As never before in our area studies program, conditions are ripe for interdisciplinary research and teaching.

In particular, it is time for those of us in history and the social sciences to draw on the knowledge of our colleagues in literature, film studies, and the arts. Though at the core of the area studies program, departments of languages and literature have been thought of by the rest of us primarily as language training centers for our students. We have seldom brought literary and arts scholars into our work as research collaborators and instructors in jointly taught interdisciplinary courses.

Altered political and intellectual conditions are now pushing us to such cooperation, and we should be grateful for these changes, which promises lively new possibilities for teaching and research. The collapse of communism and changes in the intellectual environment in the West, especially the growing influence of cultural studies, has made collaboration between literature scholars and the rest of us not only possible, but imperative, as a recent article by Michael Holquist points out (New Formations, Spring 1994).

Holquist begins his article with a quote by James Billington, a pioneer of Russian cultural history and current Librarian of Congress, to the effect that we are passing through momentous historical events that we did not anticipate and cannot even find a name for.

Billington is right. What we are observing in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is certainly not a revolution in any normally understood sense. Nor is it the kind of rebuilding of countries that occurs following a major war. Reform seems too pale a name for what some countries are undergoing, since the changes are having powerful and unintended effects. As Holquist remarks, no metaphor so far proposed adequately communicates what is happening.

The word "metaphor" gets us closer to the issue of collaboration between literary and social science specialists. The crux of the matter for the peoples of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in a

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