-century authors or works at all. At the same time, it was impossible to find a consensus that would make any work of twentieth-century literature mandatory reading. This problem skewed the entire list, and it failed to optimize the curriculum in any way.

In the end, the Society of Russian Literature [Obshchestvo russkoy slovesnosti], yet another organization with a rather conservative and protective outlook, was formed to provide an answer to all of these draft proposals and discussions. The same ASSUL together with Lyudmila Verbitskaya, Daniil Granin, and Vyacheslav Nikonov were the founders of this organization, and the keywords of the organization's founding manifesto were "preservation," "strengthening," and "development of the best traditions":

We seek to help consolidate the efforts of academics, educators, cultural figures, and the general public to preserve the leading role of literature and the Russian language in the nurturing of the younger generation, strengthen the unified cultural and educational space, and develop the best traditions of Russian humanities education and cultural and educational activities.⁴⁴

The Russian president named Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Rus as the head of the Society of Russian Literature, and Vladimir Putin himself spoke at the first founding congress of the organization on May 26, 2016. In his address, he touched on the issue of "the list of literary works that the younger generation must come to know."⁴⁵ It is worth noting that neither the president nor the patriarch struck a confrontational note in their speeches. Rather, they were even somewhat conciliatory. Thus, the patriarch cited Dmitry Likhachev and Yury Lotman, whom he recognized as carrying authority in "liberal circles." He added that "it is not necessary to be afraid of the word 'variability,'"

admitting that “if we choose between two works by Dostoevsky, then we do not lose anything.” He first spoke in defense of the USE and then of the Framework for the Teaching of Russian Language and Literature. He acknowledged that “the school curriculum as a whole is overloaded, and the child is not always able to master it successfully.” During his address, the patriarch even attributed the qualifier “smart and attractive formulations” to such key concepts that are found in the Model Curriculum in Literature as “education modules,” “the thematic principle,” “variable content,” “strengthening the academic freedom of teachers,” and “allowing the teacher to formulate their own curricula and to adapt it to the specific requirements of the school, class, and region.” However, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church did express his fear that all this activity “should not be used to cover up pedagogical helplessness, basically unnecessary and questionable experiments, a desire to follow fads, a restless desire to implement reforms for the sake of reforms, and in the end unprofessional behavior.”⁴⁶

The resolution of the First Congress of the Society of Russian Literature was not approved during its final session, as one might expect, but only three weeks later on July 13, 2016, by the organization’s presidium. On the same day, it was made public on the official websites of the Patriarchate and the Society. The question of the SC was not ignored:

The Congress hereby decrees under the patronage of the Society of Russian Literature [...] that a federal standard in language arts education with a single and mandatory curriculum for all students at all grade levels be developed for the subjects “Russian language” and “Literature.”⁴⁷

However, it was obvious that the creation of the declared document (a “federal standard for language arts education in secondary school”) contradicted the existing regulations governing basic secondary education in the Russian Federation: the latter do not allow for the existence of any separate standards for language arts. This was pointed out to the authors of the resolution in an

open letter by the members of the Guild of Language Arts Teachers:

Currently it is extremely unproductive:

- to create any kind of new “federal standards” or to even employ the concept of the “federal standard” at all, since it contradicts the generally accepted understanding of the federal educational standards (FGOS) and introduces terminological confusion
- to ignore the government’s accepted Framework for the Teaching of Russian Language and Literature, which in fact plays the role of such a “language arts standard for secondary education”
- to multiply the number of documents that seek to regulate the same area
- to distort the officially accepted model that is used to generate model curricula, which allow for both variable and mandatory components.⁴⁸

After the publication of this open letter, the phrase that caused the objection was deleted from the text of the approved resolution, which had been posted in PDF format on the website of the Society of Russian Literature. However, the unredacted version of the text has remained on the website of the Moscow Patriarchate (at least as of August 2016). The text of the open letter of the Guild of Language Arts Teachers disappeared from all of the association’s Internet resources, so that it could then only be found from sources that had republished it.

It is interesting that this open letter that has subsequently disappeared demonstrates the existence of a certain consensus between the various camps of the professional community of language arts teachers about the need for a uniform SC as a mandatory list that would be used across the country in all public schools. This is evidenced by the fact that the two non-profit organizations, ASSUL (which, we should recall, was the founder of the Society of Russian Literature and actively supports its endeavors) and the Guild of Language Arts Teachers, have come to an agreement on this issue, though on other issues they

usually take opposite positions. Thus, the members of the Guild have interpreted Kirill's words in their own various ways:

The Patriarch in his speech spoke about the need to define the "national canon": "It is fundamentally necessary to engage in responsible discussion and adopt a so-called 'essential canon.' You can call it any name you wish: 'essential canon,' 'national canon,' or 'canon of Russian literature,' but it must consist of a selection of texts that high school students are required to study. Without such a canon, we will not be able to present children with a holistic conception of Russian literature and hence of Russian culture." It seems that this task should be put before the professional community, and it should be emphasized that the "national canon" is the core framework of the school curriculum. However, though it is necessary, due to the specific nature of both literature itself and school education this framework is not the only resource, and the reading of a particular set of works should not take up the entire course.⁴⁹

I repeat, "The officially adopted approach to the creation of model educational curricula," which the authors of the open letter referred to, cannot in any way require the inclusion of an "obligatory part" in the "Model Curriculum," because this contradicts the very status of this document (since prescribing mandatory and regulatory norms is the prerogative of the "Standard"). The name "model" not only does not indicate that a curriculum is mandatory. It also does not exclude the existence of alternative "Model Curricula" that have passed the necessary expert review procedures and are included in the register of the Ministry of Education and Science.⁵⁰ (The FGOS simply does not state any further terms regarding this issue). Moreover, in accordance with the new standards, any "Model Curriculum" in a particular subject only forms a part of the "Model Secondary Education Curriculum" in a same way that a course plan for a given subject in a school forms a part of the "Educational Curriculum" of this educational institution. It is harmonized with a other subject curricula in such way that any fundamental change to one of them will inevitably require changes to the whole set of these curricula. The inclusion of a mandatory list of works for study in

the “Model Curriculum” converts knowledge of these specific works into a planned outcome of the teaching process. It dictates the need to test students’ knowledge of specific texts in particular, that is, it returns literary education to the “knowledge model.” In addition, it requires that outcomes be interpreted in the same way in the other subjects within the same unit. The latter means memorizing the assigned material and then reproducing this information (and at best combining it) during the final examination. Under this model, the student in no way has to demonstrate the ability to apply his knowledge in new, unfamiliar circumstances and conditions (such as is true under the competence approach).

Thus, we can assume that at the moment (autumn 2016 as of this writing) literary education has reached another turning point: the latest “conservative” cycle of the SC in its present form is coming to an end, and the question of how it can be renewed, including a consideration of its ultimate goals and how it can be taught in practice, has become more pressing than ever, especially in light of the general renewal of the school instructional model on the basis of the competence approach. The situation is complicated by the general conservative trend in Russian politics and by the increasing influence of various conservative groups and sentiments in the expert community (and in society as a whole), which often politicizes the process of discussing professional issues. We should also note that the professional community itself is not well prepared to switch to a new educational model. There are also not enough resources to adopt the course of action that has been proposed by the new standards, which introduces uncertainty about the immediate prospects surrounding literary education in the Russian Federation. The replacement of Dmitry Livanov as acting Minister of Education and Science on the eve of the new 2016–2017 academic year by Olga Vasilieva, a former employee of the Presidential Administration who was directly involved in the founding of ASSUL and worked on the “Framework of School Language Arts Education,” is evidence of the strengthening of the position of supporters of the “conservative turn” in Russian educational policy,⁵¹ and it forces us

take a closer look at the initiatives of the new minister in the area of humanities education.

Notes

1. This is the second article on this topic that has been published in the journal *Reserve Funds* [Neprikosnovennyi zapas]. For the first article, see: M. Pavlovets, “Shkol’nyi kanon kak pole bitvy: istoricheskaya rekonstruktsiya,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, 2016, vol. 106, no. 2, pp. 71–91, <http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/7308>. In preparing the two articles, I received invaluable assistance from Yelena Romanicheva and Yekaterina Asonova, for which I express my heartfelt gratitude.

2. M. Yampolsky, “Literaturnyy kanon i teoriya ‘sil’nogo’ avtora,” *Inostrannaya literatura*, 1998, no. 12, <http://magazines.russ.ru/inostran/1998/12/iamp.html>.

3. T. Kurdyumova; V. Polukhina; V. Korovina; I. Zbarsky; and Ye. Romanicheva, *Programma po literature dlya srednikh obshcheobrazovatel’nykh uchebnykh zavedeniy*. Moscow: Prosveshcheniye, 1991, p. 2.

4. The reasoning was explained in Yelena Romanicheva’s private letter to the author.

5. F. Kuznetsov, *Russkaya literatura XX veka. Ocherki. Portrety. Esse. Kniga dlya uchashchikhsya 11 klassa sredney shkoly: V 2 ch.* Moscow: Prosveshcheniye, 1991.

6. Feliks Kuznetsov, as he himself confessed, wavered between these camps until he joined the latter in the mid-1970s. See: V. Bondarenko, *Plamennye reaktsionery. Tri lika russkogo patriotizma*. Moscow: Algoritm, 2003, p. 133.

7. F. Kuznetsov, “Neistovomu revnitelyu. Vozrazheniya M. Postolu (‘Sovetskaya Rossiya’. 22.08.98),” *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, Oct. 6, 1998, no. 117 (11 706), p. 4.

8. *Programma ...*, p. 2.

9. See, for example: D. Murin; Ye. Kononova; and Ye. Minchenko, *Russkaya literatura XX veka. Programma 11 klassa. Tematicheskoye pourochnoye planirovaniye*, St. Petersburg: SMIO PRESS, 1997. According to this curriculum, only two hours are devoted to the entirety of Yevgeny Zamyatin’s novel *We* [My], which is the same amount of time given to the entire oeuvre of Sergey Yesenin and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

10. According to Yelena Romanicheva’s data.

11. “Standart osnovnogo obshchego obrazovaniya po literature,” http://www.edu.ru/db/mo/data/d_04/1089.html.

12. *Ibid.*

13. “100 knig po istorii, kul’ture i literature narodov Rossiyskoy Federatsii, rekomenduemykh shkol’nikam k samostoyatel’nomu prochteniyu (spisok Putina),” www.100bestbooks.ru/show_rating.php?id=26.

14. We have not yet been able to pinpoint the source of this information or even the names of the academic institutions that Putin has in mind. Kirill Korbin has suggested that Putin was told about Harold Bloom’s famous book

about the Western canon (H. Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), whose main topic was creatively reinterpreted in Putin's "Order."

15. Vladimir Putin, "Rossiya: natsional'nyy vopros," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, Jan. 23, 2012, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html.

16. "Pis'mo Ministerstva obrazovaniya i nauki RF ot 16 yanvarya 2013 g. N NT-41/08 'O perechne "100 knig" po istorii, kul'ture i literature narodov Rossiyskoy Federatsii'," http://минобрнауки.рф/documents/2977/file/1546/13.01.16-НТ-41.08-Перечень_100_книг.pdf.

17. "Vnimaniyu nauchnogo soobshchestva uchenykh-gumanitariyev," www.rfh.ru/index.php/ru/obyavleniya/novosti/136-vnimaniyu.

18. An entire issue of the journal *Conversation Partner* [Sobesednik] (2013, no. 1) was devoted to this list. The list itself can be found on the Internet on the Live Journal fan page for the works of Dmitry Bykov, for example: <http://ru-bykov.livejournal.com/1971328.html>.

19. Yelena Chudinova, the author of the sensational xenophobic novel *The Mosque of Notre Dame* [Mechet' Parizhskoy Bogomateri], broke her list down into reader age categories. See: <http://www.rus-obr.ru/opinions/29432>.

20. Ye. Kholmogorov, "Russkaya sotnya," *Vzglyad*, Feb. 7, 2014, <http://www.vz.ru/columns/2014/2/7/671286.html>. Kholmogorov also created a specialized site entitled "100 books" [100 knig]: <http://100knig.com>.

21. Another example of similar initiatives in the area of reading that failed to consider sufficiently how they would be implemented are many clauses of the "National Program for the Support and Development of Reading" [Natsional'naya programma podderzhki i razvitiya chteniya], which is intended to be carried out between 2007 and 2020 by the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications in conjunction with the Russian Book Union.

22. *Russkiy yazyk i literatura. Primernye programmy srednego (polnogo) obshchego obrazovaniya. 10–11 klassy*, Moscow: Ventana–Graf, 2012.

23. See: M. Pavlovets, "Shkol'nyy kanon kak pole bitvy: istoricheskaya rekonstruktsiya," *Neprikosnovenny zapas*, 2016, vol. 106, no. 2, pp. 71–91, <http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/7308>.

24. Its representatives, including Deputy Head of the Office Olga Vasilyeva, also worked on the "Framework." See O. Dashkovskaya, "POOP vs. ASSUL," *Vesti obrazovaniya*, 2014, vol. 109, no. 26, <http://vogazeta.ru/ivo/info/14449.html>.

25. The history of changes to this document can be found on the website of the Russian Historical Society: <http://rushistory.org/proekty/kontseptsiya-novogo-uchebno-metodicheskogo-kompleksa-po-otchestvennoj-istorii.html>.

26. *Kontseptsiya shkol'nogo filologicheskogo obrazovaniya. Russkiy yazyk i literatura. Proyekt*. Moscow: Russkoye slovo, 2015, pp. 6, 22, <http://uchitel-slovesnik.ru/data/uploads/obsugdenie-konceptii/2/proekt-konceptii-prepodavania-russkogo-yazika-i-literaturi.pdf>.

27. Ibid.

28. See: <http://uchitel-slovesnik.ru/itogi-obsuzhdeniya/obsuzhdenie-konceptii-shkolnogo-filologicheskogo-obrazovaniya>.

29. You can read a few of these criticisms on the site of the “Evrika” Innovative Educational Network: <http://www.eurekanet.ru/ewww/info/19165.html>.

30. “Federal’nyy gosudarstvennyy obrazovatel’nyy standart srednego obshchego obrazovaniya,” <http://минобрнауки.рф/документы/543>.

31. “Obshchestvennye konsul’tatsii po primernoy obrazovatel’noy programme osnovnogo obshchego obrazovaniya,” http://edu.crowdexpert.ru/middle_school.

32. Concerning this point see: O. Dashkovskaya, “POOP vs. ASSUL,” *Vesti obrazovaniya*, 2014, vol. 109, no. 26, <http://vogazeta.ru/ivo/info/14449.html>.

33. “Reyestr Primernykh osnovnykh obrazovatel’nykh programm Ministerstva nauki i obrazovaniya RF,” <http://fgosreestr.ru>.

34. See: <http://www.ippk.ru/attachments/article/4251/проект%20концепции.pdf>.

35. See: <http://government.ru/media/files/GG2TF4pq6RkGAtAIJKHYKTXDmFIMAAOd.pdf>.

36. See, for example: V. Vorsobin, “Pavel Pozhigaylo: ‘Esli literaturoy XIX veka my budem bit’ po strane, ona rukhnet,’” *Komsomol’skaya pravda*, Mar. 26, 2013, www.kp.ru/daily/26051/2963363; Mukhametshina, Ye. “‘Tolstoy, konechno, gluboko otraten’: V Rossii nachalos’ obsuzhdeniye kontseptsii prepodavaniya shkol’nogo kursa literatury,” *Gazeta.ru*, May 15, 2014, <http://www.gazeta.ru/social/2014/05/15/6034493.shtml>.

37. You can read the bill itself as well as materials related to the discussion of the proposed legislation at the following link: <http://www.eurekanet.ru/ewww/promo/23516.html>.

38. “Perechen’ porucheniyy po itogam foruma Obshcherossiyskogo narodnogo fronta ‘Kachestvennoye obrazovaniye vo imya strany,’” <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/assignments/orders/47239>.

39. Concerning this point see: O. Dashkovskaya, “POOP vs. ASSUL,” *Vesti obrazovaniya*, 2014, vol. 109, no. 26, <http://vogazeta.ru/ivo/info/14449.html>.

40. The heated debate surrounding this approach has forced its creators to abandon it: the final version of the list of recommendations presented the works in the usual chronological order, and the problematic and thematic principle of arranging the literary works was presented as just one of the various possible approaches.

41. See: http://edu.crowdexpert.ru/secondary_school/programs/literature.

42. “Petitsiya protiv proekta primernoy osnovnoy obrazovatel’noy programmy po literature srednego obshchego obrazovaniya,” <http://uchitel-slovesnik.ru/itogi-obsuzhdeniya/peticiya-protiv-proekta-primernoj-osnovnoj-obrazovatelnoy-programmy-po-literature-srednego-obshhego-obrazovaniya/?lang=ru>.

43. See: https://edu.crowdexpert.ru/secondary_school/programs/literature/literature_masterpieces.

44. Cited from: <http://russlovesnost.ru/ob-obshhestve/missiya-2>.

45. See: <http://russlovesnost.ru/materialy-sezda>.

46. Ibid.

47. See: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4560740.html>.

48. See: <https://godliterary.ru/events-post/obrashhenie-chlenov-gildii-slovesniko>.

49. Ibid.

50. After it passed all of the required expert reviews and secured approvals, the “Model Curriculum in Literature” as part of the “Model Secondary Education Curriculum” was approved by the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science on May 12, 2016, and entered in the register (<http://fgosreestr.ru/registry/primernaya-osnovnaya-obrazovatel'naya-programma-srednego-obshhego-obrazovaniya>).

51. Olga Vasilyeva is well known as one of the authors of the “Conservatism as a Developmental Ideology” framework that was presented at the All-Russia National Front round table in February 2014. In addition, in overseeing the creation of professional non-profit organizations, she took an active part in organizing a seminar for school language arts teachers and university instructors in language and literature. You can judge the nature of this closed event from the story related by Dina Magomedova, a literary critic and assistant head of the Department of the History of Classic Russian Literature at the Russian State University for the Humanities, who happened to attend the meeting at the direction of her superiors: D. Magomedova, “Zvonok iz Administratsii prezidenta, assotsiatsiya filologov i edinyy uchebnyk,” <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/dmagomedova/1265342-echo>.