

DANIEL CLARKE WAUGH (Seattle, U.S.A.)

THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM OF TSAR IVAN IV'S LIBRARY

If Tsar Ivan IV struck terror into the hearts of his contemporaries, he seems to have been equally successful in sowing confusion in the minds of scholars who study his reign. Normally sober and objective individuals have been inclined to forget the rules of evidence and proof when matters concern the Terrible Tsar. The problem, of course, lies as much in the shadow cast with time by the popular image of Ivan as with the difficult nature of the sources available for the study of his reign. As I shall suggest in conclusion, in some ways, when dealing with Ivan, we are confronted with the kinds of problems we have when dealing with the personalities and histories of current Soviet leaders: too little hard information and too much willingness to fill in the gaps with imagination. There is no better example of these problems than the history of the study of Ivan's library.

What I propose to do here is review briefly the history of the scholarship on the library, with particular attention to the recent Soviet literature, and point out some weaknesses in the methodology of studying the evidence. To anticipate my conclusion, while I am skeptical about the existence of a royal library of any consequence, I feel that we can at present neither prove nor disprove that there was one.

First it is important to establish what we mean by a "library" in the given instance. We are not talking about a few Old Church Slavic religious books that Ivan may or may not have kept beside his bed, nor should we mean books donated by Ivan to monasteries to assuage his conscience. When we deal with his library, we are asked to think about a collection of books that includes, *inter alia*, as many as several hundred in various languages, including Greek, Latin, and possibly Hebrew. Among the authors represented are important figures in Classical letters. It is the supposed existence of this Classical library of Ivan's that is the subject of dispute, although in the process of discussing it, scholars have perforce raised questions about the cultural level not only of Ivan (including the question of his basic literacy) but also of the Muscovy in his time.

The evidence concerning the Classical library of Ivan is to be found principally in two sources that may reflect contemporary witnesses to its exist-

tence.¹ One is a passage in the German chronicle compiled by Franz Nienstädt around the beginning of the seventeenth century, in which he relates how a German pastor, Johann Wettermann, was supposedly shown some books from the famous library in the late 1560s or early 1570 and asked to stay on and translate some of them. Without naming authors, Wettermann asserted that he found in the books many important works cited by German authors but now unavailable due to losses of war; although himself poor, he would give up all his possessions, even all his children, in order that these books be made available in Protestant universities. The second source is an anonymous German list of books in an unnamed tsar's library, a document supposedly discovered in 1819 by Professor Dabelov of Dorpat University. Unlike the Wettermann evidence, the Dabelov list includes specific titles and authors, among the latter individuals whose existence is otherwise not attested. Hence there is the tantalizing possibility that Ivan IV not only had a library of important Classics but that it contained unique works that would, if found, enrich our knowledge of Classical antiquity. Unfortunately, the manuscript Dabelov "discovered" has not been seen since, despite strenuous efforts to locate it.

In addition to these key sources, there are various others of lesser significance: semi-hagiographic accounts about Maksim Grek indicating that he was shown many Greek books when he came to Muscovy in the time of Vasilii III; seventeenth-century accounts about foreign interest in locating the tsar's library—in one instance eliciting the categorical response that no such library existed; entries in the inventory of the royal archive mentioning a few books (among them Latin and German ones); and so on.

When scholarly controversy over the library intensified in the late nineteenth century, the noted specialist on Muscovy, S. A. Belokurov, undertook what is still the most thorough examination of the totality of evidence concerning the library. Not only did he examine the passport of all the relevant sources, but he cast his net widely to include all possible evidence for the survival of the library after Ivan's death. That is, he asked whether any of the later library inventories from Muscovy or any of the surviving books (in parti-

1. Summaries and quotations from the most important sources and references to the literature may be found in Sergei Belokurov, *O biblioteke moskovskikh gosudarei v XVI stoletii* (Moscow: Tip. G. Lissnera i A. Geshelia, 1898), and N. N. Zarubin, comp., *Biblioteka Ivana Groznogo: rekonstruktsiia i bibliograficheskoe opisaniie* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982). For a useful summary especially of the early history of the library controversy and a different assessment of the key sources compared to that presented below, see David Arans, "A Note on the Lost Library of the Moscow Tsars," *The Journal of Library History, Philosophy and Comparative Librarianship*, 18, No. 3 (1983), 304-16. I am indebted to Ann M. Kleimola for bringing this article to my attention (after the present article had been submitted in its final form).

cular the Greek ones) known from Muscovite times contain evidence that portions of the royal library were transmitted to more recent times in other collections. Also, Belokurov raised the important question of whether the patterns of book ownership by other Muscovite rulers lend any support to the idea that in the sixteenth century a royal library of the Classics could have existed. As is well known, Belokurov reached decisively negative conclusions and by and large convinced scholars that further searches for Ivan's library were fruitless.

Belokurov raised a long list of questions regarding the validity of the Nienstädt information.² In general he suspected the chronicle, in view of the authoritative opinion of G. V. Forsten that it is the least reliable of the German narrative sources on the Baltic region for that period. Moreover, the fact that Nienstädt was writing some thirty years after he supposedly heard the story about the library raises questions as to the accuracy of what he relates. In other instances, clearly his memory failed him. We cannot even be sure that Wettermann was in Moscow itself (no other sources confirm this). If he was, it is unlikely that he was asked to translate secular books—more likely he would simply have been approached to be a translator in the Diplomatic Chancellery. Why were some of the other foreigners there before Wettermann not approached about the matter? Of course, none of these objections constitutes any kind of proof that there is no substance to the Nienstädt account, even though Belokurov's conclusion that it is a considerable embroidery on a much less significant story is perfectly acceptable as one interpretation.

Similarly, Belokurov doubted the value of the Dabelov list. It is improbable that Ivan IV would have wanted translations of the Classics, no trace of any such translations from that time exists, the immediate disappearance of the manuscript Dabelov claimed to have found is suspicious, and, finally, the list itself, where several works are otherwise totally unknown, is of dubious authenticity. Although he made little effort to explain the possible circumstances in which it might have appeared, Belokurov concluded that the document is a falsification. As in the case of the Nienstädt account, none of Belokurov's arguments has the finality which would prevent one from finding in the Dabelov list at least some grain of truth. Curiously enough, Belokurov made light of the fact that the list does not specify the tsar by name: he assumed that the list may well refer to the sixteenth century simply because for a seventeenth-century ruler, the likelihood is that other sources would contain some confirmation of the information.

Nienstädt's account, which told of the locking up of the library in underground chambers once Wettermann refused to undertake the translation job,

2. See Belokurov, *O biblioteke*, ch. 3, which is devoted to a discussion of Nienstädt and the Dabelov list.

and a tale spun by a Petrine soldier about locating an underground chamber containing some trunks with unspecified content, had led many believers in the existence of the library to support excavation of the Kremlin grounds. With the publication of Belokurov's book, the lure of possible subterranean chambers became the last defense of those who maintained the library existed. Nowhere is this more evident than in the person of Ignatii Stellets'kii, an archaeologist of sorts, who insisted that the library could be located under the Kremlin and managed to persuade the authorities in the 1930s to revive the excavations that had been undertaken first in the 1890s.³ Stellets'kii's search came to naught though, as the excavations yielded trash or flooded, and in 1935 the new commandant of the Kremlin refused permission for the work to continue. As A. A. Zimin later put it, Stellets'kii's "blind faith [was] unsupported by any new data," and his searches had a "fanatical character and could only strengthen the doubts of the skeptics."⁴

Other Soviet scholars remained interested in the library though. One of them, N. N. Zarubin, prepared a study in the 1930s that only recently has been published.⁵ A specialist on the history of the book, Zarubin was concerned principally with "reconstructing" Ivan's library, that is, compiling a list of all the books that somehow could be associated with Ivan. Of course, as Zarubin himself recognized, such a list was not strictly speaking the library itself, for he included there numerous books given by the tsar to monasteries, books given the tsar by various individuals, the vague listings in sources such as the Nienstädt account and the tales about Maksim Grek, books with an inscription mentioning the tsar's name, and so on. Even as a list of items associated with Ivan, what Zarubin came up with (some 150 items) was woefully incomplete. One of the main sources he used was the card file of works in old Russian manuscripts compiled by Academician Nikol'skii and now housed in the manuscript division of the Academy of Sciences Library in Leningrad. The Nikol'skii card file is largely based on the cutting and pasting of items from published manuscript descriptions, and, as such, it is both inaccurate and very incomplete. Moreover, works associated with Ivan, as the editors of the Zarubin volume have pointed out, logically might include Ivan's writings,

3. For an entertaining account of his quest, see Roman Peresvetov, *Tainy vysvetshikh strok* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo detskoi literatury. Ministerstva prosvetsheniia RSFSR, 1963), pp. 73 ff. His first chapter is devoted to the story of the arguments over and searches for the library.

4. A. Zimin, "K poiskam biblioteki moskovskikh gosudarei," *Russkaia literatura*, No. 4 (1963), p. 125.

5. Zarubin, *Biblioteka*. The editors mention (p. 9, note 9) another, apparently monographic, study of the library prepared in the early 1950s by the late M. I. Slukhovskii. The quality of Slukhovskii's other work on Muscovite libraries does not enable me to share the enthusiasm of the editors for the future publication of the work.

works he cites, works cited or used in the literary/historical undertakings he sponsored, and so on. Little of this, of course, tells us much about the Classical library of Ivan, even if the considerable problems of source criticism are overcome to ensure that a listing like Zarubin's is accurate.⁶

The real stimulus to a revival of interest in the library was a paper by the revered historian M. N. Tikhomirov, published in the popular literary journal *Novyi mir* in 1960.⁷ All who have written subsequently on the library cite the article as authoritative and seminal. For Tikhomirov the central issue in the controversy seems to have been that in denying the existence of the library, "bourgeois" historians like Belokurov were denigrating the level of Muscovite culture. He reduces Belokurov's multifaceted argument against the veracity of Nienstädt to one based on the supposed improbability of there having been Hebrew books in the famous library. *Au contraire*, says Tikhomirov—do we not know that there were fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Russian translations from Hebrew? Besides, the Nienstädt account is fully reliable, because it includes names of some important *d'iaki* who can be identified as having existed and because there is no reason off hand to think why Nienstädt would have wanted to make up a story about the library. Ivan undoubtedly wanted translations to answer Kurbskii's criticisms that he lacked culture. In short, "the evidence of Nienstädt . . . cannot be overturned by any kind of strained interpretations and cavils. The library of the Muscovite tsars with Greek and Latin manuscripts existed—that is a fact which cannot be doubted."⁸

Tikhomirov's article becomes even more remarkable as we read on in his attempt to convince his public that there were many Greek manuscripts around in Russia. After all, he reminds us, there were many Greeks present even in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, not to mention Zoe Paleologus later. They must have brought Greek books to Russia; obviously some of those books must have survived in the Patriarchal (Synodal) collection now housed in the State Historical Museum. Belokurov's demonstration that Arsenii Sukhanov brought those Greek books to Moscow in the seventeenth century cannot be taken seriously, since surely he would not have brought all the secular authors. It is not "an especially bold guess" to see in them the remnants of the libraries of Kiprian, Theognost *et al.*⁹ Of course, Tikhomirov cautions, those books cannot be taken to be the same as the ones in the tsar's library, since the two collections were separate. But the tsars

6. Sober and careful scholars such as A. I. Kopanov have not been fooled by the book; see his review of it in *Sovetskie arkhivy*, No. 5 (1983), pp. 83-85.

7. "O biblioteke moskovskikh tsarei (Legendy i deistvitel'nost')," reprinted in M. N. Tikhomirov, *Russkaia kul'tura X-XVIII vekov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), pp. 281-91.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 287.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.

surely had a library and were literate—one need remember only the fact that illuminated manuscripts were made for the tsarevichi [in the time of Ivan IV?—actually the evidence, as Tikhomirov fails to note, is from the seventeenth century], and there was a royal presentation copy of the 1564 *Acts of the Apostles*.

Obviously, Tikhomirov continues, the remnants of the royal library have been scattered in other collections, probably in the eighteenth century. For example, we know Peter I once gave V. N. Tatishchev a manuscript [!]. If boyars had libraries, tsars must have had them too: recall that V. V. Golitsyn owned books [sixteenth century?]. Undoubtedly the underground chambers of the Kremlin will reveal the royal library. After all, have there not been remarkable finds of manuscripts in caves in Central Asia and Palestine in recent memory? Perhaps, Tikhomirov admits, the library simply no longer exists.

A worse collection of speculation and irrelevancies is hard to imagine. Perhaps Zimin had tongue in cheek when he noted three years later that Tikhomirov had offered "a series of new considerations" in favor of the library's existence.¹⁰ Unfortunately though, despite greater caution in Zimin's own contribution, he too failed to provide new evidence and at the same time indulged in unsupported speculation.

Zimin's 1963 article outlines clearly and soberly the possible approaches that might be followed to achieve "a final solution to the problem" of the library: further study of the sources that speak of its existence; examination of the contemporary literature by authors who might have used the library, in order to establish which sources they cite might have come from it; further searches in various manuscript collections and in the vaults of the Kremlin. His main concern in the article is with the first two of these tasks, and he concludes that the existence of a princely library at the end of the fifteenth century with books in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew was "entirely probable," although one can only guess about its origin. He argues that Muscovite culture of that period, in which one sees phenomena such as "heresies," some dabbling with Renaissance culture, and the like, provides a context in which such a library could have existed. With the crackdown on heresy and forces that threatened traditional Orthodoxy, the library was locked up, which explains why it was virtually unknown until the time of Ivan IV. All this is theoretically possible, but Zimin then wishes us to believe that the library was locked up not once but three times—once in 1504 with the suppression of heresy, once in the 1520s with the trials of Maksim Grek and Vas'ian Patrikeev (Maksim had been allowed to use the books), and finally in 1570 after Wetterman refused to translate as the tsar requested.

10. Zimin, "K poiskam," p. 125.

For Zimin, at least two of the sources referring to the library deserve our trust. One is the account about Maksim Grek's having been shown the books, an account that in Zimin's view undoubtedly was written by Kurbskii (as Elie Denissoff had argued), and the other is the Nienstädt account. The main proof that Nienstädt can be trusted seems to be in the names of the Muscovite officials and the other Germans which it contains. All of these individuals can be confirmed as having existed [is this not rather like asserting that a modern historical novel is a trustworthy historical source because it mentions Napoleon and Alexander ?]. Zimin is right that the absence of confirming evidence about Wettermann's presence in Moscow (one of the points noted by Belokurov) is hardly reason to doubt the story. Moreover, unlike Belokurov, he finds nothing strange in Ivan's taking an apparently favorable attitude toward the Germans and other westerners in 1570. After all, he was releasing captives then and apparently trying to improve relations with his foreign adversaries. Zimin's conclusion is that "the precision of the accounts by Nienstädt gives reason to suppose that his information about the royal library is also trustworthy." Unfortunately, he has done nothing to demonstrate the precision of Nienstädt's chronicle. On the contrary, just to take one example that everyone mentions, Nienstädt made a terrible blunder in suggesting that books in the royal library had come to Muscovy *in recent memory* at the time of Russia's Christianization. One is struck by the fact that Zimin mentions only in passing the Dabelov list, which, it would seem, he considered to be an untrustworthy source best swept under the rug unless further information could be found concerning the original manuscript.

The most difficult portion of Zimin's article to accept is his speculation on who may have used the famous library. For example, Kurbskii, the supposed author of the account about Maksim Grek, cites the Classics (e.g., Cicero). Hence, "it is very tempting to suggest that in any event Kurbskii acquainted himself with some of these works in the royal 'book repository'."¹¹ Maksim himself, of course, cites Aristotle, Plato, and others. Hence it is *possible* that he used some of those authors in the library of the grand prince. The fact that Zimin's hero, Fedor Karpov, seems to have been familiar with Ovid, Aristotle, and Homer indicates that somehow in Muscovy such materials were available. Here Zimin does not go so far as to say that Karpov used the famous library directly—rather, he may have obtained the books via Dmitrii Gerasimov, and he in turn from Maksim Grek.

Finally, Zimin raises doubts in our minds when he deals with the foreign sources indicating that rumors about the existence of the royal library were widespread in Europe. He seems to imply (Tikhomirov is quite direct in this) that the fact of such rumors somehow is proof that the library existed. When

Pietro Arcudio came to Moscow in 1600 in the suite of Lew Sapieha to enquire for the papacy about the library, he was told that it did not exist. Zimin sees this negative answer as reflecting one of several possibilities: ignorance of its existence, the fact that the library had burned up, or the fact that those suspicious Muscovites did not want to tell foreigners that it existed. He forgets a fourth possibility: maybe we should take the Muscovite denials at face value, for there is that remote chance that someone in the Kremlin knew better than all of the rumor-mongers. Arcudio probably felt like Poggio Bracciolini, who spent time searching fruitlessly for manuscript rarities of the Classics in English monastery libraries in 1421. In frustration, he wrote to his fellow book-collector, Niccolo di Niccolis, "He [Niccolo's source, probably Simon de Teramo] must have learned all that you mention from hearsay and from people who are entirely untrained in such matters and from whom I have heard the same statements a thousand times myself. Will you therefore put faith in a man without any learning and on subjects about which he may say what he has learned from others more ignorant than himself? How stupid it is of you to be in the least influenced by everything you hear."¹²

Since the early 1960s, only two important additions have been made to the literature on the library. One is the work of the Byzantinist and specialist on Greek manuscripts in Muscovy, B. L. Fonkich,¹³ Fonkich is the first scholar since Belokurov to undertake a systematic study of the Greek manuscripts which are known to have existed in Muscovy. In the course of his research, Fonkich has actually gone well beyond his predecessor, and he has yet to discover a single manuscript that might be considered to have been part of the famous royal library. Moreover, Fonkich points out the evidence of a seventeenth-century document (originally published by Belokurov but then mostly ignored) which indicates that the library of the last Byzantine emperor (in the eyes of some, the source from which Ivan's collection might have derived) remained in Istanbul as part of the collection of the Turkish sultan. Of course, as a recent critic of Fonkich suggests, that evidence does not exclude the possibility of another source for the library: if Zoe Paleologus brought Greek manuscripts to Muscovy, as some believe, they need not have been from the royal library in Constantinople; in fact it is highly likely that they were not.¹⁴ Fonkich's argument, then, is largely a negative one—if the library of Ivan once existed, either it no longer does, or it is hidden somewhere other than in collections of books that have survived since Muscovite times in known libraries.

12. *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggio Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, tr. and annot. Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), p. 60.

13. B. L. Fonkich, *Grechesko-russkie kul'turnye svyazi v XV-XVII vv. (Grecheskie rukopisi v Rossii)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977).

14. The opinion of A. A. Amosov, in the notes to Zarubin, *Biblioteka*, pp. 72-73.

The most recent efforts to reexamine the library question—and some of the most serious since the time of Belokurov—are by the Leningrad historian A. A. Amosov, who prepared the Zarubin manuscript for publication. Amosov's work on Muscovite libraries and manuscripts deserves close attention. He has made important contributions to the study of inventories of monastic collections, he is an accomplished codicologist—that is, he has mastered the techniques of studying the history of manuscript books—and he is one of the two or three most accomplished filigranologists in the Soviet Union. Much of Amosov's recent work has been devoted to the study of the great illuminated chronicle (*Litsevoi svod*) compiled during Ivan's reign.

Amosov's work on the library question has focused on two matters. For one, and to me this is the portion of his studies that is inherently of lesser value, he has been concerned with establishing what we might call the "literary environment" of Ivan. In other words, in line with the kind of thing in which Zarubin was interested, Amosov wishes to establish what written works were associated with Ivan, even if indirectly, and in what circumstances it would have been logical for Ivan to have wanted to use the materials in his library. To a considerable degree, of course, establishing the literary environment of Ivan does not shed light on the *Classical* library, since Amosov is dealing with things such as letters and polemics that might have been addressed to Ivan or his father, and sources for compilations such as the *Litsevoi svod*—material for the most part written originally in Russian or Old Church Slavic.¹⁵ The point of such study seems to be to refute the contention of those like Belokurov (or, more recently, Professor Edward Keenan) that the cultural environment of Muscovy was so impoverished that one could not expect to find any interest whatsoever in a library of Classical authors.

Amosov's second concern is the more concrete one of examining the validity of the foreign sources concerning the library—in particular the Dabelov list.¹⁶ His arguments for its authenticity involve two things. First, in keeping with the concerns I have just described, he insists that the content of the list is believable in the context of Ivan's reign where the tsar could have been seeking new sources on Greek and Roman history as part of the project to compile the *Litsevoi svod*. One of the books mentioned by the author of the list is a history by Suetonius, which supposedly the compiler of the list was translating (or had translated, depending on how one reads the German). Ivan *could* have wanted such a translation.

15. See Amosov's articles, "Russkaia publitsistika XVI veka v biblioteke moskovskikh gosudarei," and "Litsevoi letopisnyi svod i biblioteka Ivana Groznogo," *ibid.*, pp. 87-117.

16. A. A. Amosov, " 'Antichnaia' biblioteka Ivana Groznogo. K voprosu o dostovernosti sokhranivshikhsia izvestii ob inoiazыchnom fonde biblioteki moskovskikh gosudarei," *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XVI-XIX vekakh: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Leningrad: BAN, 1980), pp. 6-31.

Proving the probable accuracy of the content of the list is important for the other main point Amosov makes, that there is no reason to see the document as a fabrication by Dabelov himself or a contemporary of his. Linguistically and in terms of content, it would have been difficult to produce something that did not have a glaring inaccuracy. Dabelov himself was not a linguist, in any event. Furthermore, what could he possibly have been expected to gain from a forgery? Indeed, Amosov admits, there are many other examples of forgeries from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but most of them involve works of some supposed literary value. In that context, something like the Dabelov list simply has no place if it is to be seen as forgery.

We must give Amosov credit for raising seriously these questions about the circumstances in which the list might have been forged. Belokurov had begged all of them. But at the same time, I find his arguments less than persuasive. To cite the compilations such as the *Litsevoi svod* and *Stepennaia kniga* as evidence Ivan needed translations about ancient history is hardly convincing. The thrust of these works and their sources are both very traditional, to say the least, Ivan's personal involvement in their compilation is not proved fact, and so on. Furthermore, the inclusion in the Dabelov list of authors whose existence is attested nowhere else is highly suspicious, however much one might wish to explain that away by claiming that some items in the list may have been garbled by copyists, or that perhaps the authors cited were so rare that we cannot expect to find them mentioned elsewhere. If one is discussing the nineteenth-century environment of forgeries, one should not ignore, as Amosov does, such items as the "Fragments of the Gothic Toparch," which Ihor Ševčenko has shown to be without a doubt a forgery by a German scholar.¹⁷ Admittedly, the case for forgery there is strengthened by the demonstration of the expectation of financial gain on the part of the forger, something that has yet to be shown for Dabelov. Finally, it is important to stress that the "much has been lost" argument to brush away the mystery of the disappearing manuscript Dabelov claimed to have discovered is too convenient a way to beg the questions raised by that disappearance.

At the same time though, there is some merit to Amosov's argument that, taken together, the sources suggesting that Ivan had a library contain no internal contradictions and are largely mutually supporting. Even Belokurov tended to admit that some elements of truth might be present in sources with otherwise dubious passports. While the believers have yet to demonstrate conclusively that the library did exist, the unbelievers likewise have not produced evidence that would force us to dismiss the witnesses to the existence

17. Ihor Ševčenko, "The Date and Author of the So-Called Fragments of Toparcha Gothicus," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 25 (1971), 155-88 plus 28 plates.

of the library. In short, I think so far we are at a standoff as far as the first of the approaches proposed by Zimin is concerned.

Perhaps what we need to do is to broaden the frame of reference within which we examine the key sources. All who have written on the library using Nienstädt make assumptions about his accuracy or the lack thereof, but who among them has really done proper source criticism on that chronicle as a whole? The possibility of the Dabelov list's being a nineteenth-century forgery has been examined (although I think there is more to be done in that context), but what about the possibility that it is "authentic" in a seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century context? Could it not have been part of some kind of effort at producing a work in the genre of the "extraordinary voyage" that became a popular type of fiction then? I do not have answers to these questions, but I think they should be asked and the answers sought. It may be, of course, that the answers still will not solve the "problem" of the library.

I am not optimistic that the second and third approaches mentioned by Zimin will get us very far. We can compile all kinds of lists of authors cited by one or another Muscovite writer (understanding, of course, that we must first undertake a careful demonstration of authorship and provenance of the attributed works that form our source base), but that exercise simply cannot prove the existence of Ivan's library. I am surprised to see someone like Zimin, who was so insistent on historians' keeping clear the distinctions between hypothesis and guesses, indulging in the latter when he piles up such indirect "proofs" of the existence of the famous library. Perhaps before we indulge in more such speculation, we should make clear in our minds exactly what we expect to prove by the exercise and what can in fact be proved. Just because someone like Maksim Grek cites the Greek authors in no way need be proof that he was doing so from a written text. We tend to forget how much of the Classics educated people in his time had in their heads, and we certainly cannot begin to make assertions about the use of sources without proper textual analysis. What we may in fact discover is what has been pointed out with regard to, e.g., Anna Comnena, who flavors her account of her father's reign with quotations from the Classics but often inaccurately, since her memory seems to have been like most of ours, a bit imperfect.¹⁸ Similar observations have been made in recent studies of the quotations in the so-called first letter of Kurbskii to Ivan IV, suggesting that a written text was not always in hand when a quotation was used.¹⁹ In any event, simply to decide that a quotation from the Classics somehow indicates the author used the famous library

18. Georgina Buckler, *Anna Comnena: A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; repr. of 1929 ed.), pp. 191-208.

19. Iu. D. Rykov, "K voprosu ob istochnikakh Pervogo poslaniia Kurbskogo Ivanu IV," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury*, 31 (1976), 235-46.

(otherwise, where else in Muscovy could one obtain the books?) is assuming far too much. Lest we delude ourselves into thinking that there was a genuine demand for the works in the famous library, it is worth remembering Sevčenko's observation about the legacy of Maksim: "It gives one food for thought about the Muscovy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to realize that this highly cultured Byzantine was long revered in Russia for his statements on the sign of the cross, whereas his classical references were never picked up."²⁰

The final task—searching in libraries and underground—is not completed, but the handwriting is on the wall, I think. Belokurov's and Fonkich's studies have mostly exhausted the possibilities that Greek manuscripts from the famous library are still extant, and certainly not in Russian collections. Yet interestingly enough, all has not been lost, even for the period well before Ivan's reign, for there are extant Greek manuscripts taken out of Muscovy by Metropolitan Isidore when he was expelled after the Council of Ferrara-Florence.²¹ It is easy for someone like S. O. Shmidt to assert that undoubtedly searches in foreign collections will be fruitful.²² But that is hardly a responsible statement backed by any kind of evidence. While the posthumous publication of Zarubin's study was clearly intended to lend support to the idea that the library existed, in fact the book has the opposite effect, for it shows how futile so far the searches in collections of Muscovite books have been. I am the first to admit that we still know too little about Muscovite manuscript collections, but I would think from what we do know that some more concrete trace of Ivan's library should have emerged than has up to this point.

The examples of any number of Western libraries provide some food for thought on this last point. The library of the Monastery of Monte Cassino suffered from the abbey's destruction by the Muslims in 883, a fire thirteen years later, fourteenth-century earthquakes and sacks, raids on the collection by humanists such as Boccaccio and Petrarch, and ultimately, the allied bombing of 1944. Yet we know the library existed—some of its books have survived, and contemporary inventories (beginning as early as Peter the Deacon's in the eleventh century) tell us what was there.²³ Over a much shorter span, the famous humanist collection assembled in the fifteenth century by a Renaissance prince, Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus, was dispersed, giving rise to all kinds of conflicting evidence about its size, content, possible survival and the like. Yet it has been possible with great certainty to reconstruct a si-

20. Ihor Ševčenko, "Byzantium and the Eastern Slavs After 1453," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 2, N. 1 (1978), 14.

21. Fonkich, *Grechesko-russkie*, pp. 10 ff.

22. S. O. Shmidt, "Ot redaktora," in Zarubin, *Biblioteka*, pp. 9-10.

23. On the Monte Cassino library, see James Westfall Thompson, *The Medieval Library* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 169-87.

zable enough portion of its stock to leave no-doubt as to its significance and importance.²⁴ Even if we did not still have some 166 of the books, we would be able to say much of a very specific nature on the basis of a variety of documentation which enables us to test the occasionally very speculative rumors about the collection.

In our search for hard evidence on Ivan's library, is our only choice to follow in the footsteps of Stelletskii and to dig up the Kremlin? In the process, at least, we can expect to add valuable information to our knowledge of the emergence of Moscow, and, since we cannot prove for sure that the famous library was not buried there, who knows. . . .²⁵ Perhaps, though, what we really should be doing is wasting less time on fruitless speculation and instead turning to some of the other pressing problems concerning Ivan's reign that the sources might enable us to solve.

By way of conclusion, I think it worthwhile to draw an analogy with more recent times. On the whole, the proponents of the library have tended, I think, to distort the history of sixteenth-century Muscovite culture, with the intention (consciously or unconsciously) of establishing Ivan's place as a kind of Renaissance prince. In reviewing these efforts, one cannot help but be reminded of treatments of the late Iurii Andropov, who moved from being a "stereotypic hard-line 'police boss'" to become skilled in four languages, "a witty conversationalist," a "bibliophile" (not, one might add, collecting the Greek Classics, but rather such classics as Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls* and Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley*—like Ivan, Iurii was clearly a man of catholic taste), and a "connoisseur of modern art."²⁶ As Edward Jay Epstein summed it up, the picture of Andropov that emerged "is a portrait worthy of 'Saturday Night Live': the head of the KGB as one wild and crazy guy. After a hard day at the office repressing dissent, Brezhnev's heir spends the evening at home, telling antiregime jokes in fluent English and playing jazz for dissidents."²⁷ All of this is based ultimately on some remarks by a defector of less than impeccable credentials and reliability.

Is this not, in fact, just what has happened with Ivan, the Russian tsar who astounds us by appearing in so many guises, who was more learned than his

24. The current authority on the Corvinian Library is Csaba Csapodi, *The Corvinian Library: History and Stock* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973); his book is a model of how one should go about reconstructing the stock of a now dispersed collection.

25. In this connection, one recalls the discovery by Scipio Maffei in 1713 of a "treasure trove" of manuscripts in the Verona Cathedral, stuck away out of sight on top of a bookcase. Even though Mabillon had been told in the previous century that nothing remained of the once famous library, Maffei's continued efforts to find it were finally crowned with success (Thompson, *Medieval Library*, pp. 153-54).

26. Edward Jay Epstein, "The Andropov File," *The New Republic*, Feb. 7, 1983, p. 18. I am indebted to Janet Schwartz for this reference.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

contemporaries, who was so versatile a writer that he conformed to none of the stringent literary conventions of his time, whose literary output keeps growing as scholars hasten to ignore their own rules for textual criticism, and who is supposed to have had, quite appropriately in view of his education and interests, a library that was possibly the most remarkable of all the European royal libraries in his time?

In fact, we have a tsar the provenance of whose alleged writings has still not been sufficiently rigorously examined, who ruled in a state where the government and church were united in their efforts to keep Russian culture in its traditional Orthodox mould, and who may, or may not, have had a library from which no surviving trace has yet been discovered. What we know about the library is solely from sources that may have some basis in fact, but at least equally probably (if not, in my opinion, more so) leave us with serious questions about their authenticity or at least accuracy. In short, so far I am no more persuaded that Ivan can be elevated to the ranks of Renaissance princes than I am that Andropov should join the ranks of aficionados of, heaven forbid, modern American culture.

University of Washington