

CULTURE AND PERESTROIKA



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КУЛЬТУРА И ПЕРЕСТРОЙКА

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Valentin Tolstykh (b. 1929): Doctor of Philosophy and winner of the USSR State Prize, specialist in socio-philosophical Marxist theory ethics and aesthetics. Tolstykh is the author of *Art and Morality* (1973) and *Socrates and Us* (1981-1986). He has edited and contributed to the *Spiritual Production* (1981), *Production as a Social Process* (1986) and *Forms of Social Awareness* (1986) as well as numerous articles.

In Place of a Foreword

The title of this collection, *Culture and Perestroika*, has been carefully chosen. It does not just refer to the “slot” the well-known cultural figures featured here occupy in society but to something more substantial. The revolutionary renewal our society is now undergoing, called perestroika or restructuring, has deep spiritual, intellectual, moral and aesthetic roots. Therefore it needs to be given a thorough cultural grounding.

Lenin once astutely equated communism and culture, thus offering criteria for determining both what kind of life communism creates and how far the ideals of the new social system have been realized. Structuring society in a new way and living in a new way meant, to Lenin’s mind, learning to do what people did before in other social contexts, but in a fundamentally new manner. The concept of culture is valuable precisely because it differentiates between eras, social systems and civilizations by *how* people in various social contexts produce what they have always produced – goods, ideals, themselves, their relationships and attitudes.

In philosophical terms culture is nothing other than a *specifically human* mode of living. Long regarded as the antithesis of “savagery” and “barbarianism”, culture offers a measure (specific, naturally, to each stage in history, each spiral in our species’ development) of the “anthropomorphism” of the indi-

vidual's relationship with nature, other people (society) and himself. In this broad sense culture is an indicator of society's development and humanity. It is this understanding of culture that Lenin regarded as "fit and proper for a country which has set out to develop into a socialist country".¹

Thus we see the profound inner link between culture and perestroika, which essentially constitutes a radical transformation of modern Soviet society. To be more specific, perestroika represents the replacement of old economic mechanisms and social institutions that have outlived their usefulness or proven worthless with new ones that correspond to today's perception of socialism. We are talking about restoring Lenin's understanding of socialism and Lenin's method of building it. This is what the famous formula "More socialism, more democracy!" is all about.

Some may object that during the period of "stagnation" vociferous calls were made to raise the "level of culture" in every area—industry, politics, daily life, leisure, etc. Sometimes important public figures even spoke of the need to raise the level of culture for society as a whole. All of these calls were just, but they ran into the wall of bureaucratic government which then blocked many of the finest ideas and initiatives.

Perestroika is commonly associated with the introduction of a new economic mechanism and the elimination of impediments to economic growth. At the same time emphasis is placed on the importance of "a strong social policy" and the revolutionary role of new thinking. In the process of perestroika we will have to reestablish—on a new foundation!—the *economics-politics-culture* triad, in which culture is both a highly important condition for the social reforms being carried out in this country and a guarantee of their *quality*. We will have to restore and act in accordance with Lenin's conception of the role culture plays in building socialism. Today, with decades of experience behind us, we have a better appreciation of how farsighted Lenin was in his criticism of the Soviet government's first steps and achievements: "...the good in our social system has not been properly studied, understood, and taken to heart; it has been hastily grasped at; it has not been verified or tested, corroborated by experience, and not made durable, etc."² Thus, issues related to cultural policy come to the forefront, since where building society is concerned "we can only regard as achieved what has become part and parcel of our culture, of our social life, our habits".³

We are justly proud of having eliminated the illiteracy, ignorance that was once the plight of the working people. We have every reason to boast of the number of books we publish, films we produce and libraries we possess, of the caliber of our science and art, etc. But this kind of approach to culture, where its progress is measured by the quantity of material and spiritual values “produced”, while culture itself is reduced to the pedantic mastery of ready-made spiritual values, is inappropriate today. We have to go on and take a more thoroughgoing look at society’s development. Then we will see that many of the social and universal problems now being discussed by people in this country and around the world rest, apart from all else, on the level of culture society and the individual have achieved.

Take, for example, the ecological problem – the clearly distorted, “inhuman” relationship between man and nature, the predatory or narrow-minded, egotistical exploitation of our natural resources, the pollution of the environment which threatens to wipe out every living thing, etc. Blaming this type of phenomenon on rash or scientifically unfounded administrative decisions would hardly be adequate or convincing. Nor would it be adequate to point the finger at the commodity (capitalism) and planned (socialism) fetishism, although that is where the initial cause of the ecological crisis should in fact be sought. What we have here is a graphic example of an uncultured attitude towards nature as a whole on the part of people, some of whom are educated and technically competent. That is why the question of the environment’s fate is not today just a techno-economic or socio-ecological problem, but a cultural one as well.

Or take the question of overcoming bureaucracy, which can and must be considered in the broader context of the culture of governing society, society’s political culture. Bureaucracy, which is particularly intolerable and dangerous in a socialist society, essentially distorts and negates socialism. For socialism represents the living creativity of the masses, while bureaucracy substitutes administrative “zeal” and the regimentation of society’s many parts for the creative energy and initiative of the masses. Exploiting a lack of culture, bureaucracy deadens and trivializes the inner life and actions of a people, and prevents individuals from realizing themselves through independent creative activity.

Whatever aspects of modern Soviet society the authors of

the articles, essays, interviews and reminiscences collected in this book touch upon, they are performing the cultural mission of raising awareness. Influenced by the decisions of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, each, unbeknownst to the others, has defended the idea behind perestroika and its necessity from the position of a Leninist understanding of socialism and creative Marxism. They show the need for a new vision of the world (Chinghiz Aitmatov, Andrei Sakharov, Vladimir Svirsky, et al.), a historical perspective on the past and present of the land where true socialism was first established (Yuri Afanasyev, Yuri Burtin, Igor Dedkov, Anatoly Golovkov, Alexei Pavlov, et al.), and a sober, realistic approach to solving the complex problems social development entails, including questions of artistic creativity (Kirill Lavrov, Alexei Simonov, et al.). They share a heightened perception of reality and a revolutionary, critical attitude towards it, which they contrast with the “self-satisfied awareness” of dogmatists and adherents of what Marx called “doctrinaire socialism”, who are indifferent to the evidence of experience.

This collection will give the foreign reader a chance to see for himself what serious changes are occurring in the social awareness of Soviet men and women. How are these changes revealed?

Above all, in the awakening of our awareness of the past: literally before our eyes “blank spots” in our history are being filled in, while accuracy and fairness in assessing many aspects and facts of the distant and not so distant past are being restored. What is even more important, there is a palpable desire to free ourselves from abridgements, illusions and inventions, from the consignment of facts to oblivion and ready-made formulas that have kept us from gaining a better understanding of the society in which we live, as well as our place in world history. As our renowned historian Yuri Afanasyev notes, we have given the world the valuable benefit of our experience, gained at the heavy price of struggle, deprivation and hopes.

Furthermore, we want to reach a new understanding, on both a scientific (theoretical) and practical level, of the link between social awareness and social being in order to further the radical restructuring of every aspect of this society. Now as never before the harmfulness of ideology divorced from reality and its transformation into some special, independent kingdom of Reason, towering over actual practice, is being recognized—slowly but surely. The very claim ideology

“emancipated” from reality makes to be a cure-all for the problems and issues life presents is being questioned and rejected. Only the “word” that becomes “deed” and reflects the masses’ vital needs has a future. “Success stories” are no substitute for educating by means of the truth. An honest attitude towards reality cannot abide with the adjustment of facts and events to fit the rankings, norms and rules that are to the bureaucrats’ liking. There is no reason to simplify the dialectically complex and highly contradictory social process of creating a new world or to reduce it to the sum of achievements and the attendant “few significant shortcomings”, as “the real movement”⁴ was commonly characterized during the years of stagnation. In criticizing our social science for being out of touch with reality, Chinghiz Aitmatov notes, “Reams of dissertations. People spent years of their lives on that and mouthed formulas they’d learned by heart instead of developing the theory of socialism... Many of the themes of our life and struggle have to be purged of verbiage and maybe even given new meaning.”

True to the spirit of materialism, which lies at the heart of our world view, we judge the restructuring of awareness by restructuring in action, i.e. the restructuring of everyday life, and not just in the economic sphere, but in social policy and the spiritual life of society. Old forms of economic and labor management (the administrative, bureaucratic system) continue to hinder the development of a new way of thinking. It will take hard, persistent work to overcome the forces holding perestroika back. Overcaution and a timid attitude, that views the current changes in Soviet society and those to come with scepticism, are just as senseless and dangerous as an orientation towards swift, immediate success and the thirst for the same “success stories” we were fed so recently. The battles of ideas being contested by economists, writers, philosophers, journalists, and ordinary readers responding to the ongoing debate in the newspapers and magazines stem not just from differing interests and perceptions of perestroika, but from discrepancies in the shaping of new thinking itself. Clearly, though, there is a trend towards liberation from dogmatism, bureaucratism, lies and half-truths. People are thinking and eagerly seeking the truth. The articles in this collection bear witness to that.

1988

LOOK FOR TRUTH

**“We have to look back
at the roots of the Revolution
more often and see how our lives
measure up.
Only then will we understand
where we’ve come and where
we should be going.”**

Alexander Alexandrov



Chinghiz Aitmatov
(b. 1928): Kirghiz writer, winner of the Lenin Prize, full member of the European Academy of Sciences, Arts and Literature.

Aitmatov has written numerous stories, including *Jamilya* (1958), *The First Teacher* (1961), *Farewell, Gulсарy!* (1965), *The White Steamer* (1970), *The Early Cranes* (1975), as well as the novels *The Stormy Junction* (*A Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*) (1980) and *The Executioner's Block* (1986).

According to UNESCO figures, Chinghiz Aitmatov is one of the most widely read authors in the world.

We Need a New Vision of the World

An *Izvestia* Interview with CHINGHIZ AITMATOV

The period we are now living in is filled with the most radiant hopes, on the one hand, and anxiety, on the other. The time has come to take a sober look at everything that has happened, and to tell ourselves and each other the honest truth. Not for the sake of settling scores: we must not fritter away our energy on that. The country has a great opportunity for rebirth, everything that has troubled us, given rise to doubts and prompted pessimism must be explained. We must free ourselves from the fetters, the socio-political conventions that have so restrained us.

That is how Chinghiz Aitmatov answered the question, "What is uppermost in your mind today?" He has recently done a great deal of traveling around his native Kirghizia and the country; ahead lie the plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee¹, and other important events, particularly the second Issyk Kul Forum, which is to be held in Switzerland. In short, like all of us Aitmatov is thinking about today's urgent problems.

Chinghiz Aitmatov: Up until quite recently we promised ourselves that the future would bring a lot: in the future we would

do this, in the future things would be like that. But the future is created in the present. A disparity resulted: we talked about how things should be without making a realistic assessment of how things stood or even what had happened in the past. We assured one another that maybe everything wasn't the way it should be, but in the future everything would be wonderful. However nothing can happen in the future if the foundations aren't laid in the present.

Many of our notions may have played a positive role in their day but now they are outdated. They don't have anything more to offer. For a long time we wouldn't admit that. We say, "our achievements" and invest that phrase with almost magical significance. But how were they made and what do they represent today? The transformation of an enormous region of the world with an enormous population—that really is a great, great achievement, but what efforts went into it, what was the cost? We have to know that in order to appreciate genuine achievements even more. Did we always find radical solutions then? Why, for example, are moral principles becoming twisted? Why don't the generations understand each other?

Georgi Melikyants. But generations have disagreed in other societies in other times...

C.A. Yes, but why is it happening here? Are all the principles we've proclaimed and goals we've set ourselves honest and realistic?

G.M. Lenin often had serious occasion to say: yes, I did maintain that, but when? Times are different, circumstances have changed...

C.A. That's why you have to keep at Lenin and know how to learn—to take stock of the facts. In many areas we act on the basis of experience that was valid for a completely different time and ignore what's happened since.

There is a statute which declares that all secrets are to be declassified after a certain number of years. But half a century has passed since 1937, all this time we've been trying to say something and haven't been able to. I mean, we didn't need that nation-wide "declassification" for curiosity's sake; the point was to learn from the past, because lessons have to be learned in time. We gave an assessment of the personality cult, but we couldn't overcome all of the consequences it had in time, we weren't able to. And we've been punished for our failure to overcome them—it has inhibited our thinking and initiative, encouraged servility and brought about a new

flowering of the bureaucracy, which lived off the system it had established – you might say it was self-supporting.

Perestroika is complicated work. It can't tolerate artificial simplifications like the ones that were made in the past. Stereotypes and conventions were helpful before, when it seemed easier to run things that way. Willpower and words could be used to bring something about regardless of whether they made any sense or bore any relation to reality. Wondering whether it is easy or hard to be in charge is a waste of time. Anyone who should know that it is never easy, he should understand that there is nothing harder than working with people, looking for the right approach to a person, finding the key to his heart.

Here's a paradox: at some point after proclaiming the great principles of building socialism we seem to have intentionally deprived it of the chief moving force – the personal interest of the individual worker, the producer. Personal interest should not be equated with the rouble. It is not just the rouble. A person's interest in his work also depends on what it is he does, on the moral boost and psychological satisfaction that work brings. And after all, we hardly welcomed displays of personal initiative – it always had to be approved higher up, someone had to sanction it. Now that training to wait for orders is costing us.

G.M. In a draft of a memo Lenin wrote on his deputies' work he particularly obligates them to compel the people's commissars to be independent. Moreover, Lenin had in mind independence at every level of government. That's how matters stood: people had to be compelled to be independent. We failed. Instead people were often compelled to be inactive, passive...

C.A. And as a result, we're going through a rough time right now. An extremely grave situation has taken shape in Soviet Central Asia. There we have a vivid example of the consequences taboos, keeping silent, hypocrisy, the pursuit of false glory and an incorrect understanding of ethnic pride can have.

G.M. We remember that the fine-sounding slogan, "Cotton is our pride", concealed some of the biggest economic and ideological setbacks...

C.A. The one-crop system led to inordinate and therefore unrealistic plans, and that in turn threw the whole cotton production system off balance. The situation with achievement awards degenerated to the point where giving them became a must and

so achievements had to be inflated. A kind of mania for awards and titles developed. No one was able to create the conditions where people could take personal initiative or express their creativity, so certain individuals were artificially picked from the crowd, often without sufficient reason. In some places they went one step farther and created waiting lists for awards and titles. The desecration of what had once been a good idea, a good custom, became plain for all to see in the last few decades when award-giving became institutionalized. Everybody knew what he “should” get for his fiftieth birthday, his sixtieth... That may not seem very important but it is also a sign of underdevelopment. The one-crop system, instituted in its classic form and taken to absurd lengths in Uzbekistan, is a lesson to us all. An economy cannot develop normally when labor expenditure and productivity, production and marketing costs, allocations for reproduction are all ignored: somebody named a figure and absolutely everything was adjusted to that, no matter what the cost. People even managed to find arguments to prove that unprofitability was profitable!

The violation of economic laws (and socialism is not immune to them; on the contrary, it, more than any other society, should be governed by the laws of economics) dealt a blow to the human psyche, it was so harmful. Take sheep farming in Kirghizia, an important sector in the country’s agriculture. How was its development impaired? At a recent republican writers’ plenum I heard about the following incident. A scientist once declared at a conference that a particular breed was capable of yielding 120-130 lambs per 100 ewes. An important official who was present gave him a quizzical look and asked, “Is that all?” At the next conference the same person was compelled to announce that they had made new calculations and were satisfied that it was possible to increase the issue still further. “Now I can see that you’re a real scientist!” the official exclaimed. Consequently, we have far too much poor quality, low grade livestock. Each year we lose more pastureland. Genotypes of plants and animals that evolved over centuries in the local habitat have vanished. People say, “We had to fulfill the plan.” Who’s arguing? They had to. But let’s not forget that figures were dreamed up and unrealizable plans were proffered fairly often at the local level, too, in order to curry favor. Plans were transformed into antiplans. They led to wishful thinking, self-deception and ultimately hurt the economy. But the cost wasn’t just economic—people lost faith. If people

lose faith in what they are doing, in their responsibilities the damage is almost impossible to undo. The preservation of proclamations that have outlived their time and decisions that were not thought through—this is the main reason for the drop in faith. And it poses a threat to society.

G.M. It's no accident that people now say that inertia in the way we think and act is too intransigent. It's going to take a tremendous effort to overcome it...

C.A. ...and a clear notion of *what* has to be reconsidered. Take the ecology, for instance. The Aral Sea has now shrunk 46 kilometers from its shores. Waste lands have emerged. The whole area now has a totally different climate. The lives of the local people have changed. They get sick more often. All of this is reflected in the economic and social potential of an enormous region. Sixty rivers and streams used to flow into the Issyk Kul. Now only one does.

The lesson here is that this occurred over decades and the alarm was sounded more than once. We need to thank the Russian writers² who defended Lake Baikal and the northern rivers. But in order to change the situation the wheels that had been set in motion had to be stopped "at the top". Even the mechanism of glasnost wasn't fully effective in this instance, because you can talk and talk but will anyone hear you?.. Or take tourism: it's plagued by incomprehensible prohibitions. You can't visit this district, you can't visit that district... A lot of people leave here dissatisfied and that doesn't help the tourist industry. What is more important to us anyway: to develop tourism or to be forever the object of criticism?

Whatever we turn our attention to today—the economy, day-to-day life, the social structure—we have to focus on whether it helps or hinders socialism, the main goal that united us all. We've got to stop thinking that socialism has ordained that we shall live in this way and no other, that we shall work under certain conditions and no others. It makes me bitter to think of how much pointless work has been done in the social sciences! Much, it appears, was not needed and much was deluded. Reams of dissertations. People spent years of their lives on that and mouthed formulas they'd learned by heart instead of developing the theory of socialism.

A lot of things stop working as soon as we start going on about them. Many of the themes of our lives and struggle have to be purged of verbiage and maybe even given new meaning. Take the peace theme. Now, in this new round, when genuine-

ly persistent work is being done to defend peace we need to stop promoting abstract desire and start looking for the truth and common ground. Much of what we said on this theme has, I think, lost its meaning, but on the other hand a new sense of it has appeared. Somebody brought me some reproductions of works by Gennady Dobrov; he does portraits of disabled war veterans. That's his subject. When I saw them, and he uses live models (you won't see these works at exhibitions, they're too depressing, don't you know), I was literally taken ill. I saw a man who didn't have any legs or arms, another who didn't have a face, just a mask. And these people are living, our government didn't abandon them. One old man is shown lying in a wheelchair, decorations and medals dangling from his military jacket. He has an intelligent face, his eyes are expressive and there's so much sorrow in them! We know that it's hard to imagine a million dead, but to see one disabled war veteran is to understand what war is all about. I didn't sleep a wink that night. My wife got worried and asked me, "Why are you looking at that?" Well, who should? I would distribute those reproductions throughout the world... although I'm afraid that anything is less powerful in large quantities.

Right now a lot is being done in terms of foreign policy. Flexibility is being shown, progress has been made on some things, compromises and agreements are being sought. What are we giving up when we compromise? Our territory, air, water? Certainly not! The point is to find a sensible alternative for ourselves and others.

How is new thinking making its way into international affairs? (When US Secretary of State George Shultz came to Moscow several writers met with him. What mainly interested the Secretary of State was glasnost. He was the guest and we considered it our duty to hear him out and answer his questions, observing proper form. He asked the questions, we answered them.

What's happening here right now is not the latest campaign, we told Shultz. It flows naturally from our realities. The political structure of the country remains the same, the goals and ideology of our society are those that were proclaimed seventy years ago. But a kind of mobilization of its spirit, intellect and organizational abilities is underway. Perestroika means gaining an insight into the past and at the same time foreseeing improvements that can and must be made.

Why did Shultz exhibit such a strong interest in glasnost and

everything it stands for? When was the last time such a high-ranking government official voluntarily got into a discussion like that? I think that for them, the West, it poses a problem. The stereotypes of our society they operated with before are no longer valid. Those stereotypes won't do for making serious new predictions, if they really want their predictions to carry weight. And their desire to know what attitude to take is understandable. That's why I think that glasnost will, among other things, help the world survive. That's what I said: "If our perestroika is successful, Mr Secretary of State, you can consider it a big contribution to the well-being of all people everywhere today. In other words, we will have more common ground and a good chance of survival."

New thinking and a new vision of the world are fundamental matters, they're not confined to foreign affairs. The principles of mutual trust, mutual tolerance, cooperation and respect for various points of view apply equally to domestic affairs. We're serious people, we must not have principles "for them" and principles "for us" – we must have *principles*. So it's not just world problems we're trying to take a new look at, but a matter as delicate as ethnic relations within the country. If we have anything to be proud of and anything to say to the world for the past 70 years then among the first of our hardest-won achievements I would name equality of opportunity for every ethnic group. And here we have to give credit not just to the Russian people and its greatness, but to the ideology which it worked so hard and at such cost to build, together with us under the leadership of the Party. That is also a new page in historical development – internationalism in action. But, have we found out everything, put everything in its proper place?

G.M. Moreover, new problems have popped up along the way. For example, we complain that the principle of equal access to higher education has been violated in some places, young men and women from the native population predominate in the freshman classes of institutions of higher learning. Could this issue have arisen a few decades ago, when some ethnic groups did not even have a written language?

C.A. The same goes for job promotion: we're increasingly coming around to the idea that the main criterion for promotion should be one's personal and professional abilities, not one's ethnic background. What's most important is that a person be in the job that's right for him or her... In short, we need to take practical approach every time to extending interna-

tionalism. The dynamism of this multiethnic state with its single economy and single ideology, as well as the scientific and technological revolution force people to interact. That has to be our basic premise.

G.M. It's not hard to imagine that happening where the economy and government are concerned. But what about culture?

C.A. Well, the idea of a Slavic Studies Day has recently been proposed. I support it, especially as the Slavic Cyrillic alphabet has played such a big role in the cultures of the non-Slavic ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. After all, most of our ethnic groups have made the Russian alphabet their own. Every group has a sense of pride and self-esteem, and rightly so. At the same time, though, they see themselves as participants in a common undertaking. We couldn't have said that half a century ago. Nowadays we're so much a part of a common Soviet culture that we can consider the Slavic heritage to be our heritage, and we regard some aspects of it (particularly the alphabet) as the building blocks of our culture. See what an interesting historical change has occurred in our time! But we should include to the same extent what the cultures of other groups in the Soviet Union have to offer. As a bilingual writer, a Russo-Kirghiz writer, I think a Slavic Studies Day would have pan-cultural significance. But we have to give some thought to other aspects of cultural integration, for example, the Turkic ethnic groups—together the second largest in the country after the Slavs. Or, say, the mighty Tajik-Persian segment, one of the most ancient cultures in Asia—why not institute annual holidays in honor of that culture?

Internationalism always presumes the existence of various essential facts specific to a particular ethnic group. Otherwise it would just be a word. Internationalism should be understood dialectically and creatively, not simply as an injunction. We are creating a model that is destined to have universal significance. All nations, if they want to coexist, face a pan-cultural movement on a global order. Here at home, in our own country, we are the first to address the issue, but I see our experience, our problems, and our efforts not just from a regional perspective or from a national perspective but more broadly, though of course we can't thrust integration on anybody.

G.M. In other words, we have a duty as pioneers here, too.

C.A. Yes. But we have to dot the i's: to say what's what. There is no such thing as a supra-ethnic culture and never has been. All cultures are ethnic. When we speak of the conver-

gence of cultures this must not be understood in a mechanical way—a standardized approach would be disastrous. Convergence is a long, dialectical process but it completely rules out the possibility of certain cultures being swallowed up by others. Some of those individuals who are forever in a hurry ask, “What do we need ethnic languages and ethnic schools for? If we’re going to fuse let’s hurry up and do it.” That is ethnic nihilism. Camouflaging itself as internationalism, it is just as reactionary as nationalism itself. Because it triggers nationalism. And those who tacitly support the restless nihilists help aggravate ethnic relations.

G.M. In the novel *A Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* you have a character named Sabitzhan—a typical ethnic nihilist.

C.A. He’d sell anyone or anything out. Apparently we’ve molded those kinds of people. They’ve talked themselves into regarding the name of the Manas Airport as an example of nationalism, and deny the need for ethnic schools and day care centers, thus depriving ethnic cultures of their base. They wouldn’t leave anything, nothing unique, not even the innocuously exotic. That’s why I think that this sort of pseudo-internationalism has no place in our efforts to do away with nationalism. That campaign should be carried out within each ethnic group in the name of genuinely brotherly relations.

G.M. So the world is a splendid place because it has many tongues and many faces?

C.A. That’s the way nature created it. The world is becoming more and more complex, a harsher and harsher place. The contradictions of the 20th century have reached such a critical level worldwide that only reason armed with human experience and pan-human ideals can counter the threat to the existence of the human race. And I am increasingly giving thought to the fact that all of us need a new vision of the world that involves genuine internationalism—the prototype of human relations in the future. And I have also been thinking about how important it is to realize today that there really is no turning back, and those aren’t just words, it’s the one and only truth.

1987



Alexander Alexandrov
(b. 1912): Mathematician and member of both the USSR Academy of Sciences and the National Italian Academy. Alexandrov has been awarded the USSR State Prize and Lobachevsky Prize for a number of fundamental works on geometry, measures theory, mathematical physics and the mathematical bases of the theory of relativity. He is also known to many readers as the author of articles on philosophy.

Look for Truth

A Komsomolskaya Pravda Interview
with Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences
ALEXANDER ALEXANDROV

V. Matulevicius. From time to time the editor of this newspaper gets letters which say that faith in our ideals has diminished. The word "faith" is also used in many comments on the fate of perestroika. There would certainly seem to be something to that, for if people don't have the shaken faith in our ideals restored they won't believe that changes so vital to society can really be made, and perestroika will, indeed, get nowhere.

Alexander Alexandrov. I'm deeply convinced that what we need to be talking about now is not shaken faith but the Marxist world view, which has been noticeably distorted in recent years. The cornerstone of the scientific world view is the desire to find out the truth. Instead people in this country were sometimes taught how best to adapt Marxism to tasks that were superficial, even alien to the truth, forgetting that Marx called people who indulged in such behavior low.

As far as the correlation between faith (not just religious) and the scientific world view is concerned, we make serious errors in interpreting it. Naturally, I don't have anything against

the word “faith” as an expression of confidence, trust in others, etc. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that in using it we often get confused. Faith, in both the philosophical and everyday sense, is a conviction that does not permit doubt or demand proof but is assumed: I believe, and that’s that. Therefore faith ends where the science begins. The word “faith” simply does not exist in scientist’s vocabulary. Thus, for instance, the mathematician does not believe in a theorem but is convinced that it is correct, insofar as it has been proven. Intellectual ethics do not allow anything to be accepted without sufficient proof except as a premise subject to verification.

While we often talk about the unparalleled faith the generation that made the Revolution had in the inevitable triumph of communist ideals, we forget for some reason that it signified nothing else than a firm hope based on an understanding of the laws of social development. After all, Lenin called on the young to think critically so that communism would not be something they had learned by rote but a product of their own thought.

It is hard to imagine Marx saying, “I believe”. His was a completely different mind set. He analyzed the data and acquired certain convictions on the basis of it – he was a traveler setting out for a new world. The passive doubt many people entertain today was not for him. He stood for progress towards the big truth through active, critical thought. It certainly does not exclude the possibility of firm convictions. But they are founded not on faith but on proofs, on a critical search for more substantial evidence.

To make the problem clearer I’ll add that proselytism of any kind, no matter how good the intentions that lie behind it, is basically immoral, because when people are moved to faith they lose their capacity to think critically and docilely follow the proselytizer.

V.M. Does that mean that the moral problems we hear so much about now were aggravated when something far removed from a genuinely scientific world view prevailed for such a long time?

A.A. What else but a departure from the scientific world view can explain, for example, the fact that communism was declared to be just around the corner? We still haven’t perceived all the moral consequences that has had. And then we’re surprised that young people didn’t listen to us! People

simply got fed up with the false claims that were constantly being made under the guise of science.

Once a long time ago, when I was the rector of Leningrad University, I went to a lecture a professor was giving on literature. The topic was Gumilev,¹ the Decadents, etc. The professor tore them to pieces. Later on some of the students asked me, "Wasn't there anything good about them? How could there be a whole trend in literature that was completely worthless?.." When I spoke to the faculty, I mentioned the professor's summary dismissal of Gumilev. But Gumilev, I said, was a poet of such caliber that if a student found his work and read it, everything the professor had said in his lecture would be wasted. It's better to say nothing about a poet like that than to indulge in facetious talk.

V.M. Isn't all the present fuss about Gumilev and other forgotten writers going to the other extreme, though? Reading the articles of some literary critics and poets you get the impression that the leading lights of Soviet poetry then were just people like Mandelstam, Pasternak and Akhmatova... Even Mayakovsky is being squeezed out and Yesenin is often ignored altogether...

A.A. Of course that's going to extremes, but you could say that life is made up of extremes. There's a Yesenin Street in Leningrad. And once he was banned. Or Bunin—the "execrable White emigrant" who was later declared "a great Russian writer"... That's going to continue until we really and truly comprehend that there is more than one side to everything. Otherwise we can keep on painting things black then white or vice versa.

It's always harder to be serious. Some things are abused and reviled because many people simply don't understand them. At other times we are dealing with a true ideological aberration that simply must be resolutely combated. Religion, for example—it has to be discussed honestly and objectively.

Criticism of religion should center, above all, on its essence, not on how it was used by some individual. The postulates of faith eclipse consciousness.

There is a theological term called salvation which denotes the supreme blessing God bestows on man when he fulfills a number of conditions and demands. If we proceed from this term, which expresses the essence of Christian morality, then we can say that the fundamentally new contribution Marx made was this: the salvation of man as a mass phenomenon is possible only

if society as a whole is saved, and this is accomplished with the help of science, not God. The finest doctrines are powerless and may prove erroneous if man does not make it a principle to study society's development objectively and scientifically.

There is also an ethical side to the question. The religious moral code, no matter how lofty it is, requires man to adhere to it because it is pleasing to God. God rewards good and punishes evil. Thus, moral behavior is not valued for its own sake but is compelled "by the fear of God". The philosopher Immanuel Kant even suggested that God was necessary so that virtue could be rewarded—a view that might be termed rather mercenary: why do good if you don't get anything in return? Thus, a moral code based on religion lacks genuine moral substance.

Speaking through Ivan Karamazov,² Dostoyevsky said that if there is no God then everything is permissible. But why? Is it because man has no conscience, only the fear of God? Isn't that vile? The socialist moral code is loftier because people are urged to adhere to it for the sake of lofty aims, not rewards. Thus, the foundation of the socialist moral code lies in our consciences, in our convictions, where the desire to do good is indissolubly linked with the scientific world view as well as with the conscientiousness and devotion to the truth they all demand. And one more important point—Lenin's definition of communist morality was that whatever serves the cause of communism is moral. Therefore communism can only be built by communist means. Not everyone understands this. One of the gravest moral errors that was made was the conviction that communism could only be cultivated by means of brutality, repression and the extermination of class enemies. It wasn't communist morality that was asserted but the opposite. We remember the examples of "barrack communism" in Kampuchea, where a whole nation was subjected to genocide.

V.M. You cited Karamazov's words, which are, indeed, untenable from a materialistic point of view. At the same time, though, one can't help but notice that his predictions have come true to a certain degree. As the master of his own soul man not only often proves incapable of living his own life in a worthy fashion but confronts society with moral problems that were undreamed of in the past. Doesn't that indicate that the new moral system rejected the deliberate regimentation of man's conduct too early? After all, society's influence, which such great hopes were once placed on, quite often proves inef-

factive. That's why, like it or not, we have to return to the old question of what can keep man from committing an immoral act when he knows that it will not have grave consequences for him.

A.A. I am deeply convinced that moral strength rests in man and man alone, in his perception of his own honor and personal integrity. If fear of punishment is all that keeps him from doing evil, society may benefit but that is not true morality. When Oleg Koshevoi³ was being subject to excruciating torture did he refuse to give his comrades away merely because he was afraid of being punished? Of course not! It was a very profound conviction that he had to maintain his integrity as a man of conviction.

As for incentives, we need put less emphasis on punishment and take advantage of the power of the example. My main "misfortune" in life was that I grew up surrounded by decent people — my parents and teachers. I was firmly convinced that that was the way things were and should be. Once, a long time ago, after I'd become a Doctor of Science I said to my father, "Dad, how about I buy you a suit?" Back then things like that weren't so easy to come by. "From a profiteer? Never!" See?.. When you grow up around a person like that your principles are shaped accordingly. My parents were teachers and as far as I could see nothing interested them so much as their work. I grew up believing that a person's work was his or her life. I didn't think that it could be any other way for an intellectual person. Only later did I learn that that's often not the case.

V.M. But for principles like those to become ingrained you have to imbibe them practically with your mother's milk!

A.A. That's why I mentioned the power of the example. I don't remember who wrote that when he was a child and went to bed his father sat in the next room and worked, and he always saw light under the door — that light formed him. That's what's most important. That's why I think the older generation has to take some of the blame for the defects of the young, which are talked about so much now. It went against and sometimes even trampled on the principles it proclaimed. There were times you'd come to a meeting of the city Party committee and hear a sermon on lofty principles, and then they'd call you at the university and try to talk you into helping so-and-so get in, who did not have the qualifications. What can you expect after that sort of thing?

The Party Rules now address the subject of ethics and I

think that's right, Lenin could not have suggested adding something like that because for him it was a given.

We have to look back at the roots of the Revolution more often. I consider myself a child of the 20s, and those were great years! We looked to the future and had lofty aims. We saw building a new society as our moral mission, and I grew up in that kind of spiritual atmosphere. It wasn't like the one that followed; that was a completely different moral climate. Let me give you an example to show what I mean. I was a mountain climber and in the 30s we sang the same songs around the campfire that were played on the radio. By the 50s that wasn't true anymore. A divergence had occurred, double-dealing had arisen.

Nowadays people talk about science and values, values and science. What kind of talk is that? Science grows out of the value man places on the truth. Likewise, man's world view grows out of his values and moral code.

V.M. You've touched on literature several times in our conversation. That seems natural because literature plays a very important role in the formation of values. However, as it possesses exceptional emotional and intellectual power it is equally capable of leading people astray, twisting their values and strengthening prejudice. Quite a few examples could be cited from the literature of the past and present.

A.A. The trouble is that we just don't have a sufficiently serious understanding of moral problems. That can't help but leave a mark on the work of writers, too. And not just on their work. For example, Boris Pasternak was recently reinstated in the Writers' Union. But who expelled him? The same writers who love so much to give us lessons in morality at times. You say they were ordered to? Excuse me, but why do we have to obey orders like that?.. And, besides, were any orders actually given? There was a time when it was simply terrifying not to obey an order—you could be imprisoned or worse. But that wasn't true later on. If worse came to worse they might stop publishing your work for a while. Vera Ketlinskaya⁴ once dissented and she wasn't able to get anything published. She was on the verge of selling her country house. So what? She preserved her integrity. I don't accept the moral stance Pasternak's work reflects but I still recognize that he was one of the most important poets of his time and I regard his expulsion from the Writers' Union as an immoral act plain and simple.

There's a lot of talk now about his novel, *Doctor Zhivago*. Years ago I read the book in English and it depressed me because I well remember how true intellectuals felt at the time. Once I got into an argument with an American about it. "You and I will never agree because I value the individual over society!" he declared. "But just think about what's written there," I replied. "A terrible, bloody revolution is going on. And what does the hero do? He's a doctor, but he just runs and hides! You yourself believe that Christ allowed himself to be crucified for the sake of people. So it's not that the morality in the novel isn't ours—it's pre-Christian..." The American agreed with me. Even so, the novel should have been published when it was written and then judged on its merits.

Given the moral atmosphere that prevailed quite recently, I appreciate the act Chinghiz Aitmatov performed in creating the character of Avdi,⁵ who throws himself on an embrasure. Avdi is a challenge to the moral apathy that is expressed by the words, "Why should you do more than the next guy?" In the character of Christ as portrayed by Aitmatov I saw the archetype of a man who gives his life for his convictions. We shouldn't harbor any unnecessary illusions—sometimes the block does await those who fight for the truth. But it is the truth.

Looking for the truth and sticking by it is hard sometimes. It's even harder to recognize your responsibility, with nothing but your conscience to guide you. It's easier to rely on faith in God or even more on instructions, the leadership... But we need to develop our fortitude, conscientiousness and loyalty to the truth. We need to look for the truth and defend it.

V.M. There's one final question I'd like to ask. Perhaps you have some specific suggestions relating to our discussion that you haven't had an opportunity to express?

A.A. As a matter of fact, I do. There is an idea I have been pondering all my life: our society has to repeal the death penalty. The Constitution should say, "Human life is sacred. Therefore the Soviet state condemns war, condemns murder as the most terrible of crimes and pledges to observe the law scrupulously. The death penalty is hereby repealed. It may be reinstated by special act of the Supreme Soviet in the emergency of war..." It is a communist moral principle that we'll have to return to sooner or later. After all, the Bolsheviks were opposed to the death penalty and introduced it out of necessity—in response to the White terror. It was subsequently repealed at the

first opportunity. But later it was reinstated. In itself a declaration that human life is sacred would be of enormous moral significance for the state, to say nothing of its significance for the affirmation of communist morality and humanism.

We really do have to look back at the roots of the Revolution more often and see how our lives measure up. Only then will we understand where we've come and where we should be going.

1987



Yuri Afanasyev (b. 1934): Doctor of History and Rector of the State Archival History Institute. Afanasyev is the author of a number of articles on historiography, the social history of France, and *Historical Method vs. Eclectics* (1981). He is also the editor and translator of Fernand Braudel's three-volume work, *Les structures du quotidien: civilization matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XV-XVIII-siècle* (Vol. 1, 1986).

The interview reprinted in this book provoked a lively discussion in the Soviet press on perestroika in historical studies and the reconsideration of the country's past in light of new historical thinking.

From a Position of Truth and Realism

A *Sovetskaya Kultura* Interview
with Professor YURI AFANASYEV

Tatiana Menshikova. One of the things that worry our society today is social passivity. I hope you won't think it strange if we address this question to you: how can historians help overcome this problem?

Yuri Afanasyev. To overcome this problem and others like it we need to know the truth about the society we live in. That may well be one of the greatest keys to understanding our socialist future. After all, the past is not a separate issue, but one of many. Without the past, self-awareness is impossible, and the whole realm of modern thought and absurdity, fears, hopes and plans is incomprehensible. Being the way we are, we need to know about the past to put it behind us. That is a basic principle.

But at this particular moment, in light of what society has undertaken, knowledge of two junctures in Soviet history is especially important: 1917-1929 — "Lenin and post-Lenin", and 1956-1965 — "post-Stalin, the 20th Party Congress and attempts at reform". It would be worth our while to analyze the triumphs

and defeats of these exceptionally dynamic and contradictory periods.

To be more specific, the question is, do we have an adequate understanding of the conflicting ideas and social projects, the “models” of socialism, that were put forward during Lenin’s lifetime and after his death? We need to reread and therefore finish reissuing the proceedings of the Party congresses and conferences. We need to radically change the way the archives operate. And we need to make an exhaustive examination of the correct and erroneous ideas that clashed then, their social roots and inner logic.

Next. People feel in various ways about Stalin. Nonetheless, we should by no means ignore his speeches and articles. If necessary, they should perhaps be reissued. Soviet television still only shows him on occasion, surrounded by the aureole of wisdom and might. Let the younger generation have a chance to form an objective idea of him by reading his works along with the works of Lenin and his fellow revolutionaries. The point is not simply to go back to the 20th Congress¹ but to take the analysis still further.

Here’s another aspect of this. In the TV documentary, *My Contemporaries*, which was broadcast recently the young Yuri Gagarin strides down a carpet after his return to Earth. Who is he going to report to? Who will shake his hand? Kids don’t know. Those who are older exchange looks. Should Khrushchev² have been left in? He was a complex figure, far from a simple. His role in the postwar history of our society still needs to be defined more precisely. How long can we pretend that he didn’t exist? And Gagarin has to stride off into the distance somewhere, from a vacuum to a vacuum. Everything has to be remembered!

We talk about stagnation over the past 15-20 years. It makes me bitter to think that for men and women my age the best years of their lives were bound up with stagnation. Those years can’t be retrieved! That makes it all the more vital that they not be forgotten. They are important and instructive. We shall remember, remember and think about the 10th Congress³ and the 20th. We shall think about them and remember them for the sake of our Party’s 28th and 29th Congresses. We shall remember the bad, too, and what lay behind all our achievements and the paradoxes of our history, all that was courageous and honest about it, the experience we gained from what we undertook but couldn’t bring about as well as from everything we could. We need to

analyze the launching and collapse of the economic reform of the mid-60s.

And do you know what else? We need to have a regular, scholarly, fearless journal on Party history. After all, at least some of the load has to be taken off Shatrov⁴

T.M. But in the meantime myths arise. They've been particularly plentiful in recent years. What are the roots of such common fallacies as "Nicholas II⁵ was not dumb", "Kolchak⁶ was a strong figure" and others? Where have they come from?

Y.A. Maybe what you call "myths" are to some extent natural—historical anecdotes, rumors, repercussions. What's depressing are not the "myths" or the common semi-superstitions but the fact that they have taken the place of works on history, rather than hovering on the fringes of them. We have to teach people to think in broad, meaningful categories, not to make do with anecdotes. Then it would become clear that Nicholas II was not just a dense man of poor or mediocre education but treacherous, obstinate and cruel, as people who knew him well noted.

Another reason why myths grow up around reactionary historical figures is the practice, which was outdated 50 years ago, of portraying them as caricatures. Soviet people are more sophisticated than that now. Aren't we feeling the effects of the vacuum of information on reactionary historical figures and periods of reaction that was artificially created by placing a de facto ban on the study of such topics?

At the same time, the history of the Revolution has been impoverished, depersonalized and weighed down by sociological abstractions that leave people cold, particularly the younger generation. Society's moral reference points have become distorted. Some authors now openly reject the class approach in assessing the facts and certain historical personalities.

All of this perceptibly shook the democratic foundations of our social awareness. An ideology (which incidentally received active support in some circles) began to take shape out of an attraction to so-called strong personalities. This is an extremely serious development. The substitution of this ideology for the class or even democratic approach to depicting the personalities and events of the past particularly intensified in the 70s.

Certain historians, journalists and writers of fiction, who identify the Russian nation's cultural heritage with tsarism and the dominant classes in Russia, were delighted by the departure in the 30s from the "harsh dogmatism" of the previous

years, when the apologetic view of the autocracy's history, a legacy of aristocratic and bourgeois historical studies, was re-examined by Marxist historians. They declare that history should not be contented with "narrow-minded discussions" of a "dark and obscure time", and have undertaken the scarcely original job of popularizing the "pan-national" mission of the Russian tsars and grandees by portraying them as exponents of the interests of all classes, society as a whole. They trace this thread from Kievan Rus through the time of Ivan the Terrible, Catherine the Great and her associates to Nicholas II. F. Nesterov,⁷ for instance, tries to persuade the reader that Russians remained as "faithful to the sovereign ... as to God", that for all his cruelty Ivan the Terrible was "loved by people to a degree" other sovereigns could attain "only through leniency and kindness", etc.

Unfortunately, these views have gotten a fairly extensive press. They have also given rise to the "myths" you spoke of.

T.M. Western historians extol the role of the autocracy in the development of the Russian state and assert that the Revolution of October 1917 interrupted the natural course of historical events. How seriously should we take such arguments?

Y.A. As far as the apologetics for the autocracy are concerned, they represent a break with the traditions of the Russian intelligentsia. And by that I do not mean the Social Democrats alone but the entire progressive, democratic intelligentsia. To disregard the powerful wave of criticism the autocracy was subjected to by the bourgeois camp would again mean merely having a very remote conception of what actually happened then. Everyone felt, knew, that there was going to be a revolution, perhaps even those who feared it; they all knew it was inevitable.

As for the October Revolution disrupting the natural course of events — it is more subtle and complicated than that. Actually, those who see the Revolution that way are right. If you think about it, it's not their insight, it's Lenin's. He's the one who said that the Revolution had changed the course of history. Any revolution does. Actually all that man has created — is that really the natural course of things? By creating events, people sometimes drastically change the course of life. After all, if April 1985 hadn't happened "the natural course of things" would have been stagnation, corruption and favoritism.

But getting back to the Revolution, it was the Mensheviks who were for the "natural" course of things — Plekhanov⁸ and

Martov, in particular. They thought that Russia was not ready for socialism, that capitalism still had a way to go. Lenin took them quite seriously. He was no less aware of that unreadiness than the Mensheviks were, in fact, he was more aware of it. We know what his response was.

As Lenin saw it, the dialectical paradox of the Revolution was that it would intervene in the “natural” course of things, which had become unbearable, and then *hasten* the day when Russia would be ready for socialism through proletarian rule and cultural revolution. Right now we’ve got a job to do that is just as incredibly difficult and paradoxical: we have to strengthen and improve the governance of the country so that it can strengthen socialist positions to the utmost and pave the way for self-government.

T.M. Many interesting books on Russia’s prerevolutionary history are published but our readers would probably not be able to name a single book on the history of the Soviet period that is as popular. Don’t you think that historians have somehow lost touch with the public?

Y.A. Unfortunately, that’s the case. Books on history that became social and cultural events in their own right have appeared, albeit infrequently. But rarely are they on Soviet history.

A historian also has to have the moral right to address broadly the problems of the society in which we live and propose solutions. He can only gain that right by taking on those who condemn history as a discipline to social passivity and by combating his own ulcers—inertia and servility. It is inappropriate for us historians to set ourselves above society and judge it, to appear before it in a white doctor’s coat or in genteel white tie and tails. If anyone needs to be healed and repent, moreover, it is us. Let’s hope that perestroika in our own profession is still to come. Yes, there were plenty of calls for debate and theoretical conclusions. But we all knew that new theories or facts would only be welcomed if they didn’t challenge the “consensus”. Deviation from the “norm” could have many repercussions for the historian up to be ousted from the profession. V.V. Adamov, E.N. Burdjalov, P.V. Volobuyev—the list goes on.

The right to understand and reconsider theoretical problems was claimed by a group of people who held a great many important posts. For example, in the early 70s they crushed a whole school of historian thought which saw prerevolutionary Russia as a multi-structured society and tried to make some general

statements about the unique features of Russia's historical development. Now, 15 years later, those same people have the gall to put forward ideas that they anathematized as deviations from Marxism and claim them as their own. Take a look at *The Historical Experience of Three Russian Revolutions...* How can authors with "principles" like that make historical diagnoses and give prescriptions? Stalin's *Short Course of the History of the CPSU* is the only way they know of curing our ills.

You spoke of passiveness and activeness. How do you think a historian should go about being active? After all, the very same administrators control the scholarly journals. Any journal that receives an article which does not entirely fall within the guidelines set by its "patron" will be sure to get the patron's okay before publishing it. If, of course, the editors aren't looking for adventure. Bureaucratic obstructions keep new ideas from getting into their publications.

Many of my colleagues think that a first step towards curing many of society's ills would be clearing the bureaucratic obstacles from the discipline's path. But that isn't easy. It isn't even easy to get ourselves to admit that we made any mistakes. We've been told, for instance, "You've lost your ability to critically assess your place in science." We make excuses: they must mean Party historians, not us, ours is a pure science. And a counter demand: it's time to place limits on the critical analysis of affairs. "We mustn't allow the entire discipline to be blackened under the guise of perestroika," Academician Tikhvinsky, the Secretary of the History Division, cautions. He is right. But that is not the point in this instance.

And here we need to be frank. Judge for yourself: thought stagnated for 20 years. Not completely, of course. Thought can never be completely stopped. Nevertheless, years of artificial restraint! It's become fashionable to sigh over the situation that has taken shape in the country and the utter hopelessness of recent years. That's something we probably have to think about, too. But there were specific culprits. It's no accident that Mikhail Gorbachev keeps returning to them, pointing the finger at the Party Central Committee and the leadership of the country, among others. We all have to do likewise. Anonymous criticism is not the best way of furthering perestroika. There were and are specific individuals who bear direct responsibility for the stagnation. At the very least we have to know who they are, especially since they continue to think and act along old lines. The campaign in the early 70s to stop new

approaches to history was headed by S.P. Trapeznikov who was able to men the discipline as he pleased and put his own people in almost every position he controlled, thus creating a network of people bound together by their “debt” to him. Some of them still hold the reins and never tire of calling for “bold new approaches and discussion”. At the March 9 meeting of the Academy of Sciences’ History Division, Corresponding Member P.V. Volobuyev named some of those people and sharply criticized the state of the discipline. But his was pretty much a lone voice. In contrast, some administrators urged us not to “hurry with perestroika”. I think the polarization of positions is going to grow in this area. We aren’t seeing the latest in a series of campaigns; a new day is dawning.

T.M. Opportunism. How have scholarship and the reading public suffered as a result? Which periods need to be given a new and more truthful reading?

Y.A. What do you mean? We don’t have any opportunists now. Judge for yourself. Some were thinking people before. Others never knew how to think or have completely forgotten how. All their lives they’ve toed the line. Now the line is independent thought and action. An anti-line line. An amazing situation, wouldn’t you say?

Seriously, a lot of people don’t want to reform because it isn’t in their interest and also, if you like, because they simply can’t. We need new blood. I think that’s why the second Party Central Committee plenum after the 27th Congress concerned cadres.

Which periods need to be given a new and more truthful reading? It is a rule of scholarship that no topic can ever be plumbed, nor is any exempt from review. But here and now, when the chief tasks historians face are bringing perestroika about and ensuring as best as they can that it will not be reversed there are, I think, certain particularly urgent topics. It is time to take a serious look at the Stalin cult in its many aspects. We do not have one study of this major, major question, while non-Marxist historians have produced hundreds and thousands of works on the subject, which we persist in ignoring. As a result even such historians of the Stalin era as V.I. Kasyanenko can’t make heads or tails of the simplest things. In my opinion they’re going backwards, not forwards, in the study of this topic.

For example, it staggers belief that the mass arrests of honest Soviet citizens in the 30s were either a “mistake” or a

“deficiency” “in the observance of socialist law” (on a par with deficiencies “in consumer services”) or even “the unavoidable debit side of the class struggle and the revolutionary restructuring of society”. Well-known Party resolutions use very different words—“perversion”, “arbitrary rule”, “lawlessness”, “the abuse of power during the cult of personality”, the actions of Beria’s “criminal band”. That is how people think of them. Since 1956 no new facts have emerged that would warrant a re-evaluation. Nor did Kasyanenko cite any in his article, “The Building of Socialism in the USSR and the Ideological Struggle Between Two Worlds.”⁹ The Party resolutions have not been revoked. So there are no political or moral grounds for a re-evaluation.

T.M. Today we’re increasingly reading Marx and Lenin instead of interpretations of their works. Why did those interpreters come to hinder rather than help our understanding of Marxism?

Y.A. You know that’s a rhetorical question, admit it. After all, that’s how it should be.

Marx and Lenin have to be read, not textbooks and not summaries. It’s terrible that our students rarely go to the originals and regard them as supplements to the synopses.

When we are alone with Marx and Lenin they are not so much “teachers”—wouldn’t they be “glad” that we call them that—as people we can always mull over ideas with. In reading them we have to keep in mind that they are not the last word on every problem. On the contrary, they point problems out to us and stimulate us to think of solutions with them. We need to understand the founders of Marxism now, when history has taken turns they did not foresee. Unfortunately, they are represented in all the textbooks as having been completely understood long ago. Their thoughts are presented as answers, not problems.

That is the essence of dogmatism.

Why is it that outwardly professional commentaries prove to be a hindrance? Because they’re unprofessional. Their basic postulates are that Marx, Engels and Lenin were always completely right and their opponents were always wrong. Even when Marx, Engels and Lenin themselves refute that by changing and arguing against the positions they had taken the day before—in those instances the commentator does not speak of complex intellectual conflicts or of the searching, choosing, doubting and other traits of a lively mind; he says

that they simply took the change in realities into account. Realities could change but they couldn't! They had educated, talented and at times brilliant opponents—Proudhon, Bakunin,¹⁰ Lassalle, Kropotkin,¹¹ Plekhanov. We frequently make their opponents stupid and in doing that we belittle the founders of Marxism. Like all truly profound ideas, those of Marx, Engels and Lenin have grown in significance over the years, encompassing developments they did not directly foresee. Their ideas are open-ended.

Of course, serious philosophers and historians adopt a different approach than dogmatists, but there aren't many works of that kind yet.

And another thing. Every period looks to Lenin for answers to the questions it faces. Right now, it seems to me, three things are of particular interest to us. One, the initial stages of the foundation of the socialist economy. Two, Lenin's method of changing course; again, not in detail but in order to extract a few general principles of political thinking. Three, extremely tough polemics without retribution, in the Leninist tradition. It is also true, however, that he carried on polemics with important and talented people who were vital to the Revolution.

T.M. The gaps in our knowledge are being filled by art—Shatrov's plays are just one example. The interest in them is natural. We're tired of oversimplification and of seeing the Revolution and Civil War turned into Westerns. Which historical processes and events do you think could become the fabric of works of fiction that would have as much of an impact on people as *And Quiet Flows the Don*¹² did? What do you expect of the historical novel and art in general?

Y.A. Art naturally cannot take the place of historical research or of political and socio-historical introspection. What Shatrov does when he skilfully and thoughtfully assembles his plays from archival material, blending fact and fiction, is brilliant and valuable, but it is also a bitter reproach to historians; it can't take the place of our work. But then history can't take the place of art either. Art gives us the "colors of the times". It gives us a synthesis that isn't in the power of the most talented and honest historian. It isn't in the power of the historian to present the Civil War the way Isaac Babel¹³ and Vsevolod Ivanov¹⁴ did, or the way, say, Gleb Panfilov¹⁵ did in the film *No Crossing Through Fire*. Or the way it was done by Pavel Filonov, Alexander Deineka and Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin,¹⁶ who gave us a stupendous fusion of the sublime, cruelty, pathos and

dreams. To quote the poet, they gave us a chance to feel history “to burst the aorta”.¹⁷

I can't entirely accept the way you put your question: what should art give? There is nothing art “should” do. The film *My Friend, Ivan Lapshin*¹⁸ depicts the early 30s in such a way that it encompasses everything that only the people of that time experienced, plus everything that the characters in the film don't know about themselves and their future but we do. Suddenly something miraculous happens: a moment in history long past becomes the focal point for a long, epoch-making time – from the Civil War to today.

I expect art to be art... and that's why I don't want to define my expectations any further. If I knew what art should give me what would I need it for? But if there is, in fact, anything art “should” do then it should surprise us and give us a profound understanding of the past. Like German's and Abuladze's¹⁹ films, nothing like what one would have imagined beforehand, or like Tarkovsky's *Mirror* and his very powerful and controversial *Rublyov*.

I expect what I don't know.

T.M. October 1917 and October 1987... What aspect of that time cast a new light on our time and our problems?

Y.A. A question I have often thought about is why, during the final “lull”, literally on the eve of the October Revolution, Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*. All of us need to read that work over and over again. Power was about to be seized by the proletariat, and the problem of power – how to exercise it – became paramount. As the Social Democrats saw it, the problem was the state *or* revolution. For Lenin, everything rested on the *copulative* conjunction: bringing about that “and”.

That was Lenin's main theme, and all our triumphs and failures, all our valuable experience bear it out. A revolution is being accomplished by a state so the state should be revolutionary. “A revolutionary state” – a paradoxical combination of words and everything is contained in the semantic unit between “state” and “revolution”. That “and” is everything. Why? Well, can you imagine, say, “bureaucracy and revolution”? Lenin focused on keeping a Soviet bureaucracy from arising. It was clear to him that it was impossible to do without a state, but a bureaucratic state would spell disaster of the revolution. In other words, the problem of problems – a state without bureaucracy.

For a time one of those words disappeared from our mental

horizon: we remembered about the state but forgot about revolution. Now the problem is before us again: the state and revolution. It is no accident that this problem lay at the heart of the speech Mikhail Gorbachev made at the last plenum.²⁰ Note that the central portion of that speech was entitled, “Extend Socialist Democracy, Develop Self-Government by the People”.

While we’re on the subject of the lessons of the last 70 years, it should be stressed that we were in too big a hurry to trumpet our success and forgot that we were at the start of a worldwide transition that is destined to take hundreds and thousands of years. We are still in the first century, the first day has not yet ended. Everything we’ve achieved, like all our dissatisfaction, has to be put in the perspective of that one day. We are still pioneers. Our valuable experience is everything we have given world history, everything we’ve accomplished at the heavy price of struggle, suffering and hopes. If he were alive today Lenin would certainly elaborate some of his thoughts and reconsider others. Something else is astounding, though—not only have his main ideas not aged, they are still waiting to be realized, we have to make this happen. That’s the attitude Lenin himself took to Marx. We should look at Lenin’s works from the same perspective.

T.M. What does perestroika mean for you, personally, as the head of an institute, and instructor of the next generation of historians? How do you see them?

Y.A. My aims as rector naturally differ from my aims as a historian. There are some that I’d like to accomplish right away. To radically improve the training our students receive, to ensure that they get a broad education and will never become timeservers, parroting platitudes. So that they will work in archives as historians, not clerks, with a truly sophisticated understanding of the significance of their profession.

I would also like to see the Archival History Institute, which I have quickly come to feel at home in, stay in its present location on the street that used to be called Nikolskaya, in the old walls of the Slavic-Greco-Latin Academy, and the plans to build what remains of the Kitai Gorod area so that it can all be turned over to the Lenin Museum permanently shelved. I wonder what Lenin would say if he knew that the Spassky Cathedral in the Zaikonospassky Monastery was to become a museum to him. It boggles the mind.

I’ve brought this subject up on purpose. Be perestroika as it

may, so far the only projects that are being scrapped, and then after a battle, are the ones the press throws its spotlights on. Any stupid plan that isn't noticed by the press, lo and behold, goes ahead.

We still frequently regard the past either with barbaric contempt or prayerful deference. First we tear down the Zaryadye neighborhood and build the Rossiya Hotel in its place. Now we propose to turn everything that's survived into one big museum! No! We must not destroy our cultural heritage either by bulldozing it or by turning it into a museum piece and tastelessly prettying it up.

Cultural continuity is ensured not just by preserving monuments but when the past is naturally and fully a part of the present.

1987

NINA ANDREYEVA

I Cannot Betray My Principles

*A Letter to the Editor
from a Teacher at a College in Leningrad*

After long consideration, I have decided to write this letter. I teach chemistry at the Lensovet Technological Institute in Leningrad. Just as many other teachers I am a supervisor of a students' group. In our day, after a period of social apathy and intellectual parasitism, students start to be charged with the energy of revolutionary change. Naturally, debate flares up on the ways of perestroika and its economic and ideological aspects. Glasnost, openness, the disappearance of areas banned for criticism, an emotional upsurge in mass consciousness, especially among the youth, often manifest themselves in the posing of problems which, to one degree or another, are prompted by Western radio "voices", or those among our compatriots, who do not have a clear idea about the essence of socialism. The range of topics discussed is amazing – including the multiparty system, the freedom of religious propaganda, emigration, the right to widely discuss sexual problems in the press, the need to decentralize the administration of culture, the abolition of military conscription... The topic that provokes the broader debate among the students is the country's past.

It stands to reason that we the teachers have to provide answers to the most burning questions. This requires, apart from honesty, knowledge, convictions, a comprehensive cultural foundation, serious consideration and balanced assessments. These qualities are required of all educators of youth, and not only teachers of social science.

A favorite place to walk for both my students and myself is the park in Petershof. We often walk along the snow-covered alleys, admiring the famous palaces and sculptures and arguing, yes, arguing. Young minds are eager to sort out all the complexities and determine their own way to the future. As I look at my young and enthusiastic interlocutors, I cannot help thinking about how important it is to help them find the truth and form a correct understanding of the problems faced by the society they live in, and which they are to restructure, to help them form a correct understanding of our past and recent history.

What worries me? Let me cite an example. One might think

that much has been written and told about the Great Patriotic War and the heroism of its soldiers. However, recently, at a students' meeting with the Hero of the Soviet Union, V.F. Molozev, retired colonel, held in the students' dorm of our institute, a question was raised regarding political repressions in the army. The veteran said that he had never encountered any repressions and that many of those with whom he had fought in the war since its beginning became high-ranking commanders at the end of the war... Some of the students were disappointed with the reply. In the minds of some of the young people the already habitual topic of repression has grown way out of proportion, preventing the objective representation of the past. Many similar examples can be cited.

Of course, one cannot but be happy about technical students being interested in the theoretical issues of social science. However, too many things have emerged which I can neither accept nor agree with. There is much talk about "terrorism", "political servility of the people", "social indifference", "our spiritual slavery", "universal fear", "predominance of boors in power"... It is with these words that the history of the period of transition to socialism in our country is often described. Small wonder then that among some students, nihilistic sentiment grows, ideological confusion emerges and that is accompanied by their losing political bearings and often becoming ideologically omnivorous. Sometimes one may hear suggestions that it is high time to hold responsible the Communists who allegedly dehumanized the country's life since 1917.

The February Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee has once again underscored the urgent need for the "young people to learn to take a class-oriented approach to world vision and understand the connection between the universal and class interests. This should include their gaining an insight into the class essence of the changes underway in our country." Such a vision of the past and the present is incompatible with political jokes, cheap rumor and hyperactive fantasies one often encounters today.

I read and reread the sensational articles and wonder what, for example, young people can gain, apart from disorientation, from the revelations about "the counter-revolution in the USSR in the early thirties", about Stalin being "guilty" for the Nazis and Hitler coming to power in Germany? Or from a public "count" of "Stalinists" among various generations and social groups?

As Leningraders, we recently watched a good documentary film about S.M. Kirov with particular attention. We found however, that the accompanying text not only failed to match the filmed documents but also imparted to them a certain ambiguity. For instance, one would see a sequence showing an upsurge of enthusiasm, universal elation and the spiritual revival of the builders of socialism, and at the same time hear a text about repressions and lack of information...

I was probably not the only one to notice that the Party leaders' appeals to the critics to also focus on the actual gains achieved at the various stages of the building of socialism provoke, as if on command, ever new outbursts of "exposures". The plays by Mikhail Shatrov stand out particularly vividly in this, alas, unfertile background. The day the 26th Party Congress was opened I went to the theater to see his *Blue Horses on Red Grass*. I still remember the hysterical reaction of the young people in the audience to the episode when Lenin's secretary starts pouring water out of a teapot onto his head having mistaken it for the clay model of his sculpture. Incidentally, some of the young people had brought along home-made posters, the inscriptions on which mixed both our past and present with mud... In his *Brest Peace*, the playwright and the director willed that Lenin should kneel before Trotsky. This epitomized the author's concept which is further developed in his other play, *Onward, Ever Onward*. A play is certainly not a historical treatise. However in a work of art, too, the truth is ensured by the author's stand, especially in the case of political theater.

Reviews in *Pravda* and *Sovetskaya Rossiya* thoroughly analyzed the playwright Shatrov's stance from a historian's point of view. I would like to share my view, too. I cannot but agree that Shatrov clearly deviates from the accepted principles of socialist realism. Describing a critical period in the history of our country, he makes an absolute of the subjective factor of social development and ignores the objective laws of history as manifested in the activity of the social classes and the masses. The role played by the proletarian masses and the Bolshevik Party is reduced to providing a background for irresponsible politicians to act against.

Using Marxist-Leninist methodology to analyze concrete historical processes, the reviewers have shown convincingly that Shatrov distorts the country's history of socialism. What he is not willing to accept is the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat without whose historic contribution to our devel-

opment we would have nothing to restructure today. Moreover, the playwright accuses Stalin of murdering Trotsky and Kirov and “blockading” the sick Lenin. One cannot but be astounded by his manner of hurling biased and unsubstantiated accusations at people who made history...

Regrettably, the reviewers failed to indicate that, for all his pretension, Shatrov is far from original. When I think of the logic of his assessments and argument, I cannot help remembering the book B. Suvarin published in Paris in 1935. The characters in Shatrov’s play voice the ideas of the opponents of Leninism about the course of revolution, the part Lenin had played in it and the relations among the Central Committee members at the various stages of intra-Party struggle... This gives a notion of Shatrov’s “new interpretation” of Lenin. Incidentally, Anatoly Rybakov, the author of *Children of the Arbat*, too, acknowledged that some of his plots had been suggested by emigre publications.

Even before reading Shatrov’s *Onward, Ever Onward* (it was not yet published), I came across enthusiastic comments about it in some periodicals. Why all these premature reviews, I wondered? Then I learned that hasty preparations for the production of the play were underway.

Soon after the February Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee, *Pravda* published a letter entitled “A New Round?” and signed by eight leading figures in Soviet theater. They were warning against possible procrastination in the production of Shatrov’s latest play. Such a conclusion was made from the criticisms of the play that appeared in the press. For some reason, the authors of the letter alleged that the authors of critical reviews did not rank with those who “loved their Motherland dearly”. How does this match then their desire to “passionately and heatedly” discuss the problems of our past and recent history? Or do they think that not everyone but they alone have the right to express independent opinion?

What I as a college instructor am especially interested in in the vast debate that today covers literally all aspects of social science are the issues directly tied up with the ideological and political education of young people, their moral health and social optimism. When talking to students and considering, together with them, various acute problems, I involuntarily come to the conclusion that many things with us have become distorted and lop-sided and need to be corrected. I should like to dwell upon some of them.

Consider the question of Stalin's place in the history of our country. It is his name that provokes most frenzied criticisms which, in my opinion, concern not so much Stalin as history-maker but rather the complexities of the transitional epoch, associated with the unprecedented heroism of a whole generation of Soviet people who are today gradually withdrawing from labor, political and public activities. Forcibly incorporated in the formula of the "personality cult" are industrialization, collectivization, and the cultural revolution, which put our country among the great world powers. All this is questioned today. Things have come to the point when insistent demands are made of the "Stalinists" (and everyone can arbitrarily be ranked with them) to "repent"... Praises are sung to the novels and films that castigate the epoch of *Sturm und Drang* portrayed as "the tragedy of peoples".

Let me say at this point that none of my family has ever had any relation to Stalin, his associates and praise-singers. My father was a docker at the Leningrad port, and my mother, a turner at the Kirov Works. My elder brother worked there, too. He, as well as my father and sister, perished in the war against the Nazis. One of my relatives, a victim of repressions, was rehabilitated after the 20th Party Congress. I share the Soviet people's anger and indignation about the massive repressions that occurred in the 1930s and the 1940s through the fault of the Party and state leadership of the time. However, my common sense revolts against unicolored portrayal of controversial events that has started to predominate in certain organs of the press.

I support the Party's appeal to defend the honor and dignity of the trail-blazers of socialism. I believe that it is from these Party and class-oriented positions that we should evaluate the historical role of all our Party and government leaders, including Stalin. We should not reduce the matter to "court intrigues" or abstract moralization by persons far removed from those stormy days and from people who lived and worked then. Incidentally, the way they did it still inspires us today.

For me, just as for many others, essential to the assessment of Stalin's role is the direct testimony of people who happened to deal with him personally on both sides of the barricade. The opinion of those on the other side is especially interesting.

Consider, for instance, the opinion of Churchill who, in 1919, was proud of his personal contribution to organizing armed intervention of 14 states against the young Soviet Re-

public and who, forty years later, was compelled to describe Stalin, one of his most formidable political opponents, in the following terms: He was a prominent personality who matched the cruelty of his time. He was a person of unusual energy, erudition, unbending willpower, harsh, cruel, ruthless in what he did and what he said; even a person educated by English Parliament (Churchill meant himself), could not counter him... His works were permeated with tremendous force. His formidable power distinguished him from the leaders of all times... The influence he had on people was irresistible. When he entered the room at the Yalta Conference, everyone would stand up as if by command. Strangely enough, everyone would stand at attention. Stalin possessed a profound, logical sensible wisdom which was not susceptible to panic. He was an unsurpassed master of finding a way out of the most hopeless situations... He was a person who eliminated his enemies with the hands of other enemies and forced those whom he openly described as imperialists to fight against other imperialists... He took Russia over with a plough in its hands and he left it equipped with atomic weapons. This confessed assessment by a loyal guard of the British Empire cannot be accounted for by political considerations of the time or by hypocrisy.

The main highlights of this description can be also found in the memoirs by De Gaulle and the reminiscences and correspondence of other political figures of Europe and America who had to deal with Stalin as a war ally and a class adversary.

Abundant and reliable material for consideration on this matter can be found in Soviet documents which are available, incidentally, to everyone. Take, for instance, the two volumes of the *Correspondence Between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR with Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945* put out by Politizdat Publishers in 1957. These documents truly make us proud of our country and the role it plays in the stormy and changing world. What also comes to mind is a collection of Stalin's reports, speeches and orders dating back to the war years. They molded the heroic generation of those who defeated fascism. We will do well to have another edition, one that could incorporate the formerly classified documents, such as dramatic Order No. 227 (incidentally, some historians insist that such a publication should be undertaken). These documents are not known to our young people. Memoirs by Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Golovanov, Shtemenko and the aircraft designer Yakovlev, all

of whom knew the Supreme Commander in person, are essential to the formation of historical consciousness.

True, those were hard times. But it is also true that in those days personal modesty bordering on ascetism was not yet something to be ashamed of and the potential Soviet millionaires still feared turning into real ones in the quiet of their unimportant offices or trade depots. Apart from that, we were not so businesslike and pragmatic as today; we were preparing our young for Labor and Defense and not for the intricate ways of enjoying the comforts and boons earned by their parents. We did not destroy the spiritual world of young people by imposing on them alien imported "masterpieces" of mass culture or their home-made versions.

From our long and frank talks with our younger interlocutors we conclude that behind the attacks against the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the former leaders of our country there are not only political, ideological and moral, but also social reasons. There are quite a few people on both sides of our frontiers who have a stake in broadening the springboard for such attacks. Living and thriving side by side with professional Western anti-Communists who have long been exploiting the allegedly democratic slogan of "anti-Stalinism" there are descendants of the classes overthrown by the October Revolution, many of whom still remember the material and social losses suffered by their ancestors. This also refers to the spiritual heirs of Dan and Martov and other representatives of Russian Social Democracy, spiritual followers of Trotsky and Yagoda, the offsprings of NEPmen, basmatches and kulaks hit by socialism...

As is known, every historical figure is molded by concrete social, ideological and political conditions which determine the subjective/objective selection of those called upon to address themselves to social problems. On emerging on the historical scene, they have, in order to maintain their position, to satisfy the demands of the time and of the basic social and political structures, to let the objective laws manifest themselves in their activity, thereby leaving an "imprint" of their personality on historical developments. In the final analysis, there are few people today who have qualms about the personal qualities of, say, Peter the Great. But everybody realizes that it is during his reign that the country was raised to the level of a great European power. Time has condensed the results of his activity and today they lie in the basis of the evaluation of the Emperor Peter as a history-

maker. The invariable flowers on his sarcophagus in the Cathedral of the Peter and Paul Fortress are symbolic of the respect for the tsar felt by our contemporaries who cannot be suspected of sympathizing with autocracy.

From my perspective, no matter how controversial and complicated a person figuring in Soviet history may be, his or her true contribution to the development and defense of socialism will sooner or later be given an objective and unambiguous assessment. It goes without saying that unambiguous assessment should not be understood as a one-sided assessment that either whitewashes or eclectically summarizes controversial phenomena. The latter approach makes it possible for one to be subjective, with certain reservations, in any way he likes — “to forgive or not to forgive”, “to throw out or keep in history”. Unambiguous assessment is, above all, concrete historical evaluation independent of the concrete situation and revealing — in terms of historical effect! — the dialectics of the correspondence of the action of a concrete personality to the main laws governing the development of society. In our country, these laws were tied up with “who will beat whom” nationally and internationally. If we want to abide by the Marxist-Leninist methodology of historical research, then, as Mikhail Gorbachev put it, we have to show graphically how millions of people lived and worked, what they believed in, and what was the combination of gains and setbacks, findings and mistakes, happiness and tragedy, the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses and the violation of socialist legality and, at times, crimes.

I have no doubts that the still valid, science-based guidelines for the assessment of Stalin’s actions are to be found in the CC CPSU resolution on overcoming the personality cult and its consequences, adopted in 1956, and in the report of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

One of my girl students has recently perplexed me by declaring that the notion of class struggle has become outdated, just as that of the leading role of the proletariat. I would not be worried if such a declaration was made by this girl only. Fierce debate was caused, to cite an example, by a recent allegation by a distinguished academician to the effect that the current relations among states belonging to the two different socio-economic systems are devoid of class content. I can assume that the academician did not deem it necessary to explain why he had

been writing just the opposite over decades. He used to maintain that peaceful coexistence is nothing else than a form of class struggle in the international arena. He seems to have discarded his former views. Well, this happens. Views change. However, as I see it, it is the duty of a leading philosopher to explain at least to the students who once studied or still study the textbooks he wrote his opinion: is the international working class represented by its various governmental and political bodies no longer opposed to the world capital today?

I feel that much of the present discussion is pivoted around the same question—which class or section of society is the leading and mobilizing force of perestroika? This question was touched upon, for instance, in the interview the writer A. Prokhanov gave to our city newspaper *Leningradsky Rabochy*. Prokhanov holds that the current state of social consciousness is determined by two ideological currents, or, as he puts it, “alternative strongholds” which aim at overcoming, from different directions, socialism built in our country in the course of “bitter struggle”. Although he overestimates the importance and acuteness of the struggle between these two currents, the author is right in stressing that “they only align in assaulting socialist values”. However, to believe their ideologues, both currents are “in favor” of perestroika.

The first, and most full-flowing ideological current at that, which has already manifested itself in the course of perestroika, claims to offer a model of some left-wing liberal intellectuals’ socialism which allegedly expresses the truest humanism “free” of any class accretions. Its advocates counter proletarian collectivism with “the intrinsic value of the personality”, with its modernistic quests in the cultural domain, God-seeking tendencies, technocratic idols, advocacy of “democratic” attractions of modern capitalism, and subservient admiration for its actual and imagined achievements. Its representatives allege that we have constructed a wrong kind of socialism and that today, for the first time in history, “there emerged an alliance between political leadership and the progressive intelligentsia”. At a time when millions of people throughout the world die from hunger, epidemics and imperialism’s military adventurism, they demand that “legislation to defend the rights of animals” be immediately elaborated, ascribe extraordinary intellectual power to nature and claim that intellectual qualities are of biological, rather than social, nature and genetically passed on from parents to children. Could anyone explain to me what does it all mean?

It is the advocates of “left-wing liberal socialism” who are creating the tendency toward falsifying the history of socialism. They try to convince us that the past history of our country consists solely of errors and crimes, while passing over in silence the great achievements of both our past and present. Claiming the full monopoly of the historical truth, they substitute the scholasticism of ethical categories for the socio-political criterion of society’s development. I wonder who could wish, and why, that every top leader of the Party Central Committee and Soviet Government should be compromised, after stepping down from his post, and discredited because of his actual and invented mistakes and miscalculations committed while solving the complicated problems that arose on our unprecedented historical path? Whence the emergent passion for undermining the authority and dignity of leaders of the world’s first socialist country?

Another highlight of the “left-wing liberal” ideology is either overt or covert tendency toward cosmopolitanism and a kind of “non-national internationalism”. I once read that when, in the early days of the Revolution, a delegation of merchants and manufacturers came to see Trotsky “as a Jew” in the Petrograd Soviet to complain about their being oppressed by Red Guards, he said, to the petitioners’ great bewilderment, that he was “an internationalist, and not a Jew”.

For Trotsky, the concept of “national” denoted something inferior and restricted as compared with “international”. That is why he kept talking about the “national tradition” of the October Revolution and “the national element in Lenin”, claimed that the Russian people had “no cultural heritage”, etc. We seem to be too shy to emphasize that it was precisely the Russian proletariat, whom the Trotskyites described as “backward and uncultured”, who effected, as Lenin stated, the “three Russian revolutions” and that Slavonic peoples were in the vanguard of humanity’s struggle against fascism.

The foregoing by no means belittles other peoples’ contribution to history, but only serves to ensure, as they say today, the completeness of the historical truth... When my students ask me how it could happen that thousands of villages in the Non-Chernozem Zone and Siberia were deserted, I answer that this, too, was the high price for the Victory and the postwar restoration of the national economy. This, and the irreparable loss of innumerable monuments and artifacts of Russian national culture. Moreover, I am convinced that belit-

ting the importance of historical consciousness causes the pacifist erosion of defense-oriented, patriotic consciousness and breeds the desire to brand the slightest manifestations of the national pride of the Russians as great-power chauvinism.

I am also concerned about the fact that militant cosmopolitanism has today become tied up with the refuseniks' practices of "rejecting" socialism. Unfortunately, we get alerted to it only when its newly recruited advocates commit crying excesses in front of the Smolny or by the Kremlin walls. Moreover, we are, little by little, trained to see it as some harmless "change of the place of residence" and not as a betrayal of the class and nation by the persons whose college and postgraduate education was paid for with the nation's money. Generally speaking, there are people who are bent on regarding refuseniks' actions as a kind of manifestation of "democracy" and exercise of "human rights" and claiming that the refuseniks' talents could not be developed because of "stagnant socialism". What if there, in the "free world", their enterprise and "talent" are not appreciated, either? What if their betrayal fails to attract the attention of the secret service? Well, in that case they can come back...

As is known, Marx and Engels would describe whole nations at a certain stage of their history as "counter-revolutionary" depending on the concrete historic role they were playing. I repeat, nations, and not classes or estates. Proceeding from their class approach, they did not shun giving a negative appraisal to various peoples including the Russians, the Poles and the nations they themselves belonged to. The founders of the scientific-proletarian ideology remind us, as it were, that every people in the fraternal family of Soviet peoples should uphold its dignity and never allow to be instigated to a display of nationalistic or chauvinistic moods. The national pride and national dignity of every people should organically blend with the internationalism of the united socialist society.

Whereas neoliberals are oriented toward the West, the other "alternative stronghold", to use Prokhanov's phrase, that is, "protectors and traditionalists", seek to "overcome socialism by moving backwards". In other words, by returning to the social forms that existed in pre-socialist Russia. Representatives of this peculiar "peasant socialism" are fascinated by this vision. They feel that a hundred years ago the moral values accumulated over the centuries by the peasant commune have been lost. The "traditionalists" have performed indubitable

services by way of exposing corruption, finding a just solution to ecological problems, combating alcoholism, protecting historical monuments, fighting the influence of mass culture which they rightly describe as consumer psychosis...

At the same time, the views of the ideologues of "peasant socialism" reveal a misunderstanding of the historic importance of the October Revolution for the fate of our Motherland, a one-sided assessment of the collectivization as a "horrible arbitrariness with respect to the peasants", uncritical attitudes to the mystical-religious Russian philosophy, outdated tsarist concepts in national historical science, unwillingness to take note of the post-revolutionary stratification of the peasantry and the revolutionary role of the working class.

As for the class struggle in the countryside, for instance, they tend to have an inordinate focus on the "village" commissars who would "shoot the peasants of average means in their backs". Of course there were all kinds of commissars in an enormous country awakened by the revolution. But it is those commissars who were shot that determined the main direction of our life. It is into their backs that stars were carved and it was they who were burned alive. The "attacking class" had to pay for its advance not only with the lives of commissars, Cheka men, village Bolsheviks, members of the committees of the poor, participants in the collectivization drive, but also with the lives of the first tractor drivers, village newspaper reporters, young girl teachers, village Komsomol members, and thousands of other unknown fighters for socialism.

The difficulties involved in educating the youth are multiplied by the creation of informal organizations and associations that uphold the ideals of "neoliberals" and "neo-Slavophiles".

It sometimes happens that the positions of leadership in those organizations are taken by extremist elements capable of all sorts of provocation. Of late, these independent organizations have started to show a tendency toward politicization on the basis of pluralism which is by no means socialist. Their leaders often talk about "the separation of powers" through setting up a "parliamentary regime", "free trade unions", "autonomous publishing houses", etc. All this, in my view, permits the conclusion that the cardinal issue of the debate sweeping the country today is whether or not to recognize the leading role of the Party and of the working class in the building of socialism and, by the same token, in perestroika with all the ensuing theoretical and practical consequences for politics, economy and ideology.

The by-product of this key issue of the socio-historical world view is the issue of the role of socialist ideology in the spiritual development of Soviet society. Incidentally, this issue was pinpointed back in late 1917 by Karl Kautsky who held, in one of his brochures devoted to the October Revolution, that socialism featured strict adherence to the planned development principle and discipline in the economy and anarchy in ideology and intellectual life. This gladdened the hearts of the Mensheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and other petty-bourgeois ideologues, but was resolutely opposed by Lenin and his associates who consistently defended the “commanding heights”, as they would say in those days, of scientific-proletarian ideology.

Let us recall here that when Lenin learned about the way the then popular sociologist Pitirim Sorokin manipulated the statistics of the divorce rate among the Petrograd population and about the religious and protective writings of Professor Vipper (which, incidentally, looked absolutely harmless as compared with the writings published in our country today), he accounted for the publication of their works by the inexperience of the mass media people of the day, stating that “the working class of Russia proved able to win power; but it has not yet learned to utilize it”. For otherwise, Lenin stressed, these professors and writers as educators of the masses “are no more fitted for this than notorious perverts are fitted for the post of superintendents of educational establishments for the young”, the revolutionary proletariat would have “politely dispatched” them from the country. As a matter of fact, out of the 164 of those banished from the country in 1922, according to the list compiled by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, many returned to honestly serve their people. Among them was Professor Vipper.

As I see it, the question of the role of socialist ideology has today become extremely acute. Hiding behind the motto of moral and spiritual “cleansing”, the authors of time-serving articles seek to erode the criteria of science-based ideology through manipulating with glasnost and instilling nonsocialist pluralism. This objectively holds back the restructuring of social consciousness and has a particularly painful effect on young people. And I repeat, we college and secondary school teachers, as well as all those dealing with youth problems, are aware of this. As Mikhail Gorbachev stated in his speech at the February Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee,

“In the intellectual sphere, and probably here in the first place, we must act on our Marxist-Leninist principles. Under no pretext should we, comrades, betray our principles.”

We have always adhered and shall always adhere to this maxim. Principles have not been given to us, we created them through suffering at the sharp turns in the history of our Motherland.

1988

The Principles of Perestroika: Revolutionary Thinking and Action

The April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee set a new stage in socialist development aimed at a qualitative renewal of Soviet society through perestroika.

As this work, revolutionary in essence and unprecedented in scale, was being launched, few were aware of the difficulties that awaited us on the path we chose. One thing was clear, however—we could no longer live as before. The country’s progress was slowing down, problems were piling up, symptoms of social erosion and tendencies alien to socialism were emerging. All this resulted in near-crisis stagnation.

The analytical work of the Party, the discussion of its results at the 27th CPSU Congress, the decisions adopted by the Congress and the conclusions of advanced socio-political thought, all pointed to the need for radically new approaches in all areas—the economy, social sphere, economic management, public life and culture—and for the stimulation of people’s activity and initiative. Only then will we be able to preserve what was achieved through the work and heroic effort of past generations. Only then will we be able to give a new impetus to the development of our socialist society.

The Party and the people, all those who are profoundly and sincerely concerned about our country, socialism and common future arrived at the unanimous conclusion that there could be no alternative to perestroika. Procrastination in launching

perestroika, to say nothing about scrapping it altogether, poses the gravest danger to both the internal development of Soviet society and the international positions of the Soviet state and socialism as a whole. This was acknowledged openly and frankly, and substantiated with facts and figures.

Three years have passed. Much has been done over this period. The concept, strategy and tactics of perestroika have been elaborated and its revolutionary principles – more democracy, more socialism – have been clearly defined. Today perestroika is a reality of Soviet society.

Perestroika as a way of thinking and acting is winning over the masses, becoming part and parcel of our life, determining our social consciousness and practical work.

We have changed over the past three years. We are holding our heads high, we have drawn ourselves up, we are fearlessly facing the facts, discussing painful problems that have accumulated over the decades and jointly looking for ways to solve them. A resolute turn for democracy has made possible the real changes that are already obvious in the approach to many social and economic tasks.

We are all learning to live in the context of broader democracy and glasnost. This is not easy to do. Getting rid of the obsolete ways of thinking and acting proves to be more difficult than expected. But the main thing that unites us today is the realization that there can be no return to the past. Everyone understands that this would be fatal.

How can socialism be restored to the concept of Lenin as quickly as possible? How can socialism be cleansed of all accretions and deformations that fettered our society's development and prevented it from fully realizing the potential of socialism? These questions are at the core of public discussion revealing different and at times opposed points of view.

Now that we have entered the second stage of perestroika, questions that seemed to have already been answered tend to arise again. Couldn't we do without an overhaul and all these radical changes? Shouldn't we confine ourselves to perfecting what was created before? Aren't we facing the risk of losing and destroying, through perestroika, much of what has been created over the 70 years since the Great October Revolution?

People are raising many acute, painful questions. Glasnost has shown that what we often lack in our discussion is political culture, the ability to listen to one another and to scientifically

analyze social processes. Sometimes we simply lack knowledge and argumentation.

Perestroika itself is being given different interpretations. Some regard it as another face-lift. Others see it as an opportunity to “dismantle” the entire socialist system and therefore declare that the road traversed since the October Revolution has been a wrong one and that the values and principles of socialism are bankrupt. Still others indulge in radical phraseology giving rise to illusions about the possibility to skip some of the necessary stages. What do the above questions reflect? Why do they arise? There are many reasons. There are people who are still unable to fully understand what is going on. Some are not totally aware of the gravity of the situation. Others question their own and their fellow citizens’ chances. Still others are unwilling to part with their complacency and placidity and to assume the burden of responsibility for whatever they do. There are also people who have already become frightened by the scale of perestroika.

The variety of reaction to perestroika is understandable, especially if one takes into account our heritage of conservative ways and the complexity and novelty of the problems which had been brought into sharp focus over the brief period of the past three years. Apparently the causes, ideals and goals of perestroika should be further explained; we must jointly analyze social processes and see clearly what is good and what is bad about our past and present. All this is normal and natural. The public discussion covering all aspects of our life is natural, too. It will continue to grow in scope and prove to have a propitious effect on social development.

The February 1988 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee specified the new tasks to be tackled by the Party at the current stage of perestroika in all spheres of life. In his speech at the Plenary Meeting, “Revolutionary Perestroika and the Ideology of Renewal”, Mikhail Gorbachev analyzed current problems and set forth a program of ideological support for perestroika. People want to better understand the meaning of changes sweeping our society and the essence of suggested solutions; they want to understand what is implied by the new quality of society we are striving for. The struggle for perestroika is being waged both in production and in the intellectual sphere. Although it does not assume the character of class antagonism, the struggle is fierce. Everything that is novel always meets with controversy and debate.

In and of themselves, these debates and their character and orientation prove that our society is becoming more democratic. The diversity of views, assessments and positions is one of the most important highlights of the present time and a testimony of actual socialist pluralism of opinion.

But one cannot fail to notice a peculiar tilt in the debates. Now and then it manifests itself in the striving to slow down current developments through chanting habitual formulae – “Our ideals are being renounced!”, “Our principles are being discarded!”, “Our mainstays are being undermined!” This is done instead of conceptualizing what is going on, sorting things out and then pressing onward.

It seems that we are facing not only phenomena of socio-psychological nature. We are facing a stand rooted in the command-and-administrative and bureaucratic methods of management and administration. It is also tied up with the moral vestiges of the past times and with the clearly programmatic interests and considerations, the desire to safeguard, at any cost, one’s own benefits, no matter whether material, social or intellectual.

It is the ABC of Marxism that the concept and the interest are interrelated categories. Any kind of interest is expressed in a certain concept. Any concept reflects certain interests. Behind the conservative resistance to perestroika there lies the burden of habits, ways of thinking and acting inherited from the past, the militant selfish interests of those who have got used to living off others and are unwilling to give up this habit. These are precisely the interests against which perestroika is spearheaded. Because perestroika, just as any other revolution, is not only “for”, but also “against” certain things. It is against all that prevents us from securing for ourselves a better, purer and fuller life, from making faster progress and paying smaller price for errors and mistakes that are inevitably encountered on a new road.

In this complex situation we must differentiate clearly between genuine debate and genuine concern over actual problems and the search for the best answers and solutions, on the one hand, and the desire to use democratization and glasnost against those same democratization and glasnost, against perestroika, on the other.

Some people are confused and at a loss. The ongoing process of democratization, the renunciation of command-and-administrative methods of management, the expansion of glas-

nost, the lifting of all kinds of bans and restrictions have given rise to fears: aren't we undermining the very mainstays of socialism and revising the principles of Marxism-Leninism?

We hear some people say: "We are heading for petty-bourgeois socialism based on commodity-money relations. And who is working to drag it into our society? An idealistic minority. This is what poses the main threat to us and to world peace in general. This is the plague of the 20th century Lenin spared no effort to combat."

Others are warning us against "rocking the boat". "You may overturn it and destroy socialism," they say.

There are also people who suggest, without beating about the bush, that we should stop and even go back.

These sentiments are reflected in the lengthy article "I Cannot Betray My Principles" carried in the March 13, 1988, issue of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.

Made out in the form of a "letter to the editor", the article attracted readers' attention. One cannot fail to agree with some of the author's observations. It energetically expresses concern over certain negative phenomena. It features intensity of expression that captivates the readers.

But what is more important is the aim the article pursues, the solutions it suggests and the general spirit and style of the letter. It is these points that reveal the complete incompatibility of the author's positions with the main guidelines of perestroika.

Let us make a reservation here: any author has the right to argue his or her case. It is precisely this approach that is gaining root today in our society thanks to glasnost and perestroika. It is the business of every organ of the press to present various standpoints to the readers, to encourage them to pass their own judgement and, at the same time, to set forth its own position. The general heading under which the article was published suggested that a discussion on the essence of the questions raised would follow — if not immediately then after a certain time. It is all the more necessary as the questions raised were serious and formulated in a way that cannot be described other than the ideological platform, the manifesto of the forces opposed to perestroika. It is no accident that many people ask: how should we understand the fact that such an article was published and the manner in which it was presented? Isn't it a signal, as happened in the past, of a return to the well-trodden path?

First and foremost, the article is aimed, intentionally or unintentionally, at artificially opposing various categories of Soviet people to one another. This happens at the moment when the unity of constructive efforts—given all the diversity of opinion—is necessary as never before, when such unity is the foremost requirement of perestroika, an indispensable prerequisite for the normal life, work and constructive renewal of society. The fundamental specific feature of perestroika is that it is expected to unite the maximum possible number of like-minded people in combating phenomena that blight our life—not simply and solely individual incorrigible exponents of such phenomena as bureaucratism, corruption, abuse of office, etc., but, above all, these very phenomena. We should make everyone feel responsible, without searching, however, for “scapegoats”.

Furthermore, the author’s approach is not constructive. A lengthy publication under a pretentious heading found no room for a conceptual analysis of at least one problem of perestroika. Whatever it touches upon—glasnost, openness, the disappearance of areas closed to criticism, youth life—all these processes and perestroika itself are seen solely from the perspective of difficulties and negative consequences.

Perhaps it was the first time ever that the readers saw, in a concentrated form of a “letter to the editor”, not a quest, not a concern, not even confusion in the face of complicated and acute problems born of life, but a rejection of the very idea of renewal and unambiguous declaration of a definite stand, one that is essentially conservative and dogmatic.

As a matter of fact, the two main theses permeating the article boil down to the following: what should we have all this perestroika for and haven’t we gone too far in furthering democratization and glasnost? The article is urging us to make amendments and adjustments in perestroika because otherwise the “authorities” will allegedly have to save socialism.

Apparently, far from everyone is fully aware of the dramatic situation the country found itself in by April 1985, the situation we justly describe as pre-crisis. Apparently not everyone realizes that the command-and-administrative methods have become hopelessly outdated. It is high time all those who are still pinning their hopes on such methods both in their old and modified form realized that something of the kind already happened in the past more than once, without producing the desired results. The idea that these methods are simple and ef-

fective is nothing but an illusion that has no historical justification.

So how should be socialism “saved” today?

Should the authoritarian methods, the practice of thoughtless executive obedience and suppression of initiative be retained? Should the order of things that promoted red-tape, lack of control, corruption, bribery and petty-bourgeois degeneration be perpetuated?

Or should we go back to the Leninist principles that embrace democracy, social justice, cost-accounting and respect for the honor, life and dignity of the individual? Do we have the right, in the face of real difficulties and unsatisfied needs of the people, to stick to the approaches which took shape in the 1930s and the 1940s? Isn't it high time that we clearly distinguished between the essence of socialism and the historically restricted forms of its realization? Isn't it high time we sorted things out in our own history proceeding from a critical scholarly standpoint, so as to change, above all, the world we live in and draw serious lessons for the future?

The first approach is actually advocated by the publication in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. The second approach is dictated by life, and it is life itself that has called for perestroika.

Our ideological opponents do everything possible to equate the essence of socialism with the old way of thinking, authoritarianism and deviation from socialist principles. Is it not clear that here, too, our domestic “mourners for socialism” align themselves with the opponents of socialism abroad? Are not we releasing our best, constructive potentialities for the work to uphold socialism, our values and ideals by removing the bureaucratic rust from the values, ideals and principles of socialism and cleansing it of all that is inhuman? Isn't the struggle against conservative thinking and dogmatism a struggle for these ideals and against their distortion, against ideological unscrupulousness and nihilism? It is precisely the fanatical, foolhardy and cocksure dogmatist, whose mentality has been shaped solely by the principle of having either all or nothing and considering everything either as harmonious and good or degraded and bad, who is prone to confusion and hysteria. It is he who is unable to withstand “the pressure of controversy” and having lost habitual material and spiritual well-being, turns into an extreme nihilist before all others.

The article lacks what is crucial to a scholarly approach: the effort to get to the roots of historical processes and separate

the objective from the subjective, the necessary from the accidental, what has actually furthered socialism from what has marred it in our own eyes and in the eyes of the world at large. The article is dominated by a basically fatalistic view of history which has nothing to do with the truly scientific understanding of history and by the desire to justify all that happened by a historical necessity. "You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs" is the approach which has nothing in common either with genuine science or socialist morality.

Almost half the article is devoted to our history, past and recent. Recent years have witnessed the general public's growing interest in history. The historical awareness of the people is being increasingly moulded according to the principles of scientific historicity and truth. Nonetheless, we are observing attempts to exploit the concept of patriotism for self-seeking interests. A patriot is not someone who clamors about the "internal threat" to socialism and hunts, hand-in-hand with political extremists, for internal enemies, "counter-revolutionary ethnic groups", etc. everywhere. A true patriot works in the interests of the nation and for the good of the people, fearing no difficulties. We need constructive patriotism rather than contemplative and rhetorical. What we need is not jingoism but the patriotism of socialist transformations. We need patriotism based not only on the love for one's native place but on the pride for the gains of the great homeland of socialism.

The knowledge of the past is essential to the present, to the solution of the tasks of perestroika. The objective demand of the day—"More socialism!"—makes it imperative for us to scrutinize what and how we performed in the past, what we should reject and what take along. What principles and values should be regarded as truly socialist? Today we are critically assessing our history because we want to have a clearer idea of our path to the future.

We are restoring the Truth, purging it of the false and sly truisms that led us to the blind alleys of public apathy, and learning the lesson of the truth taught by the 27th CPSU Congress. However, the Truth has turned out to be bitter in many respects. Hence the attempts to whitewash the past and to justify political deformations and crimes before socialism by referring to the extremely dramatic situation we faced them.

Today we know that the massive repressions hit thousands upon thousands of Communists and non-Party people, managers, army officers, prominent figures in science and culture...

This is the truth and there is no getting away from it. The Party has stated this clearly and openly. Many accusations have been disproved and many, many thousands of innocent people prosecuted on false grounds have been fully rehabilitated. The process of restoring justice goes on. As is known, the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee has set up a commission to deal with the matter. It is now thoroughly investigating facts and documents pertaining to the above issues.

To hush up the painful problems of our history would mean to ignore the truth and show disrespect to the memory of the innocent victims of lawlessness and arbitrariness. The truth is one. We need full clarity, unambiguity and consistency; we need moral reference points for the future.

Much of the current debate focuses on Stalin's role in our history. The *Sovetskaya Rossiya* article does not bypass this issue either. While voicing support for the CPSU Central Committee resolution of 1956 to do away with the Stalin personality cult and overcome its consequences and for the assessment of Stalin's activities contained in recent Party documents, the article in fact tries to disprove them and separate socialism from morality.

In arguing her case, the author seeks support from Churchill. Let us point out that the eulogy to Stalin she cited does not belong to Churchill. Something similar was said by the well-known British Trotskyite Isaac Deutscher. Anyhow, it would be just to ask whether it is at all tactful to indiscriminately refer to bourgeois sources in assessing the role of leaders, of prominent figures in our Party and state. The more so as we know of the clearly formulated stand on this matter taken by the Party itself and in this particular case, by Lenin.

Stalin's personality is extremely controversial. Hence the heated debates. Fundamental appraisals, however, can be found in the documents of the 20th and the 22nd Party Congresses and in the Report "October and Perestroika: the Revolution Continues" by Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. If we want to abide by the historical truth, we must see both Stalin's indisputable contribution to the struggle for socialism and to the defense of our gains and the gross political mistakes and arbitrariness committed by him and his close associates, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had tragic consequences for our society. Now and then we hear allegations that Stalin did not know about the acts of lawlessness. He did. More than that, he

masterminded and directed them. Today it is a proven fact. Stalin and his close associates bear the blame for massive repression and acts of lawlessness; in the eyes of the Party and people their guilt is enormous and unpardonable.

It is true that every prominent historical figure is the product of the social, economic, ideological and political environment of his day. However, Stalin's personality cult was not something inevitable. Alien to socialism, it was only made possible by deviations from the basic principles of socialism.

Why should we take up this question time and again now that we know the Party's clear and unequivocal answer to it? For two reasons. First of all, by justifying Stalin's actions, his defenders urge to preserve his methods of "solving" moot questions and his social and government structures and standards of Party and public life. Most importantly, they uphold the right to commit arbitrariness. Arbitrariness, in the final analysis, is nothing else but the promotion of self-seeking interests. With some, this interest may take the form of the inclination to take more and give less. With others, it may be concealed behind outwardly presentable claims of having monopoly in science and infallibility in work, etc.

We are compelled to repeatedly return to the issue of Stalin's personality also because the evaluation of his activity is seen by some as an opportunity to gamble on people's most precious possession — the meaning of one's entire life. Notions are being juggled with. If Stalin is guilty of crimes, some would ask, how should we go about evaluating our past record? What about the heroic efforts that made possible the historic achievements of our socialist country? Aren't we negating them by condemning Stalin and rejecting his methods?

No, we are not negating them; on the contrary, we are glorifying them even more. All honest working people, all soldiers in the battlefield, all Soviet citizens who proved their patriotism and devotion to Motherland and socialism in deed were performing — and did perform! — their duty. It is their work, their selflessness and heroism that have elevated our nation to unprecedented heights. Only an immoral person can asperse the people's labor and heroism. But today we are aware, more than ever before, how difficult it was to remain committed to the cause in those difficult times.

It would be wrong to class them as the advocates of Stalin's lawlessness. We understand, we ought to understand that the result of their efforts for the entire nation, for each and

everyone of us would have been much greater if their creative potential and productive efficiency had not been impaired by anti-Leninist, anti-socialist practices.

No, it is not in vain that Party veterans, war and labor veterans have lived their lives! All subsequent generations are eternally indebted to them.

Nevertheless, there are people who cannot get rid of their nostalgia for the past when some indulged in exhortations while others listened and obeyed. One can understand the reasons for this nostalgia. However, it was not right for an organ of the press to publicize such sentiments without expressing its own attitude to them. As a result, the readers had the impression that they were offered a “new” political platform.

Mention should also be made of the author’s discourse regarding a class-based approach to the assessment of ideas and views expressed in the course of discussion. From her perspective, they are determined not by the nature of the problems discussed, but by the ethnic background or social status of the participants in discussion. According to the author, what is important is not the argument, but its proponent.

A class-based approach is certainly important for any discussion. But even when we deal with people voicing ideas foreign to socialism, a class-based approach is not a “hallmark” to facilitate “selection”, but an instrument for scientific analysis. To quote the author, living and prospering among us are “descendants of the classes overthrown by the October Revolution”, and of the “spiritual heirs of Dan and Martov and other representatives of Russian Social Democracy, spiritual followers of Trotsky and Yagoda, the offsprings of NEPmen, basmatches and kulaks hit by socialism”. The article traces anti-socialist sentiments to all but people’s genes. Isn’t this stance consonant with Stalin’s notorious allegation that the class struggle is intensified in the course of building socialism? This idea is known to have brought about tragic consequences.

The article is concerned about the spread of nihilism among some of our young people. Is there any reason to worry? Yes. But one should see that the current “warps” in young people’s attitudes are symptoms of a sickness that didn’t emerge today. It is rooted in the past. It is an effect of the spiritual diet which we compelled our young people to keep to over the years, a result of the discrepancy between what was proclaimed from the rostrums and what took place in everyday life.

Life is the best teacher of perestroika and we should always

heed its voice. Life is dialectic. We should always remember Engels' words that for dialectics there is nothing established once and for all, absolute and sacred. The uninterrupted movement, continuous renewal of nature, society and our own mentality is the initial, foremost and fundamental principle of new thinking.

At the most difficult, dramatic and crucial moments of history Lenin would draw on dialectics as the living soul of Marxism. He did so not only to enable himself to understand the historical development but also to arm the Party and the masses with this understanding. Perestroika is introducing this idea in our life.

One cannot be blind to the fact that perestroika is gaining momentum. The atmosphere in society and people's mood have changed. On the whole, workers, collective farmers and the intelligentsia feel responsible for the cause of perestroika, for our country and socialism, and they act accordingly. It would be wrong to fear the searching thought, the quest for the best ways to implement the potential of socialist democracy. This is especially needed now, during the preparations for the 19th All-Union Party Conference.

Let us return to the question of what we have achieved. How are the Party's policy and the resolutions of the 27th Party Congress and of Central Committee Plenary Meetings being translated into reality? What favorable changes are occurring in people's lives?

We have got down in earnest to solving the top-priority problems of housing, food supplies and provision of goods and services to the population. There has occurred a turn for the accelerated development of the social sphere. Concrete decisions were made to reorganize education and health services. A radical economic reform—our main lever in achieving large-scale transformations—is being effected. As Mikhail Gorbachev put it in his address to the Fourth All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers, "It is the main political result of the past three years."

The voice of the intellectuals and all working people resounds powerfully in society's spiritual life. This is one of the main gains of perestroika. Democracy is impossible without the freedom of thought and speech, without an open and wide clash of opinions and without a critical "overview" of our life.

Our intelligentsia has done a lot to get the public ready for the understanding of the need for far-reaching cardinal

changes. It is actively contributing to perestroika with reliance on the best traditions created by their predecessors, appeals to conscience, morality and decency, and upholds humanitarian principles and socialist norms of life.

Much has been said and written about the unity of the intelligentsia, the working class and the collective farmers. Yet a new light has been thrown on this fact today, at a time when perestroika is enjoying the massive support of the working people, when all sections of our society display unanimity in their truly patriotic and highly moral assessment of ideas and actions, of our entire life. Many of the genuinely patriotic initiatives in support of perestroika have come from our writers, poets, playwrights and critics. Suffice it to recall I. Vasilyev's impressive, vigorous essays. Permeated with the ideology of renewal, they rank among the best writings on the theme of perestroika published in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* as well.

However, some of the journalistic writings display the contrary – lack of feeling for one's own people, its history, joys and sorrows. There are authors who will pontify like apostles, telling everyone what is to be done and how. Some try to make themselves heard as soon as possible, to produce a sensation by playing with “major” and “minor” facts not for the sake of disclosing the truth, but solely to satisfy their own vanity. This leads to overstatement, distortion of facts and, what is still worse, to the substitution of the history of the leaders' mistakes for the history of the people. Naturally, this approach hurts the feelings of millions of honest people and is by no means helpful in drawing objective and useful lessons from history.

These phenomena are also rooted in the legacy of stagnation. In those days, too, probing thought was at work and many hearts throbbed with the desire to comprehend the situation and assess its consequences for the future. However, people were compelled to keep to themselves the results of their quest and the proposals suggested by their analysis. Today, all this is finding an outlet with a force that has been multiplied by the years of silence, often without due consideration and responsibility.

The domain of culture is also subject to renovation and purification. The greater the intellectuals' involvement in the life of the people and the Party, the faster will this process unfold. What many Party committees lack today in their work with the intelligentsia is tact, good will, respect, recognition of everyone's right to independent opinion coupled with an hon-

est, competent and open analysis of mistakes. "In matters of culture," Lenin stressed, "haste and sweeping measures are most harmful" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 487).

The practice of Party work sometimes displays a different tendency. This is particularly obvious in the reaction to the criticism on the part of the press. Some are prepared to ascribe all troubles and difficulties of our current life to the activity of the newspapers which "have got out of hand, judging about everything, stirring up public opinion" and so forth. It has to be realized that what a newspaper says comes second. What happens in real life comes first! If we don't want to read about shortcomings in newspapers, they should be eradicated from our life.

And we can again see how powerful the impact of the printed word is and how great the responsibility for it should be. We see that the use of unverified information, claims on the alleged monopoly of the truth and sometimes the tailoring of facts to the author's preconceived ideas are counter-productive, and logically so, no matter how good the intentions may be. The conservatives make an absolute of such mistakes and claim that they are the only fruit of democracy and glasnost. What happens as a result? The forces that may seem, at first sight, to be opposed to one another in terms of their platform in actual fact become united in holding back the drive for perestroika.

Today there are no forbidden topics. Magazines, publishing houses and studios are free to bring anything they wish to the notice of the public. However, the publication of the article "I Cannot Betray My Principles" is tantamount to an attempt to revise Party decisions on the sly. As was repeatedly pointed out at the meetings held at the Party Central Committee headquarters, the Soviet press is not a private enterprise and the Communist contributors and the editors should feel responsible for the articles and material published. In the case under discussion the *Sovetskaya Rossiya* newspaper, which has actually done a lot to promote perestroika, departed from this principle.

There is certainly a great need for discussion and debate. There will be more of them in the future. And we are sure to run into quite a few roadblocks with the mines of the past hidden in them. We have to do the minesweeping together. We are in need of a debate serving to further perestroika, consolidate forces and rally people around perestroika, rather than a controversy setting us apart.

The 19th Party Conference is less than three months away. This is going to be a major event in the life of the Party and the

people. Preparations for it are underway. It is of utmost importance to bring before the conference the experience of perestroika, an analysis of the ways whereby its concept is being translated into life and of the results it is producing. In order to have a realistic view of what is going on and of the emergent phenomena, the Communists should control events rather than follow in their wake. As Lenin would say, "...a firm Party line, its unyielding resolve, is *also* a mood-creating *factor*, particularly at the sharpest revolutionary moments". Perestroika is the business of every Communist and the patriotic duty of every citizen.

There must be more light. More initiative. Greater responsibility. And greater speed in grasping the full depth of the Marxist-Leninist concept of perestroika and the new political thinking. We can and must restore Lenin's practice of socialist society as the most humane and just kind of society. We will firmly and unswervingly adhere to the revolutionary principles of perestroika—more openness, more democracy and more socialism.

1988



Alexander Gelman (b. 1933): writer, playwright and winner of the USSR State Prize. In such provocative plays as *The Minutes of a Meeting* (1975) and *Zinulya* (1984) as well as in numerous articles, Gelman examines the life of the modern working class, the progress of perestroika and, through them, the perfection of communist morality.

A Time to Gather Strength

No one gave me any topic to speak on, so I have set myself the task of making a statement of a personal nature and sharing with you my own thoughts and anxieties as we approach the 19th All-Union Party Conference.

Three years have passed since the start of perestroika. What is the main positive conclusion we can draw? To my mind it is that though three years have passed, perestroika is still underway. And the main negative conclusion? To my mind it is that though three years have passed, perestroika has not yet become irreversible.

The fact that we still do not have enough democratic structures to make the democratic way of life stable and self-generating is an enormous source of concern and anxiety for all of us who think that our future depends on perestroika, and this concern and anxiety do not release us for a moment from their grip. Drafting and adopting decisions to guarantee the utter irreversibility of the democratic process in society will, I believe, be the main order to the day at the 19th Party Conference.

My sense now, as the preparations for the conference go forward, is that the struggle over perestroika's revolutionary character is intensifying in every way. It is not out of the question that this struggle could make itself felt at the conference itself.

The overt and covert opponents of perestroika are becoming increasingly aware that perestroika's ideals are winning more hearts and minds each day. They understand that there is not much time to stop perestroika or at least keep it from being resolutely revolutionary. Sensing this they have bristled. They understand that they must hurry while the decision-making mechanisms that will enable them to circumvent public opinion and strike a blow to perestroika still exist. In many instances these mechanisms are in their hands. The run-up to the Party Conference or even the Party Conference itself may well prove to be the bridgehead they use to engage perestroika in a decisive battle.

Perhaps my fears are exaggerated—I hope to god that is the case—but we are talking about matters so serious, possible consequences so tragic that I think I have the right not to be reticent in expressing these fears.

In this sense I do not think it any accident that *Sovetskaya Rossiya* published the article by Nina Andreyeva setting forth several points on the agenda of the conservative forces in the Party. The main objective of the article was to cast doubt on the use of moral criteria in assessing Soviet society's past and present. Andreyeva's idea, presented as a Marxist tenet, is that politics and morality are incompatible, that the class and ethical approaches are contradictory. On the subject of the documentary on Kirov made in Leningrad, she is indignant that the narrator reminds viewers of the repressions of the thirties as pictures are shown of the enthusiasm of those years. This, as she sees it, does violence to the truth. All in all, she is indignant that so little is said and written today about the enthusiasm for work of those years, while tragedy after tragedy is recounted. It does not seem to have occurred to her that it is normal for people to be more concerned about the innocent men and women who met an untimely death in Stalin's camps than they are about those who unquestionably deserve respect for the heroism they displayed on the labor front, but nevertheless lived normal lives, worked and are still alive or died natural deaths. In every age the human heart has responded more to tragedy than to normalcy, particularly when the tragedy in question is as great as Stalinism. Where Stalin himself is con-

cerned, Nina Andreyeva demands that some kind of political-historical rather than moral criteria be used to judge him. She believes that we simply haven't reached the point in our growth where we can decide Stalin's place in history—we can't see the forest for the trees, so to speak.

Generally, there is a certain wantonness in the assessments of Stalin made by some comrades. In an interview with *Ogonyok*, Sergei Mikhalkov said that yes, of course, on the one hand, Stalin was a butcher, but on the other, just think, he didn't allow himself to remove a comma from the Soviet National Anthem without the permission of the lyricist, and went to the trouble of locating him at the front to ask his permission—see, what a contradictory and complex man he was! Someone else wrote that yes, Stalin was a butcher, but then he was also an ascetic, he didn't need anything at all, he was as poor as a church mouse. Why, a second Mahatma Gandhi.

Yes, Stalin was indifferent to material things and money. Something else gave him pleasure—he revelled in having complete power over people, over whole nations, and in that sense he was no ascetic, but indulged to excess...

Who stands to gain from Andreyeva's position? The people? The Party? Certainly not. Whether consciously or unconsciously, that position serves the vital interests of the bureaucrats, including the Party bureaucrats. They are the ones who will benefit if politics are divorced from morality. They need it to avoid being censured for old sins and to ensure that nothing will prevent them from committing new ones.

The smarter, and more foresighted opponents of perestroika have adopted a different strategy—they are trying to substitute liberalization for democratization. What is the difference? Democratization envisages the redistribution of power, rights, freedoms, and the establishment of autonomous management and information structures. Liberalization, on the other hand, means preserving the foundations of the administrative system, but in a milder form. Liberalization is a slackened fist, but the hand is the same and at any moment it can be clenched again. Only outwardly is liberalization sometimes reminiscent of democratization. In actual fact it represents an unacceptable substitution of something fundamentally different.

One more method of discrediting perestroika. It is maintained that an exhaustive critical analysis of the past, of Stalinism will hurt the Party's prestige as the leading force in so-

ciety. Yes, to a certain degree it will. But the Party in giving society the opportunity to criticize it, and depriving itself of a few pages of false glory, is giving itself the opportunity to gain new, untarnished glory by making a resolute and radical change of policy. We need to think about the Party's future, not just its past. The past is gone forever, but the foundations of the Party's future are being laid today and the cornerstone is the truth swept clean. As for the past, we can now say that the moral core of the Party never died. Rather it froze in fear, recognizing its defenselessness in the era of Stalinism. It contracted and shrunk but retained its inner sense of self-worth. Otherwise neither the 20th Congress could have occurred nor today's perestroika. Throughout its highly complex history the Party has remained true to moral principles, regarding them as living and unfading values.

The Party has rendered great services to the people but it has debts to pay, too. The biggest of these is democracy, the sound socialist democracy the Party failed to cultivate in our society at the proper time. I will put it even more strongly: for fairly long periods the Party, particularly its ruling bodies, worked against democracy. Fairly strong anti-democratic traditions were fostered in the Party. This should be conceded without reservation, for otherwise it is hard to explain the need for a radical change of course or to accomplish perestroika in the spirit of that new course. Yes, the Party has run up debts to society. It is now starting to pay them off, and when the immense job of democratically restructuring society is complete, the gratitude of the people and the whole world will compensate many times over for any harm done to the Party's prestige by an exhaustive critical analysis of its history.

If public property is not democratically managed it is not really public or national. Having property means having control over it, otherwise the property belongs to the bureaucratic strata of society, not the people. Confiscating land and factories from exploiters does not automatically signify that they have been handed over to the people — only when democratic management structures take root has the act of giving the people its property been performed. Today this is conceded in a way, but frequently just in word, not in deed. Again, we are witnessing a dogged attempt to substitute a liberalization of the dated and discredited bureaucratic management system for democratization.

The logic the opponents of perestroika use is not conclusive

nor is their program persuasive, but power is still in their hands. They are a force to be reckoned with. That is why I think that we, the rank-and-file members of the Party, should not fold our arms and wait to hear what decisions are made at the Party conference on the principle of "as god wills it". Our concern for the fate of perestroika has to be acted on. Not just in books, scripts, plays and films but through real, direct political action. The preparations for the conference cannot entirely be entrusted to the Party apparatus. It is very important that the delegates to the conference get a sense of the mood of the Party membership and the position of local Party chapters.

I would like to submit for your consideration a draft of a mandate for the 19th Party Conference from our Party chapter.

First: we deem it desirable that the 19th Party Conference be conducted openly, that the delegates' speeches be published in full and that significant portions of the conference be televised so that the members of the Party and society as a whole can gauge the atmosphere there, so that people really can respond to what is happening at the conference while it is in progress, not simply make a formal show of responding. So that there is lively, hourly feedback from the Party.

Second: in this spirit of openness, the conference should resolve that henceforth all plenums of the Communist Party Central Committee will also be conducted publicly. The Central Committee plenum is essentially the main Party parliament, and as our Party is in power it is therefore the supreme parliament of the land. If the Central Committee plenums are conducted openly it will bolster the beneficial influence the Central Committee has on society while increasing the sense of responsibility the members of the Central Committee have for what they say as well as for their mission as a whole.

Third: we support those Party members who propose that elected officials be limited to no more than eight to ten consecutive years in one office.

Fourth: it is vital that Party officials at every level, including the Central Committee secretaries and department heads, be constantly in the public eye as they perform their duties so that people will know who is who and what their personal qualities are in greater detail and substance, so that people will have some notion of the nuances of their outlooks, special character traits, special aspects of their stands on certain issues, how they work, how they interact and the range of their cultural interests. On more than one occasion in the past society and the

Party itself were suddenly informed of the failures and mistakes of certain Party officials. This must not happen again. We have had enough of being hit over the head with the news that an individual long considered good, good, good is an adventurer, extremist or advocate of “unbounded glasnost”. One of my readers wrote that to me in a letter: just wait, he says, “your Gorbachev will be toppled for unbounded glasnost”. See, the epithet is all ready. I am certain that a resolution on openness in Party affairs would meet with the approval of both officials and the rank and file Party members. People’s fates must not be decided suddenly, behind closed doors. Who knows, if glasnost had existed in Stalin’s day perhaps he would have found the inner strength to hold his bad inclinations in check and gone down in the history of our Party as a figure of some respect rather than as a butcher.

The question of glasnost and greater independence for the mass media also needs to be discussed in depth at the conference. It has implications for the invigoration of efforts to provide ideological support for the democratic transformations. We need to conduct a campaign of instruction in democracy, maybe on television. People know little about the history of democratic values. These values were not discovered today, as many believe. Democracy has served man extremely well throughout human history. And the very fact that we are now conducting endless debates and virulently polemicizing about the harm or benefit of glasnost is evidence of insufficiently high culture. These are essentially hackneyed debates. The question of glasnost’s usefulness has already been decided historically, and we simply cannot keep going back over that little patch of political ground for years on end. Apropos, when the ideological groundwork for non-glasnost had to be provided in the not so distant past the Central Committee’s culture and propaganda departments were much more adept than they are today, when glasnost’s prestige needs to be bolstered.

We have to cherish glasnost like the apple of our eye. And that leads me to one important topic. Recent years have seen the accumulation of numerous unsolved problems and conflicts that were driven underground, the accumulation of pain, hurts and inequities that received no sympathy. A lot of disorder, a lot of silliness have built up – after all, in many regions a real dictatorship of mediocrity existed for years. Many of these issues were not discussed, not debated, not clarified for decades. And now suddenly – glasnost, freedom. In many minds

everything is confused — that is why alongside the merited, justified, necessary demonstrations and protests there are protests — and their number may increase in the future — prompted by superficial thinking, false certitude and extremist sentiments. That is why, beyond the danger that perestroika will be stopped by its outright opponents, a danger is also posed by extremist forces that support perestroika. Those two camps could unite without ado, particularly now, in the transitional period, when the foundations of democracy are just being laid, when they are still not cemented by procedural regulations. In short, if impulse gets the upper hand over reason perestroika may stumble or even fall, and then the hobnailed boot of the orders-and-directives system of administration will hurry to stamp perestroika out.

I think the Party conference should direct society's attention to the need, particularly in the transitional period, to demarcate freedom for thought and freedom for action. We need complete intellectual freedom; people should be able to read and think whatever they like, figure out the what, how and why, clarify the obscure and put their feelings to the test of reason. But our impulses need to be held in check. I realize that it is hard to separate thought from action, and my proposal looks speculative. Nevertheless, if we put our minds to it, fully acceptable ways of restraining our impulses while allowing full intellectual freedom can be found under democracy.

I, like everyone else, am very concerned by the events in Nagorny Karabakh, in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Blood has been shed there. Each and every one of the guilty should be found, named and punished. Unfortunately, no words of sorrow over the innocent loss of life have been spoken in the press. Our mass media showed that they were not ready to report humanely and honestly on dramatic events. Several turns of phrase used in the coverage aroused indignation among Muscovites, to say nothing of what readers in Yerevan or Sumgait must have thought! The Filmmakers' Union and its Secretariat must do their part, thoughtfully and sympathetically, to help ensure that the actions of the members of the arts in those republics are marked by a spirit of reason.

Democracy is not above reason. There is nothing in people's lives that is above reason because democracy itself is a child of reason, a child of human wisdom. Sometimes in the name of self-preservation democracy is duty-bound, forced to display uncharacteristic firmness, even hardness for a time. But even

in these instances it should do everything openly, publicly, explaining convincingly to society the moral grounds for the steps it is taking. Reason responds to reason and human hearts are put at ease when they are appealed to sincerely, thoughtfully and without ulterior motive.

Today it would be a good idea to establish a ministry or committee on ethnic affairs. An agency of this kind could delve into all the ethnic problems and take measures to ensure that matters do not reach the point of mass demonstrations of protest. There is much to do, particularly in the autonomous republics and regions. The purely administrative act of making an ethnic group autonomous should not consequently reduce the opportunities that group has to develop its culture. In the treatment of ethnic groups there should not even be a hint of hierarchy. Thus, our union has a duty to think about enabling the Tatars and Bashkirs and other ethnic groups to develop their cinemas. There is no need to wait for a resolution to be passed on this score. Creating the conditions for those ethnic groups that do not now have their own cinemas should become an important component of the perestroika program for the film industry.

The upcoming Party conference should define the new, unauthoritarian nature of the Party's political activities. Its ideological and intellectual activities. That is somewhat harder than appointing and firing officials year after year. The Party must learn to employ its ideological and intellectual power. And that is the kind of power people can only submit to voluntarily.

When it is possible to give orders, no one takes the time to persuade. When it is possible to give orders, any of life's complexities can be unceremoniously simplified, reduced to a diagram, a dogma. The authoritarian principle of action gave rise to mass oversimplification, and that is a sin we have long been guilty of, a habit very hard to break. It is one of the reasons for the resistance to democratization—many Party functionaries are simply not capable of handling complex problems; they do not possess the necessary qualities. Each is willing to do what he is capable of. And whatever he isn't capable of he terms unnecessary, dangerous, and harmful to the foundations of socialism.

The restructuring of the Party along unauthoritarian lines would benefit from a few, maybe not great but intelligent and high quality films, from effective support from the cinema. Creating such films today will evidently require a special or-

ganized effort. Filmmakers have, in my opinion, now analyzed the exclusively pan-human themes and issues. That is splendid and I salute it, but we must remember, too, that our perestroika, perestroika in the Party, has real, practical and pan-human meaning today.

I think that, on the whole, since its renowned Fifth Congress our union has somewhat lost its position as one of the ideological-intellectual bastions of perestroika and democratization. That is normal, that is understandable—our energies were dissipated by various individual projects—but I think that we need to possess the dynamism and ability to concentrate our energies on general concerns when necessary. Now, as we prepare for the 19th Party Conference, is just a time to gather strength and concentrate our energies.

I think it only fit to ask the question: if perestroika is halted who will be most to blame—its advocates or its opponents? My own answer is unequivocal: the blame will lie with its advocates.

We have somehow let laziness quickly overtake us. We have turned a blind eye to things that must not be allowed. Some of us were seized by euphoria at the opportunities that have opened up, some hurried to pinch off their little piece of the freedom that has only just begun to hatch from the iron shell of arbitrary rule. These reproofs are directed not only at you but at myself, first and foremost at myself.

We need to get our second wind and now is the time to do it. The struggle has not ended. The hardest, crucial phase is just beginning.

Editor's note:

The open Party meeting gave its unqualified support to Alexander Gelman's speech and the proposals it contained. A motion was made to send the text of the speech to various Party bodies, including the Central Committee, as a mandate from the Party chapter of the USSR Filmmakers' Union Board for the 19th All-Union Party Conference. The motion was unanimously approved.

1988



Vladimir Svirsky (b. 1924): an educator, he taught for many years in rural Latvian schools. Svirsky is the author of textbooks on Russian literature for the upper grades of schools in Latvia, Lithuania, the Ukraine and other Soviet republics. He has also written a collection of articles on education entitled *Welcome to the Debate* (1987) as well as such novellas as *The Marker's Apprentice* (1976), *Ask the Stamp* (1980) and *On the Topic of Your Choice* (1984).

History Is Silent...

More and more articles on history as an educational tool have been appearing recently. They speak of oversimplification, the absence of an integral conception of the historical process, uninteresting textbooks, the shortage of popular works, etc.

That is all true, but the main problem, to my mind, lies elsewhere.

Not long ago a program was shown on television in which a reporter asked a 10th grader with an interest in history, "Who succeeded Lenin as head of the Soviet government?"

How was he to know?! I am certain that tens of millions of viewers wrinkled their foreheads and wondered, "Yes, who?"

The appropriateness of the question may be disputed, but it pointed out one of the many blank spots in our history as it is taught.

The yawning voids in it—that is the source of our chief troubles.

I have read many history textbooks, beginning with those published immediately after the war. Not only have names been expunged from them, but many events as well: the monstrous excesses at the time of collectivization didn't happen, the famines of the 30s didn't happen, the persecution of genetics and cybernetics didn't happen, the stagnation of the economy didn't happen... Nothing happened to cloud the sunny

picture or spoil the smooth telling of the myth that has taken shape over the decades.

To judge by the textbooks, Soviet history has been an unbroken march onward and upward, a time when the most serious social ailment was a slight case of light-headedness, and that was brought on by inordinate success.

At times it seems that the authors of textbooks see as their main aim not to explain the events of the past, not to reveal their causes and effects, not to teach youngsters how to utilize the lessons of the past but to skilfully “hoodwink” them and bury the truth as deeply as possible.

In the new editions of the textbooks on Soviet history for the 9th and 10th grades published in 1985-1986 the most blatant distortions of the truth have been corrected. They no longer lead the young reader to believe that British and American forces landed in Italy after it had capitulated, and the account of the Soviet-Finnish War is somewhat more intelligible.

Nevertheless the main defect of these textbooks has not been remedied. Consider how the infamous session of the All-Union Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences¹ is interpreted for 10th graders: “In the field of biology Soviet scientists also enjoyed some success. However, after the 1948 session of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences, under the Presidency of Trofim Lysenko,² a trend prevailed founded on theories that were not subsequently borne out by experiments and failed to find practical application.”

What a masterpiece! The authors have cleverly succeeded in concealing the most important point from the pupil: why the trend “prevailed” and the very serious consequences it had. Indeed, he is led to believe that no harm came of it. (True, no good came of it either, but then not every scientific theory is “borne out by experiments”.) On the face of it this would not seem to be such a big transgression against the truth, but in fact it is blasphemy! A mockery of common sense, scholarship (biological and historical) and our memory.

What an opportunity the authors of textbooks now have! To talk with the young reader about true service to science and its heroes. To tell of those who do not disavow their ideas, who did not trim their sails before the wind. To show that Nikolai Vavilov³ and other scientists showed no less courage than Giordano Bruno did in his day.

Naturally, a bitter truth is always harder to tell. However,

sugar-coating the pill is not just pleasanter; it is immoral. When we conceal the truth and omit “ticklish” names and events aren’t we acting like the tribes that taboo the words “storm”, “sickness” and “drought”? Slavery didn’t disappear because Catherine the Great prohibited the word “slave”. A history course cannot be put together on the principle of exorcism: out, Evil Spirit!

The author of *War and Peace* admitted that he would have been “ashamed to write about our triumph in the fight against Napoleonic France and not describe our failures and our disgrace”. “I did it with a feeling akin to bashfulness,” Tolstoy explained.

In my opinion there is a clear shortage of this kind of bashfulness in our textbooks. Even the unjust wars Russia fought turn out to have been less unjust where she was concerned. Should it come as any surprise, then, that the young reader perceives the Russo-Japanese War exactly as he does the War of 1812 and the war with Nazi Germany?

We just cannot seem to abandon the age-old tradition of blaming anyone but ourselves for failures, mistakes and defeats: “It was England’s fault, it was Wilhelm who made trouble...” Gorky accurately assessed the effect views of this kind have when he wrote soon after the Revolution, “Now that we’re free we have no one to blame for living poorly... If we can’t get our life straightened out now it will be our fault, ours and no one else’s!”⁴ Unfortunately, our textbooks are fairly consistent in promoting the other line – “anyone but us”.

Look at how the textbooks explain the reasons for our setbacks during the first phase of our involvement in World War II. Faithful to the principle of not speaking the “irksome” truth, the authors neglect to mention our own mistakes, our political and military miscalculations or that up to the last day and hour Stalin refused to believe that an invasion was imminent and regarded all reports to the contrary as the work of provocateurs. (Incidentally, a textbook published in 1963 stated this in so many words: “Stalin ... believed that Germany would not violate the non-aggression pact in the immediate future... Soviet forces were not given the order to deploy in time... Therefore, the powerful enemy attack took Soviet forces by surprise and they immediately suffered heavy losses...”)

We have to face the fact that “anybody but us” will necessarily lead to “anybody but me”. It is one of the causes of the psychology of dependence, passivity, spiritual apathy, arrogance,

carelessness, and irresponsibility. It helps explain why we spend so much of our energy not on solving the problems that every member of society has to face each day and each hour, but on looking for the objective reasons that supposedly prevent us from solving them. The blame will be placed on anybody—the factory that hasn't delivered the parts, the railroad that hasn't delivered the goods, the usual bad winter, the unusual drought, the machinations of suppliers and world imperialism, the meteorological service and “birthmarks”. But not me. This is the fundamental defect in our thinking. It is born primarily of the way history is now taught. Historical irresponsibility will sooner or later become moral, economic and every other kind of irresponsibility.

Some people would object that if we show the inglorious sides of our history, particularly Soviet history, we will undermine our efforts to inculcate a sense of patriotism in our youngsters. What response can be made? There can be no patriotism without truth or respect for it. Truth is the only means of molding good citizens. The moral and educational advantages of this attitude towards history are undeniable. Patriotism is only strengthened by it. For patriotism that rests on half-truths is not patriotism at all but a lazy, soothing profanation of it. Over one hundred years ago, Pyotr Chaadayev responded to the charge of anti-patriotism with these words: “I don't know how to love my country with my eyes closed, my head bowed, and my lips pressed together... I think that the time for blind affection is past, that our greatest duty to our country now is to tell the truth.”⁵

Creating an honest course on Soviet history for the schools should be a first priority for the state: the fate of the revolutionary reforms now being carried out in every area depends in large part on how we use history to educate youngsters during the next few years. A guarantee that the reforms will not be rolled back can only be given by people who aren't afraid to speak the truth no matter how unpleasant it is, people who will not allow another idol to be created, people who will have their own views and know how to uphold them.

People like that won't be shaped by patched-up or camouflaged textbooks. What we need are fundamentally new editions based on the principles of complete historical glasnost and independent thinking. Editions that will help accomplish a highly important goal—the democratization of social awareness. Obviously, particular attention should be given to the

past few decades. Many of us remember them and they are presented in the most beggarly fashion in the textbooks. Here the authors give schoolkids a real display of verbal gymnastics.

A textbook published in 1983 states that the chief of the 18th Army's political department was made a Hero of the Soviet Union for services above and beyond the call of duty rendered in the fighting near Novorossiisk during World War II. Correct? Correct. The battles took place and the medal was awarded. What it fails to mention is that it was awarded more than two decades after the fact.⁶

Another example: an account of Stalin's accomplishments and biography in brief are followed in the 9th grade history textbook by these words: "But subsequently J.V. Stalin made a series of grave mistakes that were resolutely condemned by the Party." Those 50 and older can, of course, grasp what is being referred to. But what about the 9th graders? They have no notion of the situation in the Party and government at that time and the words have been carefully chosen to impart no information.

The textbook 10th graders use informs them that at the 20th Congress the Party "gave a clear answer to the question of why the Stalin personality cult arose, the nature of the forms it took, its essence and consequences". All this is true. The Party did give clear answers to these questions. The textbook, on the other hand, demonstrates amazing ingenuity in concealing them. The sole explanatory phrase — "as a result of the personality cult ethical standards were violated" in the Party and government — tells the 17 years old nothing. It does not explain "the nature of the forms it took", its "essence" or its "consequences".

"History."

One of the most serious flaws in the discussion of Stalin is the absence of any value judgements. But they are essential! It is wrong to set the same store by a revolutionary's practical and moral qualities.

Lenin never differentiated between a revolutionary's practical and moral qualities. That is why he proposed that Stalin be removed from the post of General Secretary.

No, "history's path is not a stroll down Neva Avenue". But Chernyshevsky, the author of those words, also said in a letter he wrote in Vilyuisk to his son (the letters of great persons to their children make splendid textbook material but they are rarely used, apparently because the authors are afraid of being accused of "overloading" the books): "Yes, my darling boy,

historians and, in their wake, all kinds of other people, the learned and ignorant, all too often make the stupidest and vilest mistake in imagining that evil means have been or will someday be appropriate to achieving good ends..." Such ideas, Chernyshevsky went on to say, were "only fit for scoundrels who wish to befog people's minds and rob the duped. The means should match the end."

Frankly, the blow history has been dealt and the consequences it has had can be compared with the disastrous economic effects of Lysenkoism. Some academicians in the social sciences caused society no less harm than those who crushed genetics.

I am well aware that what is taught in the schools is a reflection of the work scholars are doing and that they should be the ones to develop a new concept and make the appropriate curricular recommendations. Does that mean that the schools will have to wait? Wait, while the venerable professors plan and conduct their debates? No! There are quite a few scholars who could put together fundamentally new learning materials on our history. Then again, perhaps writers should be invited to take part in this project?

I also see a textbook on history consisting entirely of documents, an alternative to the type now used. Let experience show which is the best.

In conclusion I would like to point out that I have not named the authors of the textbooks I have criticized. It would be a mistake to blame them. They could not have written anything else when they did. But these are different times. The slate has been wiped clean.

1987



Anatoly Golovkov (b. 1945): journalist, special correspondent for *Ogonyok*, author of *Working Heights* (1982) and *To Overcome* (1987).



Alexei Pavlov (Pavel Gutiontov) (b. 1953): journalist, winner of the USSR Union of Journalists Prize, a special correspondent for *Izvestia*. He is a contributor to collections of essays – *Sixteen Forever* (1982) and *A Wide Open World* (1983).

What All This Noise?

Chinghiz Aitmatov's novel A Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years tells the story of the Mankurts, slaves with no memory of their past: "...it would have been much easier to cut off the prisoner's head or cause him some other harm to terrify him into subjection" than "to annihilate his memory, destroy his reason, draw out by the roots that which otherwise stays with a man to his last breath, remaining uniquely his, and which dies with him and which cannot be reached by other people." This article is about memory and Memory, a society better known in the West by its Russian name, Pamyat. It is about how important it is not to become a Mankurt in one's own land, while bearing in mind the words of the renowned Russian thinker Pyotr Chaadayev: "I don't know how to love my country with my eyes closed, my head bowed, and my lips pressed together. I find that an individual can only be useful to his country if he sees it clearly... I presume that we have come after others so as to do better than they did, so as to avoid falling prey to their mistakes, their delusions and superstitions."

In recent years we have increasingly expressed our anxiety over our growing sense of having lost something extremely im-

portant. The demolished buildings we see in our capital city give us greater and greater pain. So do the mediocre history textbooks used in the schools. And the river whose name has been forgotten even by the local residents. What about the absence of family albums in our standardly furnished apartments? Or the little boys down by the entryway who don't even know the names of the splendid native games we played as children – *chizh, lapta, gorodki...*

This is what concerns the members of the Pamyat Society in Moscow. The entire article could be devoted to an account of the good, selfless work they are doing. These people stop the machinery set in motion by callous orders that would destroy our cultural monuments. They help bring about the return of age-old names to streets and squares, revive traditions and resurrect folklore. Most importantly, through its work the Pamyat movement warns us that if we reject our history we will immediately become poorer in spirit, trivial.

Painful as this is to say, however, besides the true defenders of our past there are hysterics who use the group's lofty aims as a cover. Lately, they have been sowing highly dubious ideas without even making the least attempt at disguise, and have on occasion even questioned the principles of socialist internationalism at their widely-publicized gatherings.

...The auditorium of a Moscow cultural center. Over the stage hangs a sign bearing the word "Pamyat" written in Slavonic script, along with three others executed in the manner of the processional banners of the Russian Orthodox Church. These say: "When Moscow talks the whole country listens!"; "The truth is not afraid to be put on trial!" and "Courage every day!"

It must be said that no announcement of the Pamyat meeting at the Dynamo cultural center had been posted anywhere. Nevertheless, at the appointed time the sizable hall was full to overflowing. At 7 p.m. sharp, "We shall not waver in the fight for our capital..."¹ blared from the loudspeakers and then "the fight for our capital" started right there on stage.

The master of ceremonies, a young man by the name of Nikolai, came on and in a few words sketched "the gravity of the situation" that, in his opinion, "true patriots" find themselves in. He saluted the courage of those who had gathered in that hall in spite of everything. The enemies out to persecute them were not named, but evidently their power was great. (We learned that one Pamyat activist had been "viciously beaten up in broad daylight right on Gorky St. with the complete conniv-

ance of the militia".) Then Nikolai called on the audience to keep up the fight against the forces of evil and introduced the first speaker.

The Worker Tribune—for that is how his function was designated—began by informing the audience that, “the women at work say, ‘You’ve got that Russian modesty’.” Then he let the unpleasant truth be known: “It’s ’41 all over again and we’re twiddling our thumbs!” This bleak declaration came as no surprise to many in the hall. And the Tribune prophesied for another ten minutes about the enemies who were drawing the iron ring tighter and tighter.

The enemies were never named but the Tribune was enthusiastically applauded at the end of his speech.

The next individual on the program was clearly blessed with artistic ability. At least he had enough to render in two colors the map of Moscow he presented for the edification of his esteemed audience—one color for the areas of the city where the old buildings still stood, the other for those where they were irretrievably lost. “I am not going to draw any conclusions,” the artist said, “but if you extend these lines you get—look—an arrow... And where is it aimed? At the Russia Hotel. Think about it, all of you—an arrow aimed at Russia!”

He was applauded, too.

The next speaker was “a stalwart of the North”. He made a meticulous analysis of a poster for a play put on by the Youth Theater in Riga. Utilizing the same technique as the artist, he drew an imaginary line from a sword in one corner of the poster to the figure of a Russian peasant in the other. “What gall! A sword aimed at a Russian!” The theater’s repertoire was subjected to the same kind of critique. Again the audience was asked to “draw its own conclusions”.

One speaker followed another and we learned more and more details of the “monstrous conspiracy”. All of the still unnamed “enemies” were not just destroying Moscow’s historical landmarks, and prohibiting events on patriotic themes from taking place at the Moscow Central Artists’ House while holding a “subversive lecture series, The Ancient Cities of Italy, but building the subway in such a way as “to make it easy to blow up the most important government agencies”. And they were deliberately attracting epidemics to Moscow (“I kid you not. Scientists have shown that the mellow chiming of the bells of Moscow ionized the air, thereby destroying germs, but now, when the churches have been demolished...”).

We must admit: we couldn't believe what we were hearing, noting down and recording on tape.

But all this was just a prelude to the main act on the program: the "journalist and photographer" D.D. Vasilyev. He spoke for about three hours. "I don't know if I'll ever have a chance to speak to you again. At any moment I could be found lying on the street with my head bashed in. So I want to say everything every chance I get..."

And he did. In any event, the "enemies" were finally named with the outspokenness of "a non-party Bolshevik" (it has to be said that the leaders of Pamyat can be accused of anything but overweening modesty; they do not skimp when it comes to assessing their own worth: "the great Russian composer and song writer", "the fearless popular tribune", "we, patriotic scientists", "the great sobriety campaigner"...). It seems that all our problems and misfortunes are "entirely the fault of international Zionism and the Masons". They have "penetrated all the pores of our social organism" in order to attain their common goal of paralyzing it. But as the self-awareness of the Russian nation is the main impediment to that, "the Chosen People" can resist the satanic machinations of the presumptuous enemy.

So this is what "they" have been up to! First they try to rock our "age-old foundations" and then they poison the already lifeless nation with drink! Well, there's no denying that alcohol abuse is our Achilles' heel. But is there any point in going to the extreme of anecdotes like, "Scientists have found that buttermilk has an alcohol content of 1.5 percent. It must be to somebody's benefit to make our children drunks"? But Vasilyev doesn't just sprinkle his talk with anecdotes. He cites decisions by city planners that certainly have been to the detriment of the city's appearance. From there, however, his talk deteriorates into a collection of "weighty accusations" and "unmaskings".

While recognizing the gravity of the parallel we are about to draw, it is hard not to feel that Vasilyev's ideology is remarkably similar to that of Russia's Black Hundred at the turn of the century. Before us we have a book published in 1907 at the height of that reactionary movement: *Fighters for Freedom* by S.I. Smirnova. Attacking the revolutionaries, Smirnova characterized their program as follows: "What is most important is to accustom the people to the idea that nothing it has is or should be sacred. To allow it to believe that there is anything sacred to the whole nation would be dangerous, for it might

then rise to a man to its defense.” Eighty years later we heard these same words spoken from the stage of a Moscow cultural center. Moreover, in both cases Orthodoxy was declared to be the institution “sacred to the whole nation” that alone could aid it. It could hardly have been an accident that the only time the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) was mentioned was in connection with the donations that the Russian Orthodox Church made to the defense fund.

Vasilyev was in no doubt: the situation is critical. (“They’ve built a bar-and-grill in the old church on Khavskaya St... I don’t know what a ‘grill’ is. But the hour when they open a brothel there and start using our wives and daughters as concubines is close at hand!”)

This is nothing other than the deliberate incitement of hysterical suspicion and fear. Consider the “Appeal to the Russian People by the Historical Patriotic Pamyat Society” approved before our eyes: “...the full thrust of the Masons’ and Zionists’ attack in this country is directed against the Russian people and our Motherland... Be bolder in finding and naming dens of conspiracy... Find and bring forward the true leaders of this country... Conduct demonstrations and referendums throughout the country... Establish control over the mass media, expose venal journalists and deal with them... Our country is in danger! Courage every day!...”

The ravings of a maniac? But hundreds of people listened! And how many tapes of Vasilyev’s speech went out to towns and villages across the land?!

Today glasnost and democratization are gradually becoming the norm throughout society. Frankly, the new realities are not coming easily and the costs have been great. And now we are confronted with a problem: can we in the name of glasnost and democracy provide a rostrum for incitement, lies and demagogy that pose a threat to society?

Unity is so vital to us in the Soviet Union! Each day, as the 70th anniversary of the Revolution draws near, we need to sense that we are united by a magnificent goal. While recognizing how much still needs to be done to bring it about, however, we must not turn a blind eye to those who do not wish to see us succeed. Today it is hard to be an outright opponent of perestroika – the prestige of the reform program is too high among the people. So attempts are repeatedly made to climb into the bandwagon and hijack it.

Decision after decision protecting historical and cultural

monuments have been reached at the highest levels, the Soviet Culture Fund has been established, many national treasures have been saved and restored. Still, as the movement grows attempts are repeatedly made to gain a foothold in it in order to subvert it, compromise it, vulgarize it and use its just ideas to serve other ends. Basically, the idea is to sidetrack the campaign for the preservation and restoration of our cultural heritage. This trend, for all its topicality, has deep historical roots which need to be recognized and comprehended.

Recently in an article in *Pravda* Oleg Trubachev, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, reminded us of the line from Pushkin, "What all this noise, public speakers?"² Public speakers are not orators, as the use of the word today might suggest, but those who take it upon themselves to act as spokesmen for entire nations. Pushkin recognized that by their actions and those of people like them they were exploiting just national concerns, and he spoke out against it angrily and fearlessly. Time has passed, but his rebuke, "Russia's Slanderers", reads as though it had been written yesterday.

So what sort of society is Pamyat? How did it come into being?

In the early 80s an organization was formed at the USSR Aircraft Industry Ministry by persons whose aim was to stop the destruction of Moscow's historical and cultural monuments. And worthy aim it was. Sadly, enthusiasts had their work cut out for them then, as those whose job it was to protect the monuments were not particularly diligent. That is why Pamyat attracted such a following. Hundreds and thousands of people took part in volunteer clean-up efforts and attended lectures by specialists, historians and writers.

Then things began to change. People appeared in the leadership of the organization who had nothing to do with either the aircraft industry or history. Less energy began to be spent on real actions and more on looking for imaginary enemies. Pamyat moved to the Gorbunov Factory Cultural Center. But not for long. After an event that went by the innocuous title, "Moscow!... That holy word can start a tumult in each Russian heart...", the factory Party committee met to discuss the irresponsible speeches that had been made at it and, noting that practically none of the workers had attended, the committee decided not to let Pamyat use the facilities any more. And the homeless organization went to walk the world.

After the gathering at the Dynamo Cultural Center we called its director. "Do you know what kind of an event you sponsored?" we asked. "Of course, a gathering of students from the teacher training college," the director readily replied. It turned out that one Pamyat member who teaches there had easily duped the club managers. The students never did learn about their gathering, but the various "guardians of national self-awareness" had a chance to say their piece.

Pamyat tried more or less the same tactic last February to rent the conference hall at the Yunost Hotel for a meeting. The business manager of the Komsomol Central Committee, which is ultimately in charge of the hotel, was presented with an official letter signed by V.V. Yegiazarov, the director of the Russian Federation Art Foundation's Monumental-Decorative Art Workshops. The generous monument builders pledged to pay the fee for the use of the hall. When we spoke with him Yegiazarov declared his wholehearted support for Pamyat and its ideology. But is that grounds for financing a personal enthusiasm out of the state's pocket?

The meeting at the Yunost was cancelled for technical reasons. True, those reasons did not seem convincing to the "patriots" who gathered outside the hotel. They could only be calmed by the first secretary of the district Party committee when he arrived on the scene. And then only after he offered to meet with them at the committee's headquarters to discuss the problems that had arisen.

That meeting was envisioned as a dialogue on the subject worth discussing: the preservation of our history and cultural heritage. The district committee invited eminent scholars to take part. The level of the discourse planned is indicated by the participation of Valentin Yanin, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Anyone who is genuinely interested in Russian history would consider it an honor and a great stroke of luck to be able to meet the head of the Novgorod archaeological expedition, one of the country's biggest experts on ancient Russian history. If we owe anyone a debt of gratitude for bringing the past closer, it is Yanin.

Sadly, the self-styled patriots rudely disrupted Yanin's talk. We do not wish to point the finger at every member of Pamyat, but it is worth considering why Vasilyev's illiterate pontification on historical themes was closer to their hearts! Then again, what is so surprising if the "photographer" even had the gall to say that the work of Academician Dmitry Likhachev

serves Zionism. This was reported in *Vecherny Sverdlovsk*, which described a recent visit Vasilyev made to his Uralian confederates. The newspaper recounted the revelations the visitor from Moscow made to his audience.

“For Vasilyev,” it wrote, “war is the means of preserving our national cultural heritage. In his hysterical tirades, he literally howls that enemies of the people are everywhere, that they have to be ‘torn to shreds and hurled out the window’, that ‘we’ll pulverize anyone who gets in our way’.”

In this context the words of the great Russian citizen, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin,³ are amazingly relevant: “As it is, man is more inclined to nurture a sense of ethnic identity than any other, so kindling that feeling in any greater measure than he would acknowledge voluntarily left to his own devices means working on his sense not of patriotism but of exclusiveness and specialness.”

The process by which a culture is preserved from generation to generation should not be oversimplified. In striving to follow in the footsteps of the revolutionary democrats, the creators of a democratic culture and the champions of the people’s might and knowledge, more than one generation of Soviet men and women have seen that diametrically opposed traditions are long-lived, too. It is very painful that the voices of the demagogues who have jumped on the perestroika bandwagon are so loud. But then, what did we expect? That those who have spent decades opposing the processes now collectively known as perestroika would give up without a fight? They wiped out genetics for a time and forbid the study of cybernetics as harmful, alien, dangerous and unpatriotic. The culprits may have been the demagogues of yesterday, rather than today, but the threads that bind the generations are visible to the naked eye. Many threads are now woven together in our lives and it will take all our understanding of history to sort them out. Vigilance is exceptionally important today. Like any revolutionary process, perestroika has to be able to defend itself, and demagogues are not the least of the threats to it. It is painful to see that those who are set on fighting for their personal aims while waving the lofty banner of the common cause are once more trying to use patriotism as they falsely define it as a shield. But if that is the case then we must do everything we can to ensure that glasnost is on the side of perestroika, helping us defend ourselves against political hysteria and provocation of every kind.

We have a lot to do today. Can we then allow ourselves to be sidetracked into a witch hunt?

Our memories can and should be endowed with the pure and bright energy of creation. But when memories are distorted and poisoned they can be transformed into a blind weapon of destruction.

According to Vladimir Dahl,⁴ one of the meanings of the word “memory” is “a spiritual bequest”. It is not a matter of indifference to us what our forebears have bequeathed us and, hence, what we shall pass on to our descendants. How we use its colossal energy depends on us. Memories are not a mellow chiming in the ears of philistines. They are alarms urging us to take a critical and honest look at ourselves and the present. Let’s be discriminating about what we remember and who we listen to!

1987



Yuri Karyakin (b. 1930): philosopher and literary critic. A Dostoyevsky scholar, he is the author of a monograph entitled *Raskolnikov's Self-Deception* and has dramatized *Crime and Punishment*, *The Devils*, and *The Adolescent*. In addition, he has written a number of outstanding provocative articles on issues surrounding perestroika, e.g. "Is It Worth Stepping on the Rake?"

"Zhdanov Liquid" or Against Defamation

"The moral burden has been cleared. The posts have been cut down; the fences will collapse themselves..."

Andrei Zhdanov

*You'll gasp with horror one day,
You'll howl, and curse and swear,
I'll show you how to shun me,
Brave souls that you are.*

Anna Akhmatova

Just one year ago the idea of removing Zhdanov's name, after forty years, from Leningrad State University seemed an inconceivable "fundamental assault". Today the idea is even expressed in the newspapers. This is a sign of the times when everything is finally being put in its place with extraordinary speed. Yes, extraordinary speed if we look back. If we look

ahead, however, the pace is still too slow. For instance, Leningrad University is still named after Zhdanov. The demand has been made, but it has not been met. Actually it has been met in word, but in deed we see covert, stubborn and deliberate resistance. This is also a sign of the times. Moscow State University is named after Lomonosov, and Leningrad State University is named after Zhdanov. Surely Zhdanov is not regarded the Lomonosov of the 20th century? Yet graduates of this institution are still receiving diplomas with Zhdanov's name. Yet yesterday's high school graduates are still writing his name in their application forms...

A Coauthor of 1937

In 1946, when Zhdanov organized the witch hunt against Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, the people of Leningrad who had their fill of him were using a pun that they had either made up, or were recalling from the repressions of 1934-1935. Just uttering the pun could have put a person behind bars for a long time, if not worse. The pun was based on a 19th century solution called "Zhdanov liquid" that was used to subdue the stench of decaying corpses (it is mentioned in the next to the last chapter of Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*). It was only natural that those who knew history were referring to the "liquid" Andrei Zhdanov used to "sprinkle" culture. In contrast to the earlier liquid, however, the new one was lethal, ptomaine, with a terrible stench, but was presented as ideological nectar. Akhmatova had her own commentary:

*For such antics, I should merit,
Speaking candidly,
A lethal laden pallet
From that same Secretary.*

Blasphemy? Defamation? Slander against a man who was characterized just two years ago in a national newspaper as a person "whose name is preserved in the nation's memory"?

On September 25, 1936, an urgent telegram was sent from Sochi to Moscow, to the Politburo, saying: "Comrade Yezhov must urgently be appointed People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. Yagoda clearly has not excelled at exposing the Trotsky-Zinoviyev Bloc. OGPU IS FOUR YEARS LATE IN THIS MATTER. This is the opinion expressed by all party

functionaries and most regional representatives of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs." The two signatures on that telegram were – Stalin and Zhdanov.

This urgent Sochi telegram was one of the bloodiest dispatches in Soviet and world history: it signaled 1937. If the coauthors of the telegram had themselves written the countless warrants for arrest and prison sentences that stemmed from the telegram, if they had themselves arrested people, themselves had interrogated and tortured, beaten and shot, buried and cremated the corpses, and then repeated all this over and over again with the relatives and the children of the deceased (and the children of their children), how many millions of days would all this have taken? They would have needed immortality. Immortality to destroy living people. Immortality to produce death...

What else is astounding? "Has not excelled..." Here they exposed themselves. Their idea of excelling was measured by the rivers of spilled blood. It was not enough blood for them between 1929 and 1933. And it was not enough between 1934 and 1936. How much blood was needed and what it took to excel were determined by three men – Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria.

Yagoda, shot because he did not "excel", had a small son named Garik. Lost in the bloody commotion, he sent his grandmother a few letters from camp before he disappeared completely without a trace. Here is one of them: "Dear Grandma, I didn't die again. I'm not talking about the time I already wrote you about. I die many times. Your grandson."

How many words like that were written and not written, sent and not sent during those times in our country: the horrible orphans' chorus organized by two men in Sochi. And what terrible moaning and wailing came in response from all the mothers in prisons, "Stolypin cars" and camps.

Andrei Zhdanov, the coauthor of 1937 (and, of course, 1938). That was the principal deed of his life, the main "contribution" he made to our culture. In this respect he really did excel. We learned the results of his "creative endeavors" in those days in Leningrad from Akhmatova's *Requiem* and recently from L.K. Chukovskaya's story entitled *Sofia Petrovna*.

Here is some more information about Zhdanov's "artistic endeavors" in Ufa. It comes from a letter to me written by my friend, M. Chvanov, who did special research on this subject:

"Zhdanov came here in response to a letter by the First Secretary of the Bashkir Regional Party Committee Ya.B. Bykin sent to Stalin in desperation. Bykin saw what was happening

around him, realized that clouds were gathering over him, heard the provocateurs already shouting from the podiums, accusing him of being 'too soft' on the 'enemies of the people', on the Leningraders exiled to Ufa and for whom he had found jobs. He wrote: 'I ask one thing: send me a good Cheka man. He should conduct an objective investigation!'

"Zhdanov arrived in Ufa with his 'team' and made a sinister quip at Bykin: 'So here I am! I'll show you what a good Cheka man is.'

"Zhdanov was brief at the urgently called Plenum of the Bashkir Regional Party Committee. He said he had come 'to check up on the leadership'. He read the resolution that had been prepared in advance: 'The Central Committee has resolved to remove Bykin and Isanchurin [Second Secretary. — *M.Ch.*]...' Bykin and Isanchurin were led out of the room before the plenum ended. Bykin managed to shout out: 'I'm innocent!' Isanchurin courageously proclaimed: 'I've always trusted Bykin and still do.' Both were shot. Bykin's pregnant wife was shot too.

"Zhdanov's concluding remarks were also brief: 'The moral burden has been cleared. The posts have been cut down; the fences will collapse themselves.'"

Now I'll interrupt Chvanov. Here again, as was the case with the characterization of "excellence", *their* morals are exposed: "The moral burden has been cleared..." For them a "moral burden" is when there is not enough bloodshed.

Back to Chvanov: "No sooner had Zhdanov left than 'the fences' began to 'collapse'. The survivors in Ufa still shudder when they recall that 'historical' expedition, the bacchanalia of arrests and executions in their city. One of the provocateur-informers later spoke with pride at a meeting of writers that, despite his poor health, he personally identified twenty-six 'enemies of the people'.

"To this day my heart sinks when I walk past the Ivanovskoye Cemetery (it has been built up) where, according to unverified accounts (how can you verify them?), at night the dead were buried together in long trenches. But they were not only buried there. The enormous Ufa prison was not built for such mass-scale 'production'. People were shot in numerous ravines and quarries in Ufa, and were taken outside the city.

"Zhdanov was not only in Ufa during that trip, but also in Kazan and Orenburg where similar plenums were held.

"The documents I am using I found in the Archives of the

Bashkir CPSU Regional Committee (collection 122). Some of them were printed in the *Sovetskaya Bashkiria* on February 28, 1988.”

That is just one episode. Just one of many hundreds, if not thousands.

In December 1934, Zhdanov replaced the assassinated Kirov as First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee and the City Party Committee of Leningrad. He was the one who organized the “Kirov flow”, that is, he ordered, compiled and signed the lists (the main part of his “literary legacy” which would fill more than one volume) based on which many tens of thousands of Leningraders “flowed” to prisons, camps, exile, torture and death. The lives of these murdered and mutilated people, as well as the ruined futures of their children, were his personal responsibility (I cannot bring myself to say that they were on his conscience).

How many times in his long speeches did Zhdanov brand writers, artists, philosophers and musicians for being “out of touch with reality”. But he showed that he was in touch, as he understood it: in those lists and in that telegram. Approve and glorify that connection—that is what he wanted to do most of all, he wanted culture to glorify the assassination of culture itself, the bloody violence against the people, he wanted Akhmatova and Shostakovich to create hymns in honor of their butchers.

Furthermore, about this connection, or rather about the first and last links of this connection (how many are there between them!): from Zhdanov the ideologue to those who executed orders. The ideologue appears to have clean hands, and those who carry out orders appear to have a clear conscience: a division of labor! The result is hideous social and moral privation that is presented as a “firm foundation” and a “pure doctrine”. The result is crimes that are called heroic feats. Zhdanov as a “pure ideologue” is a myth. He was a direct organizer of the bloody bacchanalia, no worse than Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria. When he was writing his literary, music and philosophical reports, when he was playing the piano (yes, he could), when he was writing these reports, going through them, reading them, he wrote, read them and played music with blood-stained hands. This also applies to his reports: “The moral burden has been cleared. The posts have been cut down; the fences will collapse themselves.” And collapse they did—people, people and more people.

A “pure ideologue”.

I know. The pages have already been written (and, I am certain, are still to be written) about the disgraceful, criminal role Zhdanov played during the Leningrad blockade. They are pages that should bring shudders to all those who died then. Even so, even so, some of the living will shout: "Slander!"

Is Conscience Defamation?

Here I would like to speak directly to these enthusiasts who are fighting defamation; I emphasize, not to those who are deceived or mistaken, but to those who deceive the people deliberately – and, of course, with the "loftiest intentions."

That was in the past, thirty years ago, when we were not always able to answer your jesuitic and crafty questions. The times have changed. Now you have to answer direct and clear questions.

What is defamation?

Is it when millions of honest people – from peasant to academician, from manual laborer to field marshal – are deliberately slandered?

Is it when these slandered millions are annihilated, annihilated "in the name of socialism?" Is this not the defamation of socialism?

What about those lists, that telegram, that expedition to Ufa, Kazan and Orenburg?

What about the persecution and destruction of scientists in all disciplines without exception?

What about the persecution and destruction of hundreds of thousands of honest, talented writers, artists and musicians?

What about Zhdanov's name on Leningrad State University?

Isn't that the defamation of culture? Hasn't all that lost us tens of millions of supporters abroad?

But they say that the truth about this is defamation.

And the revelation of the heinous crimes is defamation.

And the *Great Rehabilitation* (Yevtushenko) is defamation.

First, millions of people were slandered, arrested and destroyed.

Then the facts about this were arrested, exiled and imprisoned. (It would seem that no one could shoot the facts, but many facts were, indeed, shot, incinerated and scattered so that we shall never find them.)

Finally, we have begun to liberate the facts.

But this liberation is what you call defamation.

You are torturing the facts just like your predecessors tortured live people.

You want to arrest, imprison and incinerate these facts again. You believe the expose of these crimes is a crime itself.

Why?

Why do you fly into a rage against those who expose crimes?

Why don't you have any words of compassion for the victims, and words of indignation against the executioners?

Why, at best, will you only admit that the black pages of our history are a "state secret" that the people are supposedly not mature enough to understand? (Are the people mature enough for reprisals, but not for the truth about the reprisals?)

Why is that?

Because human pain, the nation's pain is not pain to you, but "just another subject". Because conscience to you has nothing to do with pain or the fate of the people, but the will of bosses of the Stalin-Zhdanov ilk. You complain about the persecution of people in every country but your own (and I don't believe those lamentations of yours, nor do you for that matter).

Why? Because you are afraid, you are afraid of your own people, the truth and conscience. To you the awakening of conscience is defamation.

Because speeches by Stalin-Zhdanov, and *The Short History of the CPSU(B)*, are still all you can put forth as Marxism-Leninism.

Because the kind of socialism that is dear to you is smeared and bloodstained by Stalin-Zhdanov. That's what you like, while you fear this socialism that is being cleansed before our very eyes.

Because you can breathe freely only in the atmosphere poisoned by "Zhdanov liquid" (*this* is normal to you), while you suffocate when the air is pure.

Because you feel strong (and are truly strong) only in the dark, but what about in the light? In the light you blink your eyes for no reason at all, like eagle-owls, and babble that you are also always "in favor".

I know, I know, all my life I've heard you say: the people have always associated socialism with Stalin, and we have to reckon with this. Yes, this is unfortunately true (although not for everyone by any means). I would even add that these words have actually stuck together, grew together as one. So what?

There was a time when Christianity and the Inquisition were

synonymous. Christ and Torquemada. Yet they became unstuck. Weren't the words Yagoda, Yezhov, Beria and socialism once stuck together? And what about Vyshinsky and Soviet law? Or Boshyan, Lepeshinskaya, Lysenko and science? Or: Zaslavsky, Yermilov, Elsberg and conscience? Even the words Lidia Timashuk and honesty were stuck together. So what? They became unstuck! And what happened? Socialism and science were purified.

Defamation is a lie.

The truth cannot be defamation. The truth can only be purifying.

But just the same, again and again I hear people claim: "After all, Stalin and Zhdanov did have their good points. You can't ignore them. After all, dialectics applies here, too."

You know, I'll agree with you if you accept one additional point of mine. Let it be your way: "In addition to the merits of Stalin and Zhdanov they had just one fault: they were butchers".

One more question, how many people were repressed against the law? How many of them were annihilated?

*I would like to name every one of them.
But they've hidden the records.*

Let's find this out, and count them together, correcting one another as we go along, and let's publish all this together. What's the matter? Why don't you want to? It's not patriotic? It's defamation?

You do not want to even know this, and if you did know you would do everything to conceal the facts. You are hiding what is already known. And you are harassing those who want to know.

You will still have to prove that we would not have won the war without the arrest and the extermination of millions of honest people. Just try and prove that!

Prove that we would have lost the war with these millions.

That is the extent of your "dialectics" if it is exposed:

Yes, Stalin slandered and destroyed honest people, but he did it "in the name of communism"! It was bad, of course, that he slandered and destroyed. But it was good that he did it "in the name of communism"!..

Didn't Yagoda, Yezhov, Beria, Vyshinsky and Zhdanov do that "in the name of"?..

That's a jesuitic approach, not dialectics.

The truth is that the word Stalin is tightly stuck together and forever inseparable from some other words, such as Yagoda, Yezhov, Beria, Vyshinsky, Zhdanov, plus the enormous corps of informers and executioners who were smaller fish, that is, plus Khvats who tortured academicians and marshals, plus the Ryumins who beat doctors, plus the old men who in their youth helped supercede targets for destroying people who were not nearly as distinguished. All this (and much, much more like it) is your aggregate Stalin. No one will ever be able to pull apart these words.

The main thing is that Stalin is the continual and systematic decrease in the price of human life – to zero – the decrease in the price of the individual – to minus zero: man does not have any value, while the individual is already simply the enemy. When people maintain that under Stalin “prices were lowered”, first of all, it simply is not true if we are talking about goods, about food, and second, I have to add that the price of man, of the individual, was lowered! His absolute political immorality was just one result of this main premise which was determined, in its turn, by the drive for absolute personal power.

All this does not cancel out our victories, but merely tells us what they cost. And the genuine (not imaginary) winners are not discredited, but you will still to prove that deceived people build socialism better and defend it better, and that undeceived people do all this worse. Can you prove that?

Of all the questions that you will have to answer now, you will not be able to avoid the question of glasnost. I would like to know what feelings and what thoughts you have when you read the following:

“The free press is the ubiquitous vigilant eye of a people’s soul, the embodiment of a people’s faith in itself, the eloquent link that connects the individual with the state and the world, the embodied culture that transforms material struggles into intellectual struggles and idealizes their crude material form. It is a people’s frank confession to itself, and the redeeming power of confession is well known. It is the spiritual mirror in which a people can see itself, and self-examination is the first condition of wisdom... It is all-sided, ubiquitous, omniscient. It is the ideal world which always wells up out of the real world and flows back into it with ever greater spiritual riches and renews its soul.” (Karl Marx, “Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly,” in: Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, pp. 164-65.)

You would like to tear those words apart, because they manifest talent (in comparison with the stodgy trite that you like), because they are hostile to you, despicable in essence, and also because you do not know to whom they belong. When you find out you will flail about, like a drowning man grabbing for a straw: "That is early Marx, a minor, as it were."

Just for your information, the "later" Marx did not renounce these words, but expanded on them. He suggested, for instance, to think about having the communist party press be independent of the Central Committee, so it could put forth more objectively, more independently and more fruitfully communist ideas that are by no means truth in the form of a military order. Incidentally, he was visualizing you when he commented on the likes of you by saying: "If you listen to them, I'm not a Marxist..."

You cannot raise or resolve one single question. After all, none of your ideas shows any imagination, any trace of being nurtured, of being unexpected or astonishing. And you don't know the feeling of ennobling admiration for the inspired thought of another. Instead, the only feeling you have is that of one of Pushkin's wealthy men toward the "fiddler" in his spare time. And that sterility of yours pass off as "adherence to principles". In fact you regard Thought as a "saboteur" and Thinking as an "enemy of the people". You would also like to turn Marxism into a prisoner and guard it to keep it from escaping. That is all you are capable of; that is your only function, your only "creativity": *guarding*. But now you can no longer even do that. The source of your barren prosperity has been undermined. You are threatened by ideological unemployment, because your ideology is a unique phenomenon, a mutant, a riddle of nature: the expanded reproduction of sterility, the multiplication of intellectual impotency.

But, lord, how much energy you still have despite all this, your special kind of *energy of hate*! Sometimes I even regret that you are expending it uselessly or for detrimental purposes. Now what if you used this energy rationally? Say, against AIDS? There would be no AIDS then. But if you use it against culture, there would be no culture...

Alchemists

In the February issue of *Novy Mir* Andrei Nuikin warned that you are preparing a counteroffensive. He turned out to be

right: Nina Andreyeva's letter was published on March 13. An unknown chemist became an ideologue known to all overnight. A suspicious transformation to be sure. Isn't there some kind of alchemy behind that?

A year ago one of the prototypes of my *Incognito*, incidentally, also a chemist, picked up from our editorial office his denunciation, and said in parting: "This is not the time to strike..." I can imagine how happy he was to see his colleague's letter: supposedly now is the time. I can imagine how all of you appreciated it—here it is, your new *Fundamentals*, your new *Short History*, your new ideological manifesto which is saturated with "Zhdanov liquid". I can also imagine how you mobilized all of your intellectual, moral and organizational abilities in order to turn this manifesto into a *signal* for an immediate counteroffensive, but ... again you stepped on a rake.

I am convinced that all the dramatic and comic details will be reconstructed of the day-by-day events around your manifesto, the whole chronicle of how it was planned, written and published, and the chronicle of how its approval was organized. How was the day of publication chosen? What was the strategy? What was the tactic? Why wasn't the manifesto released, say, on March 10 or March 21? It will be especially interesting to see the chronicle of events between March 13 and April 5. How many local newspapers reprinted the manifesto? How many Xerox copies were run off? How many discussions of approval were organized? Who gave the instructions? How was local initiative promoted? By whom? Why wasn't one single word printed against the manifesto for three weeks, except, it seems, in *Moscow News* and *Tambovskaya Pravda*? Why does Nina Andreyeva only seem to be the manifesto's coauthor, and far from the main one? Who was the main alchemist? Was there only one? Why did one personal opinion of one individual (let's say it was one) which obviously contradicted the whole course the party and state have set for renewal, why did it virtually dominate the press, dominate absolutely and completely for three weeks (more precisely, twenty-four days)? Why was it virtually imposed—through the press or some other way—on the Party, all the people and the whole country? How is that in keeping with the slogan "More democracy, more socialism"? With glasnost? With the Party Rules and Program? With the Constitution, at least? Who is this Nina Andreyeva who possesses so much unprecedented and incomprehensible power? If she is not the one, than who

is? If it is really not one person, then are we talking about a platform? But whose concretely? And why did its true originators hide behind a poor chemist? My last question is: if something like this was possible, then shouldn't we expect worse?

Or are all these questions unfair, and impermissible to ask? Or perhaps we should not even be allowed to think about them? Or are they of no concern to us? None of our business? But why? Then whose business are they, may I ask? Doesn't the course, the fate of renewal hinge on a straight answer to these questions?

No, we cannot get away from these questions, and we should feel and understand not only our right, but our duty to ask these questions, and to demand and get a straight answer. Or haven't I really understood perestroika? Isn't it the liberation from all political intrigue, from all kinds of alchemy?..

When I was in Leningrad between March 24 and 26, I got my fill of comments among the people and in the press applauding the coauthor. I witnessed with my own eyes a genuine relapse of Zhdanovism. I heard and smelled my fill of "Zhdanov liquid". This glorification seemed to be orchestrated. Incidentally, why and how? It was in fact well organized. Someone was dreaming again: "The moral burden has been cleared. The posts have been cut down; the fences will collapse themselves..." I heard such remarks as: "At last. Finally someone is hitting back at the slanderers!" "Finally everything is being set right!" I heard: "That's the ideological tuning fork of the 19th Party Conference!" I heard: "Now those are the kind of delegates we should send there!"... Is it any wonder that the article in *Pravda* on April 5 did not stir any enthusiasm among the organizers of this "moral clearance"?

It has a sobering effect. There is still no guarantee that the process of renewal is irreversible. Instead we have seen an obvious and joyful little dress rehearsal of how perestroika will be stifled, a micromodel of revenge. We should be thankful for the good lesson: the only guarantees are ourselves. I have seen, heard and known people (there are more of them than one suspected) who cannot be swayed, frightened and broken by anything, and for whom the article in *Pravda* has become their *own*. Nothing could be more important than to understand everything oneself and to convince others that any alchemy like the one related to the manifesto is disastrous. The "salvation of principles" that it is based on can bring about not only stagnation, but a real catastrophe—for the country,

for socialism, for the world. Stalinism, which has not been completely uprooted, naturally gave rise to Rashidovism. Now, if it is not uprooted, it can foster something incomparably worse.

The people must not be sprinkled any longer with “Zhdanov liquid”.

Meanwhile, V. Glagolev’s article devoted to the 90th birth anniversary of Zhdanov, reads: “Due to his activities, his enormous talent as an organizer and propagandist, Andrei Zhdanov selflessly served the working people, the cause of Lenin, the Communist Party... He demonstrated his excellent abilities and special gift as a political figure in the city of Lenin, the cradle of the socialist revolution... As a true Communist he did not separate word from deed, or theory from practice... His name is preserved in the nation’s memory...”

What is that? How is it possible that the author did not know anything about the facts of Zhdanov’s punitive activities? He must have known! They were brought out at the 22nd Congress. That means Glagolev knew, but wrote what he did anyway. Why? Because he was asked to? But why didn’t he refuse? After all, he would not have been shot for that, or even arrested. So why? Was the job more important than honor? What kind of job is it? Had he refused people would have been thanking him for it today and, more importantly, would have believed him. What if tomorrow he is ordered to praise tomorrow’s Andreyeva?

Here is one more source. Just the other day the seventh edition was released of Alexei Abramov’s *At the Kremlin Wall*, with a print run of 200.000 copies. It was published by Gospolitizdat. It was signed for printing on December 3, 1987. The same statements are made about Zhdanov in this edition as were printed in the first edition in 1974: “Under his leadership the people of Leningrad successfully reached the targets of the second and third five-year plans ahead of schedule... In 1948 the city of Mariupol was named after this outstanding leader of the Communist Party. A street, subway station and the First Exemplary Print Shop in Moscow are named after Zhdanov, as well as streets and factories in many cities and towns throughout the country.” Once again: the author knows everything, absolutely everything about Zhdanov; *he has to know!* Yet he still regards him as a “hero”, a “legendary associate”. The author gives the same amoral, “objective” testimonial of Vyshinsky and Mekhlis...

Yes, there is a city named Zhdanov. There is even another university named after Zhdanov (in Irkutsk). There are many thousands of streets, factories, print shops, ships, institutes, collective farms, state farms, schools, recreation clubs, and even childcare centers and pioneer palaces (in Leningrad, too) named after Zhdanov. Almost nothing anymore is named after Stalin, but plenty of things still bear Zhdanov's name. The whole country is sprinkled with "Zhdanov liquid". It is a record in its own way. Only a record of what? A record of the cynicism of those who deliberately do not want to renounce the glorification of this name? Or a record of our own ignorance, indifference and spinelessness?

I have received a letter from the city of Zhdanov: people are being harassed for wanting to live in Mariupol again. From Chvanov's letter I learned: "I thought that in Ufa nothing bore Zhdanov's name. There used to be a district named after him, but right after Stalin died it was renamed because the people's wrath was feared. But yesterday I was informed that a street was recently named after Zhdanov."

The house where Tsvetayeva spent the last days of her life, and where she committed suicide, is in the city of Elabuga. A memorial plaque is on the house: it will probably be turned into a museum. But it is on Zhdanov Street.

Isn't all of that defamation? *Isn't* it defamation not only of our past, but also of our present? *Isn't* it also the deliberate defamation of our future? Will we enter the 21st century with these brands?..

Ecology. The turnabout of rivers. The pollution of Lake Baikal...

What about the ecology of our morality? The turnabout of our cultural rivers? The pollution of our spiritual Baikals? All of this is extremely concrete, vivid, tangible. And it is reflected in our sprinkling ourselves with "Zhdanov liquid", in the defamation of ourselves.

It is about time we woke up to what we have: in 1988 we have the Zhdanov Young Pioneer Palace. And where is it? On the corner of Nevsky and Fontanka, by the Anichkov Bridge... What fairytales are the children's instructors supposed to tell them about this nice man?..

On whom does all this depend? On whom if not ourselves? On the explosion of a feeling of our own dignity, our honor and simply—our disgust. If we do not want, or cannot achieve so little, how can we accomplish more? An extremely simple

thought just occurred to me. Now I'm appealing to you, my readers. Let's conduct an experiment: how much time will it take to accomplish such an obvious and basic task of washing the "Zhdanov liquid" off ourselves, at least outwardly (an internal cleansing will take much longer and is much more complicated, but maybe this will make it work a little faster)?

Everything depends on us, including those who will represent the Party and the people at the upcoming conference. This is an event of national importance, unprecedented and decisive. Those who are the most experienced and the most reliable must be sent there, without any political intrigues, without any alchemy. They must have proven with their whole life that they cannot be scared, bought out or confused by anything. They who have no interests greater than the interests of the people. They who can defend these interests no matter what. They who have no other goal besides the renewal of the country. Incidentally, the whole story of the relapse of Zhdanovism between March 13 and April 5 also provides reliable criteria for determining who is who...

We would like to advise those who adore his name (this advice, in view of current democratization, is quite realistic) to build on a cooperative basis whatever they want—Zhdanovgrad, or even Slavozhdanovsk—or monuments to Zhdanov the Thinker, Zhdanov the Military Leader, Zhdanov the Literary Critic, Zhdanov the Exterminator of "Enemies of the People". They can gird them with those same lists, and engrave in gold that same telegram. All the streets in Zhdanovsk should, of course, be called Zhdanov, each one distinguished by a different number. They can pass daily resolutions in the spirit of Zhdanov. They can label every Madonna created by all the Rafaels and Leonardos—god-seeking and necrophilic. Then they can see who is vigilant and who is soft. They will compete. They will cut out the reference to "Zhdanov liquid" from the next to the last chapter of *The Idiot*! Or simply cut out the whole chapter! Ban the whole novel as subversion against Zhdanov. Ban all those who have read it! Ban those who banned. Ban thinking about "Zhdanov liquid" altogether! They will insanely mumble over and over: "I am not thinking *about it*. I am thinking not *about it*..." They will arrest one another until the last two Zhdanovites will rush to inform on each other for thinking *about it*. Only who will they run to and where?..

Named After Vernadsky

Now I will dare to disagree with the opinion of my favorite writer, Daniil Granin, who proposed that the university simply be named Leningrad State University. But there is the name of a former student of St Petersburg University, the brilliant scientist who is rightly called “the Lomonosov of the 20th century”, and without whose ideas about the “noosphere” the third millennium would be inconceivable, a former student whose name was Vladimir Vernadsky. I think it would be fair if Leningrad State University would bear the name of its student, the name of a person who, in addition to everything else, firmly opposed Zhdanovism, who fearlessly stood up for people persecuted by Zhdanov, a person who embodied everything that was in equal measure inaccessible to and hated by such people as Zhdanov.

However let us not have any illusions: it is incomparably harder to be cleansed of Zhdanovism than to rename a university, and to rename a university is incomparably easier than to feel, think and live in the conceptual-moral coordinates of Vladimir Vernadsky. But we will not survive outside of such pure and noble coordinates, outside the coordinates of new thinking. The lowly, evil, envious and revengeful coordinates of Zhdanovism-Stalinism today are literally suicidal.

The university should be named after Vernadsky, not Zhdanov – the very experience of renaming the university will also be a great lesson to us. It really is beautiful and inspiring: Vernadsky instead of Zhdanov, nobleness of spirit instead of selfish cunning, “noosphere” instead, instead of what? After all, the baseness of Zhdanov’s thought cannot even be named a sphere. Surely you cannot just call it the sphere of baseness?

Vernadsky once wrote: “We are experiencing not a crisis upsetting weak souls, but a major turning point in the scientific thought of humankind that occurs only once a millennium; we are seeing scientific accomplishments that many generations of our ancestors never witnessed.

“Standing at this turning point and looking out at the future unfolding before us, we should be happy that it is our good fortune to experience this, to participate in creating this future.” Now this is excellence...

Believe me, dear reader, if only you knew how much I do not want to have to spend my time on “Zhdanov liquid” when there are Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, Schweitzer and Bohr,

when there are such people as Vernadsky, and such ideas. Nevertheless it is necessary. It is necessary precisely to keep this liquid from polluting our good fortune, to keep it from hindering that future Vernadsky foresaw.

May the graduates of Leningrad State University receive at last diplomas with a name that is pure and forever reliable. May school graduates write this name in their applications. And why not start from this year?

I am certain that this will all come to pass, just as I am certain, for instance, that we should change the name of Rostov University which is named after Suslov. Is this also defamation? No. Again it is *against* defamation. However, as Dostoyevsky says in the epilogue to *Crime and Punishment*: "This is a subject for a new story, but this story of ours is over."

1988

ECHOES NEAR AND FAR

**“It is only when we learn
the whole truth about
HOW IT HAD BEEN,
shall we be able to talk about
the triumph of justice.”**

From a letter by L. Rybak



Igor Dedkov (b. 1932): literary critic who has consistently championed the truthful depiction of life's contradictions. He is the author of books on the work of Vasil Bykov and Sergei Zalygin (1980 and 1985, respectively) and has published several collections of articles, including *Recovery* (1978) and *The Living Face of Time* (1986).

Dedkov is currently a political commentator for *Kommunist* journal and sits on its editorial board.

Literature and the New Way of Thinking

“Do we need to remember... should we care... is it worthwhile?” asked Yuri Trifonov in his novel *Time and Place* (1981).¹ Is this worthwhile if the fathers have not returned from the war, little boys have grown up and had time enough to grow old and a whole era has sunk into oblivion?

The answer that suggested itself was bitter, “No one cares.” However, no matter how bitter one may be one moment, this moment of bitterness passes away. Whole years of bitterness pass by and then it turns out that people care. We should and must remember.

Otherwise our integrity and courage are in question. Can a morally sound political force do without complete historical self-awareness? Can conscientious historical thought be grounded on understatement, silence and erasures? Can artistic and literary-critical thinking pretend that something that happened had never happened?

From their young years, from school, generation after generation grows up to believe that the Communists are a morally sound political force (“the intellect, honor and conscience of our epoch”²), that Soviet historical science faithfully serves the truth and Soviet literature is committed to be true to life, educate a new type of man and protect mankind’s lofty spiritual and moral values.

No matter what corrections experience has made in these ideas, they had essentially remained unchanged. As is known, the way a concept is implemented may for various reasons differ from the concept itself; however, the more people stick to the original idea, and fight for it, the more inevitable it is that the concept, correlated with new knowledge and the lessons of the past, will be taken up again.

In his *Last Holiday*, a novel written in the mid-sixties, Ales Adamovich³ describes the shadow cast by a person “less than medium height who skilfully positioned himself against the rising sun of the great revolution”.

Should we recall the long and difficult process of emerging from this dense shadow? Should we do so, knowing that this shadow still dims some of the faces, both young and old?

I am not going to discuss here all the troublesome aspects of the “shadow” theme in its old and new versions. I am only going to speak about literature, and when I say “should” and “must” I apply these words to literature above all.

And if I want to recall something, it is not because I have purposefully dug for some facts, but because I have never forgotten them and shall never be able to forget. It is as if I had a splinter in my mind for years...

I am not going to talk about something special, nothing extraordinary though.

In 1965, a book review published in one of our national newspapers described a novel by a young author with phrases like “specific insignificant facts”, “uninteresting attitude to labor”, “the characters’ earthly duty is dull, colorless, inane”, their work is “something routine, devoid of romance and heroism”... Let us remember this— insignificant, uninteresting, colorless.

The novel in question, *Seven in One Home* by Vitaly Syomin,⁴ a writer from Rostov, was one of the best pieces of prose in the Soviet literature of the 1960s. After the above-cited diatribe, it was not reprinted until 10 years later. What I have in mind, however, are not the consequences of the denunciatory criticism of those years. Neither am I aiming at reproaching someone for a past mistake. Then, in 1965, the above discourse struck as one being strangely and arrogantly alienated from reality. It mirrored the unwillingness to be reminded about it. Literature was assigned, as it were, a certain level of being “interesting”, heroic, romantic, truthful “in a big way”. Those who failed to meet these demands were con-

sidered ideological heretics and were made to answer for it. This socio-aesthetical line was based on the understanding that what should be known about the life of the country and the people is well known. And therefore literature and art in general were not supposed to provide an answer to the question, what is the contemporary man like and what sort of life does he lead? If a talented artist created a vivid and appealing picture of something “uninteresting”, as was the case with Syomin’s novel, the conclusion drawn up was that “the author’s gift only served to accentuate the drawbacks” of his work based on a “wrong idea”. Thereby the artist’s attitude to reality was simplified and the artist’s ability to rise above the original idea by being objective was belittled. At the same time, the stimulating influence that a “correct idea” had on the artist was exaggerated. If we take into account that the correctness of the “correct” or “true” idea was questionable, the orientation of art on the “big truth” proved to be groundless both aesthetically and politically.

“How come?” people would ask themselves. “Why Syomin’s novel is a ‘semblance’ of the truth? Since when has the life in a working-class suburb, the life of working people in a socialist country become ‘uninteresting’? And not because the author is bad and has thus turned something ‘interesting’ into something ‘uninteresting’, but because what he had aptly depicted as interesting is socially ‘uninteresting’!”

Here are some of the things deemed “uninteresting”: people and life in a working-class suburb, their life stories, characters, concerns, work, conversations and memories. It was unimportant that the novel was centered around a strikingly vivid image of the factory worker Mulia (short for *ma-mulia* which is Russian for “mommy”), selfless and passionate in her round-the-clock dedication to work (“I’m about to die, but I can’t stop working”). It was unimportant that the characters in the novel were all fatherless kids, and their lives, poor, harsh, rough and at times cruel, could have been otherwise, had their fathers returned from the war... It was unimportant that the memories and fates of the women in the suburb had been shaped by Nazi occupation, the loss of their loved ones, disease and starvation...

The things proclaimed “unimportant” had been piling up to include the fact that we had overcome “hardships”, that we had forgotten how to help one another and even that life had begun to change for the better.

What is important, then? It matters that “those in charge” have been portrayed incorrectly as too callous, heartless, omnipotent and, to top it all off, never opposed as a bureaucratic force, which is wrong because it can never be so. The author was made to understand that “the truth of life and the truth of art” are two-sided, each of them having an “external side” (“skin”, “shell”) and “internal side” (“the true content of a character or a phenomena”). In other words, one should not necessarily believe one’s own eyes... Perhaps something may seem bad. But you look deeper, and you will find that everything is well-balanced, coordinated, considered; the heartless have already been reprimanded, the callous warned, and the omnipotence only imagined.

I am remembering all this in detail to prove that this kind of literary-critical portrayal of reality cannot be justified. Because in the name of socialism, democracy and cultural development they objectively led society away from the very same.

The discontent with the socio-critical and democratic spirit of literature expressed in a national newspaper could neither be harmless nor accidental. In those days there existed a hierarchy of ideological and aesthetical assessments which corresponded to the hierarchy of the press. The credibility of the assessment depended not on the credibility and competence of the critic, not on the quality of his judgment, but on the position of the newspaper or the magazine. This kind of predetermined judgment could decide the fate of a book, film, play, etc. for years to come. It would be wrong to describe the response to Syomin’s novel, for instance, as something accidental or rare. The ideas expressed by his critics had long been popular in the most reputable publications. But to be just, they were even more persistently and aggressively expressed in less influential publications.

Literature as an art form used to discover and master the world was underestimated. At times one might have even thought that it was not needed in this capacity at all.

So why do we need it? Why do we need it if the critics know in advance the way things *must be*, if they know all about man and society?

Why indeed? For the sake of confirmation, illustration and propagation of what must be?

Whenever literature indicated – this is the way things are, this is the truth, the omniscient critics would object saying this is just a “semblance”, an “outward appearance”, but not the

truth. Our people are not that way, they do not think that way, they did not fight that way during the war, they do not live that way and they do not feel that way...

Years will pass and we will hear, “we need more socialism, more democracy”. That will mean, among other things, that we have less of both than we should.

The reckless administrators will not be the only ones to blame...

When discussing Syomin’s characters, people from the working-class suburb, the critics said: “Their earthly duty is dull. They all seem to be failures, blind to beauty and art.” This could make the readers feel that the author offended their feeling of social justice and democracy. However, it is highly probable that this feeling had been played upon so often and in so many different ways that finally it was made to seem outdated and non-existent.

Commenting on one of the secondary characters in Victor Rozov’s *Traditional Reunion*,⁵ quiet and shy Lida, an assistant from a savings bank somewhere in the Far North, an author of a review in a popular magazine wrote, “It takes so little to make Lida happy and she is so insignificant that she would almost go unnoticed.” The anxious critic alerted the entire country to the fact that the playwright ignored “the true hero of Soviet society, one who was not only capable of heroic deeds, but was *constantly* [My italics. –I.D.] performing them”.

The critical spirit soared high above the vast expanses of our lives! From such heights an ordinary face, an ordinary voice held no significance. Some poor Lida with her mundane earthly duties! No more than a small detail in a constantly heroic landscape!

I intentionally do not identify the authors, magazines and newspapers: the similarities are more striking and telling than the differences. The times were complicated—the late 1950s and the 1960s. The similarities lie not so much in the rejection of characters in the works of Vitaly Syomin, Victor Rozov, Fyodor Abramov, Alexander Volodin, Grigory Baklanov, Alexei Arbuzov, Vasil Bykov, Alexander Yashin, Nikolai Voronov, Boris Mozhaev, and many others; they lie not so much in the choice of the “target”, as in the “concept” of man, his predestination, value, and role in ever advancing history, society and the state, the concept that gave rise to the rejecting or even denouncing character of criticism. To be more exact, that was a “concept” of socialism and its moral, ethical and

aesthetic principles, a concept that was home-made, abstract, schematic, poster-like, one that feared the test of being juxtaposed with historical and contemporary realities.

“It is hard to imagine,” we were told, “that people destined to address the formidable tasks of postwar restoration, the happiness of transition to the building of communist society, could look miserable or appear unrepresentative of their society.” A positive hero is a front-ranker, the writers were told. That is what made the readers so anxious to have a glimpse of their inner world, the inner world of the manager of a big enterprise, a woman scientist or a deputy to the Soviet, or the leader of a region with a population of three million, it was claimed. Typical of Soviet reality, the critics would say, was the impetuous progress of the rank-and-file and the unprecedented opportunity for a mass of them to pursue successful careers...

It was no use asking what “the happiness of transition” meant and why literary character should always represent his/her nation, as if he/she were on a business trip abroad, even as he/she stood in the middle of a log cabin in his/her village? It was not clear how the critics knew that the readers were “anxious to have a glimpse” of the inner world of someone prominent or high up, how they knew that the readers would not be content with gaining an insight into the inner self of the manager of just any factory but necessarily a giant enterprise, how they knew that the readers were not interested in an ordinary man, especially if he looked “miserable”?!

We were told that loneliness, one of the many types of unhappiness, was “justified where Americans were concerned and absolutely inexplicable in the case of Soviet people”.

Discernible behind the literary-critical recipes of those years was a strange preference given to “important” over “insignificant” people. As if to make up for it, critics spoke about the “impetuous progress” and the opportunity for the “rank-and-file” to be promoted to the ranks of “important” people as if without this kind of promotion and elevation a working person with his everyday concerns had no chance to appear positive in literature.

Referring to the days of the French Revolution in his book on Charles Dickens, Gilbert K. Chesterton wrote, “It was a world that expected everything of everybody. It was a world that encouraged anybody to be anything... His work has the great glory of the Revolution, the bidding of every man to be himself... When we experience the ungovernable sense of life

which goes along with the old Dickens sense of liberty, we experience the best of the revolution. We are filled with the first of all democratic doctrines, that all men are interesting...”

Something must have happened, something must have gradually accumulated to make us become less aware of the best of the revolution, to forget the above precept or to have it replaced by another “Table of Ranks”.

It was almost sixty years since our revolution when, in an answer to a questionnaire about Gorky circulated by *Novy Mir* magazine, Vitaly Syomin emphasized one quality about Gorky that had always struck him: “The great sense with which he always measured even the most ‘uninteresting life’”. He also stressed that with Gorky “common” people were invariably “interesting”... He said he believed that “what is deemed ‘uninteresting’ is almost sure to be something one is ignorant of... There are times when the area of the ‘uninteresting’ grows so much that what is left to the ‘interesting’ loses almost all credibility.” What occurred, Syomin said, was a kind of “false confidence in our having overcome ‘the uninteresting’”.

Syomin once described a case when a writer who had read his play to a group of actors heard the following commentary: “The Menshevik in your play is rather colorless.” The author answered: “To render him colorful would be doing him too much honor.”

There was a certain logic behind saying that some people were not worthy of portrayal because that would be “doing them too much honor”, others were too small and insignificant for a closer look (commenting on Volodin’s *Five Evenings*⁶ a critic scorned “the unsuccessful Ilyin and the colorless Tamara”) and still others were questionable because they were “cooped up in small and stuffy apartments, bent on discussing trivial and rather Philistine ideas”.

The sphere of the “uninteresting” was growing. Behind the process there were all sorts of political, social and moral considerations; gradually there emerged a sort of obligatory political and aesthetical “range” of topics for literature and the arts. This “range” smacked of a profound mistrust of the people, their intelligence and responsibility, of everything which was true and actually existing around us.

In a book devoted to “Gogol’s tradition” in contemporary drama (1953) the then well-known literary critic Vladimir Yermilov wrote: “Beauty is the spring of humanity, the homeland of socialism in its struggle, forever advancing.”

Chernyshevsky’s formula—“beauty is life”—was decisively

surpassed. Of course, what Chernyshevsky had in mind was not just any life, but life “the way it should be in our understanding”. Still, he was talking about life in its fullness as a prerequisite for and a foundation of beauty. For all its ideological impeccability, there was a bravura about Yermilov’s formula—something simple-minded and superficial. It had little regard for life, its eternal values and ideals, narrowing and limiting the foundation of the beautiful. One has an urge to ask, “What struggle are you talking about? Clarify yourself.” Yermilov did clarify himself. “We must burn out of life all that is negative, rotten, dead, everything that holds back progress; we must ruthlessly castigate, persecute, hunt down and destroy evil.”

This sounds almost up to date, but we must not deceive ourselves: apart from the repulsive ruthlessness expressed in these verbs, what we find here is also a kind of algebraic trick: one can replace any of the above symbols—“evil”, “negative”, etc.—with any variable, desired or imposed. Yermilov called upon literature to wage an implacable struggle against “rotten people, rotten ideas, and rotten feelings”, but not, however, to mix up with all this rottenness the Soviet citizen who had committed and acknowledged an error. The Soviet citizen could, presumably, display “weaknesses”, but as he did so, he ceased to be a positive hero, and had to “embark on the road of actual correction of his mistake”. The permissible “weaknesses” to be “eradicated” were then accurately listed: “lack of vigilance, inability to spot an enemy”, “lack of morals in everyday life”, “philistinism, indiscretion, vanity”, etc.

Such lists of either correctable, forgivable weaknesses or in-eradicable, unforgivable vices (for instance, the vice of being a “Menshevik”, “a rotten intellectual”, double-dyed Philistine in a “crowded apartment”, etc.), or “earthly duties” inspiring or uninspiring, were not as harmless as they might seem today. They were among the ideological stereotypes that for a long time checked the development of literature and art, as well as of literary-critical thought as a variety of social thought. It is no accident that some of our distinguished writers are unwilling to have their works of the late forties and early fifties reprinted. And not because they were early imperfect works, but because their authors feel awkward of their having been harnessed to stereotypes. Nor is it accidental that many works of those and earlier years, now considered to be the pride of Soviet literature, have awaited publication for years and even decades. On the whole, the entire development of our literature

over the last decades has consisted of a slow and difficult surmounting of social and aesthetic oversimplification, a pragmatic and utilitarian approach to man and life. This was a dramatic struggle with many ups and downs; however, the fact that today “new thinking” is gradually gaining the upper hand over “old thinking” can perhaps be accounted for, to an extent, by the role the best part of our literature, the one that is artistically and socially mature, profoundly socialist and democratic in spirit, played in shaping this kind of thinking and spreading it among the people. It was as if literature was working out in its midst social, moral and ethical foundations of a renewed world outlook, inevitably opening up new horizons for socio-political thought and intellectual culture.

Consider the way things were in the past: a literary hero, say, Fyodor Abramov’s⁷ favorite character Mikhail Pryaslin,⁷ would open a national newspaper and his heart would be seized with envy because “somewhere life surged, somewhere every day and every hour winged knights performed glorious feats for their homeland and depicted them colorfully in their letters and reports”. And Pryaslin would ask himself: “And what kind of life do we have here, in Pekashino?”

As we see, Abramov was aware of the “winged knights” and their continuous heroic deeds, however, he preferred to tell about the ordinary “uninteresting” life of Pekashino and its inhabitants, which, to believe certain chroniclers, did not exist at all. But it did exist, indeed Fyodor Abramov was capable of seeing and hearing life, especially life in a northern Russian village. And didn’t the life of the entire nation echo in it? Once the notorious denigrator of Soviet life, Abramov is today revered as one of the most consistent realist artists, faithful to that very truth of life which lies at the core of the most important recent Party documents. Abramov was truly anxious to gain an insight into the souls and fates of his contemporaries. He was equally interested in an old-line secretary of a district Party committee, a steadfast old village woman who had suffered a lot to keep her faith, and a Bolshevik who had fanatically believed in the revolutionary transformation of humanity and endured countless hardships. But he was especially interested in collective farmers of war time and the hungry postwar years... He regarded people as the greatest wealth of his country, and his heart ached when he encountered disrespect and disregard for human life...

Fyodor Abramov ranked among our best writers of the six-

ties who were the first to flagrantly reject the literary-critical precepts, exhortations and admonitions. The historical, social and aesthetic righteousness of this opposition through literature is, to my mind, obvious today.

It is easy to see that once literature has “landed and seized a beachhead”, to use a military phrase, it will never surrender its position and will start to expand steadily, inch by inch, if this proves to be intrinsically, essentially and nobly meaningful.

What Valentin Ovechkin⁸ and his comrades-in-arms started in the mid-fifties has been carried on, albeit in a different, artistically more powerful and free way, with a different choice of characters and topics, by “village prose”, a remarkable phenomenon in the multiethnic Soviet literature of the sixties and seventies.

That “inch of land” which Grigory Baklanov’s and Yuri Bondarev’s⁹ characters first held (though there had been a few earlier examples of the same) gradually grew into a vast and horrible expanse of the past war. That expanse has been covered by our war prose anew, honestly and courageously, in the name of preventing its recurrence, in the name of the victims and the victors. The service to society and the people done by our war prose writers has probably not yet been duly appreciated.

Whether we like it or not, whether or not we are willing to realize it, these prose writers—let us add the names of Konstantin Simonov, Vasil Bykov, Vladimir Bogomolov and Konstantin Vorobyov—also began with writing against the official recommendations and conventional patterns.

We should recognize that “new thinking” in literature emerged not among those who indulged in falsehoods and lies, but among those who followed the complicated and contradictory realities of life, history and human destiny.

Those critics who chose the more reliable “higher bank”, to use Dudintsev’s¹⁰ phrase, hurried to alarm the public, insisting that, hidden in the somber literary lowlands, was “the truth of the trenches” echoing the alien sounds of “Remarqueism”.

We will not go into the details of that memorable confrontation. As Vladimir Dudintsev remarked in his novel *White Robes*, on a different but essentially similar occasion: “Those lying in the lowlands could see ever more clearly that they were right. And they knew that those on the higher bank were already contemplating an organized retreat.”

We shall only accentuate here one thing—the method rec-

commended for overcoming the limitations of “the truth of the trenches”, that is the truth of the millions. It was recommended that the “staff truth” be added so that the general picture should be illuminated by the intelligence of a higher rank, as it were. The point of view of a soldier or a low-rank officer, that is, of a former worker, collective farmer or intellectual, of a person whose life was probably to end at war, was deemed insufficient, narrow, mundane and, therefore, uninteresting. The criticism was prompted not by the desire to have a worthy portrayal of the staff’s activities, but by the familiar will that dictated the observance of the rules of hierarchy, respect for those of higher rank and abstention from depicting literary characters as miserable, unhappy and so forth. It was time, it seemed, for this will to subside, but the process proved to be a prolonged one. I would say that the criticisms of the above kind at times acquired a clearly anti-democratic orientation.

Gogol¹¹ wrote, “There is nothing angrier than all kinds of departments, regiments, offices, and, in a word, all kinds of official estates. Nowadays, any private individual, when offended, considers the whole society to be offended. They say a request has been recently received from a district police officer — I don’t remember from what town — in which he says in no uncertain terms that governmental regulations are fading out and that his own sacred name is being taken decisively in vain. As a testimony he attached to his request a huge volume of some romantic writings where a district police officer appears every tenth page, at times quite drunk.”

Today, too, district police officers are sometimes displeased. It may happen when, say, a novel does not show due respect for such and such a police officer. He believes that this jeopardizes the entire institution of police officers and encroaches upon the authority, the “sacred name” of his office. However, when before going to sleep, the police officer reaches out for a novel, his tired hand falls; he might never open it, he might never get offended and alarmed. But the critics there, on the “higher bank”, are already alerted and asking whether the author should have attempted that. Are there not, they ask, many wonderful people among the officials in that field, are they not toiling in the name of the good of the people? Is it not a mere “semblance” of the truth that has lured the talented author?

One might think that hierarchical games are not becoming to the literature of a socialist country. Nevertheless, such games have been and are still played. The critics continue to

ask where the shining image of the Party official is? It is on his political and moral principles, his character, knowledge, education and culture that the destiny of thousands of people often depend, is it not? It certainly is. But it might happen that an author, having made the chairman of the city council the main hero of his novel, tactfully leaves the first secretary of the city Party committee out of the story (just to be on the safe side), while another author might be wise enough to send the first secretary of the district or regional Party committee on vacation, business trip or pension even before the story starts... Can it be that certain top officials' habit of remaining above any control and criticism that has led to omnipotence and abuse of power (this was extensively discussed at the January 1987 Plenary Meeting of the CC CPSU) and the unquestioned reverence for high-ranking people instilled in literature are closely linked? It might be worthwhile to stress again what seems to be self-evident—the author by nature dares (and is called upon) to treat absolutely equally all his characters, be it a soldier or a general, a worker or a minister, a rank-and-file Party member or a member of the CPSU Central Committee. Everyone is equal before the author; it is only on this condition that the truth prevails and everyone is given his/her due.

Georg Lukács wrote, “No matter how strongly everyday life is permeated with socially determined fetishism, art (but not necessarily the artist’s conscious world outlook) struggles with its own means against the tendencies that oversimplify and thereby deaden the sensual and spiritual world surrounding man.” He continued to say: “Art with its naive self-evidence is capable of struggling against the stagnant, fetishized realities of life far more profoundly and decisively than science and philosophy of the day.”

One may feel that the importance of science and philosophy has been thus underrated through exaggerating the impact and potential of art. However, it was the literature of the sixties and the seventies that made the “simple” or “little man” from amidst the people the pivot of the artistic world created by the writers. In other words, literature addressed itself to what philosophy describes as the “human problem”, as if reminding us that it is from this problem that all other important problems start and are measured against. The best works of the prose of the sixties and seventies brought into sharp focus the social and historical fate of man, the extent to which his potential is realized, and his true spiritual and moral state in the actual circumstances of yes-

terday and today. Literature sought to answer the natural old questions that had acquired new urgency: how did people live after the revolution, in the twenties, thirties and forties? What was happening to them? Or—what was the fate of those for whose sake the revolution had in fact taken place? For instance, the fate of the former farm-laborers Stepanida and Petrok in Bykov's novel *A Token of Disaster*?¹²

Literature's answers are far from complacent because, among other things, they are concrete. As is known, literature cannot count people by the thousand or million but only as individuals... It cannot provide simultaneous interpretation from the language of the overfulfilment of the plan, the language of percentage, into the language of human happiness. Literature feels that the difference between the former and the latter cannot be expressed in economic and material terms.

In the summer of 1930, the Report of the Central Committee presented to the 16th Party Congress said that the five-year plan for setting up collective farms had been carried out in two years and overfulfilled by more than 50 per cent. "Five-year plan in two years" and overfulfilled at that!—that is how it was perceived by the mass political consciousness of the day. How is it perceived by today's artistic consciousness and imagination? (Andrei Platonov's¹³ *The Juvenile Sea* and *The Foundation Pit* give us an idea of one of the versions of artistic perception of those days.) What faces, actions, village scenes are evoked by those excessively emotional political statistics? They are brought to life, again in Mozhaev's¹⁴ *Peasant Men and Women*, and while certain historians are searching for the convenient "golden mean" literature provides its own answers. Albeit not always perfect and sometimes biased, but they take us back to the historical reality of the "time and place", to the obstinate human content it has had before it was so uniquely summarized and incorporated in the solemn account made public in the summer of 1930.

Literature's answers reflect the complicated and controversial process of the making of the young state and people's unprecedented involvement in it. Small wonder that life is depicted as the union and confrontation of the necessary and the arbitrary, of what pertains to a certain class and what is shared by all humanity, the voluntary and the compulsory, the lawful and the unlawful, the tragic and the farcical... At the same time, literature's answers reflect the growing awareness—acquired through suffering—of the immeasurable value of

human life. It might seem there is nothing special about this awareness. One might take it for literature's usual humaneness and at times excessive dolefulness. But in actual fact this awareness is rooted in the artistic memory of the losses suffered by the people on the cruel march of the 20th century and the artist's refusal to reconcile and forget.

Through rejecting the spirit of social tutelage ("we will think for you, and you will obey; we will act for you, and you will thank us") alien to democracy and socialism, the best works of our multiethnic literature of the sixties and seventies asserted the wealth, sensibility and independence of popular thought and fostered the dignity and self-sufficiency of the working man seen not as a puppet in someone's powerful hands, not as a cog in the well-adjusted social mechanism, but a responsible historical agent. Later, this was to be described as the "human factor", something that breathes life and soul into the huge machine of the state with all its economic and industrial power, something that is the source and the only true goal and intrinsic meaning of the latter. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to say that the portrayal of man in his relation to historical circumstances, society and the state has become a usual occurrence and that socially active heroes bold enough to have their own opinion have become prevalent. The critics from the "high bank" have forgiven, as it were, "village prose" for depicting ordinary peasants with their eternal cycle of primordial cares. One cannot find among them outstanding collective farm chairmen, prominent front-rankers or zealous district police officers (and that was certainly taken into account) who might cast a shadow on the entire machinery of guidance and supervision. This means that social conflicts and choices were either avoided or underrated. Ever more frequently literature depicted people patiently enduring the vicissitudes of fate, socially malleable and dependent. This was sometimes admired as manifestation of age-old popular wisdom and traditional Russian need for firm autocratic rule... The growing confusion in the face of reality with its mounting contradictions, as well as the long-acquired habit to compromise, "comprehend" and, consequently, accommodate oneself were having their effect...

At times one might wish to compare the literary process with a river deviated by various natural and artificial obstacles and yet heading for its own, pre-established destination. The simile is not accurate: literature is never devoid of staunch, unswerving elements. Nonetheless, have the various obstacles

not affected the progress of literature in the past thirty years under discussion here? Literary criticism reflected all the zig-zags and turns accurately enough—yesterday’s talk about the civic spirit and boldness of poetry, about the accurate and fearless social analysis in essays and prose, the eradication of the consequences of the personality cult, excessive bitterness and objectivism (described as “denigration” and “the truth of the trenches”); today’s talk centered on morality, spirit, soul and conscience, about the advantages of “quiet” over “loud” poetry, on the eternal problems of life, the sources of popular wisdom; and tomorrow’s talk focused on the protection of rivers and lakes, problems of ecology over and over, the pernicious effects of alcoholism, good and evil, spiritual integrity and spiritual poverty, and the predominance of journalistic over artistic attributes of imaginative writings. Some of these shifts and turns were the result of literature’s sensitivity to the impact and needs of real life. Others were an attempt to avoid the rapids and hastily erected dams on the way...

There is something sobering and natural about current literature. The dams which for years kept the “unswerving” elements waiting for their hour have been removed. (In one of his novels Yuri Trifonov wrote about the “enduring elements” of integrity, honor, and spiritual tenacity passed from one generation to the next. This sounds quite familiar though he has had something else in mind...) The formerly forbidden stream has now joined the main stream. The predominance of journalistic over artistic thought pointed out by the critics in some of the popular writings of 1985 and 1986 has proved to have been a sign of certain confusion in the face of realities, rather than an error committed by certain authors or a sign of a new literary period. Perhaps it has only recently become obvious that no matter how much one talks about soul or good and evil, seeking to understand and even “improve” the contemporary individual, these universal “tools” prove ineffective. Putting before the reader a series of depressing, ugly and even horrible facts, one may sound the alarm and then throw up one’s hands in dismay exclaiming, “What’s happening with us, brothers?” But then it turns out that the alarm, the confusion, the accumulated facts and the appeal for good pertain to routine thinking of the masses rather than artistic thinking. It is probably no accident that in the not so distant past social sharp-sightedness and shrewdness were not approved, while the social standards of artistic thinking were underestimated

and clearly declining. Certain tendencies of belittling the power of the mind unfortunately affected literature among other things. These tendencies are forever recurring and after some updating become characteristic of every period of crisis, when, to quote Thomas Mann, “blossoming is secret knowledge, half-knowledge, charlatanism, sectarian obscurantism, gutter-vulgar beliefs, blatant cheating, superstition and idyllic idle chatter”, which some describe as “the revival of culture and the glorious popular spirit”. Reflected in the spirit and structure of Vasily Belov’s novel *Everything Is in the Future* such tendencies have strikingly impoverished and significantly lowered the potential of this recognized writer. The saddest thing is perhaps that the authenticity typical of talented writers has proved to be subordinated by a dubious tendency, as if its rights and its dark force were above the author’s rights and illuminating power.

The current situation in literature is rather unexpected. For fifty years the publication of Anna Akhmatova’s *Requiem* was prohibited. Novels by Alexander Bek, Vladimir Dudintsev and Anatoly Rybakov, and Alexander Tvardovsky’s poem *By Right of Memory* were not published for twenty years. Today these, along with many other “delayed” works once proclaimed “dangerous” and “harmful”, have been published. So what? Has this shaken the ground and shattered the walls? By no means: the readers are supposed to experience and think over what had not been fully experienced, thought over or even known. Naturally some people are annoyed by this: ignorance, half-baked knowledge and faith are slow to give way to knowledge and beliefs based on it. The majority however will probably agree with what one of the contemporary scientists said, “Knowledge is our destiny”; there is no other way to the future. Artistic knowledge is also knowledge. It is the presently inadequate knowledge of man’s place in history and politics, of the place of his fate in history and politics, rather than the inadequate knowledge of history and politics as such. Experience echoes in us, does it not?

The unexpected has proved to be expected and even long awaited, as though we have been prepared for it. What we have been prepared for is not merely individual publications and “glasnost” in literature, but rather the necessity and expediency of “new thinking”. Many people throughout the country have been prepared for it because the ideals of the October Revolution have been preserved in the Party, society and the

people: great revolutions never fade away in people's hearts and minds without leaving a trace. We have been prepared also because the "new thinking" has been taking shape in the best works of Soviet art and literature and through the difficult and controversial development of literary criticism. Here we must make certain reservations: as under strict supervision from the "higher bank", the "truth of the trenches" held its position of defense on its less advantageous lower bank, there existed critics with the same frontline background and world view or the same measure of social and aesthetic responsibility. They worked side by side with those whose "entrenched", "peripheral", "peasant", "Philistine" truth, when seen from the heights of illusory and abstract ideas about life, seemed infinitely shallow and distracting from the greatness of the state and social system. There will be a time when well-grounded essays about the literary-critical thought of the fifties, sixties and seventies will analyze the long, exhausting and sometimes forcibly subdued struggle waged by the best of our critics against such arrogant and abstract ideas basically linked with disregard for "embarrassing" realities and stripping art from the truly socialist and democratic spirit. In those years socialist realism was more often than not interpreted as "sovereign" realism called upon to meet the current requirements of the state. Fortunately, the best of the critics were sensitive enough to the relationship, at each given historical moment, between the state and its requirements of the arts, on the one hand, and its revolutionary socialist ideals, on the other hand, to whether the state was approaching them or retreating from them... In fact, the critics upheld the foundations of art: no matter what sophisticated, even fantastic forms it uses, art always starts with reaching for reality, liberating and defetishizing it. Fear of reality resulted in the artists disguising it or synthesizing a new reality; the area of the "inaesthetic", the area of the "uninteresting" was expanded to include everything that could spoil the picture of social well-being and uniformity of our society or cast a shadow on its authors. New thinking in literature was expected to signify a decisive and fearless turn towards reality, both the reality of the past and the present on all its levels. Works of art can certainly be "the mirror of the revolution", but can they be the "mirror" of the "Table of Ranks"? Can they be allowed to reflect certain people's desires to escape and remain above social and aesthetic appraisal? Can they be allowed to reflect the

striving or the desire to look better, more necessary, more important and to thereby confirm in the public eye the infallibility of certain ranks, titles and offices? Can we now assess the harm done by the fun-house mirrors of art by cultivating ostentation and subservience and spreading the myth about the need for a “strong hand” that is entirely alien to the socialist world view, the myth about a strong autocratic personality, which the Soviet people allegedly could not do without? The harm, no matter how dispersed, elusive and depersonified, is there, and the greater it is the less ordinary human life is involved in the work of art and the less it is taken into account and valued by the author.

New thinking—both in the matters of human survival and in the matters concerning our internal affairs—proceeds from reality free of the verbose fog and is based on knowledge and clear historical memory, as well as, I feel, on a well-developed humanistic imagination and new sensitivity. The dying out of old thinking with its orientation on the active use of force and instinct will hardly resemble a spring thaw. It is unlikely that everyone will hurry to give up the handy and well-tested methods described in the saying: “When one has muscle, one doesn’t need brains.” The “old ways” are always tempting. Besides, new thinking can hardly be expected to become rooted in the minds of everyone and everywhere simultaneously.

New thinking has taken shape in the process of countering whatever held back and distorted the country’s development, slowing down the growth of its humanistic potential. The collapse of the philosophy and practice of stagnation was inevitable, but regrettably it cost us more than it should have. This is not because we have failed to produce something, to fulfill or overfulfill some plan, but rather because more often than not people’s initiative has been checked and trampled upon, because knowledge and talent were never required, because people’s abilities were not realized. It is also because many people died, carrying their bitterness to their graves. The belief in the triumph of reason, the effort to ensure it, and this bitterness that cannot be forgotten are all equally essential to art.

New thinking in literature manifests itself in the passionate essays of Ales Adamovich, which cry out to every one of us that there is nothing more important than the struggle to rid the world of the nuclear threat; in the prose and poetry which, once unpublished because of someone’s age-old fears, have now been made available to the public and are restoring the

full picture of the true ideological and artistic wealth of Soviet literature; in the new and inspiring everyday life of literature, in the atmosphere of glasnost and democratic resistance to the establishment of hierarchies. Above all, it manifests itself, perhaps, in the awareness of the possibility and even necessity to write to the best of one's abilities and with full realization of one's civic and artistic responsibility stemming from the knowledge that there are no longer "prohibited" topics, "undesired" conflicts and "uninteresting" characters. There is a growing feeling that what occurs in literature, art and life is normal, natural and inevitable. As one reads novels or newspapers, one thinks, "This is the way it should be in a socialist country. If things were otherwise, it would be shameful, socially and morally unacceptable..."

The only thing that can never be renounced and rejected as something that burdens and inhibits the artist is his sense of responsibility, that very responsibility which Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov recognized. We could add many other immortal names of people scattered, as if by someone's generous hand, throughout the world...

Vitaly Syomin once wrote about the "resistance" the artist should overcome in order to fulfill himself. It would be ridiculous to hope that the efforts to overcome and to display one's courage, selfless commitment and artistic daring will forever become a thing of the past. These efforts can never be proclaimed unnecessary. But one can certainly consider these efforts unnecessary for oneself and live happily ever after.

Do you recall Yuri Trifonov's bitter question, "Do we need to remember ... should we...?" Though not immediately, life's answer was firm: "Yes, we should." Having blank spots in history is just like having blank spaces on a map: without filling them in, the traveller risks falling into the same holes or losing his way in the same forest over and over again...

The novels that have been published recently and take us back to the twenties, thirties, forties and fifties have one common feature—they are filling the gaps in the historical and moral education of the people. One may say that, to an extent, the artistic quality of these works comes second to their social meaning because they reveal so strongly to us the historical knowledge and details previously almost inaccessible. But there must be someone to tell us what has remained untold, uncompleted and interrupted... To do so would be highly natural for people both in literature and history. This, however,

evidently comes even more natural for literature with man as the eternal and unquestionable local point, be it a peasant from the Ryazan area, a student from Moscow, a boy from an orphanage or a persecuted geneticist...

At the risk of repeating myself, I would like to stress that new thinking implies a new sensitivity and a new measure of humaneness that is not calculated or computed, but determined through suffering. Just recall *The Executioner's Block* by Aitmatov, Matevosyan's *Tashkent*, Zalygin's *Commission*, or Gonchar's *Cathedral* as some of the books which gradually restructured the mentality and self-awareness of society. Is it not the thought of the destiny of man in the stream of history, in the whirlpool of politics, the thought of man's joys and sufferings, the thought of dreams realized and unrealized, that scorch us?

Characteristic of literature today, more than ever before, is the defense of human life and human individuality, reliance on the noble and daring mind, a clear and fearless view of reality, a free choice of characters and conflicts and a growing interest in all periods of our post-revolutionary history without exception.

Some people would refer to the "delayed" novels as too revealing and excessively negative. But their complaints are misdirected: they should be sorry about what happened in real life and not about fiction. In these books the harsh experiences are being overcome through understanding the social mechanism behind them. Not everyone should be forgiven—why should actual criminals be forgiven?—but when things are understood, confusion is no longer there and our thoughts about the revolution are purified.

Many years ago, K.A. Timiryazev¹⁵ wrote that his book, *Science and Democracy* (1920), should be associated with the "common striving for *scientific truth*, as well as for ethical, social-ethical, *socialist truth*".

Although it is a somewhat outdated wording, is it not a fact that, in defiance of all the sorrows and disappointments of this imperfect earthly existence, our Soviet literature has retained the striving for both artistic and socialist truth?

At their July meeting with the General Secretary of the CC CPSU, the top people in the mass media and artistic unions expressed a seemingly self-critical opinion that literature and in particular drama were not responsive enough to perestroika. Mikhail Gorbachev answered, perhaps unexpectedly, that

if people “start responding to the enormous affair that we have launched without having properly thought it over, responding with mediocre works we have no need for such response”. The works which “we will remember after reading or seeing them just once”, which “will remain with us and be our guide for many years to come” can never emerge from the philosophy and mentality of a hurried “response”.

Based on new thinking, perestroika needs not so much those who sing its praises, as the artists who are like-minded people and comrades-in-arms, who write objectively and honestly, who accept perestroika as the historic choice made by the Party, the people, the country and themselves. This means, to use a simile, not swimming with the current subjecting oneself to its strength, but rather becoming the current itself, becoming part and parcel of its guiding spiritual and moral force.

1987



Daniil Granin (b. 1919): writer and journalist, winner of the USSR State Prize. A power engineer by education, Granin is interested in the lives of scientists and technologists. They are the heroes of his novels *Those Who Seek* (1954), *Into the Storm* (1962), *Rain in a Strange Town* (1973) and *Bison* (1987). He is also the author of the non-fiction works *This Strange Life* (1974), *Klavdiia Vilor* (1976) and *A Book of the Blockade* with Ales Adamovich (1977-1981).

Echoes Near and Far

A *Literaturnaya Gazeta* Interview with DANIIL GRANIN

Irina Rishina. "I'm getting an unexpected amount of letters commenting on the fate of my novel, *Bison*," Daniil Granin told me recently over the telephone. "A kind of a far echo has been evoked." A few days later I went to Leningrad to look over the mail with him.

Daniil Granin. Many readers wonder why I write about scientists so frequently. First of all, I'm very interested in the inner world of an intellectual hero, a hero who does not simply work, but who is absorbed in his intense and dramatic intellectual life, who seeks to understand his time, and to understand and fulfill himself. A dignified and generous person, he is above vanity and the drive for personal fame and a career. He is dedicated to his work, and his work is worthy of his dedication.

It is his breadth of soul that attracts people to him. When I was thinking about *Bison* as my choice of topic, the deciding factor was his outstanding character, and my own fascination for him. I had been drawn to him long before I decided to write about him, and this probably even hindered my attempts to gather material on him, observe and study him, because I fell to following him, my mouth agape, watching him with adoring eyes, which is all I ended up doing. As for the decision to write about him, it was prompted above all by the desire to correct the injustice of his fate and to vindicate him.

We are as wasteful about our science as we are about our literature. For instance, we have shelved many outstanding works of the twenties and thirties and forgotten them. Today we don't even know what's left on the shelf – what has perished and what has survived. Recently, I picked up some books by Vasily Andreyev, an exceptionally talented writer whose name means nothing to the contemporary reader. His prose has not been reprinted... The same thing has happened with the great names in science, that is to say, contemporary scientists are certainly relying on the works of their remarkable predecessors, but their personal histories and the history of their endeavors and discoveries, as well as the inimitable dynamic of their personalities, remain unknown. We are shamefully ignorant about the great Vernadsky.¹ We have neither studied his heritage, nor published his amazing philosophical works and his correspondence. His complete works have yet to be issued.

The life story of Nikolai Timofeyev-Resovsky was extremely complicated. I had a strong desire to disentangle it. This effort proved exhausting, but I have probably never been as gratified by my investigation. In the process I met and spoke with some wonderful people. There were many mysterious things about the life of my hero. That he should have been surrounded for so long by such significant, noble, and brilliant people is another mystery. Meeting them was a great joy in itself, but what made me especially happy was the facts I was able to gather from them. They confirmed that my hero was a wonderful and worthy man, who retained his dignity in all the predicaments in which he found himself. His colleagues, friends, and admirers felt that he managed to retain his integrity in Nazi Germany and never degraded himself. Today documents and eye-witness accounts have proved this beyond all doubt.

I.R. I remember you saying that you were afraid that your book about Bison might turn into a collection of old wives' tales, or a compilation of his own stories about himself. But you can boast a vast amount of experience in document research and writing, being the author of *A Book of the Blockade*, *This Strange Life*, *Choice of Purpose*, and the collection of long and short stories about scientists, *The Rock Garden*, in all of which books the heroes are presented under their real names. In *This Strange Life*, which tells the story of Lyubishchev, you wrote, "Authenticity certainly restricted me, tied up my hands. It is much easier to deal with a fictitious hero. He is both more flexible and straightforward, as the author knows all of his

thoughts and intentions.” Were you similarly restricted by the facts when you worked on *Bison*?

D.G. I also found Timofeyev-Resovsky to be a good storyteller. His thought was brilliant and paradoxical, and his speech colorful. Each story was better than the last. I was torn between two options, either to collect and record his stories – and that was temptingly simple – or, which suited me more, to master the material myself and give it my own artistic rendering. That was a rather complicated task.

I.F. Petrovskaya, Ph. D. in art history, writes from Leningrad: “The author himself is the second hero of the novel. One feels his presence on every page, and not only where he provides direct commentary.”

I.R. Last January, after the accident you had, you couldn’t work, and I came with my tape recorder to interview you for the column, “A Monologue about the Time and Myself”. As we talked, the writer Dudintsev telephoned from Moscow. When you hung up you began to tell me about his new novel, *White Robes*, with great excitement. I know that owing to your active support, the novel has been serialized in *Neva* magazine. I remember you said it was a fascinating novel and that Dudintsev had done a great job. I still have that tape with this oral review of yours. As I listened to you, I was happy to realize that you were not concerned about the simultaneous publication of both his and your novels, in which you too express your very distinctive view of the Lysenko witch hunt. I was happy to see that you had retained the gift which has become so rare today – to be able “to exclaim and admire each other”, in the words of the poet Bulat Okudzhava,² and that you felt that there was no danger in praising others highly.

D.G. Dudintsev has certainly accomplished something heroic. Keep in mind that he took Lysenko on at a difficult point in history, and during these twenty years gathered and studied the material associated with him. He has really done a great thing!

I.R. Within a six-month term, various magazines published works by Dudintsev, Bek, Tendriakov, Pristavkin,³ and Rybakov almost simultaneously. It is well known that Tvardovsky once intended to publish Rybakov’s *Children of the Arbat*. He also tried to publish Gerasimov’s novel, *A Knock at the Door*, in *Novy Mir*. It is only recently that the latter was published in

Oktyabr magazine. Such things happened not only to Russian prose writers. The Latvian writer Bel faced similar difficulties in his attempts to publish his novel *Insomnia*. Now that we have gained access to all of these works, we can't but conclude that apart from "war prose" and "village prose", the success of which in launching a moral quest was justly lauded by the critics (significantly, the book by A. Adamovich, a very sensitive researcher, was entitled *The War and the Village in Contemporary Literature*), there has existed an entirely distinct layer of prose-writing, which had deep roots in social, moral and ethic questions, but was using material other than wartime experience and village life. Though unknown to the world, these writings had a tremendous significance, which is only today coming to light. Three remarkable books about life in the scientific community, *Bison*, *White Robes*, and Amlinsky's *Every Hour Shall Be Justified...* all came out at the same time.

D.G. It's a fair observation. This undiscovered layer, as you put it, will reveal a lot about both urban and rural life in our country. I do not believe that people should obstruct each other in literature. In my view, it's a good thing that different authors addressed the Lysenko theme each in his own way. In my novel it is not the main theme, while in Dudintsev's, it is. We can't imagine what tremendous harm Lysenko and his followers did to our agriculture, the damage they did to genetics, and the losses both moral and physical they caused to Soviet science. I know that several volumes of research have been compiled on this subject, but they have so far failed to find their way to press. If we are to conceptualize what happened and to be able to draw lessons from history, they ought to be published. They are not being published because of the strong opposition of Lysenko's followers, who claim that the downfall of Lysenko and his henchmen signalled the end of the past, and that there is no use in re-kindling the fires of days gone by.

The thing is that many Lysenko's followers, incompetent and ignorant people, continue to work in science, occupying responsible positions, sometimes as heads of laboratories and even entire institutes. The vestiges of those gloomy years are still evident. What Dudintsev is telling about in his novel and what I touched upon in mine is not simply an instructive past, something we've parted with forever; unfortunately, those are still very urgent issues.

I encountered them when the publication of *Bison* was being decided. It was an open and bitter struggle. Those who laun-

ched it resorted to dishonest and aggressive tactics. They even came to Leningrad to threaten me. But upon learning that *Novy Mir* was about to publish my novel, they assailed its editor, Sergei Zalygin,⁴ with a barrage of letters and phone-calls, threatening the magazine itself. *Novy Mir* stood firm. Many people attempted to oppose the publication of the novel. They were the Lysenkovites who always saw Timofeyev-Resovsky as a strong opponent. They were the people who succeeded in having him expelled from the Obninsk Institute, and to this day object when anything good is said of him. And lastly, there was another category of opponents—the people who had somehow learned that the novel described Bison’s opponents. Even without having read the novel, and without knowing for sure who those characters were, they were afraid to be identified with the slanderers and informers in the novel. So, even before the manuscript reached the press, I felt that my book was going to be opposed.

I.R. But isn’t it a good thing that the book hits home, and that it has provoked such a spontaneous reaction from certain people? Since you have started talking about them, I would like to ask you why you didn’t cite the real name of the person you describe so aptly as a “loyal enemy” and “sworn supporter”. You only designate him by his initial, “D.” In connection with this, some of your readers indicated in their letters that you have thereby removed the person who was D.’s prototype from the dock, and protected him from the people’s contempt.

D.G. I was not writing a court report, and I had no need for direct proof for this or that misdemeanor committed by D. It was sufficient to present an account of his reputation, that is, the opinion the scientific community had formed about him over the years.

I.R. You mean that you didn’t intend to pinpoint an actual person, and that you purposely rendered him unidentifiable?

D.G. I was amazed to learn that several people, and not just one, recognized themselves in D. and were quite unnerved... But that was not what I thought to be important—I did not really care whether or not the person I had had in mind would recognize himself or be recognized by others. Besides, I was bound by my word—I had promised D. not to mention his real name and I felt I could not go back on my word. It was far more interesting for me to try to understand his character and his motivation. It stands to reason that our relationship was strained. In thinking over our conversation and the letters he

had sent me, I sought to trace his line of reasoning and his way to becoming an informer.

I.R. In the work you did you must have relied on your study of Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri*, as well as on your own analysis and hypotheses. As I read the pages dealing with D., I at once recalled your essay on Pushkin. It must have come to my mind specifically because of something you say in your new novel, "I have long been dreaming of writing a book about honor and dishonor..." Without D. the image of Bison would not be so multidimensional.

D.G. This experience is certainly very helpful as well, although I have never thought about it. It was very hard for me to sort out the material about D. The historical psychology of this social evil epitomized by D.'s character have not yet been properly studied. We have not yet publicly tried those responsible for the repressions of, say, 1937, or for the so-called Leningrad Affair. We haven't yet prosecuted those who resorted to unlawful persecution and imprisonment of innocent people. Public trials could expose the true criminals and the perverse mentality behind their actions. Confession is not practiced in our society. You cannot expect anyone to announce that he is really so-and-so, that he committed this or that sin, and that he's declaring his guilt for it. On the contrary, everything is carefully concealed and covered up... I certainly could have revealed his true name, but he has a family and children...

I.R. The film *Repentance* very convincingly conveys the tragedy inherent in the sort of revelation you're talking about in its portrayal of the suicide of a teen-ager who has learned the truth about his grandfather, Varlam Aravidze. But in that film all the characters are fictitious, whereas your strictly documentary work features actual persons. The only exception is D., a fictitious character, an interesting type. I repeat "type", because many people saw themselves reflected in him. In connection with D., or rather, with the reasons for your concealing his real name, I'd like to go back to your monologue published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* shortly before the 27th Party Congress, entitled "Responsibility Real and Imaginary". In this article you pose a straightforward question—why those who banned Filonov's paintings, Vysotsky's poetry, and films produced by German, Klimov and others, have remained unpunished, and have not answered for their actions? The names of those "prohibitors" should be made public. The numerous readers who responded to your article shared this view, and

now, as those very people read your novel, they see that glasnost notwithstanding, you are for some reason concealing the name of the evil schemer who cast a black shadow on the great scientist. You called him "D." instead of identifying him. The type of people D. represents are far from stupid, simple or bent on playing safe. On the contrary, they are businesslike, purposeful and cunning. Today, in the context of perestroika, they have come under a spotlight. Our readers write that the Lysenko brand of witch hunt flourished and brought forth poisonous fruit in many other fields besides genetics. They have met many people like D. in the past and are still encountering them in various walks of life, including science and the arts...

D.G. You're contradicting yourself.

I.R. Why?

D.G. Let me explain. If the novel described the fate of a concrete person, who is already an old man today, you would not perceive him as typical, as someone representative of a phenomenon. While when dealing with D. it should be said that the conditions created in science and other areas over the years made it possible for mediocrity to prevail by resorting to simple, yet cruel, means. How often truly talented people were pushed into the background, while those who figured in the foreground had little talent but they were smart, vociferous, demagogical and unconcerned about slandering and making indiscriminate political accusations. Talented people are hard to manipulate because even the most cowardly and timid of them are bent on seeking the truth, fighting lies and exposing falsification. The atmosphere, permeated with fear and dominated by triumphant mediocrity, suited the likes of D., giving them free reign of a vast arena. The success or failure of the process of democratization and glasnost is a question of life and death for them because, if what is demanded in science is results and not promises and plans, their worthlessness will be revealed. They seek to perpetuate the situation in which they are not held responsible for what they did and feel no remorse for having done it. They want the state to take everything upon itself so as they could feel that they are serving the nation and that society needs them and appreciates the protective function they perform.

I.R. After *Literaturnaya Gazeta* had published the interview I had with the poet Andrei Voznesensky and the novelist Valentin Kaverin about the first meeting of the Boris Pasternak Literary Heritage Commission, its editorial board started receiving letters that demanded to make public the names of

those who, in 1958, voted in favor of excluding Pasternak from the Writers' Union. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* did publish information about the writers' session which excluded Pasternak from the Union. All names were named.

D.G. The names probably ought to have been named. But aren't there many more people who are to blame? They are guilty to various extents. Many of them just closed their eyes, remained silent or voted unfairly. What shall we do about them today? Shall we expose the real criminals, crucifying them or taking them to the block? Or shall we forgive them without forgetting their crime? I honestly don't know. Perhaps today kindness is the answer. I doubt if society can be improved by resorting to punishment or public ridicule. Some of the people shall never be forgiven and total impunity shall not be tolerated. There must be a realization that sooner or later wrongdoings will have to be answered for. But at the same time too many people are to blame. Their multitude is something we have to consider.

I repeat, what we need to publicize is the history of the Lysenko witch hunt because this is the history of our science and our whole life. We ought to do justice not only to Nikolai Vavilov and all those scientists and scholars who perished without having betrayed their moral principles, who refused to serve obscurity, deceive, cheat and do harm to the land and who, by way of punishment, were removed from science or even brought to death in the most dishonest and cruel way. There are many similar requests in the readers' letters, "Please write about the fate of G. Meister, prominent selector and Vice-President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, who was executed in 1943; please tell about the fate of Karpechenko, Levitsky and Govorov who were killed because of their involvement with the Vavilov case; please tell the story of Academician N. Tulaikov, an agrochemist who perished in 1938; please tell about D. Sabinin, the prominent plant physiologist who was driven to suicide in 1951; please tell..." These were the people who set up the criteria for serving the truth, who established the standards of commitment, who were the true defenders of the truth. It is a shame we do not know about them. This is a tragic loss, something that causes particular harm to the moral education of the younger generation.

"Thank you for your book. You have revealed to us the people we should have been proud of but knew nothing about. Why

should they have been concealed from us? To make us believe that we are all alike? Geneticists performed a feat of heroism not so much in science as in morality. Why should our history be white-washed? Who benefits from that? By the way, shall I tell you why I think Bison kept D. by his side? First, because he felt that if he drove D. away, D. would be replaced by someone else, someone he did not know. Secondly, – and that must have infuriated D. – Bison was not afraid of him. I am very thankful to both you and Zalygin. A few words about myself. I was born in 1940. I work as a technical inspector at a factory. My name is V. Stepanov.”

I.R. In your introduction to *The Rock Garden* you wrote, “What I was interested in was not the scope or degree of talent, but rather, the intellectual and moral problems that face almost everyone who devotes his life to scientific endeavor... The moral qualities of a scientist are, in my view, no less important than his achievements. The moral fiber of great scientists is something that affects many generations...” In their letters your readers speak of the main lesson they learned from Bison—one ought to live one’s life without losing one’s identity regardless of the circumstances. You wrote, “His entire life consisted of actions, one action following another. For him, however, these were not separate actions, but his own mode of life... He didn’t fight for his convictions, he simply adhered to them in any circumstances. He proved by his own life that one can always retain his identity. No outside obstacle could prevent one from doing so, only the far more numerous internal ones.” When we were visiting the Reformatskys, A.N. Tyuryukanov, or Tyuryukanych as Bison called him, said that you were the voice of the intelligentsia. One of your readers writes that Bison’s firm principles, his original and steadfast character, were directly determined by his being in the intelligentsia, by his awareness of his own roots, of his family history.

D.G. I would like to say that membership in the intelligentsia is a purely Russian, and today purely Soviet, notion. In some foreign dictionaries, the word “intellectual” is followed by (Russ.). It is perceived as something Russian just as glasnost today. No one has yet succeeded in defining what “membership of the intelligentsia” implies. It is a quality that can only be sensed just as one senses integrity. To me, the intelligentsia is the cream of the nation. I have met non-intellectuals, in the Russian sense of the word, among scholars, even prominent ones and I know some wonderful intellectuals

among workers. To me, it does not imply one's membership of a class, one's position or educational background. It is something beyond all these formal categories. It is a unique spiritual notion close to that of integrity and independence, though distinct from them.

Working on *A Book of the Blockade*, Ales Adamovich and I thought it important to bring into sharp focus the meaning of "intellectual" as something that implies spiritual strength. Under most inhuman conditions, these qualities guaranteed one against sliding into an abyss of immorality, becoming degraded, and surviving at the expense of other people's lives. We all know what is foreign to the intellectual. He is a person who never acts against his own moral principles, who is never dishonest, chauvinistic, self-serving or boorish. He is a person acting steadfastly within his own principles. This definition is also incomplete though.

What struck one about Timofeyev-Resovsky was, among other things, the distinct feeling of his being connected with his family, his ancestors, the feeling that he is responsible to them and their history, that he could never do anything to disgrace his family name and that he was responsible for the honor of his family's age-old history. Most of us do not know our family history, family legends and traditions. We have almost completely lost the feeling of having roots. It is absolutely essential to restore people's historical awareness. This historical awareness was typical of people, say, in the 19th century when they realized that they formed part of the stream of history and that what they did molded history, left an imprint on it and would be properly evaluated by future generations. This direct sense of history is very important because it gives rise to the sense of responsibility before one's children and grandchildren. This is what guarantees one against disgracing one's own name and, thereby, one's progeny. "Our family has always been known as decent people, people who never allowed themselves to be base and mean, who cherished their family's honor. Disgracing oneself was out of the question simply because others spoke highly of us and held us in high esteem..."

I.R. That was typical of the nobility, of the educated part of society.

D.G. That was typical of the people, of any peasant family. Wrongdoing came as a shock: "We the Ivanovs (the Petrovs, the Nikolayevs) are honorable people, our forebears were so,

and our in-laws too... There has never been a thief in the family. None of us has ever been prosecuted; we have always paid our debts... And now... all of a sudden... what a shame... what a disgrace..." That the family, the clan are primary to historical awareness—and that I tried to prove by telling the story of my hero—is, in my view, a very serious issue of spiritual life. Only those who were brought up not to know their kin can dare to commit defilement at cemeteries and graves. The newspaper accounts of acts of vandalism committed at the Alma Ata Kensai Moslem cemetery, or the Jewish cemetery in Leningrad caused me great pain.

What is peculiar about documentary literature is that it is never without repercussion. Readers' letters, telephone calls, visits add more information, more details. Lying before me now are several letters that certainly make the story of Bison and his ancestors more complete. The author of one of them is T. Egert who was born and has lived for over fifty years in the apartment that belonged to the mother of Nikolai Timofeyev-Resovsky in Nikolsky (now Plotnikov) Lane. She remembers the family very well. "I feel that you strive after maximum truthfulness," she writes. "You would like to know that there were four more brothers and only one sister in the family. The brothers were all remarkably gifted. Two of them, Vladimir and Dmitry, perished during the years of the Stalin cult, the other two worked successfully—Victor as the sable-breeder and Boris as documentary filmmaker. They were full of energy, charm, sharp wit and exceptionally original."

The other letter is from the Muscovite G. Aksyonov. "As I was telling my father about your book, he remembered how he took Timofeyev to the station, or to be more exact, to the transit concentration camp. Father, too, was serving his term, but he was lucky to be appointed a groom, so he traveled from place to place. His trip with Timofeyev took a day and a night and he remembered him very well, first, because they came from the same part of the country, the Kaluga area, second, because of his tales about life abroad and, third, because he struck my father as a person of consequence, well-educated and good-mannered. They talked a lot during the trip. Timofeyev was not accompanied by anyone, looked very weak and hardly dressed—his padded jacket, being too small for him, would not button up."

I am often asked why I did not describe my hero's life in the camp. But I did not describe his life in Sverdlovsk and other

periods of his life either because it was not his biography that I was interested in. What I was interested in was the story of his heart and mind, the story of his inner self as affected by the dramas and tragedies of his life. One of the letters that provided an insight into the mentality of my hero and explained, to an extent, what happened to him came from Ye. Slepko who wrote, "My husband, V.N. Slepko, worked, together with N. Dubinin, at Professor Serebrovsky's genetics laboratory in Moscow. His book *Genetics* was published in 1926. In 1928, he was sent on a business trip to Berlin where he worked on the *Drosophila* fly either with or under Timofeyev. I stayed back in Moscow as I was to have a baby. (Our daughter was born in 1929.)

"It is so nice of you to have written about Timofeyev. Stories about people like him ought to be written. How fortunate it is that we have lived up to the times, when you are able to write such stories and we, to read them. Have you by any chance come across the name of Slepko in the materials you studied or stories you heard? Executed in 1937, he has been rehabilitated posthumously. That is perhaps why his name never crops up when you talk about the years 1928-1929, although he was there, in Berlin, side by side with Timofeyev. I spent more than ten years in various prisons because I was his wife. I am sorry to waste your time, but don't be angry with me, a mess was made of my life, although I had been raised in a family where not only children were Party members since 1917 (they, too, were rehabilitated posthumously) but my mother had a secret address. My husband was Party member since 1920. He loved biology and genetics so much but his life was brought to a sudden end so early..." This letter, too, explains, to an extent, Timofeyev-Resovsky's decision to stay on in Berlin. He certainly knew that his brothers and the brother of his wife Yelena Alexandrovna had been arrested...

Yet, some letters express surprise about Bison's decision to remain in Germany. Their authors fail to take into consideration the above circumstances and the fact that officially our country and Germany had good relations. For instance, as one scientist wrote to me—and what he wrote was true—that in those years German pilots were trained in our flying schools in Voronezh. Guderian, for one, studied in this country. One thing should be understood clearly: what was happening then should not be tied up with what happened later. Our judgment about Germany of that period has always been determined and overshadowed by the subsequent horrible war; we seem un-

able to renounce that and to separate the prewar years from the war.

I.R. But didn't you comment, when citing the episode about the famous physicist L. Artsimovich who refused to shake hands with Timofeyev-Resovsky: "That year I would not have shaken hands with the Russian who worked with the Germans either." You added, "I was strongly influenced by my own past, my own war against the Nazis. I could never imagine myself being in Germany, in Buch, among Germans; I could not imagine the way they could feel there. I could only see myself firing at Germans. That was a war complex." I feel you had mixed feelings when you first went to Berlin after the victory.

D.G. Very much so... But my state of mind at that time should not be projected onto Bison's story. That's the whole point.

I.R. Did you have any additional information from abroad after your novel had been published? About Thomas, perhaps?

D.G. Not on Thomas. But I had a letter from a German biochemist August Eichler who had known Bison. Response also came from other German scientists from Buch and West Germany. Zimmer-KG, as he was called in Buch, responded. Oleg Zinger in Paris was happy.

I.R. Did you send a copy of *Novy Mir* to him?

D.G. I did. But it turned out that he had already read the novel. Evidently, the people abroad read the magazine, and then, scientists communicate easily and information spreads quickly in their midst.

What struck me most of all, however, was an article in a recent issue of the British magazine *Nature* whose author, the famous Perutz, a Nobel Prize winner, holds that Schrödinger's well-known book, *What Is Life*, is in fact an adaptation of the content of the early works by Timofeyev-Resovsky and his associates.

In my work on the novel I should have used far vaster material. Unfortunately, the memoirs that interested me, for instance, the reminiscences of Born, Zimmer or Riehl that were published abroad are closed and kept in special library storages. There are no catalogues, and if there are, one is not allowed to use them. In a word, I failed to get some of the materials I needed. It is hard to understand why they should be kept secret from us. This could only do harm to our history and art. It is good to know that work toward making the "specially stored literature" available to the public has been started.

I felt on many occasions that our lack of biographical ref-

erence books hampers the writing of documentary prose. In dealing with all sorts of people, military or, say, emigres, one would want to have such reference books and other sources handy.

The theme of Russian emigration, especially the first-wave, post-revolutionary emigration, has evoked vast response. People write that this phenomenon is complex, that the emigres should not all be judged about from one perspective and that our national science and culture has suffered a great loss from alienating them. Some people ask what I think about magazines' started to publish emigre writers. What is my attitude? *Literaturnaya Gazeta* has written about Irina Odoyevtseva having returned from Paris to Leningrad. I feel that is part of the process that enriches our culture, history and science. Had the possibility to come back been opened up earlier, Russia would have regained quite a few scientists and engineers, to say nothing of humanitarians, of the first caliber. True, engineering scientists were treated with more condescension than writers. For instance, at college we studied the strength of materials from a textbook by Timoshenko who was at that time in emigration. The textbook on hydraulics was by Bakhmetyev, also an emigre. The contribution of Russian post-revolutionary emigration to world science, engineering and culture is certainly great. It is even hard to estimate it. In our attitude to emigres we should also take into account the psychology of scientists and scholars: carried away by their ideas, the main thing for them is to have appropriate conditions for work, a laboratory and the possibility to obtain results. I understood this when pondering the fates of Timoshenko, Bakhmetyev and others. I once thought that my hero belonged to their type, too. Then I found out that I had been wrong. When the war was over and he could get a splendid laboratory in the United States to carry on his experiments on a full scale, Timofeyev-Resovsky did not go.

By way of a conclusion, I would like to repent. The factual material used in the novel was so vast that I failed to avoid some inaccuracies. For instance, mentioned in the novel is a rather unseemly story associated with the name of M. Zavadovsky. The reaction of his relatives and pupils made me study his life more carefully. I found out that M. Zavadovsky was a man of great staunchness and courage and that in the gloomiest years of the Lysenko witch hunt he retained his integrity in everything he did. This aspect of his personality and

activity, serious and meaningful, escaped my attention, somehow. When the novel is published as a separate edition, I shall correct my error. There were also mistakes in names and dates. I thank the readers who brought them to my notice. Most of them show goodwill and are tactful in pointing to my shortcomings. But there are some who seem to gloat at my mistakes and find great joy in reprimanding me for confusing patronymics or, say, dates. I thank them too—after all, they have read the book carefully, and pinpointed the mistakes. Yet, I'd like to note that civilized communication implies a certain tone in writing one's letters. The inaccuracies in the book were not intentional, and that is obvious. I might have made mistakes in the 200 or 300 names mentioned in the novel. I see the reprimands as addressed not only to me personally—unfortunately, many tend to think that the writer's job is an easy one. It is not so. It is a difficult job and, as any other, is worthy of people's respect.

They say that our age is the age of telephones rather than letters. The readers' letters disprove this assertion. When something stings them to the quick, they respond with letters. Letters in response to *Bison* continue to flow in...

1987



After the release of my new record featuring the song The Music of the Soul Is Fading, I am often asked what kind of music rings in my ear now. Is it the music of attack? Of victory? Or of love? I answer, it is the music of hope. I feel this music is heard by many people today. This is probably why there is a sustained interest in the discussion about the fifties launched by the mass media.

BULAT OKUDZHAVA

I Have Regained Hope

The fifties witnessed the awakening of society's self-awareness. It was then that the years of the Stalin personality cult started to be perceived as a sad occurrence which, thank God, had become a thing of the past. There were many people in the country capable of rolling up their sleeves and working.

Everyone expected poetry to suggest a new way of life for the future. Even those who had never taken an interest in poetry suddenly felt that poetry was the means to answer a multitude of "sensitive" questions and to help overcome social imperfections.

Even in hard times, literature and intellectual life in general do not cease to exist and are sustained though behind seven locks and seven seals. While Bulgakov, Platonov, Akhmatova and Pasternak were continuing to work, the potential was there. And at the right moment it suddenly manifested itself. There was an explosion. The flood-gates were lifted, and what had been held back in the arts could finally flow freely.

It was at that time that I appeared on the scene. I had been a Stalinist before, as had many people of my generation. Small wonder. First, any possibility of expressing doubt was suppressed,

and this bred fear. The fear struck root and created a new type of man. My parents were arrested. I believed that they were guilty of something for the reason that our wonderful security service could not possibly err. I lived through two searches and night-time arrests and, like many those days, lived in fear. This was combined with the desire to be a human being and to believe that what was happening was good and justified. The desire to believe was the most appalling aspect of the whole affair. I was a blind romantic, a typical product of the times and I never found it hard to rationalize the most horrific facts connected with the Stalin cult. I thought that what was happening had nothing to do with him, and that he was preoccupied with the important business of creating a new state...

And then, all of a sudden, there was a dramatic change. In my case it occurred very quickly. I unexpectedly found out that my parents, whom I secretly loved all the while, were completely innocent. In itself that revelation was extremely helpful because, if this was indeed true, then everything else could have been an error. I started to perceive our world, our life, and our future in a new way.

Although I had written a few songs previously, the fall of 1956 signalled the beginning of my work in guitar-accompanied poetry. It was then that I felt the need for public exposure. My dream was to be able to go to Tverskoi Boulevard and perform. People told me I was crazy and that I would be arrested. So I gave up the idea, but the desire remained. Through a happy coincidence tape-recorders became available at about that time. Thanks to them, poetry started to circulate at an amazing rate. Without them, poetry would have been available only in hand-written form. But how can one relate the sounds of a guitar on paper? Music boosts the impact of poetry, broadening the circle of poetry lovers and making poetry more popular.

In my view there were four people who stood out among other singing poets who started to perform at the same time or a little later: Novella Matveyeva, Alexander Galich, Vladimir Vysotsky and Yuli Kim.

Novella Matveyeva epitomized romanticism. Yuli Kim was a brilliant and tragic clown. I still believe him to be so. Alexander Galich was a poet in whose work both a "general" poetic and a satirical strain were discernible. He was very powerful in expressing the latter. Vysotsky, too, was an iconoclast. He gained strength very quickly and his art grew ever more com-

plicated and effective. He was the first to be concerned not about purely external symptoms, but about the essence of phenomena. He was developing as a personality, becoming ever more mature and sharp-sighted. All that was reflected in his work. I feel that he did not live long enough to fulfill himself. The quality of his last songs show that at the moment of his death his work was on an upswing.

Poetry sung to the accompaniment of music was opposed to light popular music, an art that lacked soul and simulated emotion. The former was written by intellectuals for intellectuals. We sought to talk to people in a language that had been latent in them over the years rather than in the officially approved language that had long prevailed in the country. We tried to awaken people, and not entirely without success, I believe. We provided an impetus for thought.

Singing poets were long suppressed. During the years of endless bans and prohibitions, I would be summoned to various places and advised to write a song that could inspire young people to immediately set off for the virgin lands. I tried to argue that this was not my mission, maintaining that the purpose of poetry was, above all, to expand the potential of what is good in the world and to help good overcome evil. If it weren't for poetry, I argued, evil would triumph and humanity would be degraded. We survived, I said, because there was poetry, music, art and history. Poetry had a propitious effect on society, I held.

The artist always seeks to express himself through the means available to him. Today, too, he must do the same, achieving self-expression in his own way. He should do it calmly and quietly, without much fuss. If he is gifted, his self-expression will benefit society. I, too, have always sought to express myself through verses, songs and prose.

I am writing short stories about my life now. I have written eight already. The most recent, entitled "The Art of Cutting out Patterns and Living", has been published in *Znamya* magazine. I want to go on; I want to write more. Perhaps someday the stories will comprise an autobiographical novel.

Once, with Moscow in mind, I wrote, "Had you once believed in our tears, neither you nor we would be sorry about our past." What are we sorry about? About the cruelty of our life. About the lack of trust in and respect for an individual, about the ruin of our ideals, about disappointments and losses, about the flimsiness of our hopes. We have to speak about all this. We have yet to tell a lot about our past...

We're concerned about the fate of the younger generation. At times, we accuse them of being irresponsible and ill-behaved. But aren't we to blame? We are; yes, we are. We have to confess the truth about our past and repent. Provided we have enough courage to do so, the younger generation will change. They'll start believing us.

Some people believe that everything that must be told about the past was laid out in the 20th and 27th Party Congress documents; something about the past can also be found in current journals. Since everything has been said, they argue, there is no need for further discussion. I can't agree with them. I'm convinced that we have to purify ourselves completely by naming names and saying who's who. The Russian language has enough words to explain what needs to be explained without undermining the mainstays of our system. Then we shall be able to talk about the dignity and spiritual wellbeing of the people, and the strength and wisdom of the state. There is great wisdom in the age-old tradition of repentance handed down by the people; evil cannot be concealed for long. Disease can only be aggravated by concealment. The sooner we rid ourselves of the burden of evil, the sooner we will achieve our goals.

As a young man I believed that my hopes would be realized very early. As a matter of fact, those older than I shared my feeling. We were wrong; the road has proved to be a long one. The present is the continuation of our past. It is with great joy and hope that I am devoting my unspent energies to the present.

By the way, even during the years of stagnation I had never lost hopes for a turn for the better. Only I didn't know that it would occur in 1985 or 1986, but I was sure that it was going to happen. By that time, I had already realized that society had to mature for perestroika before it could be successfully implemented.

I hope that most citizens of my country have the strength to carry out the renewal of society. I place special hope on children, who have not yet been poisoned by the general atmosphere of stagnation. According to the Bible, it took Moses 40 years to land his people back to their homeland. He could have done it in five days, but he wanted those who had experienced slavery to die out.

I am not bent on self-deception, and I have never liked garrulous optimists, talkers, bawlers or starry-eyed rhetoricians. I don't want to be classified with them. I can clearly see that today we are living under complicated and severe conditions.

The present bitter struggle will continue for quite a while. I can't blame our leaders and the authorities for our difficulties as many seem inclined to do. No, I'm not going to do that. The struggle is taking place in our minds.

As early as 1919, Maxim Gorky said that the Revolution should beware not the Entente¹ or counter-revolutionaries but the Philistines. In our society Philistines have become very strong. They have been given free range since the Stalinist times. They are usually quiet and obedient, and are never involved in solving acute social problems. But they're especially dangerous when they achieve positions of power. In the struggle for their own personal rights and privileges, they are ready to cut others' throats. What is especially dangerous about them is that while they fight for their personal wellbeing they carry banners with lofty slogans. It is under these banners that they are serving themselves and setting scores with their enemies.

That the Philistine has grown beyond all limits I can judge from our Writers' Union. What are people often talking about at our meetings? Instead of talking about cultural matters, about literature, artistic quests and moral categories, some of our writers talk about their own merits or are engaged in petty squabble.

I sometimes hear people say the Writers' Union has no need for perestroika. Alas, it has. There are some members who are capable of independent thinking, but most of them lack that ability, and that is exactly what holds back progress. There are also deep-rooted fears and the inclination to live according to accepted guidelines. I can feel what is today described as the resistance phenomenon in every major and minor undertaking. This is not a malevolent resistance. However, there are people who are afraid of sacrificing their comforts, and are therefore putting up a really villainous resistance. They are all the more dangerous for they spread their emanation among young people. But most people are not to blame; they are just victims of their time, their upbringing and their surrounding circumstances. They were brought up to be the way they are. They can't imagine that things could be otherwise. Now that there is an opportunity to change everything, some of them may be both attracted and frightened by the idea. You can't change one's blood chemistry overnight.

Some people say that none of the goals society is presently reaching for will ever be fulfilled. But I believe that they will. It will certainly take time, but it is important not to stop along the way, not to retreat or get side-tracked by different goals,

but instead to work cleverly and consistently. It is easy to negate and condemn everything. I know very well our difficulties, but I offset them with my hopes, my will to work hard and participate in perestroika to the best of my ability. A British reporter once asked me if I wasn't afraid of making a fool of myself by clinging to my hopes. I answered that the situation in the country was not easy, but since Gorbachev was taking risks, why should I not follow suit!

If the present tendency continues, and the process of perestroika proceeds on the line of ascent, our lives will improve. We shall survive and enjoy ourselves. That is the whole point of life. And that is what I hope for very much.

1987



Anatoly Rybakov (b. 1911): novelist whose previous works include *Truck Drivers* (1950), *Yekaterina Voronina* (1955) and *Heavy Sand* (1978). In 1987 *Druzhba Narodov* magazine published *Children of the Arbat*, written in 1960s. It elicited an enormous and wide-ranging response. The letters included in this book present a realistic picture of the Soviet people's awareness, growing independence of mind and outspokenness.

Readers' Letters on Anatoly Rybakov's "Children of the Arbat"

To the Editorial Board of *Druzhba Narodov* magazine¹:

It is well-known that Lenin lamented the inertia and semi-literacy of the *muzhik* (the peasant) who was to be involved in the building of socialism. Let me cite some of his statements: "The organizational problems of socialist transformation in Russia are so immense and difficult that their solution—in view of the numerous petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers of the socialist proletariat, and of the latter's low cultural level—will also require a fairly long time"; "This will entail many difficulties, sacrifices and mistakes; it is something new, unprecedented in history and cannot be studied from books. It goes without saying that this is the greatest and most difficult transition that has ever occurred in history..."

Do you think that in the 1930s the leaders of the Party and the country did not find it hard to resolve the problems of building socialism in terms of the "human factor", people's

The letters are published in abridged form. — Ed.

skills, qualifications, sentiments, and energy? Were the victims innocent? And where are the victims' uncivilized torturers? The torturers too came from the people's midst.

Why should Stalin be blamed for all errors, hardships, and victims? He was at the head of a nation with a low cultural level, in a context of a bitter class struggle in the international arena, when the world imperialist bourgeoisie was literally pressing on us from all sides. Could sacrifices have been avoided? Are we now having second thoughts? Have we forgotten the situation?

P. PETROV,

veteran of the Great Patriotic War, Cand. Sc. (Hist.), senior lecturer, author of books and chapters in the *History of the CPSU, History of World War II*, and several dozens of articles

Moscow

Only a year ago I couldn't even imagine that we could ever hope that such things would happen. Before, in order to have just a glimpse of the truth about the thirties, one had to read dozens of books published over the years and to try to distill the truth by reading between the lines. I never had any great expectations or hopes... But in fact it has come to pass, and I thank the Party for this from the bottom of my heart.

Now I cannot but rejoice that we are finally publishing what was forbidden before, now all of these BBC broadcasts are mere rubbish for me. All their broadcasts about our past are not worth a single word of your novel.

Glasnost signifies the triumph of Lenin's ideals. The year 1985 carries on the cause of all those who fought for our happiness, defended our future during the Civil War, who built our economy in the thirties, who gave their lives during the Great Patriotic War, who reconstructed the country after 1945, who developed the virgin lands, who ventured into outer space and fought for peace on Earth. I am convinced that we shall never retreat.

I am thirty-two years old and work as a senior electrician at a factory.

P. PARKHOMENKO

Jambul

First of all, thank you very much for your novel *Children of the Arbat*. To be honest, it is for the first time in my life that I have come across such a straightforward book. Its subject is

usually avoided, and when it is addressed, then it is always glossed over. I became interested in it after I read Konstantin Simonov's trilogy, *The Living and the Dead*. You'll remember his mention of Stalin's orders to execute certain political prisoners. Since that time I have been collecting information piece by piece on those tragic times. I am not attempting flattery when I say that in your book I found an answer to the question, how could THIS have happened?

Soviet people should know the way things really were in THOSE years, for from time to time I hear people say, "If only Stalin were here now...", "Remember how under Stalin..." And do they wish to be exiled or executed? How could it happen that Uborevich, Tukhachevsky, Blucher, and Yakir, loyal sons of the Party, were executed?

Andrei VOLOVNIK,
17 years old
Zhdanov

Citizen Rybakov!

I can't refrain from sharing with you some thoughts on recently published "masterpiece" *Children of the Arbat*. I consider your book harmful, phony, and full of subjective views on the history of our country; it is especially injurious for young people, who are not well-versed in some aspects of history from 1917 to 1956. Obviously you are not brave enough to admit that you are enraged at your fate and the people who contrived it. What has left a vivid imprint on your book is that you yourself were hit at a certain point. But I have no pity for you...

I will also share my views on *Children of the Arbat* with the press, and perhaps I will write a letter to the USSR KGB.

L. STRIZHAKOVA,
office employee
Leningrad

I managed only to read part of this novel, and I should like to share some of my views, and these are the views of someone who lived during that period, and saw quite a lot. I know the facts not from the archives; I witnessed them with my own eyes. From what I read it follows that the author first had the idea of writing such a book long ago. He wrote it not because he was impressed by the changes which occurred in our country seventy years ago, not because he was impressed by all the good things that have been done for people since that

time, but to serve those who have been maliciously screaming against our society and socialism for seventy years now. Rybakov is assisting them with his novel... His novel is a gift to all adversaries of Soviet power. Glasnost is a good thing, but it should be applied with discretion and never abused.

E. FETISOV
Lvov

Your novel is powerful because it is full of truth, both truth of life and artistic truth. It will contribute to the revolution in people's mentality, without which it is impossible to effect revolutionary changes in the economy, in social and political life as declared and carried out by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Many people will be grateful to you, Anatoly Rybakov, for *Children of the Arbat*. But I also know some who are malicious at the exposure of all that we describe as the Stalin personality cult.

So don't be surprised if you are confronted by the vicious outbursts of this sort of victims of the Stalinist period (yes, they are victims, moral degenerates!)

I. PELIPEIKO,
teacher, war veteran
Kosov, Ivano-Frankovsk Region

It is still too often that we hear people say, "What do we need this truth for? Why should we disturb the dead? We should be content with the personality cult having been condemned." Neither those who say so, nor those who listen to them without objection give thought to the immorality of this attitude. All men are mortal and every decent person seeks to leave good memories about oneself (at least). There are no goals lofty enough to permit slandering honest people, humiliating and killing them, and then keeping silent about their martyrs' death and resorting to convenient cliches, such as "personality cult" and "a person of hard fate". People's fates are certainly hard... Was it an easy fate that befell Berzin or Postyshev during the revolution? As we talk about the heroes of the battle- and home-fronts, we will say, "No one has been forgotten, nothing has been forgotten". This attitude is dictated by our conscience. May the heroes' memory live for ever! But can we forget those who perished in the years of Stalin's reprisals and who to the last hour of their lives remained loyal to Leninist ideals, to science and art? They were deprived not only of life, they were deprived of their good

names! Their memory was flouted. We shall only be able to talk about the triumph of justice when we learn the whole truth about **THE WAY IT WAS**.

L. RYBAK
Odessa

I thank you sincerely and wholeheartedly for your truthful and honest book. Previously I thought that the young people of today are not interested in the history of our state and Party. Now I know that I was wrong. *Druzhba Narodov*, in which your novel was published, is today hard to get; people enter their names in the library waiting list so as to be able to read the story you have so skillfully related. Characteristically, there are many young people among the responsive readers of your novel. This is a gratifying fact. I live in a small town, which is the administrative center of an agricultural district in the Donetsk region. When there is such a commotion around your novel in our town, I can imagine what the reaction is in large cities. Since I was a child, your books have always been an eye-opener to me, so you can imagine how happy I was to learn that my favorite writer had written a truthful and honest book about a frightening period in the history of our nation. I have long been interested in the materials related to the life and tragic death of Sergei Kirov.² The thing is that my father Karl Brandt, a Latvian by origin, was the first secretary of the Lenin District Party Committee in Kharkov; in 1937 he was arrested and on August 23, 1938, the death sentence handed down by the Special Commission of the USSR People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs was carried out. He was falsely accused of literally the following: membership of the terrorist group which prepared for and carried out the assassination of S.M. Kirov. My mother spent twenty years in prison as the wife of "an enemy of the people"; I found myself in an orphanage and then the army took care of my upbringing. At fourteen I was a soldier at the battle front. I learned more about that period from my mother when she was rehabilitated; my father, too, was posthumously rehabilitated and reinstated as a Party member.

A. BRANDT
Donetsk Region

My should we stir up trouble? It was impossible to build the world's first socialist state without committing errors. In the capitalist surroundings, at that. To me and people of my age, which is close to yours, your position seems strange. Publish-

ing your novel *Children of the Arbat* was still another mistake. You shouldn't fool the young people and cast shadow on your contemporaries' memories of their wonderful youth.

Your former admirer,
K. SIDOROVA

(The sender's address is not indicated. The letter was addressed to the First Secretary of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union, V. Karpov. The enclosed note runs, "Please read my letter and forward it to A. Rybakov".)

I have long been waiting for such a book and am now happy to be able to write to you.

Your hero Sasha Pankratov is a truly good and honest person. He is my age (I am 23). The fact that Sasha never goes against his conscience, that he is always motivated by the sense of justice makes him especially close to us who were children and adolescents in the 1970s and 1980s. I know what my friends think about your book and can tell you that we have always needed a book like this and a hero like Sasha.

I am very much interested in the 1930s but we have little authentic information on these years, instead, we have myths, semi-truths and simply downright lies! I wanted to sort everything out myself. I started asking questions of older people and read newspapers dating back to 1921-1934 at the University library (I am doing a postgraduate course in mathematics). One should certainly have discretion and not believe everything newspapers say. After a certain amount of training, though, one learns to see what is true and what is not. I was interested not only in historical facts, but also in the minute details about that faraway time. I even discovered several colloquial phrases which have completely gone out of use. In this respect, newspapers are far more valuable than books or movies of the period.

Now I have much better knowledge of the road my country has traversed over the past 70 years.

How good it is that at last Soviet people can read such remarkable books as your novel. There are still many people, among them young ones, who claim that under Stalin there was more order and, in general, everything was much better. They simply don't know or understand many things, but I don't feel they are to blame. The blame should be put on those who concealed the truth from them. I am convinced that reading your book will make people better, and this is what counts most.

V. PETROCHENKO
Moscow

I had been waiting for this book for forty years, since the time when, having matured at the war front, I started looking for the truth. I sorted many things out, but to really understand ... only you succeeded in doing so. Your work is hard and painful, but may our appreciation, our hope and our longing for more knowledge support you. What you have written is only an introduction, isn't it? We hope to learn how HE managed to get some of the most outstanding leaders involved, how HE made them wade in their own comrades' blood; we want to know why Voroshilov committed the whole Army to laceration, why the healthy forces failed to oppose him, and why HE should have wanted to exterminate the military on the eve of the war... There are many more why's that do not let us live in peace and quiet.

P. NIKITENKO,
Lieutenant-General

1987



Olga Kuchkina: critic and playwright, arts correspondent for *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper. Plays from her collection *White Summer*, published in 1987, have been successfully staged in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities both here and abroad.

The Water of Life

The short story by the young (35) author published in the sixth issue of *Znamya* magazine is a significant event in Soviet literature.

The author's life was no bed of roses, as the saying goes. "There were 10 people in our family at one point," he writes in his *Autobiographical Letter*, "and I, the oldest son, was the only one with a job besides Father. My father, a locksmith, could not feed that horde alone." Employment at a locomotive repair shop. Service in the army followed by studies at the polytechnic. Chairmanship of a gubernia commission on the irrigation of arid lands and employment as a specialist in the electrification of agriculture. See how a few words chronicle the changing times!

The Juvenile Sea is dated 1934. It took more than half a century for this stupendous story by Andrei Platonov to reach the reader.

Here is one of the legends about Platonov. In the final years of his life he was a doorman at the Writers' Club. One of the young members, perhaps tipsy and carried away by emotion, rushed up to him and exclaimed. "Hi-ya, Andrei!" "Good evening, Sir," Platonov replied without missing a beat. Everything is contained in his response: a sense of self-esteem that main-

tains a certain distance, and a profound sense of humor, and his fate. We see all this in his portrait, too, particularly in the eyes, bright and piercing. Those eyes are astounding, as is his face with its distinctive molding, the distinctive fusing of contradictory features. "Specialists" read palms. I would read faces. Psychologists may well do that already. Schools may well someday be established where not only social studies are taught but human studies, including the *study of the face*.

We need to know Platonov by sight. Everything written in his prose is written in his face. The same is true of Pushkin, Tolstoy and Chekhov – the talents and geniuses of the Russian land.

The Juvenile Sea provokes tears and laughter. Not by turns, but all at once. Our tears and laughter are for them, his characters, for him, the writer, and for ourselves, human beings. The hidden tenderness Platonov feels for man arises from the feelings a child inspires, I am convinced. A child in the midst of the land, a child in the midst of the history of mankind now begun. Hence the purity and wisdom, the naivity, absurdity and passion the Platonov character brings to everything he encounters for the first time, everything he first discovers for himself – how to live on this earth, how to create himself and his history. Hence the emotional eloquence of Platonov's language, which is unlike any other and has so much of the child's idiom. The syntax of children's speech is a combination of personal detail and generality. It has a strong comical effect and at the same time it makes you think about the way the child sees the world. That, I suppose, is how everyone who begins to think thinks. And he is Platonov's "soulful man".

"...Vermo was lost in the hazy state of his ever restless mind... There was not a natural object or even trait whose fate Vermo had not mentally taken ages into the future: thus he already saw in Bostaloyeva a being surrounded by the brilliant light of socialism, the light of a mysterious summer day drowning in the blue of its woods, filled with the perceptible sound of a still unknown attraction."

The idea of social justice, embodied in socialism, proves to be akin to human beauty, which, in turn, is akin to the beauty of the world and new, still unknown feelings. And how strangely and simply it is expressed! Perhaps an initial effort needs to be made by anyone reading Platonov for the first time to become accustomed to his style and enter his world. The reward is well worth the effort, though. The pleasure provided by feeling, thought and poetry is great.

“Juvenile” comes from the Latin *juvenilis*, meaning young. The “juvenile” water Vermo plans to give the parched steppe to drink is ancient, maternal water that lies deep “below, in the darkness of the earth”. But it is also young water that came into being in the planet’s youth. “When the earth was being created and now, as the creation continues, a great deal of water was trapped and became crystalline rock.” The “juvenile sea” is a metaphor for the transfiguration of the world ... on the basis of “State Meat Farm No. 101”, managed by an individual by the name of Umrishchev – a character straight out of Shchedrin but in a new setting. If the most romantic albeit in many ways sad pages of the story are associated with Vermo and Bostaloyeva, the pages associated with Umrishchev are the most satirical. For that matter they, too, are sad.

He’s the one who wants to disseminate his all-embracing motto – “don’t poke your nose into other people’s business”. He’s the one who wants to give “each laborer ... possession of his own realm of labor – may he till it without interruption and be eternally happy... One, for example, cleans the stalls, another cleans the log wells in the steppe, a third simply tests batches of milk to see which is sour and which isn’t. Each one does his job according to the plan and has no business poking his nose in anywhere else.” The perversion of the ideas of socialism which the Umrishchevs have always occupied themselves with, is portrayed with caustic wit by the writer.

Platonov’s literature and life were devoted to the service of beauty.

That “beauty of the whole illuminated world, beauty obtained with great difficulty from sharp contrasts, from the contortion of matter, in blind battle – and the only hope for all this utterly exhausted bigotry is to struggle through to the future aided by the truth of human awareness...”

1987

The Fierce Word

On Andrei Platonov’s The Foundation Pit

A beautiful legend has it that the souls of dead sailors live on in albatrosses, while those of land-dwellers live on in cranes. When you hear the call of the crane, someone’s soul is calling to you.

A writer's soul lives on in his work. Isn't it sad that his readers could not respond to his call while he was still alive? Aren't we fortunate that his voice has reached us even if after his death?..

It is for the second time within a brief period that Andrei Platonov has addressed us; first, with *The Juvenile Sea*, which we have already discussed, and now with *The Foundation Pit*.

The novel makes both beautiful and sad reading. To be frank, it is difficult to read. Not only because of Platonov's peculiar phrase structure and combination of uncombinable words that seem cumbersome (he heaves words as if they were boulders), though they perfectly match his subject matter, both concrete and cosmogonic, but also because of what and how he writes. *The Juvenile Sea* was a more optimistic novel. *The Foundation Pit* was written by a thirty-year-old writer distressed by what was being done to the human element in humans deprived of the possibility of living a decent life and saddled with a routine formalized to the last comma by those at the very top.

"The activist sat through the night by lamplight trying to hear whether or not a rider from the district center was galloping along the road bringing a directive to the village. He read each new directive with curiosity and relish, as if spying on the passionate secrets of grown-up, key people. There was hardly a night without a directive and the activist would study it until dawn, accumulating the enthusiasm for decisive action by daybreak. Only very seldom would he freeze for a moment with the grief of life and then glance dolefully at anyone who met his eye. He would recall that he was a muddler as he was sometimes described in the papers from the district center... It would take him especially long to study the signatures on the papers. Those letters were written by the passionate hand of someone at the district center, and the hand is part of the body of someone who lives in glory before the eyes of the faithful and devoted masses."

To judge from the above passage, this is satire if not farce. True, at times one cannot help but laugh when one recognizes a phenomenon described with a not so amusing word, but this rarely happens. The author's soul is deeply wounded and clearly does not feel like laughing.

People are certainly different and their world views are different too. In what one sees as a lethal element, another sees a source of inspiration. There is no irony about the foregoing. That is really so. Life has different colors. When Katayev, for instance, was writing his *Time, Forward!* he saw his own time in

exactly this way. It's a good thing when everyone has the opportunity to speak out, not only those who are passionate, but also those bent on analysis, not only joyous people, but also those who are sad. The different views not only enrich the readers and teach them to view reality from different angles, to make their own choices and to suffer through their own experiences; the writer's word, especially if it is fierce and straightforward, may help, especially in our society, to improve the way things are. If everything about our history were healthy and correct, one could imagine that in the days when the novel appeared (1929-1930) various responsible people would react to it in this way: "What is happening to us, brothers? Could what we are doing be right if one of us feels such pain?"

However, history cannot be rewritten. History is as it happened.

"Don't people start to feel less when they build more?" Voshchev didn't dare to believe it. 'A person may build a house and collapse. Who will live there then?' he wondered, as he continued to walk."

The theory of "cogs"¹ replacing real people with their unique and precious lives inevitably caused pain to the sensitive soul, who perceived anti-human essence of the process.

"Oh you masses, you masses! How hard it is to form the backbone of communism out of you! What do you want, you bastards? You bastards have tortured the entire vanguard to death!"

With this formula Platonov brilliantly captures what is our concern today: not faceless, "guided" masses, but the working people, who consciously choose their own fates, build their own lives, and think for themselves—therein lies the guarantee of true democracy.

Platonov is calling to us from the 1930s, addressing us with his peculiar, honest, embittered and talented words, the "soulful man" to use Platonov's own expression.

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The critic's latest essay, published here, was among the winners of the *Oktyabr* magazine prize for 1987.

"To You, Not of My Generation..."

*On the Publication of Alexander Tvardovsky's poem
By Right of Memory*

At last they have burst upon us from the pages of a magazine, these words memorized many years ago in what now seems to have been another life:

*...Deny your father, deny your mother...
The task is clear, the cause is sacred –
Pursue the very noblest end.
While on the way, betray your brother,
And, secretly, your own best friend.*

*But spare yourself and do not burden
Your soul with mere humanity.
Swear falsely in the leader's name
And shrink from no brutality.*

*Grateful for what your lot may bring you,
Simply affirm: supreme he reigns,
Although you be Crimean Tatar,
Ingush, or Kalmyk of the plains.*

*Applaud all public condemnations,
Though you won't fathom what is meant.
Revile the people, though you're sentenced
To live with them in banishment.*

*And in the crowded Exodus,
Of our times, not the Biblical,
Exalt the father of the peoples –
He sees best, being
Above it all.*

It is a long time since our nice, clever-clever poetry, anxious to surpass itself, be more interesting and show itself off to advantage – it is a long time since it heard such an ominous message, such powerful sarcasm. It has become used to play, to conventionality, and now, suddenly, we have Tvardovsky,¹ with his austere, peasant-like, Tolstoyan bluntness. It will not, of course, suit the connoisseurs of fine writing, but it was not for them that it was written. The poet's words have nevertheless undoubtedly evoked, and will continue to evoke, a sympathetic and grateful response in living human beings, in those who were and are troubled by the "mute anguish" of the people's destiny.

Nevertheless, after the first feeling of joy that the poem has been published at last and, what is more, in two leading magazines,² another feeling almost immediately joins it, one of regret and bitterness: did it have to be published today!

Let this be our starting point.

"Manuscripts don't burn!" These words from Chapter 24 of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* have gone down in our consciousness as a byword of fortitude and faith, of the artist's bitter and courageous determination to create, to fulfil his destiny even when hostile circumstances deprive him of any hope of seeing his work made available to the public. Beautiful, proud words! Brilliantly confirmed by the fate of the novel in which they were said, they conveyed a powerful moral message and, of course, gave strength to many in the now past years of stagnation.

But the truth of these words is immediately turned into a blasphemous falsehood as soon as one gives that maxim placatory, conciliatory note (which no creative artist himself would ever give it): "Well, what of it? It's no tragedy! If it wasn't published yesterday, it'll be published today or tomorrow. Manuscripts, as they say, don't burn."

At this point one inevitably wants to object. They certainly do burn! So many of them have burned in our history, not only in the remote past, but in times more or less nearer to our own. Where, for example, are the manuscripts of Babel, Mandelstam, Pavel Vasiliev, Voronsky, Victor Kin, Kharms and hundreds of other victims of unjust repressions? And how many talented works were deposited on the filters of the press itself and the government departments in charge of it? And how many—because of the well-known impossibility of passing through those filters—did not even get as far as them... All these are losses to thought, to our culture—irretrievable, in many cases, and beyond repair.

That is the first point. Secondly, even in more favorable cases when, after lying in the desk because of circumstances over which the writer had no control, the work finally went to the reader, but long after its natural deadline—is its loss to *its own* time not essentially just as much of a loss?

It may be said, perhaps, that true treasures of art live long after their own time.

*You and I both have eternity in store.
What's the loss of just an hour or two?*

Indeed, are ten, twenty or even fifty years lost so important if a work has centuries ahead of it? On the other hand, they say, there is no bad without good. A work has been lying about unpublished for 10-20 years: now is the time to look and see whether it has stood the test of time. If this is so and if it reads as interestingly as ever, let it live. If it seems out of date, maybe they did right in not letting it through in its own time.

As for the last argument, its cunning is disclosed by a simple question: is it fair that this kind of preliminary “test of time” has usually been prepared only for sharply critical books (films, stage productions), while a favorable grayness goes to press with all speed? Even the persuasiveness of the thesis about the indifference of true works of art to the time of their publication proves, on closer examination, to be imaginary.

Of course, a philosophical allegory of life and death or a poem about love can be more independent in this sense, although time also puts its stamp on the solution of the “eternal themes”. But is the content of literature limited to “the eternal themes”? And in most cases, to take a book, even a book of genius out of its time, is largely to deprive it of its living social

significance. Try to imagine, for example, *Dead Souls* published not in 1842 but in 1862, in a post-Reform Russia. Everything would survive in the novel: the artistry of the portraits and landscapes, the lyrical digressions, Gogol's amazing use of language and the grandeur of the general idea—but it would never have achieved the impact, the mental upheaval that was evoked by this book in the generation of the 40s. Like to anyone of our own times, it would be beautiful, classical *reading*, giving pleasure and edification, but no more. Similarly, if Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* had appeared in, say, 1882 instead of in 1862, would it have shaken up the whole of reading Russia, would it have become a subject of such violent controversy, would it have had even a quarter of the impact on the spiritual self-determination of the new Russian intelligentsia as at the time when it was born and for which it had been intended?

While the grass grows, the horse starves. Let us take it as axiomatic that when a talented and significant work satisfying the urgent demands of its time is long overdue in being made available to the reader, this damages not only the work's chances of success and influence, but the society whose development it could have helped serve, but did not. It did not do so at the precise moment when it was particularly needed by that society, and although it may live for another thousand years, that moment will never recur and the loss will remain irretrievable. A loss not only to the generation directly addressed by the work, but, as a result, to the whole subsequent history of the people.

In our days, in the apogee of universal enthusiasm at the opportunity to read much of what has been banned for many long years (including Bek's *The New Appointment*, Akhmatova's *Requiem*, Platonov's *The Foundation Pit*, Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*, and Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*), it is useful to bear all this in mind. In particular, so as not to submit to the above-mentioned complacent reconciliation ("everything sorts itself out in the end, justice triumphs"), nor to the equally unfounded "disillusion": "It was printed, but nothing came of it; interesting, of course, but the work never became an event..." But if *The Divine Comedy* was published for the first time today, or *Don Quixote*, *Faust* or *And Quiet Flows the Don*—would it become a revolutionary event of contemporary life, capable of affecting each and every reader? It is more than doubtful whether it would. It is unlikely that the queue in the library for a magazine containing such works of world classics would be any longer than one,

say, for Victor Astafiev's *Sad Detective Story*, which is far from being a classic in artistic terms, but which is urgently contemporary. That's the whole point.

The fate of Tvardovsky's last long poem, like that of his penultimate one, *Tyorkin in the Underworld*,³ which requires separate discussion, serves as bitter confirmation of the above axiom. Not only in the sense that in both cases a ready, finished work remained unpublished here against the author's will for many years. It is something else that is far more painful: that in its content and time of writing it belonged to a certain stage of social development, but has reached the reader at another and qualitatively different stage. Another life with its own problems is busy around us, and even the former problems are seen from a different viewpoint, with the experience of the elapsed years taken into account.

If "you, not of my generation" are to appreciate the poem *By Right of Memory*, you must respond to the inspiration of its publicistic message, you must above all understand its relationship to the time in which it was written. But what is known about this time, our 60s, by most contemporary readers, those who are 30-35 today, to say nothing of those in their twenties? We will risk affirming that they know almost nothing. And how could they know? The young person of today, if he remembers this period of history, at best remembers it as his childhood years, which the adult life has not yet been able to touch. They never mentioned it at school, and even if they do say a few meaningless words about overcoming some kind of "subjectivism and voluntarism", then it simply goes in one ear and out the other. This period is not shown on TV and is not mentioned in novels or historical writings. As a result, our young contemporaries have a clearer idea even of the war or NEP⁴ than of that not so distant past. True, their mothers and fathers could have told them something about it, but, with rare exceptions, they themselves are not very clear about their attitude to that period in their lives. Should they condemn it or praise it?

The result is that before any other kind of criticism, the poem *By Right of Memory* now demands a flatly realistic historical commentary, without ambiguities and cover-ups.

The main question is: why did Tvardovsky, in the second half of the 60s, need to write a poem about Stalin? Even in 1963, when the early drafts of several stanzas had been written, and particularly in 1966, when the apparently transitory

theme came back to him and demanded thorough treatment, Stalin was already part of a past that was perhaps not so very remote, well-remembered and still familiar, but nevertheless the past and separated from the present by not just a period of 10-15 years, but by a whole period of social development. Did he suddenly want to write a historical poem? This would certainly not have been like Tvardovsky. He had always lived in poetry by what, at a given stage of his social existence, not this or that group of people was living, but the *people*, the people as a whole, and it was precisely by sensitively detecting all the historical upheavals and transitions at this universally popular level that he was, in his way, the chronicler of the age, but in no way a writer-“composer” in the common sense of the word. Run over in your mind all his major works: not one of them was “off the cuff”, at the whim of free poetic fantasy. Each one was, so to speak, by will of history, and each one opened up, portraying in its most essential features, a new major stage which the life of the people was entering. *Land of Muravia* – the 30s, their spiritual upsurge and optimism, unsullied by doubt, in building the new life. *Vassili Tyorkin* – the war as a special historical era in its universally national and universally human content and significance. *The House by the Road* – the first post-war years, “Yesterday’s war with its disasters. And the disasters of today”. *Tyorkin in the Underworld* – the social crisis from the end of the 40s to the beginning of the 50s, when the gradually matured contradictions of the bureaucratic regime achieved their critical point. *Horizon Beyond the Horizon*, the period from the mid-50s, the time when the above-mentioned crisis was being resolved and the new social upsurge that resulted. On all these occasions, the poet seemed not to be choosing his theme any more than people choose the time in which they live; it was as if the theme and the time themselves were choosing him as their spokesman and chronicler. His creative imagination was courageous, bold and fertile (remember the plots of *Muravia* and *Tyorkin in the Underworld*). It never directed Tvardovsky’s work, however, but simply served as the fullest expression of the truth about the life of the people. After all, does *By Right of Memory* resemble a historical poem? It contains lyrical poetry and it contains wrathful and passionate journalistic invective.

Another explanation was suggested for the leading motif which stimulated the author to write a new poem: the feeling expressed, in the early rough drafts of 1963, that in his earlier

works he had “held back” something essential about Stalin and his time. “For us,” writes V. Dementiev, “this testimony [that Tvardovsky initially wanted to add a new chapter to the poem *Horizon Beyond the Horizon*] is extremely important as is this stanza, beginning with the words, ‘I held things back...’

*I held things back. Can I be leaving
An uncompleted tale to you
In which to add or take away
Means not to give the truth its due?*

“This is a precise formulation of the basic moral-philosophical idea of the poem: the truth about the life of the people should not be partial or ‘selective’, it should not contain either omitted or intentionally hidden connections...”⁵

There are certain grounds for all this: a demand for the whole truth, a sense of some of it having been left unsaid and the self-dissatisfaction that goes with this – motifs very typical of Tvardovsky. Let us note, however, that the lines on which the critic laid such strong emphasis stayed in the rough drafts and did not go into the final text. And would not the “basic moral-philosophical idea of the poem” have been impoverished in such a case, for all its rightness? Of course the full truth is better than half-truth, but, taken in such general form, does this truth need a poetical proof? It would be nothing more than correct truism then.

And as for the things “held back” (if we assume that in 1966-1969 the poet was still concerned over the above-mentioned motif)... After all, that is the question: why was it precisely about the theme of Stalin that he experienced a need to say what was left unsaid? There were plenty of other themes left unmentioned. On the other hand, by that time much had already been written about the repressions during the personality cult. In every form – journalistic works, history, literature and reminiscences – memory easily prompts with books and names. So why was it about this particular theme with this particular tendency and at this particular moment that Tvardovsky wanted to say what had been left unsaid?

As we see, the suggested explanation itself requires explanation and so tends to distract from the essence of the matter...

Meanwhile, there is no need even to look for an answer to the question – it is given in the last chapter of the poem. From the very first lines:

*Forget, forget they keep on bidding:
They'd drown the living pain at last
In dead oblivion; let the waves
Close over it; forget the past.*

*Forget, they say; let it not be
Fondly recalled: gag memory,
For fear that the undedicated
Be troubled accidentally.*

There it is, the direct and closest source of the poem. Not in “abstract” love for the whole truth, but in a courageous determination to resist—“by right of memory”—any wholly specific attempts to impose a ban on the truth, any fabricated, consciously organized consignment to “oblivion” of the crimes committed in the Stalin era. But from whom did this ban come, to whom was it necessary, and why?

*What special congress, off the agenda,
One day decreed
On our behalf
That ever-wakeful memory
Should there and then be written off?*

In 1969, it was clear to almost anyone who was not strange to social life and was following its course of development; today there can be no getting away without an explanation.

During the three and a half decades since the death of Stalin, public interest in him has invariably remained extremely great. This interest has also been very considerably supported by the atmosphere of mystery with which his name was surrounded, even during the period of the harshest denunciations. This interest was, of course, mainly conditioned by the fact that—given the most varied and even diametrically opposite evaluations of the personality and historical role of Stalin on the part of those representing various social groups—his role was objectively very great and concentrated in itself historical circumstances on a truly gigantic scale, determining the destinies of tens and hundreds of millions. Nonetheless, it can be claimed that the distinctly *political* character, essential for the direction and results of our social development, was acquired by the discussion of the above theme twice in the given period. The first time was in 1956-

1964, during the widespread and active criticism of the “personality cult”; the second was in the latter half of the 60s, when this criticism began to be muzzled so actively and in such an organized way. We are interested primarily in this second period, but its historical significance can only be understood against the background of the first.

What is popularly called the “Khrushchev era” is often mentioned with a contemptuous smile. There are reasons for this. All the same, we will say at once that any such arrogance is un-historical and morally doubtful. The flinging open of the prison-camp gates and the courage to admit to the whole world that there had been “massive repressions” against our own people and that they had been unprecedented in cruelty and scale—these things alone are enough to commemorate that time as one of the finest pages in our country’s history.

The following must also be borne in mind: the wave of criticism of Stalin raised by Khrushchev’s report to the 20th Congress of the CPSU, “On the Personality Cult and Its Consequences”, mounted year by year, encompassing ever newer stages and sides of Stalin’s activity and steadily gathering depth and force. What at first had been treated as regrettable “mistakes” and “deviations from Lenin’s standards” were, at the 22nd Party Congress (1961), directly and harshly termed “villainy”, “criminal acts” and “ignominious methods of leadership”. Above all, criticism “from above” was taken up⁶ and strengthened many times over by the growing critical movement “from below”. And although there was a definite lack of timing and although there were also, at times, fairly sharp contradictions in the mutual relations between the two sides of the process, it was a single process, on the whole, whose objective historical meaning consisted in democratization, in the replacement of Stalinist “barrack-room communism” (against which Marx and Engels had given a warning⁷) with a qualitatively different kind of socialism based on fundamentally different principles. In economics, not on compulsory labor, but on a material interest in the fruits of labor; in the system of government, on democratic (instead of authoritarian-bureaucratic) centralism, with an expansion of local independence and the elements of control “from below”; in foreign policy, on the idea of the peaceful coexistence (instead of the hostile confrontation) of two worlds, on the search for the possibilities of mutual understanding and cooperation...

There has been much justified talk about the shortcomings

in the criticism of Stalin at that time, the most important of which were a narrowing of historical responsibility to the personal culpability of one or several individuals, the reduction of history to statement, the stalling of all attempts at any kind of consistent *analysis* of the causes, conditions and consequences of the gory facts that were made public... It is also true that the process of social transformation, to which this criticism gave spiritual and political *form*, a moral impulse and a goal, was proceeding erratically, unevenly, largely by trial and error. Without any substantial theoretical analysis and without the uniquely integral, complete and inwardly logical system from which they wanted to get away, and without what they ultimately intended to reach, and, finally, without the actual ways, stages and means of restructuring. Without the conscious, consistent unbridling of initiative and independent social action of the masses that alone could give true strength and irreversibility to the process of democratization. Moreover, with the frequently renewed attempts to solve the new problems by the old dictatorial methods, top-level transformations of the apparatus and the introduction everywhere of ephemeral but obligatory economic panaceas.

Today, we have no grounds whatever to blind ourselves to the above-mentioned shortcomings that severely damaged, at that time, the energy, depth and effectiveness of the cleansing process, nor have we any grounds to minimize them. On the contrary, they must be acknowledged to the full, especially so that such mistakes will not recur at the latest stage of renewal. And yet, and yet... Be that as it may, the steps taken at the time were made toward *human beings*, not from them and not over their heads. The process, even though contradictory and sporadic, even though unable and dilatory in obtaining at least relative completion, was inwardly significant and historically promising. It was heading in the same direction as our present-day perestroika.

The theme of Stalin surfaced in a very different form a few years later.

It was far from immediately understood that the removal of Khrushchev in October 1964 was not simply the removal of a leadership, but the beginning of a new period in the life of the country. An event almost as great in its consequences as the 20th Congress, but with a minus sign. A move aimed not only against "voluntarism" and unrestrained experimentalism (the sole motive offered as an explanation and thought a convinc-

ing one by many), but, in effect, opposing the positive social process that had been the content of the previous historical period. Little by little, however, especially towards the end of the decade when the idea of economic reform was dropped, this became obvious enough (although, as before, no direct announcements on this account were made).

It was not that there should be a restoration of the Stalinist regime; that would have been impossible and the elementary feeling of self-preservation could only be an obstacle to it. As always in history, restoration in this case, too, was only partial and relative. One may even put it as follows: all the transformations in the *system*, everything new that had been introduced by the “Khrushchev era” into the economic and socio-political organization of our society and into the home and foreign policy of the Soviet state, was preserved and consolidated by the new era. With one sole exception: the above-mentioned process of democratization was halted and blocked. This was enough radically to change the whole picture. Although the previous stage in this respect (as in a number of others, for instance, in the growth and intensification of production) did not achieve much society was at least on the move and was searching. There was a powerful tendency for self-change. The situation was contradictory, but dynamic and open. Now all this was stopped; the dynamics were converted into statics, and the statics of their own accord became deadening stagnation. The social structure that consolidated itself as a result of this subtraction (socialism minus democracy) was, of course, in many respects more flexible than the one that had existed up to the mid-50s, but, like the previous one, the new structure recognized as an unwritten norm the administration-bound, authoritarian-bureaucratic nature of the relationships between leader and masses and a system of privileges for the higher echelons of a pyramidal social hierarchy. Like the previous structure the new one, while proclaiming slogans of movement, was in fact inwardly orientated on *stasis* alone, on maintaining and protecting the existing order. What this led to is well known.

It was precisely the change in accents as regards Stalin, his moral rehabilitation in the eyes of the people, that became the ideological form of this “subtraction”, a kind of emblem of the changed official line.

This line was followed consistently and not, it must be admitted, without success. Certainly not by the direct negation of the early denunciations—that would have been difficult and

could have had the reverse effect—but by a premeditated combination of half-truths and cover-ups. Half-truths in what concerned Stalin's role in the Patriotic War, the only stage in his life story that could be morally triumphant in the eyes of society. And cover-ups of everything else.

The success of the first part of this programme was helped in no small way by the circumstance that during the preceding years, very little had been said about Stalin's activity during the war, and that only grudgingly, with a one-sided emphasis on his mistakes and on his despotic interference with the organization of the various military operations. (Tvardovsky, a proud man, never joined the chorus. He was at that time one of the few who spoke out against such one-sidedness—see the chapter “That's How It Was” in the poem *Horizon Beyond the Horizon*. Especially in the 1960-1961 editions.) But now, as if to correct the allowed injustice which, it must be said, exasperated many at the time, at first one by one and then in an ever-growing swarm, came memoirs, films, and, finally, novels, re-educating the reader and the viewer about Stalin's special services as military leader, strategist and head of the anti-Hitler coalition. On the other hand, nothing detrimental to the Leader's reputation was mentioned any more. Not even the particular blunders in his military leadership. Much less his general responsibility for the heavy price paid for our victory. Nor the fact that in 1937-1938 he decapitated our army, destroying the flower of its command, nor the treaties with Germany in August and September 1939, one of the results of which was that Hitler was presented with the opportunity to concentrate his divisions directly on our frontiers, nor a great deal else that was cruel and terrifying and was associated with this name in our history. A conspiracy of silence was imposed on it all.

In this way, the desired optical illusion was achieved. The luster of a holy and just war illumined the uniform of the Generalissimus, seeming to sanctify at the same time his political life-story as a whole. Everything that he had done before and after the war acquired in that light, if not undoubted moral justification, at least the importance of state necessity, far-sightedness and rightness. This, in its turn, also spread to the general characteristic of that stage of social development, which it was no longer permitted to call “the period of the personality cult”: it began to be talked about in almost the same language as before 1956.

The whole of this ideological shift took place gradually and

without much fuss, but even its “little signs” did not escape the watchful eye of our contemporary and told him a great deal. Nor the fact that the wave of “cult” criticism began to subside with growing speed, gradually restricting itself to a single ritual phrase that was uttered on great holidays in the reports of the leaders and became more and more incomprehensible from year to year. Nor the fact that in the articles and books about the posthumous rehabilitation of the “fighters for the great cause”, the sad end of their lives began to be truncated in a stylized formula that left the reader in the dark about what had actually happened to the hero, what had become of him then and was he not still thriving to that day. And then their names too, to prevent the revival of bad memories, again began to disappear little by little from the pages of the press.

In these circumstances, the new and very determined approach to the crimes of the Stalinist regime had a thoroughly distinct and clear political meaning: this was the language of open and sharp protest. And it was only possible (if it was possible at all) in one single organ of our press.

Whole volumes have been written about Tvardovsky's *Novy Mir*, about the truly historic significance of this magazine in the spiritual development of our society, about for what and against what it struggled, and who and how, in their turn, struggled with it and, finally, what were the results of this struggle not only for the magazine and its editor, but for society as a whole. Even a commentary to the poem *By Right of Memory* is impossible, however, without at least a few preliminary words on the subject.

In the light of what was said above about the contrast between the two periods (the interrupted “Khrushchev” and the early “Brezhnev” periods), within the limits of which the history of Tvardovsky's magazine ran its course, the essence of the matter may be defined indeed briefly. In point of fact, what was *Novy Mir* if it is examined from the viewpoint set by the foregoing analysis?

Before 1964, it was a magazine which very soon developed into the leading publication of the democratic renewal of Soviet society, representing the policy of the 20th Party Congress with the greatest consistency, vividness and fullness. Consistency, of course, not in the sense of a kind of special maturity and depth in the theoretical interpretation of our society's development: alas, our social thinking does not have this, even to

this day. But at least in three other vitally important respects. First, in the critical portrayal and *artistic* interpretation of the road traveled by the country. No other organ of the press went so far in this respect or told so much of the bitter, cruel but necessary truth about the Stalin era as was done by Tvardovsky's magazine. Secondly, in disseminating as critically sober an approach to reality and contemporaneity (as distinct from that insinuating verbosity that is ready at times to denounce a dead tyrant, but metamorphoses into a sweet-voiced siren on the threshold of the present day). Thirdly, in uncompromising struggle with the then forces of deceleration, very influential and preparing for a *revanche* — the struggle with them little by little comprised the basic content of the magazine's critical section.

After 1964, however, when the situation had radically changed, criticism of the "personality cult and its consequences" was wound up and all the rest of our magazines and newspapers — some more quickly and joyfully, others more slowly and with less enthusiasm — reflected and confirmed the change. For over another five years, Tvardovsky's *Novy Mir* remained the only Soviet magazine preserving full loyalty to the former course. For over five years, overcoming an increasingly stubborn resistance and with blows being inflicted on it from all sides, it fought against the restoration of the bureaucracy and for the deepening and developing of the ideas of the 20th Congress and of a democratic awareness of society. For the truth. And it fell in this unequal battle without retreating a step.

In its time, the foreign press racked its brains over how to define Tvardovsky's social position as poet and editor. Was it "the Party line" or was it "in opposition"? The Party line? Then why had one long poem of his been unpublished for the last nine years and another for eighteen, and why had his magazine first been under siege and heavy bombardment for many years, then been taken over by all the rules of the art of war (with diversionary maneuvers, a task force, etc.)? In opposition? Then why do the children at school learn his verses about Lenin by heart? Why, in his last poem, too, is that name as much of an inspiration to the author as it had been 10, 20 and 30 years before?

*He always seemed to be so near,
After he'd worked his shift on Earth,
Who found ovations hard to bear,*

*Knowing exactly what they're worth;
Whose image was kept by the world
Forever living after death...*

Is that opposition?

Apparently, the foreign press arrived at no generally convincing conclusion. Perhaps it is understandable why: because of the incorrect formulation of the question. A purely logical incorrectness consisting in the initial conviction that either the Party line or the opposition—things that are incompatibly contradictory. Meanwhile, they should have asked themselves right at the start: what Party line? The one expressed, for instance, in the lines introducing this article?

*The task is clear, the cause is sacred—
Pursue the very noblest end.
While on the way, betray your brother... etc.*

This is not even a poetic hyperbole, but the most mundane reality—the Party line that forced a man to entrust his thinking and conscience to a higher, supreme will that was initially and forever infallible and that, in the name of the obviously clear, undisputed goal, demanded of him ecstatic blindness and joyful subordination to that will. Or, on the contrary, the Party line that laid down as the norm an entirely different and democratic mentality and conduct, the sovereign and responsible human personality, which, for the sake of the common weal, lives and acts on its own reasoning:

*Entrusting all their boundless homeland,
Theirs and their children's destinies
To some divinity no longer,
But to their own responsible
And thrifty management.*

In exactly the same way, opposition to what? To the course that was outlined by the 20th Congress and that opened up before our society the prospect of democratic development? Or, on the contrary, to politics that contradicted that course, shutting up the marked out prospect? To argue about the “Party line” and “opposition” without asking oneself such questions is an obvious waste of time. As Mayakovsky asked the finance inspector:

*And supposing I am the people's leader
And the people's servant rolled into one?*⁸

And in the same way, one could ask: But what if, precisely because Tvardovsky's position was a truly Party position, in the spirit of the 20th Congress, in the anti-cult, anti-bureaucratic, democratic and popular sense that it had been at variance with ideological line of Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Suslov?

In fact, since Western criticism put the question of Tvardovsky and his magazine's opposition incorrectly, and since Soviet critics avoided it altogether, it certainly doesn't follow that no such question exists. It is very real and deserves calm, serious examination (today it actually *demand*s it owing to the objectives of our current perestroika).

Significantly, talk about *Novy Mir* as an "opposition" magazine did not arise before 1965-1966, although its aesthetic and social-political line and its leading position in literature had been fully defined five years earlier.

As a magazine with a trend, *Novy Mir* was brought into being by the era of the 20th Congress. Before then, since the beginning of the 30s, there had not been, and could not have been, any publications like it. Those that nevertheless somehow managed to appear did not survive. Even in this respect, the 20th Party Congress had the significance of a real breakthrough. Under its liberating influence in an atmosphere in which the country had realized the necessity to rethink its path, its results and prospects, various and in many ways mutually repellent trends of social thought were bound to come into being. This democratic diversity of opinion now in process of formation meant, in point of fact, that the society that had hitherto been absorbed by the state, as it were, and that had handed over its functions to the state, was again acquiring its spiritual sovereignty and returning to the full-blooded life. A vivid manifestation of this positive social process was the appearance of publications with a trend—there were others besides *Novy Mir*, to which Tvardovsky returned in July 1958—such as, with various degrees of clarity, *Yunost* under Valentin Katayev (1955-1962) and to some extent *Literaturnaya Gazeta* under Sergei Smirnov (1959-1960), with Vsevolod Kochetov's *Oktyabr*, the newspaper *Literatura i Zhizn* (1958-1962) and some other publications at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum.

The contrast of ideological-aesthetic positions which found

expression on the pages of the above-mentioned magazines as well as in many other magazines and newspapers was, in a number of cases, very large and certainly did not boil down to that natural variety of individual viewpoints that is expressed in the saying, "There are as many opinions as there are people". Nor was it to be explained, in spite of the widespread Philistine notion, by the much-vaunted literary "grouping". No, these were to a considerable degree principled and established differences of opinion between very different social-political tendencies among which a battle was being fought in real earnest. Even so, without in any way lapsing into idyllic euphoria, it may be affirmed that not one of these tendencies was at that time representative of an opposition. There was no political opposition in the country, since there were no grounds for one. In effect, the likelihood of one appearing was ruled out by the possibility of open self-expression for virtually every trend of thought able to count on widespread public support.

The state of affairs that came about in the second half of the 60s was another matter, when the line of the 20th to 22nd Party Congresses proved to have been phased out and the movement of social thought that this line had called into being, proved undesirable. As a river tries to burst a dam, so the democratic movement, blocked and arrested in its course, was inevitably bound to become an opposition. And an opposition it became.

Needless to say, not the whole movement. Its conservative wing could only rejoice at the changes that had taken place: even earlier, it had tried to narrow the front, to modify the harsh criticism of Stalin and to reduce to a minimum the transformations in the system of leadership that he had created. After all, it was their attitudes that had now acquired the force of an official ideological platform (although out of tactical considerations, the latter considered it useful to portray itself as a "centrist" and sometimes even to distance itself, as it were, somewhat from Stalinist extremes). Nor did the conformist "silent majority" change into an opposition, being ready, because of its ideological spinelessness and moral laxity, to accommodate itself to any policy if, as far as its daily material welfare was concerned, that policy allowed of adaptation one way or another. But the more vital, socially active and responsible members of the intelligentsia and society on the whole, those who did not just support the course of the 20th Congress toward democratic transformation in the social structure but, to rephrase Mayakovsky, could say,

“my democratization”,⁹ lived by that course, associated with it their own hopes and socialist ideals, wanting to see it as full, consistent and radical as possible, and did their best to facilitate it. These elements of society were, under the changed conditions, effectively doomed to be an opposition, for they simply had no choice.

A sad and dramatic page in our history is the way in which that part—and, we stress, the best part—of the democratic movement of that time became an opposition movement, while the energy of positive social reformation was converted into the energy of protest. For many people, it led to a loss of faith in socialism; ruined lives befell most of those who were debarred from directly and openly voicing their disagreement with the new official line and were driven to illegal forms of political self-expression. Some had to say goodbye to their homeland, others to endure punishment “according to all the severity of the law”. It is not a matter of freeing them from responsibility after the event for any of their specific actions, even though these were evoked by the conditions and logic of the struggle; that is an individual moral and judicial problem in each separate case. But the responsibility of the other side must be admitted without hesitation. The responsibility of those who turned that law against democracy, which is socialist under our conditions. The responsibility of those who were themselves the source and, in judicial and moral terms, the culprits in the rise of a political opposition in our country.

It may be said that those who lit the fire were the ones who put it out; those who started an opposition (as an unavoidable price to pay for changing the political course), were the ones who fairly quickly (and also bloodlessly!) eliminated it.

This is true, as is also true that much energy and inventiveness was shown in carrying out the above-mentioned operation. But first let us recall once again that these virtues would not have been needed if the people who skilfully and methodically eradicated “dissidence” had not themselves created it in the first place. Secondly, and this is the most important, the victory under discussion proved so costly for the country in the near historical prospect that it may be considered equivalent to a crushing defeat.

The goal had been fully achieved. The intelligentsia stopped raging and making trouble by writing other than what was expected of them, by petitioning and by protesting. The required silence reigned. Not total and not literal, of course: novels and

films came out, the press more or less successfully created an impression of variety and conflicting critical views and of urgent problems being discussed. But this struggle was taking place within a predetermined framework and was leading up to a foregone conclusion: problems were discussed with the stipulation that the real roots of the evil should not be touched. It was a game, word-spinning, admixture of deception and self-deception. And so, after a decade and a half of this life came the now truly terrifying economic consequences, about which enough has already been said, and perhaps even more serious moral and spiritual ones. We still have to assess them properly. A society apparently deprived of its intelligentsia, which means not just people of certain professions, but what they had always been in Russia since the times of Fonvizin and Radishchev¹⁰ – the brains and conscience of the nation. A society in which the dominant psychological type was now the indifferent person, not really interested in anything, glib enough with words, but not experiencing anything too deeply, having lost the ability to feel shame and contempt, working without joy and at half strength; the person in whom, together with a catastrophic dissipation of civic feelings, even the personal ones have somehow faded and withered away. A society needing the present perestroika for its own salvation, but which has yet to prove seriously its capacity for it...

The fault of a policy that provoked a clash between the democratic movement and the authorities was, in this way, many times worsened by the chosen means of resolving that conflict.

All this was directly relevant to *Novy Mir* and to Tvardovsky's *By Right of Memory*.

If we remain within the limits of that same line of reasoning, then as a magazine that more and more openly and consciously opposed the official ideological line (while the official line itself, in its turn, became more specific and showed itself in its true colors), *Novy Mir* of the second half of the 60s was objectively a magazine of the opposition. This was in no way hampered by the circumstance that Tvardovsky himself considered his a strictly Party magazine, and indeed it stayed that way – a Party magazine in the spirit of the 20th Congress, in that it independently but consistently reflected the democratic trend in socialism. For, under the changed conditions, *that* kind of Party spirit was definitely not to the liking of the authorities, since loyalty to it was expressed by disobedience and protest.

In this respect, as the main organ of the democratic opposition of the 60s, *Novy Mir* was unique in Soviet journalism. Its peculiarity consisted in that it was, first, a legitimate magazine and, moreover, in that it clearly and openly declared its program. (However paradoxical this may sound, it was in a sense even more legitimate than publications expressing the prevailing system of views and, without exception, compelled to avoid calling things by their real names, camouflaging the change of course that had taken place and pretending that no restoration of practices rejected by the people was underway.) Secondly, it was an organ of the *socialist* opposition, proceeding from the ideal of socialism that was capable of democratization, open to democratic self-development. This was a standpoint internally durable. Of course, it could be criticized from the most varied viewpoints, and it would be unwise to dismiss any criticism. However, its reserves of durability proved so great that even today, twenty years later, in our hopes of perestroika we are, after all, living precisely by that ideal, that ideal alone.

An opposition magazine in Soviet history? How should one treat this? Above all, as a fact which, like every historical fact, must be acknowledged and understood. Understood in its origin and in its specific social content. And then to evaluate it according to its true historical significance, its place in relation to the general perspective of human progress. As applied to this case, our evaluation proves to be directly dependent on how we understand the course of Soviet society's development over the last thirty years. Will we acknowledge that sharp turn made by the 20th Party Congress as a benefit to the country, to the lives of the people and to socialism? Will we, moreover, admit that the subsequent development of our society was not a smooth step-by-step ascent? Not only in the sense that there were "individual" hitches and contradictions, but in the sense of movement—at a definite stage—on the principle of one step forward, two steps back, an about-turn and then a long disintegrating period of stagnation? If we acknowledge this—and it is impossible not to acknowledge it today—then, with due account of all that has been said above on the proposed question, there is only one answer: it will be unquestionably in favor of Tvardovsky and his magazine.

There are occasions when the public figure, if a true citizen and patriot, is forced to go against the current, against the majority. And what come? In his solitude, he weighs more on the scales of history than the whole crowd of his opponents and

enemies. That is precisely how it was with Tvardovsky the Editor and leading public figure of our times. Lenin once put it excellently about the publisher of *Kolokol* (The Bell) who, at the time of the uprising in Poland, resolutely sided with the insurgents, thus even breaking with most of his former allies: "Herzen has saved the honor of Russian democracy."¹¹ These words are likewise applicable to the man who under entirely different historical circumstances, but in approximately the same way, saved the honor of our intelligentsia and of Russian democracy in the Soviet 60s.

Let us add in conclusion that if Tvardovsky's *Novy Mir* is a glorious page in the history of Soviet journalism, the last five years of its existence were that magazine's best period, its time of suffering, but also its time of glory. Never was its importance so great, above all its morally corrective importance. It was not just in printing only outstanding works, although most of what was best in our literature of that time came to the reader on its pages. It was the magazine's incorruptibility, its faithfulness to the truth and its loyalty to itself. By its example, the magazine seemed to be saying: so it is possible not to betray one's human dignity, one can hold out! In this sense, any story or review published in *Novy Mir* and, for that reason, read with sympathy and eagerness, was often superior in significance to more fundamental publications of former or subsequent times. And the more alone that magazine remained in its struggle, the more thickly the clouds gathered overhead, the stronger became its social effect and authority.

Is there not a contradiction here with what was said earlier? We have praised the post-Stalin period as a time when there was democratic variety of opinion in the country but there was no political opposition, and we have condemned those who evoked its appearance by changing course. And we praise *Novy Mir* nevertheless precisely for its courage in opposing, that is, for taking a stance in opposition. Just so, but this merely says that the truth is concrete...

However, since we do not consider ourselves entitled to avoid participation in the controversy: "Party line or in opposition?", and using the appropriate terminology to clarify our thoughts, we do not consider it altogether successful. "In opposition" is too general a term and therefore inexact. It would be more accurate, in our view, to say that the first half of the 60s was a time of sharp struggle between two tendencies in socialism: the bureaucratic-conservative and the democratic.

And as the organization of public forgetfulness became widely used as an instrument for the restoration of bureaucracy, so *memory* became a weapon of resistance to it. The principal organ of this historical memory that refused to submit to compulsory mercy killing or curtailment was Tvardovsky's *Novy Mir*, for which his last long poem was destined.

Eloquently and determinedly entitled *By Right of Memory*, the poem was born as an act of resistance, as a continuation of the struggle which its author and the magazine he ran were waging against the advancing trend towards restoration. It was not a matter of Stalin here, and of a desire to "finish saying" something about him to complete the picture; it was a matter of those who, in their own selfish interests, were ready to burn incense to the same "god". They are the target of the poet's angry words:

*And as for you, who now contrive
To bring us back the old abundance...*

The readers' perception of the poem was special. In 1969, when it was finished and sent to press, it spoke about what everybody still knew quite well:

*(But as for the undedicated,
There are none. Where can they be found?),*

but about which they had been stubbornly silent for many years. And with its whole content, the poem shattered that silence and attacked the organizers.

It attacked above all by *reminding*.

To what was said here about Stalin, there was, indeed, only one aspect, but an extremely important one that no one before Tvardovsky had ever significantly touched on before: the theme of father and son is examined from many angles, the theme of the son's responsibility for the father, the real father, by blood, and the symbolically named "father of the peoples". (This motif, central to the poem and most essential for the contemporary consciousness, is an original and summary contribution by Tvardovsky to the theme of Stalin and demands an article to itself.) But as he unfolds his basic theme the poet was, in the course of its development, also unrolling a scroll, as it were, on which he recorded the evil doings associated with the name of the "universal father". The fate of the peasantry,

broken by the “Great Change”. The fates of whole peoples “flung into banishment”. And those, who had to pay doubly for the Commander-in-Chief’s miscalculations: “*From prison to prison, while victory thundered, Proceeding with a double brand.*” And countless other destroyed and broken human lives, when

*...Outside the limit of the law,
All are made one by destiny:
Son of kulak, of commissar,
Of priest, of army C-in-C...*

*From birth, the stigma singled out
The babe-in-arms of enemy breed;
Not enough sons, it seemed, were branded
To gratify their country’s need.*

All this had the ring of a double accusation: against the one who committed these dastardly crimes, and against those now trying to obliterate the memory of them. Yes, from the first line to the last, the concluding part of Tvardovsky’s triptych “On Memory” hammered directly and solely at the zealots of oblivion and silence.

The poem is crowded with realistic details of that period. That “they *order* to forget”. And that at the same time “they ordered *tacitly*”: never aloud, but solely in the language of gestures or behind those office doors described in another poem by Tvardovsky,

*They are massive, one and all,
With high-grade sound-proofing.
Each stands out beyond the wall
Like an upright coffin.*

And the reference to the “Chinese model”, highly significant at that time, when the “cultural revolution” was raging in China, their version of our 1937...

The voice of the editor of *Novy Mir* is in every stanza; as is the poetic concentrate of those controversies which the magazine conducted on its pages, and its editor – within the walls of the above-mentioned offices, defending literature’s right and obligation to tell the truth. And how that voice thunders! Not with rhetorical eloquence, but with firmness and the triumph of the truth:

*No, all the things once left unuttered
Our duty bids must now be said.
Your curious Komsomolka-daughter
Will think your censor off his head...*

*And who banned grown-ups from perusing
The pages from a foreign press?
Or will our honor thus be tarnished,
Our glory be one whit the less?*

The poet's scathing sarcasm completely demolishes the sanctimonious arguments ("by announcing about the past aloud, we only gladden the foe", etc.) such as were habitually used by the "silencers" of that time (for want of other arguments, they are sometimes repeated by today's silencers too: as it happens, they are much the same people). And the conclusion:

*One falsehood is a loss to us,
And only truth can be accepted!*

And a general diagnosis for the "silencers" themselves, the striking accuracy of which is confirmed by all our subsequent development, or rather stagnation.

*Who zealously conceals the past
Will hardly get on with the future...*

One can imagine with what a storm this poem would have burst on the readers had it been published in 1969! When the force of the impact would have been multiplied not only by the nationwide authority of the country's first poet and one of its truly great men, who only acknowledged one authority, his own conscience, but also by the receptivity of the reader who had been waiting only too long for an honest, direct word about what had been troubling and outraging him. One can imagine what a shaking-up that little poem would have given to human souls that were already beginning to become accustomed to the relaxing idea of the all-permissiveness enjoyed by those in power and about their own impotence, and were already beginning to sink in the moral swamp from which we are now trying to drag ourselves by our own boot-straps. And how much it would have hampered the task of the "silencers", pushing us over into that swamp step by step.

But that was why they couldn't allow it.

I have before me several, alas, scattered sheets of paper dating back to the spring and summer of 1969—progress reports on the preparations for current numbers of *Novy Mir*. They were carefully made out every day with great meticulousness by the managing editor, N.P. Bianki and were distributed to all the editorial staff, of whom I was then a member. Together with drafts of the contents of the numbers (and in many cases there were two or more, since items held up by the Chief Censorship (Glavlit) sometimes had to be replaced with something else and the numbers were sometimes replanned many times), these reports make it possible to trace the magazine history of the poem.

On 23 April 1969, the poem was received in the editorial office and sent to press for the already typeset fifth number (report of 24 April). By the 30th of April, the editorial office had already received not only the first but the second proofs of the poem. However there was no permission from Glavlit (nor had there been a refusal, much less a motivated one—a situation not infrequent in the magazine at that time). In order not to hold up the number, the editorial board transferred the poem to No. 6. The same picture: weeks, months, and no permission. Finally, in a report dated 8 July: “Tvardovsky’s poem to be replaced by the verse of Zlotnikov, Aibek and African poets.” The poem was carried forward to No. 8, but with the same result. Tvardovsky put up a fight, insisting to the Secretariat of the Board of Writers’ Union on the poem being discussed by fellow writers, but his words were wasted on thin air. Meanwhile, the poem had begun to be passed from hand to hand and copied down. Finally, without the author knowing, it was published abroad. This was to be exploited as a means of moral pressure on the intractable editor, but it did not speed up the appearance of the poem in the Soviet press.

Finally, publication 18 years later... A contemporary critic (singing the glories of perestroika, the times, “when from the high Party rostrum it was acknowledged that the cornerstones of our socialist democracy had been subjected to marked corrosion in the past”), explained the reason for the delay as follows: “The particular drama of the situation that arose in connection with the plan of the poem *By Right of Memory* ... was also in that public awareness at that time was not ready to accept such a work. That is why the poem only saw the light twenty years after it had been finished by the poet... Today, it is not hard to imagine how painfully Tvardovsky felt the at-

mosphere when he was a ‘precursor’, as the Futurist poets used to call themselves.” So that, as it turned out, was the crux of the matter. Public awareness was not yet ready; it is characteristic of real talent to be ahead of its time, whereas all other people—“we were, unfortunately, a long way from being aware of this corrosion”. But now we have matured properly in the most natural way, and from the high rostrums something has been clarified for us—and so this is when (only now!) Tvardovsky’s poem’s real time has come. It is somewhat sad, of course, that the poet himself was not able ... etc., but no one is to blame now, as no one was to blame 20 and 10 years ago...

What are we to say about similar sadly reassuring explanations (very typical, of course, of the present conditions for certain of the “old cadres”)? In the light of what we have said above, it is hardly necessary to say anything. We will merely note that the “old, but ominous weapon”, evidently even today pricks and stings too much, if it has to be dealt with, for one’s own safety.

What matters most, however, is not how the poem *By Right of Memory* (and many other publications only yesterday still banned) were received by the “old cadres”. Their concerns are understandable and present no problem. The present problem is this: to you, “not of my generation”, the youth of today, is this work close and necessary? Or is it already mere history to you, “pages of the distant past”, so that between them and your life you see no essential connection?

All the foregoing is an explanation of Tvardovsky’s poem as a work of our 1960s. That era has remained as if behind a glass wall: so near and yet so far, and no voice have reached us from there. Then, suddenly—a voice, and another voice like it breaking the deep silence. To appreciate them, we must retune our no longer accustomed hearing; if we are to enter with them into a dialogue across the years, we need to remember and understand their forgotten, closed time. But it is important also to feel a need for such a dialogue. After all, the past is valuable to us not just for itself, but rather as a concentration of experience necessary today and tomorrow. So where is the “formula” for such a necessity in relation to Tvardovsky’s poem about Stalin? Can this work, written a long time ago and, above all, in special circumstances already cancelled by the course of events, somehow be of great service to us in our present period of change?

We will, for the time being, end with that question.

1987

SO WHAT CAN WE DO ?

**“Let’s ask more of ourselves,
not just of society,
which is making steady progress
towards change.”**

Alexei Simonov



Kirill Lavrov (b. 1925): actor, Chairman of the USSR Theatrical Union. Since 1955 he has been a member of Leningrad's Big Drama Theater company. In addition to his stage work, Lavrov has starred in numerous films, including *The Living and the Dead* (1964), *The Karamazov Brothers* (1969), *My Tender and Affectionate Beast* (1978) and *A Trip to Another City* (1980).

So What Can We Do?

I can easily imagine an actor or actress from one of the country's six hundred and thirty professional state theaters asking me one of the typical questions that theater people pose today, "So what has changed now that the Theater Union has been set up? Everything seems to be just like it was."

I too ask myself whether anything has changed at all. Then I ask myself a second question, "What in fact should have changed?" And then I pose a third question to my imaginary audience, "And what have you, yes, you personally, done to effect change?"

Alas, my imaginary audience has a ready-made answer, one known to me since childhood, "And what can we do?"

Strange as it may seem, this dialogue, which is not really a fantasy at all, reflects the gist of our problems. That is why I shall present what is to follow according to the pattern the dialogue suggests.

Well, what should have changed? If we look at it seriously, the entire structure of the theater industry in the Soviet Union. The accepted model of permanent companies, which has not changed for more than fifty years, and has been the same for all parts of the country, regardless of their cultural and historical traditions and demographic peculiarities, has become hopelessly outdated. To use medical terminology, its spine has become rigid and lost the ability for continuous revitalization. This rigidity hampers blood circulation, if you will. The generation of new artistic ideas has slowed down. Moreover, the uniform theatrical model in question actually im-

pedes the adoption of alternative forms of theatrical art that have stood the test of historical experience.

For decades we have lacked a legalized mechanism through which new theaters could emerge. The practice of theatrical studios with like-minded people clustering around a talented leader did not fit into the existing system. Theaters were organized “from above” by decree. The chief director would be appointed and the company would be formed by getting individual actors from various places. Thereby, built into the very foundation of the emerging collective was a terrible centrifugal force which, at some point, was bound to make itself felt. Currently, to cite an example, it is manifesting itself in the many conflicts between chief directors and actors that have almost become typical, and in the dramatically decreasing number of people among whom leaders could be selected through the natural process of theatrical life. It has become obvious that the explosive material has been accumulating over the years; understandably, the context of glasnost and democratization brought the morbid phenomena in sharp focus.

At the same time, we have never had a mechanism for the legitimate cessation of theaters’ operation upon the exhaustion of their creative potential. In fact, such exhaustion is evident and accompanied by a disastrous decline of the public’s interest in the theater. What is the use of concealing the bitter fact that over the recent years theater attendance throughout the country has been on a descent.

Meanwhile, dramatic schools and colleges, no matter whether their faculty is highly professional or not, continued to graduate actors regardless of the theaters’ need for them. This gave rise to disbalance and disproportion. Republican and many district theater companies were swelling up. From season to season, scores of actors failed to get new parts. There emerged Leviathan-size, administratively and artistically unmanageable companies. The whole story of the conflict at the Moscow Arts Theater and the latter’s split¹ is a consequence of this unnatural process.

Honestly speaking, apart from concealed unemployment among the actors, there is also overt joblessness. And not only among actors, but also, strange as it may seem, among directors. There is shortage of “leader” directors. We have stage directors. However, the theater folk know that “stage director” and “chief director” are different professions. One is trained

to become the former, provided one has enough ability. As for the latter, one has to be born that way.

Today hundreds of actors and many directors have to be content with odd jobs with radio and television and must frequently relocate. But even these temporary jobs are in short supply and certified actors often have to learn a new profession. By no means are all of them people without talent. That is simply bad luck...

And now we have to mention yet another important mechanism that our theater business lacks. There is no well-adjusted mechanism that could provide for a quick and, more importantly, timely change of job. In general, we do not train our young people to be aware of the immutable fact that a job in the arts always involves risk. To become an actor, director, or playwright means to commit oneself to a life-long contest. In the theater, no one is guaranteed employment according to his or her training. No one and nothing can help—neither a degree, nor the administration supervising a given medium, not even the Theater Union. Young people looking for a job in the theater are not psychologically ready to accept that. Something should be done about this. I don't think we were right in rejecting the legal concept of "freelancing" in the arts. The right to work is guaranteed by the Constitution. Unfortunately, however, many young people suppose that if they fail to get a job with the theater and with the theater alone their constitutional right is violated. They file complaints and look for those to blame with persistence worthy of better application... In our business personal dramas are inevitable. However, it is our duty to minimize their number. The natural process of a theater's emergence "from below" and vast opportunities for drama studios to develop are the most effective vehicles whereby would-be actors' abilities are revealed and publicly tested.

There is still another matter to discuss here—the material status of the theaters. In my view their present condition is inadmissible, especially as far as municipal and regional theaters are concerned. Over the past thirty years quite a few new theaters have been built. But look at their equipment and facilities! They are outdated, if not physically, then morally. Scenery storage rooms are either not available at all or are unsuitable. The scarcity of space provided for dressing-rooms and actors' lounges is indicative of the lack of respect for the main figure in the theater, the man on stage, the one who literally devotes himself to art. As a rule, a theater's transport-

ation equipment is poor and inadequate. Repair and maintenance are always a problem. Things are still worse with the provision of basic comforts to a troupe on innumerable tours that have become a must for most companies. They have to travel hundreds of miles away from the "home theater". Only their love for their calling and their professional commitment compel actors to go on tour under such conditions.

But this is not the main point either. According to an old saying, "Where there is an actor and a mat, there is a theater." But how does this actor live, and what sort of "mat" does he have—that is the question. Actors' wages are among the lowest in the country. To call a spade a spade, the average take-home pay is shamefully low. Actors joke that those able to drive people to heaven or hell will never make as much money as a bus-driver. Actors' wage-rates are so minutely graduated that it is hard to make sense of them.

As for the "mat", or the actors' living conditions, everyone in the theater knows how hard it is for an actor to get an apartment. I cannot understand why, with all the programs for large-scale housing construction, republican or regional theater cannot have an apartment house of its own to accommodate from 60 to 70 actors' families. This could provide for a mechanism ensuring a dynamic renewal of theater companies. The resolution adopted by the USSR Council of Ministers on May 5, 1987, speaks of building houses for theater workers with the expenses partially borne by the Theater Union. We have the Union and we have the funds, but local administration and Party bodies are in no hurry to implement the government resolution, as if it were not their responsibility.

To talk straight business, I think it just to pay actors and directors more when they take work in outlying districts than in the capital cities. Today our policy is exactly the opposite. The smaller the town and the farther away it is from large theatrical centers, the higher the actors' pay should be. Firstly, this would be fair because in the capital and larger cities, actors have various means of earning extra money (in radio, television or cinema) and second, this would stimulate young actors (and not only young ones, for that matter) to seek work in the provinces and gain experience through meaningful and intensive work. Everyone knows that many prominent and great actors started in the provinces and achieved maturity there. This will certainly necessitate the removal of meaningless restrictions on residential registration and on reserving one's place

of residence during one's absence. The actor must have the opportunity to work in the provinces as long as he needs to, and then to return to his original location, as he sees fit. He's a freelance, isn't he? His freedom means nothing more but his right to choose a company to work with, no more and no less! In the resolution mentioned above, the actors' and directors' right to have their homes reserved for them during their absence is legitimized, but in practice... And here I appeal to Party and Soviet leaders: Dear comrades, if you are not indifferent to the fate of the Soviet theater, please study the resolution carefully!

It goes without saying that there have been and will be remarkable talents and wonderful productions. But let's not console ourselves with the refrain from an old comic poem, "as far as the ballet goes, we lead the world". But experience shows that we are hardly leading, and in some areas we are even lagging. Let's compare our present level with the heights the theater reached under Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, Diky, Okhlopkov, Lobanov, Marjanishvili, Akhmetely and Smilgis, with the skill of the great actors, with the productions by Brecht, Brooke, Streller, Bergman and Steinah. We must do our utmost to restore to our country the title of theatrical center of the world. A lower goal does not befit us. All this is the responsibility of the USSR Theater Union, which comprises fifteen republican unions. Moreover, people throughout the world expect us to do this. I have just returned from a trip to the United States. I was happy to see and feel on every corner that Mikhail Gorbachev's historic visit made a great impression on the American people. They want to communicate and cooperate with us. We have concluded a number of agreements with theatrical organizations there. Meeting with the representatives of the American theatrical world was a sign of the strong political impetus provided to the cultural sphere by the USSR-US summit. I must say that the reputation of the Soviet theater is still high. And once again, I felt the difference between the role the theater plays in our country and overseas.

While in the States the theater is orientated on the show business, with us, for all our deficiencies, it remains a means of self-expression for the national spirit...

In our Rules there is a remarkable paragraph that reflects the tendency towards the introduction and development of self-management. It says that we, "along with" and "together

with” the bodies under the Ministry of Culture are fully responsible for the state and evolution of theatrical art. How is this provision implemented? How can we ensure that rank-and-file actors in every theater, regardless of its location, feel, as soon as possible, that changes are occurring in their life and work? Let me identify two obstacles which, to judge from the experience of the first year of the Union’s existence, are most difficult to surpass.

Today, after the 27th Congress and the Plenary Meetings of the CPSU Central Committee of the past few years, everyone knows about the harm done not only to culture, but to entire socialist construction by the so-called residual principle of funding the social and cultural spheres. Indifference shown to the actual life of our working people resulted in the growing social apathy, various social diseases and declining labour productivity. This residual principle has captured, however, the minds of the managerial personnel and some of the staff at Soviet, Party and economic bodies.

This is manifested in the incompetence which has almost become something they are proud of. This is seen in the administration by decree practiced locally in the arts area, theaters included, which is dominated by poorly educated people whose primitive taste is passed for the “opinion of the Party”. The whims and ambitions of a person in charge result in an avalanche of prohibitions because many of those responsible for cultural affairs are simply ignorant about other methods. For such people—and there are, I repeat, a great number of them still—the very emergence of our new union as a theatrical self-management body is a blow or, at times, a short-lived “game” which, they hope, will soon come to an end.

It is easy for us to find a common language with higher Party bodies. We are probing for contacts with the leaders of the Ministry of Culture, and many of the mutual preconceptions have already been eliminated. But locally much has remained unchanged.

Moreover, I should say that various departments (I shall not list them here) are bent on interpreting our various rights and benefits as an encroachment on their rights. When faced with such an approach I cannot help thinking that we still have many people who are indifferent to culture and are unable to see beyond their desks. Too many of such people are put in charge of none other area but the arts.

Another no less powerful “mechanism” is our own apathy

with respect to social affairs and our deep-rooted feeling that the public cannot effect change. This is coupled with inordinate concentration on people's own egos. During a recent plenary meeting of the Board of one of the republican Unions I was shocked by the atmosphere of petty squabbling. Everyone was fighting for a role in a show and trying to secure a position in his or her company. Alas, not many of us in the Theater Union have proved to be public figures. Besides, paradoxically enough, it is not the generation of the 1970s and early 1980s that is today showing the greatest vigor and commitment to perestroika and its ideals, but rather the older generation, who were bursting with enthusiasm to effect society's renewal in the sixties after the 20th Party Congress. But unless all of us take control of our own fates and the fate of Soviet theater, instead of continuing to wait for a change "from above" and regarding our own Union as one more authoritative body, we shall not achieve anything.

Yet when I am asked, "Has anything changed?", I say, "Yes, and quite a lot at that." The atmosphere or, if you will, the very style of theatrical life has changed. There is a marked invigoration of theatrical ties between the republics. The current nationwide event "Theater and Time" is being contributed to, in one way or another, by hundreds of productions and thousands of actors and directors throughout the country. Discussions and symposia have involved hundreds of spectators and practically all theater critics, including young ones. The first ever review of musical theaters was held. The USSR Theater Union, together with republican Unions, above all, those in Russia, Georgia, the Ukraine, Lithuania and Byelorussia, proved capable of carrying out this enormous event conjointly with the ministries of culture. We have taken stock, so to speak, of our creative potential. Our goal was to shake up the theater world by this event, because all of us know that festivity lies at the socio-psychological basis of theater. One of the highlights of this event was the opening of the Friendship Theater in Moscow. Many of the plays brought from various parts of the country and staged there were very successful. This improved the circulation of blood in the veins of Soviet theater. We have become witnesses to many remarkable successes. Among them, for instance, were Dushanbe's Hashiv Godoyev in the role of Oedipus Rex, the Yakutian Theater, which has won the hearts of the nation's audiences, and the theater formed around the School of Dramatic Art under Anatoly Vasilyev,

which has gained international acclaim... It is our duty to re-structure the theatrical mechanism in such a way that it should react to the sudden (and it is always sudden!) appearance of remarkable talents promptly and without much administrative red-tape!

We are nearing the completion of the experiment which is now being carried out within the theater management and self-management system. A large-scale representative conference has recently been held in Rostov-on-Don to discuss the experiment's progress and to work out recommendations for the upcoming theater reform. We expect a resolution on the state theatrical enterprise to be adopted soon. This will enhance our potentialities for advancement and renewal. But if we are passive, these potentialities will remain mere potentialities. Therefore, my answer to the question, "And what can we do?" is "We can do a lot, if not everything." Moreover, we should bear in mind, as our national genius Tolstoy rightly said, that complacency is a "meanness of soul".

1987



Eldar Ryazanov (b. 1927): film director, scenarist and playwright. In 1956 he directed his first feature, *Carnival Night*. Next came musical comedies—*The Girl Without an Address*, *A Hussar Ballad* and others. Since 1966 Ryazanov has written the scenarios of his films with Emil Braginsky. The result is a unique genre of comic prose for the cinema—*Watch out for Cars* (1966), *Senior Citizen Thieves* (1972), *Fate's Strange Ways, or After the Banyan* (1975), *A Business Romance* (1977), *The Garage* (1980), *A Station for Two* (1983) and *A Forgotten Tune for the Flute* (1987). He is the winner of the USSR and Russian Federation state prizes as well as international awards.

Why Did I Leave Television in the Era of Glasnost?

I am unendingly grateful to the Lumière brothers. They invented the cinematography, and thanks to them I have a profession I love. I must vigorously express my appreciation to the inventors of television. Thanks to them I began to be known by sight, something that does not usually happen to film directors. So it's obvious that I adore television! Oh, television! The pull, the lure, the enticement! Just one show can make a hitherto unknown face recognizable and even as familiar as a brother's or sister's to millions upon millions. There is not a single person who has never dreamed of being on television, making his mark, gaining popularity, becoming a TV star. And if anyone says that he does not want to appear on television, don't believe him. More likely than not he is a hypocrite! In short, television is the lord of our age. Its might is unlimited, irresistible and invincible. Moreover television is perfectly well aware of its might, its omnipotence and thus its impunity. But after all, the more limitless a potentate's power the more impeccable his conduct should be, whether he is an individual

or an organization. In ruling, he must display delicacy, modesty, culture, even a certain bashfulness, fine manners and infallible courtesy. Then intelligence and virtue will immediately be manifest, and again it is unimportant whether they are institutional or personal.

In the Brezhnev days Central Television turned into a special kind of empire which applied its whole being, its gigantic staff and all its modern, foreign-made equipment, towards pleasing one man, catering to his tastes, views and predilections. I remember once being in the office of the first vice-chairman of the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting (Gosteleradio) on some business when a question of vast importance was being discussed. The Gordian knot it presented was being unravelled with the help of seven or so people from the programming department. The problem was that two football games being played by top teams in different cities had been scheduled for the same hour. No one knew which of the games one fan by the name of Brezhnev would want to watch. What if he wanted to watch both? And they were being shown at the same time! What then?! Call and ask him which game he preferred? For some reason that idea never occurred to anybody. But then, it's clear why. When these penetrating minds were unable to come up with any solution, the first vice-chairman called the secretary of the regional Party committee in Voroshilovgrad where the match being played by Zarya was to take place. The first vice-chairman asked the secretary of the Party committee to reschedule the game. Of course, the first vice-chairman realized that the tickets to the game had already been sold. But the reason for rescheduling it was so very compelling, so important. And he explained what the reason was! The secretary of the Party committee recognized the significance of the motivation and rescheduled the game. So the Fan was not faced with any dilemma over which game to watch.

I could write a whole book about my own experiences in those years, working on *Film Panorama*, making films and doing various television programs. And I think I will! But a few stories won't wait. I remember how Gosteleradio rejected the script of *A Kind Word for the Poor Hussar* literally two weeks before shooting was to begin. In the script Grigory Gorin and I had written the villain, Major Merzlyaev, worked for the notorious "Third Department". The script had already been approved, but the higher-ups at Central Television

nevertheless suddenly demanded that Merzlyaev be made a civilian so as “not to blacken”(!) the reputation of that organization. Good Lord! Would it ever have crossed the mind of Alexander Benkendorf, chief of the gendarme corps, that in one hundred and fifty years’ time the honor of his department would be defended by the Party members in charge of Soviet television? Of course, the executives were not concerned with whitewashing the “Secret Office” of Nicholas I. They were scared to death of giving pain to something contemporary. The television people drew very strange parallels. The reasoning was unbelievable! An obliging fool really is more dangerous than an enemy. If you think about it, the unscrupulousness of these people in “playing it safe” knew no bounds...

The other side had the advantage. In the film Merzlyaev did not serve in the “Third Department”. We were forced to make him a civilian, a senior councillor of state, a provocateur not by obligation, but by inspiration, by calling.

On the eve of *Hussar*’s television premiere – December 31, 1980, – two cuts were made in the finished film, naturally without my knowledge. On that occasion the man then chairman of Gosteleradio made an unforgettable statement: “Don’t tell Ryazanov. There’s no reason to spoil his New Year’s.” The fact that on the next day, January 1, I might keel over with a heart attack while watching the film did not occur to the considerate minister.

In those days television was not an exception to the rule. In the cinema, theater, publishing houses and the art world the same kind of bureaucratic demagoguery and license reigned...

New times are here at last, long awaited, cleansing, promising, salutary times. Although there are still many unresolved problems, the situation in the film industry has nevertheless become healthier: films once under lock and key are being shown; provocative, interesting scripts are being filmed; we, ourselves, are approving completed pictures without expurgations or cuts. Paradoxically, it has become harder to work than before, but much more interesting. True artistic competition is now underway, and that will result in a fresher, more full-blooded, ingenious, original and truthful portrayal of reality. We no longer feel subservient to the State Film Committee (Goskino). We are fighting for the rights of filmmakers, and hope that our authorship will be protected by the new copyright law. I am convinced that our cinema is starting to recover from a crisis thanks to the joint efforts of Goskino and the Filmmakers’ Union.

Television has undergone change, too, of course. Interesting new programs have appeared, live shows are being produced, and once in a rare while you can even hear something provocative being said. Spontaneity, once unthinkable, has become the hallmark of many shows. There are television broadcasts not only before, but after midnight. In short, quite a few outward signs of renewal are evident. But in one respect this powerful medium remains unchanged: its aim is often to please. Sadly, not the nation, though. I hope the reader will forgive me for drawing on my own experience. At least I know all these things not by hearsay, but because it was my own skin that was involved. And not in the dark days of stagnation, but today, when glasnost and freedom are the order of the day.

In March 1986 the program *Among Friends* was shown. It was broadcast on Saturday evening, as a light entertainment. And the people who took part in the event, filmed at the Central Concert Hall, really were my friends. They included actors Andrei Mironov, Alisa Freindlich and Oleg Basilashvili, composers Andrei Petrov and Mikael Tariverdiev, singer-songwriters Tatiana and Sergei Nikitin. We wanted to do a variety show that would amuse viewers and at the same time poke fun at all kinds of scum.

Before a program goes on the air in the European part of the country, it is shown twice on the Orbita System for the Soviet Far East and Siberia, as those regions are in different time zones. On that ill-fated Saturday afternoon I suddenly got a call from Ostankino, television headquarters, warning me: "After the program was broadcast over Orbita orders came down to cut a whole bunch of lines from Grigory Gorin's, Gennady Khazanov's, Alexander Shirvindt's and Mikhail Derzhavin's numbers." Naturally, the lines in question were caustic, satirical. I shot over to Ostankino and went into battle. I managed to save some things, others were cut by a merciless hand. This is what the result looked like: Gorin or Khazanov is performing; words are spoken signaling a joke, gag, a witticism, but the punchline itself is gone, it has been removed. And then the members of the audience are shown, laughing wildly, applauding, practically falling from their seats. And the viewer, unaware that a vivisection has occurred, is bewildered: why are they thundering their approval, when nothing funny has happened? Is this a group of half-wits who will howl at anything? Or is it the viewer who is a little slow, too dull to appreciate a joke?

Why was this funny show mutilated in such haste? I can only guess. The executives didn't have time to watch it beforehand, but then that wasn't so important – there isn't a single individual beyond the Urals they would be afraid of. So what people there, beyond the Urals, said, how they reacted did not worry the TV bosses. They watched the program while it was being shown on Orbita and, to be sure of not irritating a few viewers residing in the European part of the country, started hacking away at it.

It is noteworthy that the heads of Central Television were particularly displeased not that they had mutilated a program out of overweening caution, but that there turned out to be a "traitor" in their midst who had informed Ryazanov. "Traitors" and "spies" were indignantly spoken of at the next meeting.

The following story has to do with an appearance I made on *Before and After Midnight*. I was invited to come on the show to talk about my new film, *A Forgotten Tune for the Flute* and show a clip from it. The segment was filmed ahead of time, not broadcast live. I told the host, Vladimir Molchanov, that if my comments were edited in any way I did not want the segment to be shown at all. I had reason to fear just such an occurrence as, in line with the theme of *Flute*, I had talked about bureaucrats, about the fact that there are eighteen million of them, about the strange prejudice that if a bureaucrat does not have a black Volga but some other color he is a second-rate manager, about the special grocery orders and special hospitals and other privileges, that the bureaucracy is a ball and chain slowing the nation down as it tries to surge forward, etc. Not one word of that was in the show either before or after midnight. I do not know who cut it out, Molchanov himself or if he did it on his bosses' orders. Be that as it may, Molchanov did not call me; he did not prove to be a "spy", but he forfeited my regard. Paradoxically, all that remained in the show of my comments was the phrase, "*A Forgotten Tune for the Flute* is the first picture I have ever done that was not censored."

I am of two minds as I write this article. After all, my experiences were not uniformly bad. And the television people treated me very well, with great regard, I cannot deny it. For example, last year they showed my film *Garage* (though, on second thought, why shouldn't they?), then they gave me permission – after months of asking, it is true – to do a program on Vladimir Vysotsky (though, why did it take a whole year to push the project through?). What is more, in honor of my 60th

birthday I was given a chance to chat with a studio audience at Ostankino (not everybody is given the chance!). That is why a feeling of guilt is gnawing at me that I seem to be answering kind treatment and concern with black ingratitude. This feeling probably needs to be analyzed. Am I grateful to television for the opportunities it has given me? Without question! Very grateful! Then why is there bitterness in every line I write? Because each time joy was defiled by humiliation, because in each instance they made it so unpleasant for me that I don't even want to think about it...

The newspapers have a rule that anyone who has written an article or conducted an interview must give his written approval to any changes or omissions that are made. If he does not agree he has the right to prevent his work from being published.

And the press has to respect that. But there is nothing of the kind in television. So many times I have seen people I personally knew to be intelligent and talented come out looking shallow and at times silly. I have seen or heard sloppy edits and realized that something worthwhile, provocative, individual has been taken out. How many people have been presented in a false light or, to put it bluntly, discredited due to overcautious editing. There needs to be a protective law which states that no finished program can be shown without the approval of anyone who appears on it.

Numerous cuts were made in my meeting with the studio audience at Ostankino. Consequently, I wrote a letter to the heads of Central Television protesting against the showing of the program as it stood and stating that I did not want a censored version of my civic views to be presented to my fellow citizens. I requested that the program NOT BE SHOWN, and said that if it were not I would have no grievance against Central Television. I did not receive any answer. Several days later I took the radio and television schedule out of my mailbox and saw a listing for the program.

Let me sidetrack for a moment. Old movies are regularly shown on television. And I am all for that. But the condition they are shown in! Not long ago I saw *The Diamond Arm*, *Kidnapping Caucasian Style* and *A Hussar Ballad*. Each time the television audience fluctuated between 50 and 100 million — an incredible, huge number! And each time the copies shown were faded, scratched and had poor sound quality. Surely the television people know that with time film fades, ages, decays? What contempt this reveals for the artistic director and cine-

matographer who work to express the film's theme through composition and color. What disrespect this demonstrates for the nation, for millions of viewers. Instead of a high quality visual experience people are given a pathetic surrogate. Incidentally, it costs approximately 500 roubles to print a new copy of a film for broadcast. Surely the money could be found, so that millions of viewers could see something worth seeing? For films are a fundamentally visual experience.

But perhaps it is not disrespect that is to blame but incompetence. Sergei Kononykhin is the editor-in-chief of film entertainment. Once a figure skater, he went on to become a figure skating judge and then a sports commentator. Later he moved up into the Central Television Party committee. A distinguished post. When his term came to an end this distinguished person had to be given a job. And not just any odd job, obviously. Thus, a figure skating judge became the chief of the film entertainment department and began to judge cinematic artistry. I have no doubt that he knows perfectly well what toe dance is and how a double toe loop differs from a Kauffman jump. But I am afraid that when it comes to cinematic expression, scriptwriting skill, the unique features of cinematic language, who is who in film art and other details of our business he is less well versed. But then that's the custom...

And now one, last story about the production and televising of the four-part series on Vladimir Vysotsky. I have mentioned that I spent more than a year pushing the project through. Later, when the series was complete it lay on the shelf for seven months, waiting for the bosses to find time to look at it and make their comments. For seven months the production group waited to be favored with their attention.

Then the criticisms began—to my mind niggling, amateurish, overcautious. For three hours Sergei Kononykhin and his deputy, B. Kaplan “twisted my arm” in Kononykhin's office. I felt as though a time machine had transported me back ten years. Each time I replied, “NO! NO! NO!” The two executives ignored my angry words, though, and continued to press me. To all their objections, suggestions and coercion I replied over and over again, parrot-like: “I don't agree and will never agree. NO! NO! NO! The reels are in your hands. But if you cut this or that out, I'm warning you, it will mean war. I will write an article, 'Why I Left Television in the Era of Glasnost'! I will write a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev.” I said something to them about principles, honor, ethics... Finally I left

the office. I left as though those three hours had taken a year off my life: I was broken, crushed, destroyed.

But what are the anger and threats of a member of the arts to a bureaucrat in the face of the hypothetical displeasure and disapproval of his boss? The creator of a work cannot, say, remove a bureaucrat from his post, but the Big Boss can make Big Trouble. He might not, but better to be overcautious than incautious.

Realizing this, we watched the series carefully as it was broadcast. And it must be said that I managed to save something with my mulishness. However, the episode that was the main bone of contention was at the start of part four. The first segments had already been broadcast. Each evening I called the director and editor, and they replied, "Nothing's been cut out yet."

Nevertheless Central Television succeeded in pulling the wool over all our eyes. How was the operation to castrate the program carried out? Fearful that the director would either refuse to make the cut or inform me (for some reason I have a reputation for being a troublemaker) it was all done in secret. The head controller (that day it was Andrei Averianov) was given the order to cut seven and a half minutes from the beginning of the fourth segment. He obediently did what his bosses told him to. If only he had dared to object! That never enters anybody's head there. The broadcast of part four on Orbita 1 began literally in mid-sentence, with a subordinate clause. So that the cut wouldn't become known to the production group and thus me, during the hours the program was shown on Orbita the monitors at Ostankino were turned off. Normally, many of the Ostankino employees watch programs that are broadcast on Orbita in the afternoon, but on that day the TV screens were blank. When the members of the production group asked, "What's the matter? Why aren't the monitors working?", they were told, "Maintenance work!"

But that's enough! It just can't be that the television superpower took such precautionary measures. Against whom? I probably suffer from megalomania. That's absurd... It was probably just coincidence, and maintenance work really was being done at that time. Subsequent investigation showed, however, that the so-called maintenance work had for some reason been done exclusively in those hours when the Vysotsky program was on the air. Before and after the monitors scrupulously showed everything that was going out on Orbita.

Just two hours before the program was to be shown here, in

Moscow, one of the members of the production group learned from a chance conversation with a member of the programming department (Secret for secret! I wouldn't want any disciplinary action to be taken against the "informer") that seven and a half minutes had in fact been taken out at the start of part four. I was informed immediately, and called Sergei Kononykhin right up. Something could still be done! I repeat our conversation almost verbatim:

Ryazanov: Tell me, who gave the order for the cut and who made it?

Kononykhin: It is not a matter of specific individuals. We made the decision collegially.

Ryazanov: Why wasn't I told?

Kononykhin: We are not obliged to inform you. It is a technical matter.

Ryazanov: Who actually made the cut?

Kononykhin: We have special people to do that kind of thing.

Ryazanov: Why didn't you entrust the director with the job then? At least it would have been done accurately.

Kononykhin: Don't worry! It was done professionally.

Ryazanov: (An outpouring of emotion, shouting becoming abusive.)

Kononykhin: I refuse to speak with you if you use that tone. You know that we were told at a very high level that our programming should be responsible and balanced. That's what we're here for!

I started dialing the numbers of people higher up and each time exactly the same thing happened. First the secretary would say, "I'll put you straight through!" Then there would be a long pause. After two or three minutes of waiting I would be told, "It turns out that Ivan Ivanovich (or Pyotr Petrovich) is out of the office. Please call back later."

I could do nothing. I had lost the battle. The program went on the air without an important section which told of the fates of Gumilev, Yesenin, Mayakovsky, Mandelstam, Tsvetayeva, Pasternak and Akhmatova. To my mind the perspective it gave raised the series to a higher level, strengthened it emotionally and was its thematic core.

But matters did not end with that cut. The next morning at 9 a.m. part four was rerun. The program controller that day was Alexander Sidorin. He knew that seven and a half minutes had to be edited from the start of the program. Without bothering

to check whether the copy he had taken was cut or not, he eliminated another seven and a half minutes.

I would like to know who gave the people who occupy positions of authority the right to insult us. Who certified them greater patriots than we?

They have an amazing nose for the offbeat, unsanctioned, provocative, out of the ordinary. And their sting is directed at those very places which make a work art. Usually they say, "We cut out just a little bit, the work didn't suffer in the least..." Incidentally, you just have to cut out a very little bit to make a man a eunuch. Only for some reason he starts singing soprano.

It is insufferable to read in the newspapers that we enjoy so much freedom, censorship is gone, bold ideas are being encouraged and talent is cherished when you actually encounter difficulties, "it-will-come-to-no-goodism", servility, secrecy and all the other goods and chattel of the previous period. On more than one occasion it has seemed to me—and not just to me—that the wind of change struck the building on Korolev Street and broke up without penetrating it. The appearance of change is not change. Do we need still waters today when they conceal the undercurrents of the promotion system?

Here are my proposals:

1. It is time to get rid of the secrecy in television personnel policy. Not one appointment to a managerial position in that hierarchy should be made without the consideration and consent of the arts unions. That is the most fundamental question.

People have to be chosen openly and competitively, through an examination of their abilities and vitae. Most importantly, these posts must be filled not by bureaucrats with experience in obedience and paper-shuffling but by creative individuals with experience in the arts and modern, progressive views.

2. The copyright law should be amended to protect the rights of authors, directors and television commentators from the whims of bureaucrats and cuts motivated by personal taste or overcaution. A rule must be established which states that no material can be broadcast without the written consent of the host and guests.

3. When an old film is shown a new copy must be printed for the broadcast.

4. Commissions should be established within the arts unions to investigate disputes. Television must be divested of the privilege of sitting in secret judgment over films and programs.

Any ban should be discussed openly. There cannot be one kind of glasnost for society and another for television.

5. A cinema and video library should be set up where films and programs that have not been shown for many years for various reasons, primarily censorship, could be screened.

6. I cannot resist making a personal request: show the fourth part of the Vysotsky series complete with the first seven and a half minutes.

7. Finally, television, like the film industry, should be run by the public and the state. That means that literally everything, from the various departments' programming plans to the finished product should be discussed with the arts unions and viewers, discussed openly, may be even "live".

I understand that it is unpleasant to share power but I'm afraid it is unavoidable. Such are the times. Fine times! Fighting times!

1988



Alexei Simonov (b. 1939): film director and the translator of plays by Arthur Miller, including *The Price* (1970) and *After the Fall* (1986), stories by Irwin Shaw (1966) and the verse of Asian and African poets.

Simonov has written and directed many documentary films: *Farewell, Old Circus* (1986) and *The Studio at the Nikitskiye Gates* (1987) are just two. His feature film credits include *The Ordinary Arctic* (1969), *We'll Be Back in the Fall* (1979), *The Detachment* (1984) and *My Dearly Beloved Detective* (1986).

A Time to Confess, Not Preach

In my opinion, perestroika in the arts is stalled. Changes are not occurring either on the scale or with the speed we would wish or expect. Far from it. Even the Filmmakers' Union, to which I belong, the most uncompromisingly revolutionary of them all, is getting nowhere, drowning in a sea of words. "Who's to blame?"; we ask the magic question and, looking around, heap abuse on the holdovers of the distant and not so distant past. How loathe we are to admit the simple fact that we are the crux of the problem. To the question of who is to blame we must answer bluntly and unequivocally: we are, I am.

One of the many merits of the film *Repentance* is that it brought back into use words that had almost disappeared from our vocabulary: atonement, sin, confession. I am an atheist. It disgusts me to think that there is a higher power sitting in judgement over me, and my gratitude to the film lacks all Christian overtones.

Russian literature taught us that preaching and confessing go hand in hand. We have sworn by that great literature, and extolled it, but at some point the indivisibility of those two acts was breached. The crack gradually became a gorge, a gulf, an

abyss. How many cunning preachers walked the land of our arts, preaching anything at all except what they themselves thought, except what pained their consciences. Untapped, the pain faded.

That is why the individuals and works they created that preserved the great tradition of inner truth and the creation of art as an act of conscience were like lonely islands in the sea during the period of stagnation.

The rift has not been closed. As long as it is preserved in our hearts, in our lives, perestroika will get nowhere. Because perestroika means restoring the link between the depths of our soul, our torments of conscience, and what we do, film, write and say.

I remember how ten years ago one director literally writhed in hysterics the day before he was to start filming. He screamed that it would be impossible to do the film the way he was planning to, that he would be fired and the picture would be closed down, that it was suicide. But on the next day he started shooting and did the film exactly as he'd planned. And the picture was closed down and he was shown the door. He is one of those people who was an island. Now his pictures, which were vilified and written off as bad investments, have been taken off the shelf and are the pride of our cinema. And the director? He is silent, he is not filming. His conscience is troubling him again. He's afraid he'll join the chorus of damnation or praise, so he is listening to his own inner voice, afraid of doing violence to his soul.

Meanwhile, those of us who didn't have the courage of our convictions are vying to teach each other right from wrong. Look at us—how many games of hide-and-seek with ourselves, how many cunning omissions, how many tactical subterfuges and how much fear! We think that if a great deal has been permitted that has eliminated the thick accumulation of fear in us. Forgetting that even a crystal of fear distorts our vision, we throw ourselves into the verbal fray with ready-made truths in our hands and flog each other with them, not troubling to distinguish between the righteous and the guilty.

It seems to me that a habit we secretly laughed at in the years of stagnation has taken hold in us. Remember, if we were told on one day that such-and-such would happen, then on the next it would certainly be proclaimed that the prediction had come true, "such-and-such" had happened. Now there is a new reality, the reality of perestroika. We are under the impression that if anybody has long been ready for it, we

have, that, strictly speaking, we don't have to turn over a new leaf. Impatiently we look around and find to our indignation (a consequence of the habit of quickly changing reality on command) that everything—people, organizations, relations, reality—seems to be as it was before, the changes are insignificant and not at all in proportion to the words spoken or efforts outwardly made. In indignation some are ready to retreat into their shells while others fire off another salvo of words with even greater fervor. But the crux of the matter isn't words, or the reality around us, or others, friend or foe. We are.

It seems to me that art today does not yet have the right to preach; first it must traverse the hard road to confession. I say hard, because quite often recently in coming across sad attempts at confession in the press I have found to my surprise that the author has unintentionally turned his confession into an editorial on the subject of how to make a confession, complete with quotations, theses and examples that pave the way for others. But it doesn't work for him. We've forgotten how to confess. Or maybe we never knew. And some will never learn. New thinking probably arises not just out of new global conditions, but the rebirth of old, sadly forgotten truths. And they return most easily as imperatives. It is so much easier to say "don't lie" or "don't steal" than "I will never lie again" or "I will not touch stolen goods". The second necessitates too big an obligation. And after all, we do not have any particular reason to believe ourselves. That is why we do not like to bind ourselves with onerous pledges.

The blank spots in our history are being filled in, fewer and fewer subjects, people, organizations and truths are off limits, but we still offer our hand to the scoundrel and are not ashamed to sit at the same table with a profiteer, for we do not attach any importance to it or, if worst comes to worst, justify it by pointing to the general decline in moral standards.

Well, let's tot up what we can't live without: without freedom, without a sense of self-esteem, without truthfulness in our conversations with each other and our children? Hardly. And now how many of us can't live without the butcher or salesgirl we know, without my-friend-the-dentist or my-pal-the-car-mechanic? Those who've obtained privileges of some sort—special orders from a good store or hotel reservations without waiting—can't do without them any more. The homes and hostels of the artistic community are filled with "good people to know", and we're the ones who've taken them there or gotten them in. For

it's all we have to barter with in a society where the notorious "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" has sadly become the axiom. It is what binds and fetters us. If we were to follow Anton Chekhov's example and start squeezing the slave out of ourselves,¹ where he extracted a drop we would produce a jet. Our own smug, self-assured amnesia is, as I see it, the first barrier to perestroika. But not the only one.

I don't know about universal evil, but our domestic evil almost always does not just have a name but a surname. Simply, an acquired reticence has made us forget how to call it by both. My generation, whose childhood passed during the war and first postwar years and whose youth saw the 20th Congress, learned a sad lesson in this sense. When our relatives and their friends and acquaintances so long absent and almost or entirely unknown to us began appearing with certificates of rehabilitation each of their evils had a name and surname: the informer, the investigator, the camp commandant. It has to be said that their desire to name that evil for all to hear was strong and unequivocal then. First, to name it. As far as I can judge from the people I knew, the desire to take revenge came not even second but fourth or fifth and, moreover, quickly disappeared. How many flaps there were at the local level when someone who had returned tried to name that evil! And named it. The general trend, though, was not to do it. Stalin was named as the big evil but delving into the smaller ones was not advised, for it was more convenient and agreeable to regard both those who had been imprisoned and those who sent them there as victims, too. So, for the first time in the memory of my generation the drum head was brought together with the drumsticks (to borrow Boris Slutsky's² expression), and the problem was buried to the sound of the drumming once and for all – or so it seemed at the time. A balance was struck, as it were, between the hangmen and the victims in that national act of cleansing. I recognized that lesson in immorality for what it was much later. At the time it all seemed like individual cases of injustice. Now I see that a national confession was not made because neither those who initiated it (for they were accustomed to preaching) nor those who either accepted or rejected that inconsistency but did not dispute it had enough real inner strength. The blame rests with all of us.

The period of stagnation arose out of that – out of the incomplete cleansing, out of the violence that was done to our sense of justice. Don't we risk making the same mistake today?

At the start of this article I called my union, the Filmmakers' Union, the most revolutionary because at its Fifth Congress it went farther than others not just in naming the external and internal restraints that led to the period of stagnation, but in giving both names. Some of those people had to leave, others stayed, but stripped of protective anonymity they have been forced to stop preaching and start talking, to stop lecturing and start discussing. Where this hasn't been done people are still writing revolutionary articles urging one another to name the evil, though they just can't make up their minds to do it themselves.

We are so accustomed to reading between the lines that our attention is still often distracted from what is written in the lines. During the years of stagnation the sublime art of employing and understanding Aesopian language was like a secret sign thinking people used. It became so ingrained that instead of saying, "Ivanov is a scoundrel" we still prefer to write a whole passage where we give his place of employ, a physical description and even his shoe size rather than his name. Is it a dodge the author has used or timidity on the part of newspapers and magazines when it comes to glasnost? Probably both. Together or apart though, the result, again, is that heroes and scoundrels are lumped together in the public mind.

Therefore, I reiterate: our own biography teaches us that the anonymity of evil is the greatest menace. Not least because when evil is anonymous, it seems bigger, more formidable and harder to conquer than it actually is, and consequently our worst fears may come true in the end.

Yes, we were the victims of the stagnation. But some cashed in on it, while others beat their heads against the wall, and those small heroic acts, those cracks, invisible to the naked eye, ultimately breached the wall. We mustn't lump people together. Neither should we make ourselves into the new heroes, though. My father once said, "Every person is duty bound to batter as far into the wall as he can with his head." Being honest — let's make it a habit, not a feat but the rule, no matter what the difficulties or dangers. It saddens me even more to see articles and speeches that boldly expose individuals no longer at the helm by choice or otherwise. Oftentimes the authors prove to be people who once stood at the helm, too. But they always write about others, never themselves. These articles and speeches, entirely lacking in the confessional element, do not inspire trust even when every word in them is

true. Evidently the truth about a time or others cannot be told if the memoirist does not know the truth about himself or conceals it.

Let's recall history: the Stalin Prize became the State Prize. Fine. But to this day there are winners who could only be compared with genuine scientists and artists under Stalinist criteria. Likewise, among the winners of the Lenin Prize there are individuals whose merits were fully consistent with the circumstances that gave rise to them. I dream, not of taking the prizes away, but of reading just one letter-to-the-editor that says, "I won such-and-such a prize for an opportunistic work that..." — well, and so forth. That would do so much to clear the air. The heart would swell with pride at that truly righteous human act.

We are to blame for so much about the recent time that we do not have the right to start our lives off with a clean slate. The teacher who is given a new history textbook cannot simply walk into the classroom and say, "The old history is out, now we're going to learn the truth." His pupils won't believe him. He has a duty to his own conscience to tell them why he, personally, taught them lies before. Only then will the new, truthful history be a lesson in human and national morality.

Perestroika in the arts is stalled because of us, our inertia, our sloth, our inveterate mistrust and our fear.

What I have written is not a confession. It is just a prelude to one. But the road to the temple involves acquiring the need to confess. Let's ask more of ourselves, not just society, which is making steady progress toward good change.

And eliminate the gap between what our conscience tells us is right and what we do, by giving evil its real names and keeping in mind our own imperfection in failing thus far to scrape away the crust of inner slavery with the help of repentance and confession.

Our progress will be slow but it will be impossible to reverse.

1988



"I am certain that music, more than any other art form, can penetrate the inner recesses of the human heart and mind, the conscious and subconscious. Its effect is unpredictable. Chekhov once noted that music alone was capable of expressing the subtle charm of grief."

Vladimir Spivakov: A Conversation in the First Person

Back in the legendary days of yore when it was not impossible to get a ticket to the Conservatory I attended a concert by the Virtuosos of Rome in the Great Hall. The music of Vivaldi, which we were just discovering, was enchanting and the word "virtuosos" added to its charm.

The Virtuosos of Moscow came into our lives much later, but so naturally that they seemed to have always been around. If you are lucky enough to obtain a ticket to one of their concerts (and even the head of the orchestra has difficulties), you will agree that the ensemble has added the sparkle of genuine perfection to the concept of the virtuoso. Innumerable rave reviews both here and abroad could be cited, but all epithets run the risk of sounding excessive. One French newspaper put it best after the orchestra's most recent appearance in Paris: "Forget all the adjectives and remember what's most important — brilliant!"

At their 500th concert, held in May of this year in the Great Hall of the Conservatory, the Virtuosos of the Moscow State Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Vladimir Spivakov, People's Artist of the Russian Federation, played Mozart. So inspired and passionate a performance did they give that it seemed as though the composer had written his great music especially for the jubilee. At moments like these the soul really is cleansed, so it was strange to see the musicians chatting and smoking during the intermission, and the conductor and soloist, pale with exhaustion, looking dazed. But after the bell they once more took their places on Olympus and became the equals of the gods.

Birth

This September the orchestra will celebrate its fifth anniversary. Its progress would seem triumphal, however the pangs of its birth reflect all the difficulties society experienced half a decade ago.

There comes a time once an artist has reached creative maturity, when he feels the need to speak not just on his own behalf but on behalf of people who share his ideas. Take Pushkin, founding the journal *Sovremennik*, or Tvardovsky, editing *Novy Mir*.

A brilliant violinist, the winner of four international competitions, a conductor whom Soviet and foreign orchestras consider it an honor to play under, Vladimir Spivakov (b. 1944) made up his mind that he needed to form his own ensemble eight years ago. What he wanted to do was bring chamber music to a wide audience. Spivakov was convinced that chamber music reveals more about composer's soul than symphonic works. It is like an artist's diary. Isn't that why, for instance, the Czech composer Leoš Janaček, named his quartet *Intimate Letters*?

Spivakov did not lack for offers. After his conducting debut in America, the finest orchestra there—the Chicago Symphony Orchestra—promised to roll the red carpet right out to the plane if he would agree to head a chamber ensemble there. English and Scottish orchestras made similar offers.

But Spivakov says that only now have we come to understand a simple truth: it is better to create than prohibit; time will tell whether a new ensemble is viable. In the late 70s, though, the bureaucrats in charge of the arts found it less

bothersome to say no, for a collective represents a stance, a force in a certain sense. Those people have not disappeared: quite recently V. Grenkov, head of the USSR Ministry of Culture's external affairs office, prevented the Virtuosos from performing in Britain, where they were to open a Russian and Soviet arts festival.

But it would be wrong not to give credit to those who helped the orchestra get on its feet.

For three years the future Virtuosos rehearsed wherever they could, at odd moments, in their free time, frequently at night. By the time the orchestra was officially recognized it was already a fully formed ensemble with its own repertoire. One of those happy instances when avocation becomes vocation.

Give the Individual Freedom

If Mother Nature decides to endow anyone with talents she usually does it lavishly. A splendid musician, poet, artist and connoisseur of painting, Spivakov also has a talent for organization and an ability to think far ahead rare among artists. In conversation he improvises with as much ease and artistry as he does at the conductor's stand, proving that the American writer and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson was right when he said that music makes us think eloquently.

Long before the country began to talk about "the human factor" the conductor had made it a priority.

"I tried," he says, "to give the individual freedom and create an atmosphere of trust and respect where love of our work is the sole motivating force. Only the finest qualities enable you to give fully of yourself. Those qualities are honesty, kindness, tolerance, the ability to hear others out, take part in a discussion and argue your point of view, not just say yes or no. The conductor has a pretty difficult role to perform. He has to say, 'No, you're not doing that right' practically all the time. Musical ideas demand proof based on knowledge and intuition, something that is very important to art. And, of course, nothing can be achieved without a high level of professionalism."

"Work should erase all trace of work." Spivakov loves to quote those words, and the enchanting ease with which his orchestra plays would not seem to be the result of long hours of rehearsal which the musicians happily put in, oblivious to "violations" of the labor code.

The Artist and the Public.

In the right hands statistics can prove anything. We can proudly say (and show with exact figures) that every other inhabitant of this country attends a concert once a year. But turning this data on its head we find that each Soviet citizen attends a concert just once every two years. Suddenly musicians' complaints about empty halls make sense. The Virtuosos' complaints are of a different order. In telling me about the letters and calls he receives from every corner of the USSR, the manager of the orchestra, violinist Robert Bushkov, explains that one hundred concerts a year is an unbelievably heavy load, and the musicians do not have enough time to work on new programs.

Nevertheless, the orchestra considers educational work here at home its first priority. It holds annual festivals of 7-10 concerts in various Soviet cities, and takes them as seriously as performances on major world stages.

"I find the contention that the public doesn't understand music strange," Spivakov says. "It's simply unintelligent and unethical. I'm sure that the listener has a sense of the orchestra's morale, and the easy, friendly atmosphere that reigns on stage and is definitely transmitted to the audience. Every person is naturally drawn to beauty, it's just awaiting its hour.

"I am certain," he continues, "that music, more than any other art form, can penetrate the inner recesses of the human heart and mind, the conscious and subconscious. Its effect is unpredictable. Chekhov once noted that music alone was capable of expressing the subtle charm of grief."

For Spivakov the dramatic composition of his concerts is extraordinarily important. He builds a program like a show where every detail plays a role, from entrance to encores (which, to the mutual delight of the orchestra and audience have become a special, third section of the program), but what is particularly important is the *totality*, when the listener is elevated to an understanding of the entire composition, its overarching theme.

The Virtuosos' repertoire runs the gamut of classical and modern chamber music. There are monographic concerts and medleys, but the composers must "go together": Mozart and Tchaikovsky, Bach, Haydn and Shostakovich, Vivaldi, Stravinsky and Prokofiev. The orchestra premiered Rodion Shchedrin's¹ *Music for Köthen* (the city where Bach composed the

Brandenburg Concertos) and the author called the performance “perfect and irreproachable”.

The Virtuosos concerts are democratic affairs. At them a miracle occurs — everything becomes crystal clear, like spring water. As one person noted, it is music without buskins and stilts, however Spivakov is deeply convinced that accessibility is not the chief criterion of art. The artist should not lower himself to the level of the novice listener but bring the novice up to his level. “It doesn’t bother me,” the conductor says with a smile, “when people suddenly applaud at the end of a movement and the members of the audience who know better shush them. In fact, I see that as a good sign. It means that those people are here for the first time and have discovered music at our concert.”

My conversation with the leader of the Virtuosos confirmed an idea I had long entertained. For some reason we are accustomed to regarding the artist as eternally in the public’s debt: he is “called upon”, he has a “duty” and so forth. We forget that the artist is the supreme embodiment of a nation’s genius and the public owes him a debt of gratitude for the joy of insight.

Discovering Talent

Before leaving on tour for Japan, Vladimir Spivakov often composes five-line rhymes that the energetic Japanese immediately translate and print in the Virtuosos’ programs. The musician gave one of these poems to *Moscow News*: his consuming dream, “the unspoken word frozen on my lips”, came to him at one of blackest moments in his life, when he regained consciousness in a hospital after suffering a heart seizure during a concert. It is no accident that Osip Mandelstam, the most musical of poets, wrote his famous line, “Play then to burst the aorta”, about violinists.

And it is no accident that Spivakov speaks with such fervor of obsession, which is akin to inspiration. Inspiration is a rare visitor, it does not like to call on the lazy. Spivakov quotes Tchaikovsky’s words and then adds, “Inspiration is the moment when a person reveals himself most fully, and that only happens if he has complete mastery.

“Each new work you bring out on stage should reveal something new about the composer and yourself.” That is the musician’s guiding principle, the essence of his creativity.

“They say that interpretation is a term invented by music critics. But the very same works that excite us one day leave us

cold the next. It all comes down to who is on the conductor's podium and how he experienced the composer's creation in his soul. The interpreter always speaks in the first person. The great works are extraordinarily rich. The performer sees in them what he, as a man of today's world, cherishes. Contemporary music is timely music. And don't the same feelings experienced by the first people to hear the music of Bach and Beethoven, the first people to see Shakespeare's tragedies – love, death, fate, jealousy, vengeance – concern us now as they have in every age and bind us together?"

Spivakov does not just shed new light on music, reveal himself and open the eyes (or rather, the ears) of his audience. He regards discovering new talent as one of his greatest duties. The Virtuosos' charm has prompted world renowned soloists to perform with them. But among the musicians to make their debut with the orchestra are the now widely known pianist Yevgeny Kisin, the unusually lovely soprano Araxia Davtyan (she had sung at funeral services and nobody knew of her, even in her native Armenia), the pianist Stanislav Bunin, the cellist Alexander Rudin... Audiences still remember the concerts the Virtuosos gave last year with the Orfeon Donostiarra Choir from Spain. Next year Spivakov intends to invite the Portuguese pianist Maria Pirez, an outstanding interpreter of Beethoven and Mozart, to perform with the orchestra.

Classical and Heavy Metal

During a recent visit to Minsk a group of heavy metal fans came to a Virtuosos concert. The hall was full so Spivakov seated them on the stage. Afterwards a heated discussion took place. The young people asked why Shostakovich and Prokofiev had been persecuted in the 30s and 40s, why so many Soviet musicians had left the country in the mid-70s. Mainly, however, the discussion centered on classical music and rock. When Spivakov asked them which they believed would last, Mozart or rock, the heavy metal fans thought for a moment and then said, "Mozart" (his music was still ringing in their ears).

Recalling this, Spivakov told me about a study sociologists in Bashkiria had done. They played Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and ABBA for the fifth graders at one school. No one recognized Tchaikovsky, but everyone recognized ABBA.

"We've neglected our children's education, despite all the impassioned cries for well-rounded individuals. We're also re-

aping the fruits of the lengthy ban on rock music, which gave rise to a homegrown mass culture. When the floodgates were opened, the enthusiasm for rock took aggressive forms. Unquestionably, rock culture has social roots: young people are trying to find one another through the music that is collectively known as rock. Incidentally, rock fans in the West fill the halls at classical music concerts.”

There are a great many young faces in the audience at Virtuosos’ concerts. But Spivakov does not think that his orchestra should be alone in introducing people to classical music. “Television, as though afraid of boring us with the classics, offers us mediocre entertainment and tries to ingratiate itself with viewers who aren’t even capable of articulating the reasons why they are opposed to Tchaikovsky and Bach. ‘No!’ and that’s that. There is no need to adopt a pedantic tone, but we must demonstrate what is truly of value with skill and at the pinnacle of achievement. I am in no doubt that classical music can serve as a yardstick. Ultimately, any kind of music, even synthesized, any kind of theater, any kind of painting has a right to exist—it all comes down to professionalism.”

Spivakov receives numerous letters from parents asking whether they should make their children take music lessons. Yes, for without music life becomes too dull. Back in his day Hoffmann wrote in his novella *Ritter Glück* that the first melody a child accidentally picks out becomes his first independent thought.

“As I see it,” Vladimir Spivakov concludes, “now is a time when the individual is being encouraged to be creative and attain a personal understanding of what he’s seen and heard. Only, it’s not a good idea to think that we’ll bring off perestroika in no time and everything will be wonderful. Perestroika is a never-ending process, like renewal or perfection. In addition, we mustn’t forget that trees often die because people hurry to clear away the fallen leaves...”

Finally, I asked why there are no women among the Virtuosos.

“Out of the question,” Spivakov laughed. “Life on the road is hard. We’re protecting women from it. On the other hand, when we leave a city we’ve performed in we’re seen off like hussars by crowds of girls.”

Olga Martynenko

1987



Andrei Sakharov (b. 1921): physicist and member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Since 1945 he has been on the staff of the USSR Academy of Sciences Physics Institute. He has been active in antiwar work for a number of years. During the period of stagnation Sakharov was subjected to persecution for his outspoken criticism. In 1986 he returned from the city of Gorky to his institute and has now resumed his professional and civic activities.

Academician Sakharov attended the premiere at the Moscow Youth Theater of *Heart of a Dog*. The editors of *Theater* magazine asked him to share his impressions of a play that asks, is all scientific research justified?

I Believe in Reason

Heart of a Dog was very interesting. I don't consider myself a theater buff, but I thought the directing was highly inventive and energetic, memorable performances were given and the play was well staged.

The wonderful story by Mikhail Bulgakov the play is based on was written over sixty years ago, but it is still relevant today. Professor Preobrazhensky tries to create a new, artificial human being by the method we now know as genetic engineering. Of course, the story is a product of the author's imagination. But the bizarre goings-on just form the backdrop for an exploration of the author's humanistic ideas concerning the nobility of intellect and the impossibility of inoculating people with culture by rash, surgical means.

I would like to comment on something that made a particular impression on me. When Bulgakov wrote the work in 1925 he, naturally, could not have known what was to happen in this country much later, but with his artist's eye, he discerned how dangerous and pernicious ignorance and boorishness are when combined with the opportunity to wield power. The theater

has staged Bulgakov's work so that an awareness of the subsequent years in our history and its tragic pages comes through.

After the play I recalled a discussion I once had with another person about Bulgakov's story. He put forward what he thought was a serious refutation of the author: "Excuse me, but we had Soviet government then, it protected the individual!" Yes, but the authorities twisted the postulates of democracy. Even today the Sharikovs and people like them don't just spit on the floor — "we can do as we please" is the guiding principle of their lives. Thinking back on the play has reminded me of the classic theory that scientific and technological progress is occurring faster than anything related to man's inner development. It would be terrible if the people sent up in the spaceships of the future were competent from a technical standpoint but had black hearts. Why, they'd pollute the whole Universe!

The theater makes us think about the fate of the intelligentsia in our country. In the 20s, and even today there are people who don't realize the importance of the intelligentsia, its role in the creation of culture, science and art.

Now a process of change and cleansing is gathering momentum. That makes me very happy. I realize that it is extraordinarily difficult to bring about the plans our leaders have put forward. We are hampered by old, stereotyped ways of thinking, pseudodemocratic demagogy, lies and laziness.

I work, sometimes I find the time to go to the theater, and I pour over the magazines. It is wonderful that works which were stuck away in archives and desk drawers are seeing the light of day, and that new works are appearing which couldn't have been published, say, 15 years ago! The criticism of the negative aspects of the past and the attempts that are being made to unite society behind the program of renewal are hopeful signs.

There are times that are pompous and cruel; there are times that are difficult but happy. I would like to believe that the reasoned principles that underlie our life today will gain the upper hand over all the harmful aspects of the past that are still with us. I believe in reason.

1987

MEMORY

**“I’ve always felt I was an
artist from Russia.”**

Marc Chagall



Boris Pilnyak (1894-1941): a master of Russian prose whose wide-ranging work occupies an important place in the literature of the 20s and 30s. In the course of his career Pilnyak went from romantic stylization and experiments in form to psychological, lyric and epic prose rooted in the stable traditions of social realism. His novels include *The Barren Year* (1921), *Machines and Wolves* (1925), *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea* (1930) and *The Salt Warehouse* (1937).

The Hinterland (1937) is apparently the writer's last work. It was not published in his lifetime.

The Hinterland

A Russian settlement. Just that—a settlement and Russian. Under the tsar Ivan there was a frontier fort here. Under the emperors the town became the seat of an uyezd* and that it remained almost until '17 when it was stripped of its status, cashiered. The Revolution's plans passed the hinterland by. Soviet map-making placed a district executive committee, or DEC, in the town. At the start of the century the town was on its way to becoming somewhat unusual: retired generals had begun purchasing homes with cherry orchards and settling down in them for a peaceful old age. But the Revolution put a stop to that. The town was seventy-one kilometers from the station. A market and cathedral stood on the hill, though the cathedral was boarded up. Surrounding the market were the former hereditary-honoraries' two-story stone residences with their stone gates and overgrown gardens. To the east, south, west and north of the market and the two-story residences of that settlement were one-story wooden houses, barns fronting orchards, wells at crossroads, pastures, fields and the sky.

The DEC was in the former town council offices. The execu-

* *Uyezd*: the lowest administrative division in prerevolutionary Russia, replaced in the 1920s by the *raiyon*, or district.— *Tr.*

tives' dormitory was in the former tearoom-cum-hotel. The old market coaching inn, stables and a two-story stone house had been converted into a veterinary clinic. Senior veterinarian Ivan Avdeyevich Groza shared the top floor of the house with the pharmacy; junior veterinarian Nikolai Sergeyeovich Klychkov lived in the annex. Across the street, in fact window to window to Groza's apartment, also on the second floor, lived sanitary inspector Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky; he occupied the whole floor and it was furnished with mahogany left over from the generals. There were five doctors in the town, two veterinarians and about thirty teachers. Each village Soviet naturally had its own medical and veterinary clinics and its own teaching staff.

Veterinarian Groza and Sanitary Inspector Nevelsky turned up in the town after the Revolution and, upon encountering one another, did not shake hands, did not nod, did not wish to become acquainted. There were reasons for this. Once, before '05, Groza and Nevelsky had worked in Kalyazin zemstvo.* The medical councils of the zemstvo observed a tradition dating back to the Pirogov conferences. In keeping with this tradition new physicians were allowed to practise in the zemstvo only if the medical council voted to admit them, moreover the first year was a probationary period when the other doctors could scrutinize the persons they were accepting into their midst. It was not a law written in the code of the zemstvo; it was a time-tested tradition. The chairman of the uyezd council and marshal of the nobility in Kalyazin zemstvo was Prince Feodor Rastorov, a local feudal lord and Uhlán to Her Majesty. Prince Rastorov ruled as he pleased, and he invited two physicians to take up permanent appointments, thus bypassing the medical council and the probationary period. The doctors in the medical council were perturbed and gathered at Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky's home to discuss what they should do to defend the Pirogov Rules. Laver Feodosovich held the floor with his brilliant oratory and quotations from zemstvo classics. The democrats proposed democratic measures. A decision was made to meet again and invite the two doctors the Prince had hired without the medical council's consent. A decision was made to have a friendly chat with the two doctors and persuade them to turn the Prince's

* *Zemstvo*: a local electoral district and assembly created in 1864 which was in charge of education, public health, road construction and other local affairs. Abolished in 1918.— *Tr.*

offer down and bow to tradition. A decision was made that in the event the doctors chose not to take the council's friendly advice, the members would boycott them by refusing to shake hands with them. The medical council met again at the apartment of Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky and the two new doctors came. Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky gave a brilliant speech urging the young doctors not to break the splendid Pirogov Rules and warning them that the members of the medical council would fight for the tradition by refusing to shake hands with them. The young doctors listened attentively to Nevelsky's speech and reported it to Prince Rastorov. Prince Feodor Rastorov saw sedition in Nevelsky's speeches. He called a special meeting of the medical council and let the doctors know that he was about to introduce them to their two new colleagues, and should any of them refuse to shake their hands they would be expelled from the zemstvo. And the doctors — shook their hands ... all except two, all except Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky and Ivan Avdeyevich Groza. Learning of the Prince's plans, Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky tendered his resignation the day before the medical council meeting, promptly left Kalyazin, thereby avoiding the necessity of refusing to shake the new doctors' hands, and went to work in another uyezd. Ivan Avdeyevich Groza, however, placed his hand behind his back, gave an old-fashioned bow to the Prince, ceremoniously said, "Forgive me, Prince, but I do not wish to make the acquaintance of these gentlemen", and twenty-four hours later had been expelled from the zemstvo. Nevelsky was a worse strikebreaker than the cowed individuals who shook hands with the young doctors. About two weeks later, when Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky came back to Kalyazin to clear out his apartment, he paid semi-licit farewell visits to all his colleagues, a semi-licit dinner was held in his honor, replete with semi-licit speeches and predictions. But no farewell dinner was held in Groza's honor. Groza was seen off by a physician's assistant and the clinic watchman. Thus, Ivan Avdeyevich moved five times from uyezd to uyezd, traversing hundreds of thousands of versts* on Russia's country roads to treat foot and mouth disease, anthrax, glanders and equine plague. As the curtain fell on the empire, in the year the Great War began, in the hot, stifling atmosphere of feudal reaction, in the days of Vtorov capitalism and von Meck industry, those Russian country roads brought Ivan Avdeyevich Groza to the town of Mozhai.

* One *verst* is equivalent to 1.06 kilometers. — *Tr.*

Groza's new colleagues, the veterinarians in the various districts of Mozhai uyezd, were busily resurrecting a Gogolesque way of life. Soon after his arrival, Groza addressed the medical council on the state of veterinary medicine in the uyezd and ways of improving it.

"Gentlemen of the medical council," Groza said ceremoniously. "My whole life and service to the community have demonstrated to me that we should consider our community work a sacred trust. When shortcomings in my work for the community are pointed out to me I am only grateful, for by correcting my shortcomings I serve the community better. Therefore I shall begin my talk by pointing out the shortcomings and some even shameful aspects of veterinary practice in Mozhai. For example, one of our district veterinarians subscribes to *Russkoye slovo* on zemstvo money and enters the expense in his accounts as paper for wrapping medicine, thereby defrauding the zemstvo. This same veterinarian, like a number of others, spends not a kopeck when he goes about his rounds, but puts down twelve kopecks a verst in his expense accounts for the hire of a horse..."

Ivan Avdeyevich Groza made a long speech. The members of the medical council, physicians and veterinarians, wined and dined each other and paid court to each others' wives and sisters-in-law – the speech was greeted with deafening silence and "taken into consideration". Then, in the summer of '17, when the Socialist-Revolutionaries were in power and *those* very members of the medical council were rapidly made commissars in the Provisional Government, Ivan Avdeyevich Groza was ignominiously expelled from the zemstvo with the bang of a volcanic eruption for his speech to the medical council. He settled in the hinterland described above, a lonely old bachelor, without possessions, a dour old sod. In the hinterland he began seeing patients each day at eight and finished up near one, made his own dinner, diluted fifty grams of rectified spirit in a measuring glass for himself, ate, drank, napped until three when he set off about the uyezd, returned at sunset, looked at the animals being kept at the clinic, diluted another fifty grams, drank them in the pharmacy without a chaser, hawking and wheezing, fried himself some eggs at ten, lay down on the sofa under the Romanov sheepskin blanket and read Meyne Reid's novels for the hundredth time until sleep overtook him. In the fall, winds blew over the hinterland and rain poured down. The raging winds rattled the

dilapidated roof over Groza's head, and in the rain it seemed as though Mamai's hordes, which had indeed roamed those parts before the frontier fort, were tramping across the roof in their soft riding boots. On evenings such as those, when the hinterland was wrapped in darkness, it was nice to light a lot of lamps, get a good fire going, settle back and be with friends. And so it was across the way, window to window, in Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky's apartment. Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky arrived in the hinterland after Ivan Avdeyevich Groza. Having parted company with Groza in Kalyazin without bidding him farewell, Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky was the sanitary inspector of a gubernia* when '17 rolled around. From March to November of that year he was involved in organizing the new state, first as a representative of the PSs, then of the SRs.¹ Under the title of gubernia commissar he performed the duties of city mayor for about two weeks, then took charge of medical care in the gubernia. He fell on evil days immediately after the October Revolution, was searched twice by the Food Army,² disgraced in '18 when twenty-seven poods of the finest wheat flour were discovered concealed in his cellar and—transferred to the hinterland. He arrived in the hinterland from the station with seven cartloads of household goods. There he secured the best of the apartments left by the generals and purchased the generals' mahogany to furnish it. He was accompanied by his wife, an incredibly portly and majestic woman with a pince-nez. A physician's assistant by profession and a person of truly encyclopedic learning when it came to the classics of world literature, she felt more comfortable quoting them than speaking in her own words. Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky met Ivan Avdeyevich Groza at the executive committee and recognized him: the expression in Laver Nevelsky's eyes was even cordial. Comrade Trubachev, the chairman of the DEC, said, "Ivan Avdeyevich, meet our new sanitarian, Comrade Nevelsky."

And as he had once done in the presence of Prince Rastorov, Ivan Avdeyevich Groza placed his hand behind his back and, shaking his head, eyes downcast, he bowed to Comrade Trubachev and said ceremoniously, "Forgive me, Pavel Yegorovich, but I do not wish to make the acquaintance of this gentleman."

* *Gubernia*: the next highest administrative division after the uyezd in pre-revolutionary Russia, comparable to the modern-day *oblast*, or region. — Tr.

Comrade Trubachev was taken aback. Nevelsky's eyes became steely and narrowed to tiny slits. In general, Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky had the habits and appearance of an old student and member of People's Will. He dressed in a loose cloak and soft hat, had long hair and, like his wife, wore a pince-nez on a black string. He was lean and agile.

When they were alone, Comrade Trubachev said to Nevelsky, "Listen, Comrade Nevelsky, don't be mad at him... He's a good vet, but he's crazy. They say he drinks vodka alone and spends his nights reading novels cover to cover..."

When they were alone, Comrade Trubachev asked Groza, "Listen, Comrade Groza, how came you bridled like that without call? Or do you know something? If you do, tell me."

Ivan Avdeyevich Groza flew at him: "I do not know anything! I do not wish to speak of Nevelsky!"

On those fall evenings, when the hordes of week-long rains walked the roofs of the hinterland in their soft riding boots, Laver Feodosovich's home was very warm and bright. Doctors and teachers came to see him and his wife, sat in the armchairs and on the sofas, talked and on occasion even argued about current affairs. Laver Feodosovich subscribed to *Krasnaya Nov* and *Novy Mir*, they lay on a separate little table together with the newspapers. The latest issues were read aloud by Polina Isidorovna, who took a thoroughly sardonic attitude towards contemporary writers. Polina Isidorovna did community work. She organized a museum of local lore that had a stuffed wolf, bear, fox, polecat, hawk and black grouse picked out from the generals' junk, the eggs of jackdaws, sparrows, siskins, titmice and cuckoos collected at Polina Isidorovna's instigation by the hands of little boys, and sheaves of the various local grasses hung by Polina Isidorovna. The first spring Polina Isidorovna introduced volleyball to the hinterland and played with the teachers. In the summer Polina Isidorovna arranged intellectual-collective outings—boating, picnics, fishing and fish soup over the campfire. Meanwhile, in the hinterland, as is the nature of things, spring gave way to summer, summer to fall, and so on. Laver Feodosovich attended conferences. But he was at home every day by six, had dinner, and preserved the sanctity of the evening and evening relaxation with the utmost strictness in keeping with Pirogov's injunctions, breaking them only with walks after sunset in the countryside somewhere in the direction of a ravine or hill in the summer, or the tumbledown mill in the spring and fall, where, despite his advanced years,

one or another young schoolmistress was waiting for him and where he mused about eternity, something his wife, Polina Isidorovna, took a sardonic view of. Laver Feodosovich was popular in the hinterland and respected. He gave lectures and chaired meetings. The Pirogov traditions forbade private practice, nor was it part of the sanitary inspector's duties, but Laver Feodosovich was considered the best doctor in the hinterland and while adhering faithfully to the principle of not practicing privately he took part in consultations and graciously accepted ducklings and chicks as his fee. From his Kalyazin youth to his hinterland maturity, Laver Feodosovich told a story about himself, phrasing it as though it had happened in the living present. The other week, it went, he'd overheard a couple of people who were walking past his door. One had asked the other, "Is this where the doctor lives?" "Yes," the other had replied. "Well, is he a good doctor?" "He's a very good doctor only he specializes in dead folks, he doesn't heal live ones!" But Groza lived alone, lonely and bad tempered. He did not go to see anyone and the only person who came to see him was his assistant, the young veterinarian Nikolai Sergeyeovich Klimov, and then only to drink the diluted spirit. On those occasions Groza would increase his dose from fifty to one hundred grams and fry eight eggs. Ivan Avdeyevich Groza definitely did not belong to the breed of the talkative. The nights were very short in the hinterland in the summer. The veterinarians in the hinterland were responsible for making insurance appraisals of the livestock, so in the summer Ivan Avdeyevich Groza awakened at 2:30 a.m. and went to do insurance work — before eight, before his hours at the clinic began. He thundered out of the former coaching inn onto the street in his droshky wearing a duck dustcoat and straw hat, with an enormous portfolio tied onto the bag of oats. The half blood was excellent, the old man lowering. There were often thunderstorms in the summer. As far as Pavel Yegorovich Trubachev was concerned, he was a very junior Party official — his comrades had long been working at the territory level or even in Moscow — a local boy who grew up near the hill, the son of a fisherman, descendant of feudal tradesmen and paupers. In between fishing trips he had studied at the local high school set up by the Statute of 1877. At sixteen he had been swept southward by the Red Army. He fought excellently, bravely, staunchly, but in 1921, when he was demobilized, he did not get into any college for further studies or move on to a new post, but returned to the

hinterland, married a teacher, the daughter of a deacon, and stayed to live at the bottom of the hill by the vegetable gardens, raise a family and chair the DEC term after term, a good man and comrade who learned the news at Party meetings in between his responsibilities at work and at home. Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky naturally invited Pavel Yegorovich and his wife, the teacher, over. Pavel Yegorovich and his wife went just once. Polina Isidorovna talked about Buckle and Dr. Montessori's system for teaching children, quoted Ovidius and Shchedrin, and let it drop that she was a Zavalishin by birth. Pavel Yegorovich's wife enjoyed her evening at the Nevelskys', but Pavel Yegorovich said nothing to his wife until a second invitation was issued and then put his foot down, "I'm not going. To hell with them. Intellectuals! And I ask you not to go, either... A Zavalishin*! Swamps you with words! Neckties!" Ivan Avdeyevich Groza never once invited Pavel Yegorovich Trubachev over; he only summoned Pavel Yegorovich to the clinic stables in the courtyard outside his home on two occasions to give him a piece of his mind on the spot in honor of the leaky roof.

And the first Great Five-Year Plan approached. An automobile arrived in the hinterland bringing a commission from the territorial center—the head of the territorial lands authority, the territorial statistician-economist and a secretary-stenographer. The head of the territorial lands authority, a slightly aging man recently sent to the territory from Moscow, and the chauffeur stayed in the executives' dormitory — Pavel Tyurin's old tearoom-cum-hotel. The statistician-economist turned out to be an old acquaintance of Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky, so he and the secretary-stenographer put up at the Nevelskys'. The meetings of the commission and numerous sub-commissions were held at the museum of local lore where the stuffed animals and herbariums of local flora were displayed. Everything in the hinterland was shaken down and Laver Feodosovich was in evidence everywhere. He obtained information on local soil types and raised the question of building if not a metal works then a plant for producing cement or nitro-potassium. He even calculated the winds, for the question arose of harnessing them to produce electricity. A census was taken of the lands, isolated terrain features, church

* This is a play on words. *Zavalishin* from the *zavalit* – swamp, overflow, etc. – *Tr.*

buildings, cemeteries, wastelands, octaves and fields. All the ravines were counted, for it had been proposed with the greatest urgency that the five-year plan include the elimination of ravines by damming to provide irrigation for the hinterland and create reservoirs of drinking water—that project, proposed by Laver Feodosovich, had been the brainchild of Polina Isidorovna. And a meeting was held on health care and animal husbandry in the hinterland. The meeting was attended by the health workers of the district. The keynote speaker proved to be none other than Laver Feodosovich. He gave an address that shone with oratorical skill and statistics. He expressed brilliant ideas on the bright future of health care in the hinterland. On the subject of veterinary medicine, he talked about foot and mouth disease, glanders, anthrax and equine plague, about the disastrous consequences they had, about means of combating them and means of driving them out. The statistics and oratory indicated that by the end of the five-year plan not only would epizootics of epidemic proportions, glanders, anthrax, rabies, foot and mouth disease and equine plague disappear from the livestock of the hinterland but so would vaginal infections and tuberculosis. The head of the territorial lands authority seated next to Trubachev listened attentively, if a bit wearily. Next, those scheduled to take part in the debate spoke, and it has to be said that their arguments were unintelligible, for there were no opponents just as there was essentially no debate, for all were of the same mind as the keynote speaker and, enraptured by his talents, structured their remarks to confirm that as far as veterinary medicine was concerned, for instance, by the end of the five-year plan epizootics in the cashiered seat would indeed be cashiered. The stuffed hare, fox, wolf and bear stood along the walls; cuckoos, a black grouse and an eagle owl hung along the walls. Laver Feodosovich had just referred the resolution to the presidium when Ivan Avdeyevich Groza demanded the floor. He had a savage look, and Ivan Avdeyevich was an extraordinarily hairy man.

“Gentlemen,” he said solemnly, then becoming flustered and irritated, corrected himself. “I mean, Comrades! As a matter of principle I do not wish to address myself to the projects put forward by Citizen Nevelsky concerning the other aspects of health care, but as far as veterinary medicine is concerned I am completely baffled by the proceedings here. I have served the zemstvo,” became flustered and irritated again and corrected himself, “I mean, first in the zemstvo and then, under

Soviet government—twenty-seven years in all,” became flustered again, and completely lost his temper. “I mean, Comrades, I would like to be absolutely frank. I don’t know who we are planning on fooling. I will give an example. Veterinary medicine is in a better state in Germany than here, the German population is more civilized than ours, the Germans have France, Switzerland, Austria for neighbors and their least civilized border is with Poland. Nevertheless, epizootics occur in Germany to this day. Here, on the other hand, we are just a stone’s throw from the Volga and then comes Kazakhstan and Central Asia which, in turn, borders on Mongolia, the nidus of all epizootics. I must be absolutely frank: I am absolutely convinced that we will not rid ourselves of epizootics in five years. We will need several decades to do it.”

The statistician-economist, who had come from the territorial center along with the head of the TLA, took the floor. He was extremely polite and academic. He demanded with extreme politeness that Groza apologize to the congress, for Groza had questioned the integrity of the speakers. Then, citing specific features of the veterinary profession, the extremely polite statistician-economist demonstrated that Groza was guilty of being a Germanophile and doubting the might of the Revolution, of being a right-wing opportunist and wanting to undermine the five-year plan. Groza’s slips, “gentlemen” and “in the zemstvo”, were thrown back in his face with steely politeness and academic scorn.

The chairman, a Bolshevik and former sailor, spoke up in Groza’s defense.

“Still, Comrade, the man did, after all, point to the fact of the borders and the state of veterinary medicine here and in Germany. Permit *me* to judge the political significance of what he said... Maybe we’ll reconsider the resolution the presidium has proposed?”

The statistician-economist took the floor again and insisted that Groza make an apology to the congress. Then Laver Feodosovich took the floor and spoke in a tone of voice that indicated that the incident had not occurred. He began his remarks by saying that he was the author of the resolution and did not repudiate it. He was the only person at the congress to address the chairman by his first name and patronymic, and said in a slightly ironic and very amiable voice, “Please forgive us, Ivan Nefedovich, even though our integrity has been questioned, but this time let’s listen to what the majority has to say and vote.”

Then Ivan Avdeyevich Groza* leapt from his seat. His aspect was menacing, his eyes savage. He did not ask the chairman for the floor. He yelled quite incoherently.

“I wish to declare! I demand a discussion!.. I do not wish to have anything to do with Citizen Nevelsky on principle. I wish to declare that in my twenty-seven years as a member of the zemstvo, I mean as a doctor, I have never done anything dishonest. What I said about epizootics is true but I refuse to discuss the matter on principle. Therefore I wish to declare that I have no intention of apologizing to anyone or of remaining at this congress any longer, for the facts are clearly being distorted here...”

Groza slammed the door. The summer sound of the hinterland penetrated into the hall of the museum, and in the blaze of speeches and indignation the stuffed wolf, hare, fox and magpie came to life and even the sheaves nodded their ears. Over the noise Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky moved that a vote be taken on the resolution and reaped the laurels** : with regard to veterinary medicine it was resolved that all epizootics would be gone from the cashiered seat by the end of the first five-year plan, they would be cashiered.

The congress was rounded off with a festive supper in the executives' residence, Tyurin's old tearoom. There proved to be singers among the physicians and veterinarians, and they sang *Dubinushka*, the *Budyonny March*, *Little Bricks* and even *Gaudeamus*. The chairman, the head of the TLA, proved to be a fun comrade who made no airs and he danced the *Russkaya* to the accompaniment of the piano as he had once danced it on the deck of a dreadnought, moreover the accompanist was Polina Isidorovna, who had organized the party. It broke up towards dawn. At dawn the head of the territorial lands authority, the Bolshevik and former sailor, who had not slept properly for many nights, went down to river with Pavel Yegorovich Trubachev to bathe while mist lay over the meadows and asked Comrade Trubachev, “Who's this Groza of yours?” Then he added, thinking aloud, “God only knows, these intellectuals! I mean, it's true, the hinterland, the steppe, a rabid dog can run about the steppe and not meet a soul for a thousand versts, and then there are all those plague infested mice

* This is a play on words. *Groza* means storm or thunderstorm, consequently something that is menacing or inspires dread. — *Tr*.

** Also, a play on words, *Laver* means laurels. — *Tr*

and gophers... On the other hand, the majority, they aren't kids after all, they aren't playing checkers. I mean, they realize that we're talking about building socialism, that this is no joke. I mean, they don't have any less schooling than that old man ... what's his name — Groza? Is that the name?"

"That's his name alright," Trubachev replied. "He's an excellent worker, but as a person... Well, he's crazy. He drinks vodka alone and spends his nights reading foreign novels from cover to cover. A troublemaker. Not that it really shows, but you've got to figure he's not one of us, since he hightailed it out of Mozhai zemstvo and moved here!"

"What about that Nevelsky, of yours?" the head of the TLA asked. "He's in a real big hurry, heck, like one of those SRs... Who's he?"

"He works, he tries," Trubachev replied and started thinking aloud. "God only knows, you say — intellectuals! And it's true, they all wear those darn neckties, just try telling them apart... You start talking to one of them: he can't understand you and you can't understand him, there's no class contact, no common ground. One time Nevelsky invited me and my wife over and his wife swamped me with her learning. He works, he tries. To tell you the truth, I avoid getting into any kind of heart-to-heart with them. I try to go easy on them, of course, be as quiet as I can about giving orders and seeing to it that they're carried out — they themselves demand it... I think the majority is right though. I mean, you're right that they aren't kids. You came right out and said that this isn't a game. That it's a great undertaking. Why, you started out by saying that you wanted their expert opinion. And I repeated it. We'll have to believe them... Damn intellectuals, all wearing those neckties..."

"Sure will have to believe them," the head of the TLA started thinking aloud, too. "I'll go back to the territorial center. Then a telegram will go to Moscow. See? And Moscow is going to take the information from the republics, territories and regions of the Union, I mean when they put together in the Great Five-Year Plan in the section on animal husbandry, in the chapter on veterinary medicine, in the paragraph on combating epizootics they're going to write and remember that because of measures taken by Soviet government and veterinary medicine epizootics in your district will be wiped out by the start of the second five-year plan! They're going to write that about you. Short and sweet, judge for yourself."

"We need our own people," Trubachev said gloomily, "our

own Party people... I give those folks orders and they try ... and—I can't rightly explain it—I don't really like having to believe them. But I have to. I'm no doctor! As for an order—I can't rightly explain it to you—but I don't really like to do that either. Orders make intellectuals bridle... We'll have to believe them or else we'll be stuck with that crazy Groza!"

The Party men bathed in the river near the old mill. Then the head of the territorial lands authority, the Bolshevik and former sailor, got in his Chinese Mercedes, as chauffeurs called any beat-up old automobile, and left for the territory center. The steppe stretched away as it had before the fort.

Ivan Avdeyevich Groza did not go to the party at the execs' residence. All night he lay, eyes open, in his room on the second floor under his sheepskin blanket and listened to the night. Not once did he go into the pharmacy for diluted spirit. His arms lay motionless, like a corpse's. His eyes were fastened on the ceiling. His assistant and only visitor, Nikolai Sergeyeovich Klimov, had gone to the supper to celebrate the end of the congress and returned to his apartment in the veterinary annex from the party as dawn broke. Ivan Avdeyevich had been listening for his footsteps outside and called to him from the window, saying, "Come up!", unlocked the door and lay back down on the bed, under the sheepskin, arms at his sides, eyes on the ceiling. Nikolai Sergeyeovich walked into the dark room where the dirty shadows of the dawn were groping about in the corners and there was a stale smell of useless junk and unaired night. Nikolai Sergeyeovich walked in unhappily. Ivan Avdeyevich offered him a cigarette. Klimov took it hurriedly but lit it very slowly. Groza was silent. Nikolai Sergeyeovich lit the cigarette and said after a while, "But why did you do that, Ivan Avdeyevich?"

"What do you mean, why?" Groza cried.

"Why did you even bother to get up and speak at the congress? And since you did, why didn't you stand up for your point of view, why didn't you stay and fight instead of creating a scandal and leaving? A respected doctor with years of experience and..."

Groza interrupted with a question.

"What resolution was adopted?"

"Nevelsky's resolution, almost unanimously."

"Did you vote?"

Nikolai Sergeyeovich looked out the window very unhappily, then examined the glowing end of his cigarette and said,

“You’ve known Nevelsky for a long time, haven’t you? You should have started with that, you should have exposed him as an enemy. Since you took him on you should have fought to the end with every means you had instead of creating a scandal and leaving... Oh, that’s not even the main thing...”

“And what is?” Groza demanded. He sat up on the bed, wheezed and then grumbled, “I have known Nevelsky for a quarter of a century and consider him a traitor on principle. I will not shake hands with him and have no wish to speak with him, much less get into any kind of debate with him, but I myself am not a traitor or an informer and I have no intention of informing on Nevelsky.” The old man’s eyes became sad. “You voted in favor? So tell me now, here, just between you and me, frankly: didn’t I tell the truth? Will we really be able to take care of epizootics in five years?!”

“Or course, you told the truth! If everybody didn’t understand that, if everybody didn’t then the majority did...”

“So what’s the matter?! What’s the matter?” Groza cried exultantly. “I mean, I spoke up for the sake of our profession! I was helping the veterinary profession and the country! ...And you voted!”

Nikolai Sergeyeovich tore his eyes from the cigarette and looked at the unhappy and at the same time exultant eyes of the old man.

“Ivan Avdeyevich, it’s not for me to teach you,” he said sadly. “How can you talk about ‘our profession’ if people said dishonest things and knew it? Can you really expect them to support honesty? Judge for yourself, can really anybody talk like you did? Oh, that’s not even the main thing. I don’t want to talk about Nevelsky. I think he lays it on because he’s a bootlicker and doesn’t want to play second fiddle. As for us, people like me, I want to tell you... We didn’t get much of an education and we don’t belong to the Party. Somehow we want to believe that we’re moving onward and upward, we want to believe in the Revolution’s might. On the other hand, I mean, nobody knows what things will be like in five years—maybe the five-year plan really will work miracles, maybe not one of us will be alive then, who knows? Believing in success is one thing. Not having knowledge is another. Well, and what if the Bolsheviks up and build stone walls around all our borders and really do burn all the sleigh horses and bury them in cement? Who’ll be right then, you or Nevelsky? And another thing. Look at the Bolsheviks, how great they want everything to be.

Take our congress. I'm not talking about Trubachev: he as good as said, 'Go to it, fellows!' Look at the chairman—a fine man, a sailor, an old Bolshevik. Did you notice that scar on his face? He said at supper that a White Cossack had slashed it. With all his political and human substance he wants everything to be wonderful. I mean, I dare say he's happy, I dare say he considers it a big thing and an achievement that we passed a resolution saying there won't be any epizootics here in five years. He's devoted his life to the Revolution. Well, how can a person go against him?! Nobody wants to offend him and it's frightening, too—power! And the people in power want to see epizootics disappear. Some folks are afraid of the Communists, and with reason, because they're socially alien and don't speak the truth out of spite and out of fear—fear plays a role, too, you know! And there are those who don't understand anything except that you have to say nice things to the authorities if you want to stay on their good side and save your skin ... the human skin is an awful thing!"

Nikolai Sergeyeovich fell silent. He clumsily tossed his unfinished cigarette, now extinguished, into the corner with the rest, then spoke again sadly and bitterly.

"You shouldn't have gotten up, Ivan Avdeyevich! The human skin is an awful thing!.. Well, tell me, has Comrade Pavel Yegorovich Trubachev ever once talked openly to you? But people don't just want to work to save their skin! They want to do it because it's honorable and their duty!.. You aren't going to talk openly to Trubachev either—and you shouldn't, you shouldn't have gotten up!.. Of course all the speakers opposed you, and ones who were generally in favor of the resolution knew in their own different, little ways that they were lying and embellishing, and then you went and said it out loud, you said the truth out loud. That's why we went over to Nevelsky's side—I'm speaking for myself—because you said the truth out loud. You could say that the comrades slandered you when they made you out to be alien element. But the point is that if one person plays a dirty trick on another, one day it's going to start bothering his conscience and then he's going to look, not even consciously but still with his whole being, for an excuse for what he did and he's going to find one and he's going to accuse the person the dirty trick was played on of having done it. You shouldn't have gotten up, Ivan Avdeyevich!.. You didn't help the profession, you didn't stand up for yourself, and I'll tell you frankly that if you hadn't called to me

from the window, if you hadn't been so nice and given me that cigarette, I would have become your enemy. By speaking out you only earned yourself enemies..."

"Fine!! I have no desire or need!" Ivan Avdeyevich Groza roared, not yelled, so loudly that the glass shook in its frames. "I do not have cynics and traitors for friends! I have never sold my honor to anyone! I have never been a traitor! I have no desire! I have no desire, Sir!"

Across the street, window to window, a sash opened in the Nevelsky apartment. Nikolai Sergeyeovich placed his hands together prayerfully and pleaded in a whisper, "Ivan Avdeyevich, Nevelsky is listening. Please, keep your voice down. Please, don't. I've told you as a friend, heart to heart. Please, they're listening!..."

The old man lay down on the bed, covered himself with the sheepskin, placed his arms on either side of the sheepskin and studied the ceiling. A very distant look came into his eyes. The old man was listening to himself, and the old man said quietly, "I don't understand, I don't understand... I mean, I spoke up for the sake of the veterinary profession, I mean, I have devoted my whole life, my whole cheerless life to it... And you... Thank you for your truth. I don't know that kind of truth. Please, don't be angry at me... I'm old! I don't understand!"

Nikolai Sergeyeovich said very sadly, "O-o-oh, Ivan Avdeyevich..."

Across the street, window to window, a light had flashed on before dawn. Laver Feodosovich and Polina Isidorovna were preparing to retire. Across the street, window to window, as dawn was breaking Groza's cry came from the veterinary clinic. Both of them – Laver Feodosovich and Polina Isidorovna hurriedly threw open a window. The cry faded.

"That thundering idiot, Groza!" Laver Feodosovich said.

"And he really came out and said that he didn't believe epizootics could be stamped out and did not wish to speak about it any more and walked out of the meeting? What an idiot! Did he really say that?" Polina Isidorovna asked for the twentieth time, then added very softly, "But aren't you worried Laver? Don't you think that's going too far and the territorial authorities will demand a review?"

Laver Feodosovich made a pained face and said in a pained voice, "No, of course not. But if you only knew how fed up I am with them!"

"Who? Groza?"

“No, the Bolsheviks, of course. All that raving nonsense, all that stupidity! If only you knew how fed up I am with them, how they make me ill! As for Groza, I’ll register a protest with the labor union tomorrow...”

“Oh, yes, of course!” Polina Isidorovna said.

When the sun had completely risen the Chinese Mercedes sputtered away from the execs’ residence, and soon afterwards the thunder of Ivan Avdeyevich Groza’s droshky could be heard as he left to appraise the livestock for insurance. Ivan Avdeyevich sat in the droshky wearing a duck dustcoat and a straw hat. Behind him, tied to a bag of oats, was an enormous portfolio. The half-blood trotted merrily and smartly. As he descended from the former cathedral Ivan Avdeyevich met Comrade Trubachev. Trubachev called to Ivan Avdeyevich.

“Listen here, Ivan Avdeyevich, what are you raising such a fuss for? Give it to me straight about these here epizootics. You damn intellectuals, you and your neckties!... Did Nevelsky get it wrong? Give it to me straight!”

Groza replied very calmly:

“Well, judge for yourself. After all, seventy percent of our cows have vaginal infections. Holland is a dairy country, but even so the extent of vaginal infection and tuberculosis among their cattle is enormous. Take the Danish statistics if you don’t believe the German ones.”

“Just hold on with all that scientific stuff. Just tell me if we’re still going to have them or not, and tell me about Nevelsky,” Trubachev demanded. “Here, have a smoke, Ivan Avdeyevich!”

“We will have them,” Groza said firmly and added firmly, “as for Nevelsky, it’s beneath my dignity to talk about him. Good-bye.”

Ivan Avdeyevich adjusted the reins.

“Just hold on, now wait a minute. Where are you going? What do you know about Nevelsky, huh? How come you say we’re going to have them? Maybe you’re going to help us have them? Why should I believe you?”

“Good-bye,” Groza said. “You’re talking nonsense. I’m going to do insurance work.”

Mist lay over the meadows. Trubachev watched bleary-eyed as Groza made his way down the hill. On the hilltop there remained a Russian settlement, once a frontier fort in the time of the Ivans, later stripped of its status as a seat, cashiered. The market and boarded up cathedral stood on the spot where the

wooden fort had been. To the south, north, east and west lay the hinterland. In the fall the Mamai hordes of night and rain swept down on this godforsaken place in their soft riding boots. Over the hinterland the winds blew and the snows swirled. And as is the nature of things, spring gave way to summer, and summer gave way to fall. Winter came and covered everything with snow. Thus one year followed the next. The Revolution passed the hinterland by with its plans, and Soviet map-making put a DEC in the town. At the start of the five-year plan the bells were removed from the cathedral in the town, and the locals said, "It won't work. The people will be up in arms." But the bells were removed and forgotten as new events occurred. In the social wind that swept over the country the villages around the town took fright and entered collective farms in droves. The locals said, "It won't work." But the individual peasant farmer disappeared and was forgotten in the new villages. The whole town did not sleep one night, boys hung round-the-clock from the fences and limes and young people set out with knapsacks to meet the tractors that were expected from the station, a sight not seen before. The tractors arrived all at once, all twenty-three of them, and drove right into the cathedral that had no bells, into the cathedral garage. The locals escorted the tractors to the cathedral and crowded into the garage along with the tractors. For three days the old women came to examine the tractors and hung around the fields to watch them plow. On account of the tractors they did not notice that a stone highway had been laid from the station to the hinterland—seventy-one kilometers—in place of Catherine's clay high road, or that a bus had lumbered down it. On account of the collective farms and the bus and the noise of the tractors the locals did not notice that a power station had started to belch at the bottom of the hill in place of the tumbledown mill or that a local on the DEC had demanded as his due to have a line laid to his home. They did not notice that many locals got out of harm's way or otherwise disappeared from the hinterland or that new people had moved out to the hinterland who knew nothing of the times before the fort. Thus, four years passed. Polina Isidorovna got ready to greet the Second Five-Year Plan at the museum of local lore. The month was December. It had been forgotten but it was known that there were epizootics in the hinterland. Groza's home stood opposite Nevelsky's, window to window. And right before the New Year—in Moscow the trial of the Manufac-

turers' Party had just faded from the scene and the Kondratiev and Chayanov trials were heating up in the Moscow papers—right before the New Year two brand new automobiles came into the hinterland along the new highway. Out of one climbed a slightly aging man dressed in a sheepskin coat, fur cap and felt boots. On his nipped face a scar made by a sabre stood out white in the cold. It was the former sailor. The snow had been carefully swept from in front of the museum of local lore for the occasion and a large number of electric lights were lit—a new commission was meeting there. Slowly the old sailor read the yellowed shorthand reports. Next to him, leaning over the sheets of paper, arms crossed stood a young, clean-shaven man with rhombs on his red tabs.

“Tsk, tsk—neckties! They aren’t kids...”

Trubachev stood across the table. He did not sit down all night. And in the small hours of the morning Ivan Avdeyevich Groza was awakened last, told to hurry and get ready to go to the museum of local lore and escorted there. In the main room of the museum the sailor walked away from the lamps with the green shades towards Ivan Avdeyevich, extended his hand and said, “Recognize me, Ivan Avdeyevich?! Hi there, how’re you doing? We’re reading the shorthand reports here—you know, from when we put together the first five-year plan. You said then that there would still be epizootics. And there are. What do you have to say in your defense?”

“Hello. Yes, I recognize you. There were and there are, as I said.”

“Give us some advice, what do you have to say in your defense. You know, we arrested Nevelsky today...”

“Arrested?” Groza said, and smiled with all his gray hairs.

“Arrested,” the sailor replied. “That’s why I’m asking you what you have to say in your defense. After all, if you’d told us about Nevelsky four years ago maybe we wouldn’t have had to arrest him, or maybe we would have arrested him then—for the good of the effort. And you know what, you should be arrested for concealment of scoundrels. I mean, Comrade Trubachev asked you to be open with him! Think about it, old man. With that intellectual moral code of yours you’ll find yourself a saboteur. Can we believe you?”

“Yes.”

“Then prove it and don’t try to confuse us. State your attitude towards local veterinary practice and your views. Now, you aren’t going to stand up for Nevelsky, are you?”

In the museum it was very warm and bright. Beyond the museum lay a Russian settlement, the hinterland. The Mamais once roamed here, then there was a frontier fort. But when the bells were removed from the cathedral the locals said, "It won't work. Groza will be up in arms to say nothing of Laver Feodosovich Nevelsky." But the bells were removed and forgotten.

1937



Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940): prose writer and playwright. In *The Days of the Turbins* (1926) and *The White Guard* (1925-1927) on which the former was based Bulgakov vividly depicted the plight of the Russian intelligentsia, caught up in the cataclysmic changes brought on by the Revolution at the start of the century. He demonstrated the danger corruption posed to the new social system in three stories written in the 20s: *Heart of a Dog*, *Diaboliad* and *The Faithful Eggs*.

Bulgakov's life was marked by extreme adversity: his works were viciously attacked

by the critics, his plays were not staged or quickly removed from the repertoire, and his best novel, *The Master and Margarita*, was not published until 27 years after his death.

The excerpts from Mikhail Bulgakov's correspondence published in this anthology shed some light on the social environment in which he lived and worked, and will help the reader better understand and assess the writer's inner trials and unbroken sense of self-esteem.

Letters by Mikhail Bulgakov

Edited with an Afterword by Victor Losev

Secretary of the USSR C[entral] E[xecutive] C[ommittee]
AVEL SOFRONOVICH YENUKIDZE

As it is obvious that my works are totally unacceptable to the Soviet public,

as the total ban that has been declared on my works in the USSR spells my doom,

as my destruction as a writer has already had catastrophic financial consequences (documents can be produced to show that I have no savings, cannot pay my taxes and have nothing to live on as of next month).

Bearing in mind my tremendous exhaustion
and the fruitlessness of every attempt,

I ask the supreme body in the land—the USSR Central Executive Committee—

to permit me and my wife, Lyubov Yevgenievna Bulgakova, to go abroad for however long the Soviet Government sees fit.

Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov
(Author of *The Days of the Turbins*, *Flight*, etc.)

September 3, 1929
Moscow

A.M. Gorky
September 3, 1929

Dear Alexei Maximovich;

I have applied to the Government of the USSR for permission to leave the USSR, along with my wife, for however long it sees fit to allow.

Alexei Maximovich, please support my petition. I wanted to write you a detailed letter about what is happening to me, but my exhaustion and sense of futility are overwhelming. I cannot write anything.

Everything is banned, I am destitute, hounded and completely isolated.

Why force a writer to remain in a country where his works cannot exist? I ask that the humane decision be made—let me go.

Respectfully yours,
M. Bulgakov

I earnestly request acknowledgment of the receipt of this letter.

September 9, 1929

Dear Alexei Maximovich,

Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin informed me that you received my letter but desire to have a copy of it.

I do not have a copy, but this was roughly its substance:

“I have sent a letter to A.I. Svidersky asking the USSR Government to consider the intolerable position I find myself in and permit me and my wife, Lyubov Yevgenievna Bulgakova, to go abroad on vacation for however long the Government is pleased to allow.

“I wanted to write you in detail about what is happening to

me, but the overwhelming weariness I feel prevents me from working any more.

“One thing I can say: why do they detain a writer whose works cannot exist in the USSR? To condemn him to death?”

“I ask that the humane decision be made — let me go. I earnestly request that you intercede in my behalf.

“Please be so kind as to inform me whether you have received this letter.”

I would now like to add the following to the letter:

All my plays are banned,

not a single line of anything I have written is being published anywhere,

I do not have a single finished work, nor is a single kopeck of royalties coming in from anywhere,

not a single agency or individual has responded to my letters,

in short, everything I have written in 10 years of work in the USSR has been destroyed. All that remains is to destroy what is left — me. I ask that the humane decision be made — let me go!

Respectfully yours,

Mikhail Bulgakov

GOVERNMENT OF THE USSR

Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov

I address the following letter to the Government of the USSR.

1.

After all my works were banned, a chorus of voices arose from among the many citizens who know me as a writer offering this advice:

Write a “Communist play” (I quote), and furthermore send the Soviet Government a penitential letter recanting the views I have expressed in my literary works and pledging henceforth to work as a writer-fellow traveler dedicated to the idea of Communism.

The aim: to save myself from persecution, poverty and ultimate death.

I did not listen to this advice. It is highly unlikely that I would have succeeded in presenting myself to the Government of the USSR in a favorable light by writing a dishonest letter representing a sloppy and at the same time naive politi-

cal curvet. As for writing a Communist play I did not even attempt to do so, knowing full well that I could not bring it off.

My desire to bring my tribulations as a writer to an end has reached the point where I must send the Government of the USSR a truthful letter.

2.

Analyzing my album of clippings, I have discovered 301 commentaries on me in the Soviet press over the past 10 years. Of these 3 were complimentary while 298 were hostile and abusive.

The latter 298 mirror my life as a writer.

The hero of my play *The Days of the Turbins*, Alexei Turbin, was called a "SON OF A BITCH" in verse, while the play's author was characterized as "possessed by DOGGY DOT-AGE". I have been called a "literary CLEANER", who gathers up the mess after "a dozen guests have PUKED".

My critics have written:

"MISHKA Bulgakov, the godfather of my kid and a WRITER too, if you'll EXCUSE THE EXPRESSION, rummages around IN OLD GARBAGE... What kind of UGLY PUSS is that you've got, pal, I ask... I'm a tactful person, so I up and BASHED HIM IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD WITH A PAIL... The social lowbrow needs the Turbins like A DOG NEEDS A BRASSIERE... A SON OF A BITCH HAS MADE HIS APPEARANCE, A TURBIN, HERE'S HOPING IT'S A BOX OFFICE FLOP..." (*Zhizn i-kusstva*, No. 44, 1927).

They wrote "About Bulgakov, who is as he always was, A SPAWN OF THE NOUVEAU BOURGEOIS, spraying venomous but impotent spittle on the working class and its communist ideals" (*Koms. Pravda*, October 14, 1926).

They announced that I like "THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE RUT around some red-haired wife of a friend" (A. Lunacharsky, *Izvestia*, October 8, 1926), and that my play *The Days of the Turbins* "STINKS" (Shorthand record of an Agit-prop meeting in May 1927) et cetera, et cetera...

I hasten to add that I cite these comments not because I wish to complain about the criticism or engage in any kind of polemics. My aim is much more serious.

I am presenting documentary evidence to prove that the press of the USSR along with all the agencies entrusted with overseeing the repertoire, has throughout my literary career

unanimously and WITH UNUSUAL FURY argued that the works of Mikhail Bulgakov cannot exist in the USSR.

And I declare that the press of the USSR IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

3.

My satire *The Crimson Island* will serve as the starting point for this letter.

All the critics in the USSR without exception announced upon seeing the play that it was “inept, toothless, pathetic” and that it represented “a pasquinade on the revolution”.

The unanimity was complete, but then it was suddenly and quite astonishingly marred.

In issue 12 of *Repert. Byull.* (1928) a review by P. Novitsky appeared which announced that *The Crimson Island* was “an interesting and witty parody” in which “a sinister shadow is cast by the Grand Inquisitor, who crushes artistic creativity, cultivates SLAVISH, ABJECTLY RIDICULOUS DRAMATIC CLICHES, and obliterates the personality of the actor and writer”, that *The Crimson Island* concerns “a dark, sinister force that is molding HELOTS, TOADIES AND PANEGRYISTS...”

The review said that “if such a dark force exists THE INDIGNATION AND ACID WIT OF THIS DRAMATIST CELEBRATED BY THE BOURGEOISIE IS JUSTIFIED”.

Where does the truth lie, one might ask?

What is *The Crimson Island* ultimately—“a pathetic inept play” or “a witty satire”?

The truth lies with Novitsky’s review. I do not presume to judge how witty my play is, but I admit that a sinister shadow is cast in the play and that shadow is cast by the Glavrepertkom [Chief Repertoire Committee]. It is molding helots, panegyrists and cowed “servants”. It is killing creativity. It is playing havoc with Soviet drama and will be the ruin of it.

I did not whisper these thoughts in a corner. I put them into a theatrical satire and staged it. The press of the USSR, taking the part of the Glavrepertkom, wrote that *The Crimson Island* is a pasquinade on the revolution. That is silly prattle. The play does not contain a pasquinade on the revolution for many reasons, of which, for lack of space, I will name just one: it is IMPOSSIBLE to write a pasquinade on the revolution due to its extraordinary enormity. A satire is not a pasquinade, the Glavrepertkom is not the revolution.

But when the German press writes that *The Crimson Island* is “the first call in the USSR for freedom of the press” (*Molodaya gvardia*, No. 1, 1929) it is speaking the truth. I admit it. Combating censorship of whatever kind and under whatever system of government is my duty as a writer, as is calling for freedom of the press. I am an ardent advocate of that freedom, and think that any writer who took it into his head to prove he did not need it would resemble a fish publicly claiming not to need water.

4.

That is one feature of my work and it alone is quite sufficient to deny my plays and stories the right to exist in the USSR. But all the other features my satires reveal are related to the first: the dark, mystical tones (I am a MYSTICAL WRITER) I use to depict the innumerable ugly features of our daily lives, the venom my tongue is saturated with, the profound scepticism I feel towards the revolutionary process occurring in my backward country contrasted with Great Evolution, which I hold so dear, and, most importantly, the depiction of the horrid traits of my countrymen, the same traits that caused my teacher, M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, the most profound suffering long before the revolution.

Needless to say, the press of the USSR did not even consider giving this serious thought, busy as it was making unconvincing announcements that M. Bulgakov’s satire was “LIBELOUS”.

Just once, early in my fame, was it noted with a touch of haughty surprise:

“M. Bulgakov WANTS to become the satirist of our age” (*Knigonosha*, No. 6, 1925).

Alas, the present tense of the verb “want” was a poor choice. It should be placed in the present perfect: M. Bulgakov HAS BECOME A SATIRIST and at the very time when no genuine satire (encroaching on taboo areas) is at all thinkable in the USSR.

It did not fall to me to express this criminal thought in the press. It was expressed quite clearly in an article by V. Blum (No. 6, *Lit. Gaz.*), and the message of that article is brilliantly and aptly paraphrased by the formula:

ANY SATIRIST IN THE USSR IS A THREAT TO THE SOVIET SYSTEM.

Do I have a place in the USSR?

5.

And, finally, the last feature of my work revealed by the plays *The Days of the Turbins* and *Flight*, which have perished, and the novel *The White Guard*: the persistent depiction of the Russian intelligentsia as the best social strata in our country. In particular, the depiction, in the tradition of *War and Peace*, of an intelligentsia-gentry family thrown by immutable historical forces into the White Guard camp during the Civil War. This is a very natural perspective for a writer with intimate ties to the intelligentsia.

But the upshot for the author, like his characters, is that, despite his great efforts TO VIEW THE REDS AND WHITES IMPARTIALLY, he is certified a White Guard enemy and from that moment on, as is clear to everyone, he can consider himself a finished man in the USSR.

6.

My literary portrait is complete. It is a political portrait as well. I cannot say what degree of criminality it reveals, but I ask one thing: do not look beyond it for anything. It has been executed quite conscientiously.

7.

I have been destroyed.

My destruction was greeted by the Soviet public with unqualified joy and called an "ACCOMPLISHMENT".

Noting my destruction (*Izv.*, Sept. 15, 1929), R. Pikel expressed a liberal thought:

"We must reluctantly say that Bulgakov's name has been struck from the list of Soviet playwrights."

And encouraged the slain writer with the words that "what is in question are his past dramatic works".

However, reality in the form of the Glavrepertkom, showed R. Pikel's optimism to be completely unfounded.

On March 18, 1930, I received a letter from the Glavrepertkom laconically informing me not that one of my old works but that my new play, *A Cabal of Hypocrites (Molière)*, was BANNED FROM PRODUCTION.

In short, two lines on official letterhead buried library research, my imagination and a play that has been called brilliant by innumerable qualified theater people.

R. Pikel is mistaken. Not only have my past works perished. So have my present works and all my future ones. And with my

own hands I, personally, threw the draft of a novel about the devil, the draft of a comedy and the beginning of a second novel, *Theater*, into the stove.

There is no hope for any of my things.

8.

I ask the Soviet Government to bear in mind that I am a writer, not a political figure, and have given everything I have produced to the Soviet stage.

I ask that the following two comments on me in the Soviet press be noted.

Both come from implacable foes of my works, which makes them particularly valuable.

In 1925 it was said:

“A writer has appeared WHO DOES NOT EVEN DISGUISE HIMSELF IN THE COLORS OF A FELLOW TRAVELER” (L. Averbach, *Izv.*, Sept. 20, 1925).

While in 1929:

“His talent is as obvious as the social reactionism of his work” (R. Pikel, *Izv.*, Sept. 15, 1929).

I ask the Government to bear in mind that for me not being able to write is tantamount to being buried alive.

9.

I ASK THE GOVERNMENT OF THE USSR TO ISSUE AN ORDER ALLOWING ME TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WITHOUT DELAY IN THE COMPANY OF MY WIFE, LYUBOV YEVGENIEVNA BULGAKOVA.

10.

I appeal to the humanity of Soviet government and ask that I, a writer who cannot be of any use in my homeland, magnanimously be set free.

11.

If what I have written is unpersuasive and I am condemned to a lifetime of silence in the USSR, I ask the Soviet Government to give me a job in my field and assign me to a theater full-time as a director.

I particularly and expressly and emphatically ask for A CATEGORIC ORDER, AN ASSIGNMENT, as all my attempts to find work in the only field where I can be of use to the USSR, as an exceptionally well-qualified professional, have

been an utter fiasco. My name has been made so odious that the offering of my services inspires FRIGHT, even though my theatrical expertise is perfectly well known to enormous numbers of actors and directors along with playhouse managers in Moscow.

I offer the USSR a completely honest, professional director and actor without a shadow of evil intent who will conscientiously undertake to stage any play from Shakespeare's plays to the plays of today.

I ask to be appointed assistant director at the 1st Arts Theater—the best school, headed by the masters K.S. Stanislavsky and V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko.

If I am not given an appointment as a director, I request a permanent position as an extra. And if I may not be an extra, I request a job as a stagehand.

If that, too, is impossible, I ask the Soviet Government to do with me as it sees fit, but to do something because I, a dramatist who has written 5 plays and is known in the USSR and abroad, am faced AT THIS MOMENT with destitution, the street and death.

M. Bulgakov

Moscow

March 28, 1930

GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CPSU(B)
J.V. STALIN

*I give the Muse a voice again,
And you recover blessed hours
And once more gather in the grain
From land whose unreaped crops are yours.*

Nekrasov

INTRODUCTION

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich;

Approximately a year and a half have passed since I fell silent. Now, when I sense that I am gravely ill, I would like to ask you to be my first reader...

[early 1931]

GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE C[entral] C[ommittee of
the] CPSU(B)
JOSEPH VISSARIONOVICH STALIN

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich;

“As time went by my desire to be a modern writer grew in strength. But I also saw that I could not depict contemporary life and remain in the uplifted and calm state necessary to create a large, well-balanced work.

“The present is too vivid, too astir, too irritating; *the writer's pen slides imperceptibly into satire.*

“...I have always had the sense that some great self-sacrifice lay ahead for me and that in order to serve my country *I should be bred somewhere far from it.*

“...I knew only that I was going by no means to delight in foreign lands, but rather to endure. It was precisely as though I foresaw that I would only learn the value of Russia outside Russia and come to love her when I was far away.

Nikolai Gogol”

I fervently ask that you intercede with the Government of the USSR in my behalf with a request that I be granted a foreign vacation from 1 July to 1 October 1931.

I would like to tell you that after a year and a half of silence new ideas for works have come to me with irrepressible force. These ideas are broad and powerful, and I ask the Government to give me a chance to bring them to fruition.

Since late 1930 I have been suffering from a severe form of neurasthenia involving attacks of anxiety and depression, and as matters stand now I am finished.

I have ideas but neither the physical strength nor the conditions I need to work.

The reason for my illness is well known to me:

In the broad field of Russian letters in the USSR I was the lone literary wolf. I was advised to dye my coat. It was absurd advice. Dye its fur or cut it, a wolf will still not look like a poodle.

And I was treated like a wolf. For several years I was chased round a fenced yard according to the rules of the literary ambush.

I do not bear any ill will, but I became very tired and in late 1929 I collapsed. Even a beast can tire.

The beast declared that he was no longer a wolf, no longer a

writer. He turned his back on his profession. He lapsed into silence. Frankly, it was a faint-hearted act.

No writer can fall silent. If he does he was not a writer in the first place.

And if a real writer falls silent he will perish.

My illness was caused by years of hounding and then silence.

In the past year I have done the following:

adapted N. Gogol's poem *Dead Souls* for the stage despite tremendous difficulties

worked as a director at the Moscow Arts Theater during the rehearsals of that play

stood in for actors taken ill during those rehearsals

was assigned by the Moscow Arts Theater to direct all the campaigns and revolution celebrations this year

worked at the Young Workers' Theater in Moscow, going from daytime work at MAT to evening work at YWT

left YWT on March 15, 1931, when I felt that my brain was failing me and I was not benefiting YWT

took on a play at the Sanprosvet Theater (it will be finished by July).

And nights I began to write.

But I overstrained myself.

I am exhausted.

Now my impressions are one of a kind, my ideas are enveloped in black, and I am poisoned by melancholy and habitual irony.

Throughout my writing career every citizen, Party member or not, has impressed upon me that from the moment I wrote and published my first line to the end of my days I would never see another country.

If that is so then I have been cut off from the horizon, barred from the supreme school of writing, deprived of the chance to resolve huge questions for myself. The mentality of the prisoner has been fostered.

How shall I sing of my country – the USSR?

Before writing you I weighed everything in my mind. I need to see the world, and, having seen it, to return. That is the key.

I must tell you, Joseph Vissarionovich, that important figures in the arts who have traveled abroad have warned me in all earnestness that I would find it impossible to remain there.

I have been warned that in the event the government opens the door for me I must be extremely careful to avoid somehow unintentionally cutting off the way back and bringing a disaster down on my head worse than the banning of my plays.

In the opinion of everyone who has taken a serious interest in my work I have no place in any other land than my own, the USSR, because it has been the wellspring of my writing for 11 years.

I am sensitive to these warnings, and the weightiest of them came from my wife, who has been abroad. When I asked to be exiled she declared that she did not wish to become an expatriate and that I would die of homesickness in less than a year.

(I myself have never been abroad, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* to the contrary.)

“The Soviet theater does not need that kind of Bulgakov,” moralized one critic when I was banned.

I do not know if the Soviet theater needs me, but I need the Soviet theater like air to breathe.

I ask the Government of the USSR to let me go until the fall and to permit my wife, Lyubov Yevgenievna Bulgakova, to accompany me. I make the second request because I am seriously ill. I need to be accompanied by someone close to me. I suffer from anxiety attacks when alone.

If any additional explanations beyond those provided in this letter are needed I will give them to whomever asks to see me.

But, in concluding this letter, I would like to tell you, Joseph Vissarionovich, that my dream as a writer is to be asked to go and see you personally.

Believe me, it is not just because I see it as the best opportunity, but because the talk we had when you called in April 1930 left a sharp impression on me.

You said, “Maybe you really do need to go abroad...”

I am not spoiled by telephone calls. Touched by that phrase, I have worked conscientiously as a director in the theaters of the USSR.

M. Bulgakov

May 30, 1931
Moscow

COMRADE STALIN

*from the playwright and director in the
Gorky Moscow Arts Theater of the
USSR company,
Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov*

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich;

Allow me to inform of what has happened to me:

1.

In late April of this year I sent a letter to the Chairman of the Government Commission in charge of the Arts Theater requesting permission to take a two-month trip abroad together with my wife, Yelena Sergeevna Bulgakova.

In the letter I indicated the purpose of my trip—I wanted to put together a book on a journey through Western Europe (in order to offer it for publication in the USSR upon my return).

As I really do suffer from nervous exhaustion related to a fear of being alone I requested permission for my wife to accompany me in order that she could leave for two months my seven year old stepson, whom I am supporting and rearing.

Having sent the letter I expected one of two answers, either permission for the trip or refusal, believing that there could be no third alternative.

However, something I had not foreseen occurred, in other words, I received a third answer.

On May 17 I received a telephone call and the following conversation occurred:

“Did you request to make a trip abroad?”

“Yes.”

“Go to the Foreign Department of the Moscow Gubernia Executive Committee and fill out application forms for you and your wife.”

“When do I need to do this?”

“As soon as possible because your case will be considered on the 21st or 22nd.”

In my joy I did not even ask with whom I was speaking, but hurried down to the Executive Committee Foreign Department with my wife and presented myself. When the clerk heard that I had been summoned to the Foreign Department by telephone he asked me to wait, went into the next room

and upon returning asked me to fill out the forms.

Once the forms were filled out, he took them and attached two photographs to each, but refused to accept any money, saying, "There will be no charge for the passports."

He would not take our internal passports, saying, "That comes later, when you receive your passports for foreign travel."

Then he said these very words: "*You will receive your passports very soon because we already have instructions concerning you. You could have them today, but it's late now. Call me on the morning of the 18th.*"

I said, "But the 18th is not a working day."

To which he replied, "Well, the 19th then."

On the morning of the 19th, in response to our call, we were told, "The passports still haven't come. Call at the end of the day. If they are ready the passport girl will give them to you."

When we called at the end of the day the passports had not come, and it was suggested that we call on the 23rd.

On May 23 my wife and I appeared personally at the Foreign Department, where we learned that the passports had not come. One of the clerks made inquiries over the telephone and then suggested that we call on either the 25th or the 27th of May.

At this point I became suspicious and asked the clerk if there really were instructions concerning me or had I misunderstood on May 17?

In reply I was told, "You yourself understand that I can't tell you whose instructions they are, *but there are instructions regarding you and your wife*, just as there are regarding the writer Pilnyak."

Whatever doubts I had faded and my joy knew no bounds.

This was soon followed by another confirmation that instructions concerning me existed. I was informed at the Theater that someone at the secretariat of the Central Executive Committee had said, "The Bulgakov matter is working out."

At the time I was congratulated that the dream of years had come true: I was to make the trip essential to any writer.

Meanwhile, the Executive Committee Foreign Department continued to put off giving any answer regarding the passports from one day to the next. By now I took this quite equably, believing that no matter how long they put it off the passports would eventually be issued.

On June 7 the Arts Theater courier went to the Foreign Department with a list of actors who were to receive passports for

foreign travel. The Theater kindly added me and my wife to the list, even though I had not made my application under the Theater's auspices.

In the afternoon the courier returned, and just by looking at the expression of dismay and bewilderment on his face I could tell that something had happened.

The courier said that he had been given the passports for the actors, they were in his pocket, but as far as my wife and I were concerned we had been REFUSED passports.

On the very next day, without further delay, the Foreign Department was given written notification that citizen M.A. Bulgakov had been refused the right to travel outside the country.

After that I left for home, to avoid hearing the expressions of regret, surprise, and so on. All I understood was that I found myself in a distressing and comical situation not of my years.

2.

The insult done me at the Foreign Department of the Moscow Regional Executive Committee is all the more grievous as my four years at the Moscow Arts Theater offer no grounds for it, so I ask you to intercede.

[June 10, 1934]

JOSEPH VISSARIONOVICH STALIN

*from the playwright
Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov*

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich;

Allow me to make a request concerning the playwright Nikolai Robertovich Erdman, who has completed the three years of his exile in the cities of Yeniseisk and Tomsk, and currently resides in Kalinin.

Convinced that literary talent is exceptionally valued in our country, and knowing at the same time that the writer N. Erdman has been deprived of the chance to make use of his abilities due to the negative attitude that has formed towards him and been strongly expressed in the press, I take the liberty of asking you to concern yourself with his fate.

Hopeful that the lot of N. Erdman will be mitigated, if you feel obliged to consider this request, I fervently ask that N.

Erdman be given the opportunity to return to Moscow and do his literary work freely as he recovers from feelings of loneliness and depression.

M. Bulgakov

February 4, 1938

Moscow

* * *

Publications of recent years have provided a fairly detailed picture of Bulgakov's situation in the late 20s and early 30s. It was distressing in every sense: his fiction was not published, his plays were not performed and he was deprived of the work he loved at the Moscow Arts Theater. The persecution he was subjected to was methodical, cruel and vulgar. By the writer's own count, 298 out of 301 reviews of his work were "hostile and abusive". Among the papers in the Mikhail Bulgakov archives is a scrapbook containing examples of this Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) output. Here are a few.

"The stories of M. Bulgakov are integral and restrained, one in mood and one in theme. That theme is the despiriting senselessness, confusion and worthlessness of Soviet life, the chaos born of communist attempts to build a new society... A writer has appeared who does not even disguise himself in the colors of a fellow traveler. Not only our critics and bibliographers, but our publishing houses should be *on their guard*, and that goes all the more for Glavlit [the Chief Censor]" (Leopold Averbach, September 20, 1925).

"Bulgakovism of every kind or full-blooded Soviet subjects? That is the question the Moscow Arts Theater faces on this, its thirtieth anniversary!" (O. Litovsky, October 27, 1926).

"The flight backwards must be stopped... The staging of *Flight* is an attempt to drag White Guard apologetics into the Soviet theater, onto the Soviet stage, to show ... the Soviet audience an icon of the great White Guard martyrs painted by a *mediocre* dauber" (I. Bachelis, October 23, 1928).

"Strike a blow to Bulgakovism!" (I. Kor, November 15, 1928).

It should be noted that criticisms of Bulgakov and other writers were also made by members of workers' organizations and economic managers, who thought modern literature had little of worth to offer the working masses. For instance, Varlaam Avanesov, a well-known Bolshevik and one of the heads of the

National Supreme Economic Council in the 1920s, wrote: "I almost never read modern Russian literature, but I must frankly say that in those odd moments when I do glance through a specimen of it I can never find anything that would satisfy me, let alone be of the least benefit to the workers and peasants of the USSR." As examples he cited works by Bulgakov and Pilnyak, which the proletariat would, in his opinion, scarcely be able to derive "any edification" from.

In the early months of 1929 when, despite the opposition of the Glavrepertkom [Chief Repertoire Committee], the Moscow Arts Theater was furiously rehearsing Bulgakov's new play, *Flight*, Joseph Stalin read it and in his "Reply to Bill-Byelotserkovsky" expressed his opinion of Bulgakov's works for the stage:

"C[omrade] Bill-Byelotserkovsky;

"It has taken me a long time to write you. But better late than never.

"(1) I think the question of 'right-wingers' and 'left-wingers' in fiction (and thus in the theater) is formulated incorrectly. At the present time in our country the 'right' and 'left' are concepts that apply to the Party, specifically the Party's internal affairs. 'Right-wingers' or 'left-wingers' are people who diverge in one or the other direction from the pure Party line. It would therefore be strange to employ these concepts in such a non-Party and incomparably broader realm as fiction, the theater, etc. These concepts can be applied to one or another Party (Communist) circle in fiction. Within such a circle there could be 'right-wingers' and 'left-wingers'. But employing them in fiction at the present stage of its development, where all kinds of trends are evident, even anti-Soviet and outright counter-revolutionary trends, means turning every concept on its head. It would be most accurate to operate with concepts of a *class* order in fiction, or even concepts like 'Soviet', 'anti-Soviet', 'revolutionary', 'anti-revolutionary', etc.

"(2) Thus it follows that I cannot regard 'Golovanovism'¹ as either a 'right-wing' or 'left-wing' menace—it is beyond the bounds of Party trends. 'Golovanovism' is a phenomenon of an anti-Soviet order. This, naturally, does not mean that Golovanov cannot mend his ways, that he cannot free himself of his mistakes, that he has to be persecuted and hounded even when he is ready to bid his mistakes good-bye, that he has to be thus forced to leave the country.

"Or take Bulgakov's *Flight*, which also cannot be regarded as

evidence of a menace from the 'left' or the 'right'. *Flight* is evidence of an attempt to rouse pity, if not sympathy, for certain groups of anti-Soviet emigrés—consequently it is an attempt to justify or partly justify the White Guard cause. *Flight* in its present form is an anti-Soviet phenomenon.

“That said, I would have nothing against a *Flight* production if Bulgakov added to his eight dreams one or two more showing the internal social mainsprings of the civil war in the USSR so that the theater-goer would realize that all those Seraphims and privat docents, though ‘honest’ in their own way, were kicked out of Russia not on the whim of the Bolsheviks, but because they had lived off the people (their ‘honesty’ notwithstanding), that in packing off all those ‘honest’ supporters of exploitation the Bolsheviks were carrying out the will of the workers and peasants and so what they did was absolutely correct.

“(3) Why are Bulgakov’s plays produced so often? The reason is probably that we don’t have enough plays *of our own* that are fit to be put on. Even *The Days of the Turbins* is better than nothing. Of course, it is very easy to ‘criticize’ and demand a ban on non-proletarian literature. But the easiest way must not be taken for the best. It is not a ban that is in question, but driving the old and new non-proletarian pulp literature from the stage step by step, through competition, by creating genuine, interesting and aesthetically satisfying plays, Soviet in nature, capable of replacing the pulp. Competition is an important, serious matter, for only through competition will we be able to achieve the formation and crystallization of our proletarian literature.

“As far as *The Days of the Turbins* itself is concerned, it’s not that bad since it does more good than harm. Do not forget that the main impression the theater-goer comes away with is one favorable to the Bolsheviks: ‘If even people like the Turbins were forced to lay down their arms and bow to the will of the people once they realized that their cause was completely lost then the Bolsheviks must be unconquerable, you can’t do anything about them.’ *The Days of the Turbins* is a demonstration of the all-conquering power of Bolshevism.

“Of course, the author is not in the least ‘to blame’ for this demonstration. But what do we care?

“(4) It is true that Comrade Svidersky² is guilty of the most incredible errors and distortions pretty often. But it is also true that the Repertkom is guilty of just as many errors, though in the other direction. Recall *The Crimson Island, A Conspiracy of*

*Equals*³ and similar pulp, which for some reason is readily permitted the genuinely bourgeois Chamber Theater.

“(5) As far as ‘rumors’ of ‘liberalism’ are concerned, I think they’re best passed over in silence – let’s leave ‘rumors’ to the wives of Moscow’s merchants.

J. Stalin

February 2, 1929⁴

Naturally, that sealed *Flight*’s fate, and it was only in 1957, many years after Bulgakov’s death, that the play was first performed. One by one, Bulgakov’s other plays began to disappear from the bill – *Zoika’s Apartment*, *The Crimson Island*, *The Days of the Turbins*. Then in late 1929 the dramatist was officially notified by the Glavrepertkom that all his plays were banned from production.

Outwardly, Bulgakov remained calm during this extremely difficult period. Attacks by critics never elicited any response from him. In a letter to the editor of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* by Yelena Bulgakova pointing out gross errors in the biographical essay on Bulgakov in the first edition of the *GSE*, she stressed, “He [Bulgakov] did not write to the editors of the *GSE* in refutation because the whole essay was in keeping with the attitude taken towards his work at the time by the literary circles led by L. Averbach, V. Kirshon, R. Pikel, F. Raskolnikov, V. Blum et al., and M.A. Bulgakov never responded to any of their publications or newspaper articles on principle.”

He continued to work productively, well served by inspiration and talent. He began “a novel about the devil” and wrote both the autobiographical story *To a Secret Friend* and a play about Molière. But what it cost him at a time when he was so despondent that he even sensed his death was imminent is revealed in letters to his brother, Nikolai.

On August 24, 1929, he wrote:

“Now I must tell you, my brother, that things are not well with me. All my plays have been banned from production in the USSR, and not one line of my fiction is being published.

“In 1929 my destruction as a writer was brought to completion. I made my last effort and wrote the Government of the USSR a letter asking that my wife and I be allowed to go abroad for any length of time. Deep down I have no hope... A grim rumor is already slithering around me that I am doomed in every sense... If my request is rejected the game can be considered over, the cards gathered up and the candles snuffed out.

“I will have to sit in Moscow and not write, because they can’t even look at my name with indifference, let alone my writings. I am not being at all faint-hearted when I tell you, my brother, that my death is just a matter of time, if, of course, a miracle doesn’t occur. But miracles rarely happen.

“Please, please write and say whether or not you understood this letter, but under no circumstances write me *any words of comfort and sympathy* or else my wife will worry.

“So now I have written you a more ample letter.

“It does not bode well that I felt tired this spring and was overcome by apathy. There are limits, you know...”

January 16, 1930:

“...I earnestly beg you not be angry at the gaps between letters. Please, write more often. Please, don’t fall silent. The reason for this most recent delay in replying is that my situation has worsened and so I could not tell you what and how to write.

“Here is the news about me:

“All my literary works have perished and so have my plans. I have been condemned to silence and quite possibly to complete starvation. Despite extreme difficulties I wrote a play about Molière in the second half of 1929. The best people in the field in Moscow declared it to be the strongest of my five plays. But all the facts suggest that it will not be allowed to be staged. My tribulations with it have gone on for a month and a half now, even though it is Molière, the 17th century, even though I didn’t touch on a single modern theme in it.

“If this play perishes I will have no means of saving myself – I am already *in distress*. There is nowhere I can turn to for protection and aid. I am quite rational in telling you that my ship is sinking, the water is rising towards me on the bridge. I must bravely drown. Please believe what I say ... I can’t take any more, I’m not in any shape to work. It’s very hard...”

February 21, 1930:

“One thought oppresses me and that is that we will evidently never see one another again. My life has been a tangled and frightening affair. Now it seems I am fated to fall silent, and for a writer that is tantamount to death.

I have a question in response to yours: are you interested in my literary work? If you are in the least ... listen to the following and if you can with understanding:

“I tried to perform my task as a writer properly despite extreme difficulties. Currently my work has been brought to a standstill. I represent a complicated (as I understand it) ma-

chine whose output the USSR does not need. That is all too clear to me. They argued that before and are arguing it now with regard to my play about Molière. Nights I rack my brain trying to come up with some means of saving myself. But I can't see any. Who else, I think, can I write to?.. On March 15 I will have to make my first payment to the inspector of finances (income tax for last year). If a miracle does not occur, probably not a single object will remain in my tiny and downright dank apartment (incidentally, I have been suffering from rheumatism for several years now). I don't care that much about things. Chairs, cups – to heck with them. But my books! My library is poor, but even so I'm finished without books. When I work I work very seriously – I have to read a lot."

But a new blow was in store for Bulgakov: on March 18, 1930, he received notification from the Glavrepertkom that his latest work – the play about Molière (*A Cabal of Hypocrites*) – had not been approved for production.

Several days later, on March 28, Bulgakov sent off his letter to the Government.

That letter will clearly be of the utmost interest to Bulgakov scholars for years to come. It is a literary and political portrait of the writer, as he himself said. I would like to draw attention to the following elements of that portrait. We have before us a man of integrity and considerable personal bravery whom nothing will compel to become "a helot, panegyrist and cowed servant".

S. Liandres is correct in saying, "Today we can understand and forgive Bulgakov's sharp tone as that of a man driven to extremes, but we also cannot but see his desire to serve his country." In the letter Bulgakov openly declares, "I offer the USSR a completely honest, professional director and actor without a shadow of evil intent who will conscientiously undertake to stage any play from Shakespeare's plays to the plays of today."

This attitude is borne out by the following incident. After acquainting himself with the translation he had been sent of *Zoika's Apartment*, which was to be staged in Paris, and discovering various mistranslations distorting the meaning, Bulgakov wrote to his brother: "First, I ask you in all seriousness to personally check the French text of *Zoika* and tell me that no distortions or additions of an anti-Soviet nature have been made or will be by the producers, as that would be quite unacceptable and unpleasant for me, as a citizen of the USSR. That is what is most important."

On April 18, soon after Bulgakov sent off his letter to the Government, Stalin called him.

This is how the event was described by Lyubov Bulgakova-Belozerskaya.⁵ “First about the telephone call from Stalin. When the phone rang I answered it. It was Stalin’s secretary, Tovstukha, from the Party Central Committee. I called M[ikhail] A[fnasievich] to the phone and started doing some housework. M[ikhail] A[fnasievich] picked up the receiver and not long afterwards shouted ‘Lyubasha!’ so loudly and nervously that I dashed headlong for the telephone (there were headphones attached). I am now the one and only person who heard that conversation. Stalin was on the line. He spoke in a muffled voice with a pronounced Georgian accent and referred to himself in the third person. He suggested to Bulgakov – maybe you’d like to go abroad?”

A more detailed account of that conversation is provided in the memoirs of Yelena Bulgakova.⁶ “When I became acquainted with them [the Bulgakovs] ... they were in difficult financial straits. Which is to say nothing of M[ikhail] A[fnasievich]’s terrible despondency... Then he wrote a letter to the Government... On April 3, when I happened to be at M.A.’s place on Pirogovskaya, F. Knorre and I. Sokolov (the former was the YWT literary director, I believe, and the latter was the manager) came by and entreated M.A. to take a directing job at YWT... Then on April 18 at around 6 or 7 in the evening he came running over to the apartment Shilovsky and I shared on Bolshoi Rzhnevsky, quite excited, and related the following: he had just lain down for his nap after dinner when the telephone rang and Lyuba [Belozerskaya] told him that it was the Central Committee.

“M.A. did not believe her and decided that it was a practical joke (such things happened then). Dishevelled and irritated, he picked up the receiver and heard, ‘Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov?’

“‘That’s right.’

“‘One moment, please. Comrade Stalin would like to speak with you.’

“‘What? Stalin? Stalin?’

“Right then he heard a voice with a pronounced Georgian accent: ‘Yes, this is Stalin. Hello, Comrade Bulgakov’ (or ‘Mikhail Afanasievich’ – I do not remember exactly).

“‘Hello, Joseph Vissarionovich.’

“‘We received your letter. The comrades and I read it. You

will receive a favorable reply... But maybe it's true—do you want to go abroad? What, are you really fed up with us?"

"(M.A. said that the question came so unexpectedly—the phone call itself was unexpected—that he lost his head and did not answer straightaway): 'I've thought a lot lately about whether a Russian writer can live outside his homeland,' he finally said. 'I think not.'

"You are right. I am of your opinion. Where is it you want to work? At the Arts Theater?"

"Yes, I'd like to. But I spoke with them about it and was turned down.'

"Put in an application there. I think they'll take you on. You and I will have to meet and talk.'

"Yes! I really need to talk to you, Joseph Vissarionovich.'

"Yes, we must find a time and meet, absolutely. But in the meantime I wish you all the best."

After the call from Stalin, Bulgakov was hired as a director at the Moscow Arts Theater. Evenings he worked at the Young Workers' Theater. Soon he had completed an adaptation of Gogol's poem *Dead Souls*. The best evidence of the writer's mood and the changes for the better that had taken place are provided in his letters to Konstantin Stanislavsky. Of particular interest is the letter of August 6, 1930, in which he says:

"Dear Konstantin Sergeevich;

"I write you these simple, informal lines having returned from the Crimea where I went to cure my ailing nerves after the past two, very difficult years.

"The banning of all my plays compelled me to write a letter to the Government of the USSR asking to be sent abroad if it was not possible for me to work as a playwright any more, or to be given an opportunity to become a director in a theater in the USSR.

"There is only one Theater, the best Theater. You know it well.

"This is how I put it in my letter to the Government: 'I ask to be sent to the best school, headed by the masters K.S. Stanislavsky and V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko.' My letter was heeded and I was given an opportunity to apply to the Arts Theater and be taken on.

"After the despondency that came to seeing my plays perish I felt better when, after a long absence and in the new capacity of director, I stepped over the threshold of the Theater you created for the glory of the country.

“Konstantin Sergeyeovich, please accept your new director with an untroubled heart. Believe that he loves the Arts Theater.”

Matters would seem to have worked out well for Bulgakov. Nevertheless, he did not find peace. The euphoria of the first months after talking with Stalin and obtaining work in the theater was replaced by confusion and depression. His poor health and extreme exhaustion told. But the most important cause of his low spirits was the uncertainty of his position as a playwright. As before, not one of his plays was being performed. Not one line appeared in print.

Again he got the idea of writing to Stalin and straightforwardly stating his case. Apparently Bulgakov had in mind a long and detailed letter in which he intended to set forth his views on writing, the writer, and his lofty purpose. Evidence of this is provided by the start of the letter dated early 1931 with the epigraph from Nekrasov. It is hard to say why it was never finished. Perhaps the author was afraid of being misunderstood.

But as time went on there was no sign of brightening on the literary horizon, his spirits fell still further (“I am poisoned by melancholy”), and the strength to work failed him. There were events of a personal, marital nature, too... All this prompted Bulgakov to write a letter to Stalin in May 1931 asking to be sent abroad for two or three months.

But the letter’s main theme remains, as before, the writer’s calling and the tragedy of enforced silence: “No writer can fall silent. If he does he was not a writer in the first place. And if a real writer falls silent he will perish.”

There is also a second theme related to the first—service to one’s country: “I have no place in any other land than my own, the USSR,” and further on, “I do not know if the Soviet theater needs me, but I need the Soviet theater like air to breathe.”

Stalin did not reply to the letter, nor did Bulgakov receive permission to go abroad, but towards the end of the year things began to look up for Bulgakov’s literary career. In October 1931 *Molière* was approved for production and rehearsals began in March of the following year. In early 1932 he received a call from the Moscow Arts Theater informing him that *The Days of the Turbins* was to be revived. “It’s unpleasant to admit,” Bulgakov wrote to his friend Pavel Popov⁷ after learning of the revival, “that the news overwhelmed me. I felt physically ill. There was a surge of joy but it was immediately followed by a surge of melancholy. My heart, my heart!” Yes, the heart was tired of waiting...

The thought of travel abroad did not desert Bulgakov: it was associated in his mind with new plans, a change of scene and a chance to regain his health. In the letter to Popov he wrote, "I talked to Lyusia [Lyubov] long ago about the kind of journey I could write about! And I recalled the unforgettable *Frigate "Pallada"* and how Grigorovich rolled into Paris eighty years ago! Oh, if it could only happen!"

In late April 1934 Bulgakov made a request for two months abroad. Perhaps his optimism was based on a degree of attention from the "top leadership". Yelena Bulgakova's diary contains this entry for March 27, 1934: "This afternoon I went by MAT to get M[ikhail] A[fanasievich]. While I was waiting for him in the hall ... Nikolai Vas[ilyevich] Yegorov⁸ came up to me and said that Stalin had been at the theater a few days ago and asked in passing about Bulgakov, was he working at the Theater?"

"I can vouch, Ye[lena] S[ergeyevna], that the opinion among the members of the Government is that *The Days of the Turbins* is the best play."

The unexpected refusal of permission to go abroad literally stunned the Bulgakovs. For more than a month they were unable to recover. "That shock was a dandy!" Bulgakov wrote to Popov on July 6, 1934.

Bulgakov expressed his indignation at the crass, bureaucratic refusal to issue passports in a letter to Stalin. Yelena Bulgakova refers to it in her diary. "July 20 [1934]: M.A. is in very bad shape... [He] wrote a letter about it all to Stalin and I took it to the Central Committee." No reply was forthcoming.

It should be noted that Bulgakov did not just address Stalin with his own problems, but helped other writers. On October 30, 1935, Anna Akhmatova turned to him after her husband and son were arrested, and together they composed a letter to Stalin.

Thus, in February 1938 Bulgakov asked Stalin to "mitigate the lot" of the playwright Nikolai Erdman, who had been his friend in recent years. Yelena Bulgakova's diaries often contain entries such as: "Misha [Mikhail] decided to write a letter to Stalin", "Today Misha resolved to write a letter about his lot as a writer", "Misha is working on a letter to Stalin", etc. Unfortunately, not all of these are preserved in the Bulgakov archives. Scholars have a big job ahead of them in opening up this special and very important epistolary legacy.



I made Marc Chagall's acquaintance quite by chance. In 1969 a large illustrated book on the work of Martiros Saryan I edited came out. I asked Saryan which of his old friends he would like me to send a copy to. He sighed, spread his hands in sad resignation and said, "Last year I buried Pavel Kuznetsov and he would seem to be the last artist of my generation. Except for Marc Chagall, who's living in France. We once knew each other well." I learned Chagall's address in Saint Paul de Vans and sent him the book, never hoping for a response, of course. To my very great surprise, though, I soon received a short letter — lively, witty and marked throughout by a pro-

found interest in the Soviet art world. Thus our correspondence began. It continued almost until Chagall's death in March 1985. I told him the art news here and, of course, that he was remembered and loved in the USSR. Later I sent articles and chapters from a book on his work, which I recently finished. Chagall mainly wrote of his memories of Russia and his undying love for his homeland. Here are a few extracts from his letters: "I will never forget my visit to Moscow, it was as if I'd never left" (July 1973). "It made me happy to be at home — to see so many good people, and the scenery was charming" (January 1974). "Yes, I constantly recall my hometown, it figures in almost all my pictures... I continue to work and at the same time continue to love everything that is in my memory and heart" (February 1980). "I am working as always — what else? But I sit in Saint Paul and almost never leave it. But my homeland is always in my pictures. You've always sensed that" (July 1982). "I constantly think about you and home, and I think that's reflected in my works. You're the only one who writes me, after all. I value that greatly. Keep me posted on what is happening back home" (September 1983).

ALEXANDER KAMENSKY

Color, Purity and Love

An Interview with MARC CHAGALL

Alexander Kamensky. You have led a long and rich life. What with all you've seen, learned and created, an art historian could deluge you with questions that would take you over a week to answer. Nevertheless I realize the time you can give me is limited. So I want to just ask you the questions that I find

particularly important at present and that the Soviet public most needs to know the answers to.

Marc Chagall. Do you want to interview me? I got the impression from our correspondence that you are an art historian with an interest in various aspects of the creative process and want to write an article or some of the sort.

A.K. Exactly. But I would also very much like to publish something in our periodical press in conjunction with your visit to Moscow and the exhibition of your work at the Tretyakov Gallery.

M.C. You have my sincere best wishes. But I don't like giving interviews. If I have something I want to say—and I very rarely do—then I write it myself. But a critic should rely on his own opinion...

A.K. You're absolutely right. We won't consider our talk an interview. I'd just like to know, first of all, what your views are on a few aspects of the art world (and the world in general) in this century, and, secondly, I'd like to gauge the fairness of my assessments of Chagall the artist and your work in order to use it all later in my articles and books.

M.C. I can't say whether you're right or wrong. I can only say whether or not I agree with you.

A.K. Fair enough... You've seen several wars and revolutions. You've lived in a world rocked by tragedy and disaster, a world that saw Hitler and Mussolini, that experienced Hiroshima, Babi Yar and Auschwitz. Your own life has not been easy, not in the least: for so many years you were far from the land of your birth, where you spent the first 35 years of your life, you've lost so many people near and dear to you... Your works were burned at an auto-da-fé in Mannheim—that vile spectacle was staged by Joseph Göbbels, who would have gladly burned you along with your paintings.

And despite all the drama and suffering you've experienced in your life your works are always permeated with a sense of beauty and a joy of living. You often depict a world that is strange, illogical and paradoxical; there are tragic scenes—crucifixions, martyrdom; there are relentlessly mournful and oppressive visions. But in these instances, too, your painting, treatment, artistic materials, perhaps, assert with tremendous fervor that the world is wonderful despite everything, that that is its primordial essence, while the horror and ugliness are distortions and perversions of the universe's intrinsic nature... Have I understood you correctly?

M.C. That's not a question, it's a statement. A whole speech. It was interesting to hear.

You're evidently right about something important and essential. But you speak as an art historian. And you speak very warmly. I get excited, too, when I have a brush or pencil in my hand. Moreover, something tells me that I possess a kind of truth.

But in conversation or the company of others I find it harder to be completely myself. Still, I will say that in itself the world is probably not any particular way. It is beautiful if you love it. I love love. No matter what I depict it's about love and our fate. Love helps me find the colors. You could even say that it finds the colors and I just put them on the canvas. It is stronger than I am and comes from the soul. That's how I see life. Both the beauty and the horror. And the strangeness, too. Maybe it seems strange when you see it through the eyes of love.

Hitler, Auschwitz... Yes, yes, all that happened and it was horrible. It's in the past, but there are plenty of threats to man now, too. They want to take love from him. But it has always persisted, and so have its colors. That's what my art's about. That's what it's been about from the very beginning, since I was young. It's part of me, it's stronger than I am.

A.K. Excuse me, but you aren't using the word "color" in its conventional sense but to express something broader, larger and more complex. Is it a special concept for you?

M.C. Of course. Basically, color is purity. Color is art. Art in general, moreover good, pure art. Or else its main intonation.

A.K. You said—and it sounded like a sign of faith—"I love love". Is that "the main intonation", the "color" of your art?

M.C. Perhaps. But you probably have to be born with that color. My love for my native Vitebsk is boundless, not just because I was born there, but above all because that is where I obtained the color of my art that has lasted me all my life. You know that I deliberated a long time before deciding not to go back to Vitebsk now, even though it has been in my thoughts all my life. That's why I decided not to, because I remember it. After all, if I went there I'd probably see a different place than the one I remember, a different kind of life. That would be a severe blow to me. It's so painful to part with your past forever!

Yes, you have to be born with color. After all, color is quality, too...

A.K. No matter how complex the evolution of your art you've always valued many of the old traditions in painting. You've always striven, as you've said many times, to love love.

In the 20s many did not appreciate or respect those kinds of affection. Nevertheless, no one really ever attempted to push you off center stage. You were recognized by critics, theoreticians and artists who furiously attacked any kind of lyricism, to say nothing of the old traditions. How can you explain this contradiction?

M.C. Only by saying that it never existed. How can you say that no one tried to get rid of me? They did and more than once. You yourself mentioned the Nazis and the bonfire in Mannheim. But I clashed with artists, too. For example, in the early 20s I was forced to leave Vitebsk after Kazimir Malevich and his followers, whom I had invited to come and teach at the academy I'd founded, drew me into an acrimonious and intolerable debate. I see you've brought Efras's *Profiles* with you—he tells about it in there. [I later found the passage in *Profiles* Chagall referred to. Efras wrote, "Malevich ... accused Chagall of steering a middle course and of toying with the representation of objects and figures at a time when genuinely revolutionary art was inobjective."]

...In the period between 1911 and 1913 when I was in Paris, Delaunay and Metzinger attacked me (which, incidentally, didn't stop us from being friends). They accused me of literalism... They and others said that I belonged to the past, that I would soon be forgotten, and so on. I was to hear that many times later.

A.K. Even so, you weren't afraid of seeming to be old-fashioned or, maybe, alone.

M.C. I've never felt alone. Maybe there was no one like me, but there were artists who were close to me in spirit, in color.

A.K. I mean in European art of recent decades...

M.C. There, too. It has seen artists like Matisse, Braque and Juan Gris.

A.K. Now they seem like solitary figures, too. At the same time, there have been so many artists in Europe in recent decades who have depicted the world as empty, nasty and cruel. A spiritual wasteland, which conflicts with the central theme of your art.

M.C. I frequently saw cruelty and evil in the world, too. I just wanted to do what I could to defeat it. Can we really condemn those who didn't succeed? Especially as I'm not at all sure that I myself did. On the whole, I wouldn't want to pit myself against anyone.

A.K. So you don't object to the various books and articles

that consider you in the same light and breath with artists who are decidedly unlike you in spirit?

M.C. Perhaps it's more complicated than it seems? Maybe those who prefer my things love aspects of others' work that are akin to mine, that have a similar color, quality, "chemistry"?

A.K. In abstractionism, too?

M.C. Abstractionism has its own purity at times. Some of Mondriaan's and Paul Klee's things, for example.

A.K. You don't think that you and Mondriaan, say, paint in different styles?

M.C. Styles! There are artists, period. Styles are more a theoretical concept. The great artists are the ones who break the limits of styles, who prove to be above them, who aren't bound by the rules and standards of styles. Only mediocrity fits entirely within a style. Sometimes adherence to styles hinders major artists, too. Courbet and Delacroix disagreed sharply. Delacroix upbraided Courbet for the naturalism of his forms and the insignificance of some of his pictures—reread Delacroix's diary. Delacroix, probably, won the verbal disputes—he was a gifted writer and an exceptional thinker. But when colors, rather than statements, contend Courbet probably comes out on top. He has more power, vigor, color. Delacroix bent too much to the dictates of style and there is at times a superficiality about his pictures, deliberate effects in the spirit of traditional romanticism. Those effects took a toll on his individuality and trivialized him: the "style" subjugated the artist's personality and diminished it.

Styles, like fashions, prevent you from making a correct, unbiased assessment of an artist's work. I remember how sarcastic some people were 25 years ago when I said that I thought highly of Claude Monet's colors. It was a time when tastes were swinging away from impressionism towards other styles. Then Monet suddenly began to be extolled, but primarily as a forerunner of abstractionism, though with his infinite love of the impressions nature made I don't think he ever was. But that's not the point. Are Claude Monet's merits determined by the school he belonged to? He is simply a magnificent artist with a highly keen sense of color. And isn't it all the same which little word you use to designate an artist's style? If he's good try to figure out exactly why, what his strength is...

A.K. Perhaps without an understanding of styles and even the most general classification putting together a history of art

would be difficult: it might be deprived of a definite structure. But let's leave that dispute to the art historians. Since we're on the subject of movements, though, tell me, what do you think about the fact that you're often called one of founders and most distinguished artists working in the style of surrealism? Even the classic surrealist?

M.C. First of all, let's leave the word "classic" out of this. It's a grand title, and only time will tell.

Surrealism? Do you absolutely have to have some label? I don't know. I myself never understood what people meant when they called me a surrealist, and I don't like the word.

It's true that I wanted to get away from earthbound art, from a kind of superficial style, the simple retelling of events and scenes that had been observed. I wanted to put together my works with the aid of spiritual, psychic elements, embodied in color...

I don't regard myself as an adherent of any style. Color, purity and love—that's what I'm about. I don't need anything else. But that's a conviction, not a style.

A.K. You frequently show how illogical many events are or, to be more precise, how they diverge from ordinary, elementary logic.

M.C. Perhaps. But what do styles have to do with it? In one way or another an artist experiences life, perceives the world. That is artistic, poetic logic.

A.K. And time in your paintings is not ordinary and immediate but relative and poetic.

M.C. It has always been relative and poetic in art.

A.K. But in the last century artists usually depicted what was happening before their eyes, as it were.

M.C. First of all, not always, and secondly there are even earlier examples.

A.K. Well, that's true. Your paintings have conjured up very distant associations for me at times. You have several versions of one painting. In it the head of the carcass, which is hanging from a hook, seems to come alive and drink water from a keg! Looking at that painting I suddenly recalled a dialogue in one of Lucian's works where one man says to another that he isn't at all surprised when he hears a slaughtered bull bellow that's already half roasted and on the spit. A highly similar sense of life's dynamics!

M.C. Well, it's a coincidence. Although I like Lucian and have read him many times. I'd love to achieve the unity, the natural

sense of the world the Classical writers had. It's the dream of many of my contemporaries but probably an impossible one. To see the world integral and indivisible, to see it all at once, its variety, its fluidity, its beginnings and ends — that's so gripping, that's such purity! Incidentally, the Russian icon had that. I love it and owe it a great deal. Icon painters are poets whose use of color depicted life and the universe in their entirety all at once. Their art was thoroughly spiritual, it had nothing to do with the passion for technique, which destroys purity.

Time. I've always wanted to divine the mystery of time, capture its magic. Quite a while ago, when I began to depict man and his memories, his thoughts as something that simultaneously exists and is visible, my paintings were sometimes considered eccentric. But after all, that is time for man, the way he really is. Isn't memory a form of time? Memories are always with man, his past is always with him. And his thoughts. It is like one being. And I depict it. That helps me understand man...

A.K. The sense of time you're talking about also encompasses the conditionality of theater, which can compress or expand time as it pleases. In general your art seems very theatrical in the sense that in each of your works life is like a stage for drama, and often like a mystery play.

M.C. Perhaps. But I wouldn't want to be theatrical. I love the theater and worked in it for years. But theater is one thing and theatricality is quite another. Theatricality is artificial, it signifies the loss of purity. There were many examples at the start of the century. There still are, for that matter.

But I love the theater. And the circus. The circus is a great art. It's terribly difficult to be a good clown. You have to be an actor and an artist and a philosopher. Nowhere do eccentricity and naive simplicity come together so splendidly and so naturally as they do in the circus. You say that my paintings remind you of the theater. Well, if you're going to make those kinds of comparisons my paintings are probably more reminiscent of the circus. Not always, of course, and not in the direct sense of the word, but in terms of technique, the search for color and purity...

A.K. You really love Rembrandt...

M.C. Yes, I do. He's probably my favorite artist in the entire history of art, though I'm fond of many, very different artists, including Russians.

A.K. There are many love scenes in your art — and I don't mean in the broad philosophical sense of the word but ordi-

nary human love. People say that much about it is changing now too, that the colors of the age are operating on it. What do you think about such notions?

M.C. Let people love each other the way they like. It's absurd to establish rules. Especially for someone who's about to hit 86. I have just one thought on the matter. Anyone, even if he has never held a brush or a pencil in his hand in his life, or written a single line of poetry, is an artist when it comes to love. It'd be a shame if the artistic foundation of love crumbled. People would be robbing themselves. The subtlety and strength of love would fade. Everything can be coarsened. That would be sad.

Art should aid love. They have ties of kinship. Art can counter coarseness and pettiness in love. The calculation and theatricality I spoke of—you see them in bad artists and people who don't know how to love or have forgotten.

A.K. And the art of loving art? Do you think it's in decline?

M.C. It can't be in decline because it's a fundamental human need. People can be led astray, though; bad, silly tastes can be fostered. In short, people's perception of art can be distorted, and unfortunately we have had plenty of opportunities to observe that in our age. By the way, criticism can play a beneficial role here or it can be lethal.

A.K. I heard that you visited the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. And that you liked the display.

M.C. Very much. The display and the museum in general... Everything seemed somehow new to me. A splendid collection, magnificent Rembrandts, impressionist works, Matisse's. All in excellent condition. There is a very good air in that museum.

A.K. The lighting?

M.C. Not just that. It really is excellent, very natural. And everything about the display is simple somehow, there are none of the startling effects big museums often like to flaunt that are just a hindrance to perception, spiritual communication with the artist, his colors.

But in general there is a very good air in that museum, the air of art.

A.K. The heads of the museum would like to see your works hanging somewhere near those of Matisse and other masters...

M.C. That's not a simple question. It would be odd if paintings I did in Russia hung next to Matisse or one of the other Western artists. In every sense those works belong in museums of Russian art, Russian art of the early 20th century...

I just want to say that I've always felt I was an artist from Russia. When I left in 1922, I felt like an uprooted tree suspended in mid-air. It's true that I had lived in Paris earlier, from 1910 to 1914, but I didn't have that feeling then and couldn't have, because any time I wanted to I could have gotten on a train and gone home to the country that was always in my thoughts. In the 20s I lost the chance to return. It was a severe blow. I survived and even—continuing the comparison with a tree—went on growing only because I never severed my spiritual ties with my country. I own a tremendous debt of gratitude to France, where I have lived for over half a century, and to French culture, which I am bound to by thousand threads. France has been kind to me, it's given me support and acclaim. But my soul was always nourished by Russian memories, by Russian air. I am very grateful to those who helped me, at 86, to visit Russia and see Moscow and my works hanging in the Tretyakov Gallery. It has long been my dream and I'm happy now that it's come true...

1973/1987



Arkady Strugatsky (b. 1925): writer of socio-philosophical works and science fiction. Together with his brother Boris (b. 1933) he has written *The Land of Crimson Clouds* (1959), *It's Hard to Be God* (1964), *The Snail on the Hillside* (1966-1968), *Breakfast on the Roadside* (1972), *Beetle in an Ant Hill* (1980) and others.

ARKADY STRUGATSKY

As I Knew Him

Andrei Tarkovsky did not have a calm, easy life, but has there ever been a single truly talented individual who did?

Anyone who was at all close to him or fortunate enough to work alongside him was able to observe first hand not just his restlessness and torments as an artist but his anger, despair and rage when he was brought up short by incomprehension, malicious plotting and petty obstruction on the part of those whose job it was to try to understand him, help him and give him support.

I can understand them, though. He was frenzied. Art took precedence over everything else. He did not spare anyone's pride, nor did he conceal his dislikes. And he often lost his temper. Sometimes in a big way. They didn't forgive him for that. Sad to say they have never forgiven anyone, no matter how brilliant. He didn't understand that and didn't want to because he knew his worth and knew too well the worth of the people he grappled with.

The telephone rings. Andrei Tarkovsky is dead. Poor Andrei Tarkovsky.

Why pity him? He's there now, where tribulation and loss do not exist. Where he won't be afflicted by "artist's cramp", as he once put it.

We're the ones to be pitied. We, whom he's left behind in this world. A world that has become a poorer place without him.

...This happened in July of '78, I believe. Andrei Tarkovsky was filming *Stalker* outside Tallinn and I was there, on location, as one of the scriptwriters. When Andrei returned from the set, drained and wane, we would get down to work. Scenes that had proven superfluous were scratched and vital ones contemplated. Dialogues that had become immaterial were taken out and essential ones planned. Sometimes we worked late into the night, arguing and trying to reach agreement. When I awoke in the morning, Andrei would already be on the set.

Note: up until that tragic July Andrei had not seen a single frame of the film he had shot. He was waiting for his turn at the Mosfilm Studios' developing machine. I remember how amazed I was, and scared, too. It seemed to me that he was working blindfolded and something was bound to happen. I was right, but disaster, when it struck, came in a completely unexpected form.

As the exposed reels were being developed the machine broke down, damaging the film badly. If I recall, footage for Mikhailov-Konchalovsky's *The Siberiad* was also damaged. Naturally there was an uproar. The deputy head of technical services conveniently had a heart attack (or a stroke, or sciatica). A few little people had their ears boxed.

Luckily for Mikhailov-Konchalovsky, it was a blow solely to his morale. Either the damage was insignificant or his material losses were quickly compensated: new film, additional money, even new deadlines. I don't remember the exact details. I had other things on my mind.

Andrei found himself in an awful and practically hopeless situation. As a writer I understood him perfectly. It was like (if not worse than) losing the only copy of your new work and being left with nothing, not even a draft. But Andrei's situation was far worse. He had lost half the film he had been allocated and two-thirds of his budget had gone up in smoke. The State Film Committee (Goskino) politely but categorically refused to compensate him for his loss. It was ingratiatingly suggested that he accept the ruined film and continue shooting. When he flatly refused they gave him to understand that they would magnanimously write off the entire loss under the paragraph on artistic failure if, of course, he chucked the film and did something else.

Those were truly black days. A cloud of gloom hung over

Andrei. The production group was horror-stricken. (Incidentally, no one in it even thought of deserting Andrei, no one except a man he loved dearly, the cameraman Georgy Rerberg, who went straight to his car and took off for an unknown destination never to be heard from again.) It goes without saying that I was in despair, too, as I conceitedly put the disaster down to the bad luck that dogs the Strugatsky brothers. On one of those days I said so to Andrei. He furiously dismissed me with an impatient wave of his hand.

Then suddenly... A great deal happened to Andrei Tarkovsky suddenly.

After about a week and a half of gloom a euphoric Andrei came to see me. He walked on air. He beamed. To be honest, I was even frightened by the sight of him. He walked into the room and gluing himself, legs, back and head to the wall – only he could do it; I tried once but failed – fastened his gaze on the ceiling and asked sweetly, “Listen, Arkady, aren’t you tired of rewriting your *Picnic* over and over again?”

“Well, yes,” I cautiously replied.

“Uh-huh,” he said and nodded understandingly. “Well, what would you say if we made *Stalker* into a two-part movie?”

I didn’t immediately see what he was driving at. But it was perfectly obvious. For a second part he would be given a new deadline, more money, more film. By throwing in what remained of the first version the project could be salvaged. And one more consideration of no small importance: by that time I had already sensed instinctively what was obvious to an experienced professional like Andrei—a one-part movie provided far too little scope for his ideas, which had changed and expanded as work progressed.

“But will they say yes?” I asked almost in a whisper.

Andrei gave me a look and turned away. Later I found out that he has sent in the request (or was it demand?) several days before and it had been granted flinchingly and with gritted teeth.

“Now then,” he said in a businesslike tone. “Go back to Leningrad and get to work with your brother Boris. I want a new script in ten days. For a two-part movie. Don’t give me any atmospherics. Just the dialogue and brief reprises. And most importantly: the *Stalker* has to be completely different.”

“What should he be like, then?” I said, taken aback.

“How should I know? Just make sure there’s not a trace of that bandit of yours in the new script.”

I sighed. I remember. But what was I to do? I do not know

how he worked with his other scriptwriters but here is how it was with us. I would bring him a new scene that we had hashed out the day before. “No good. Do it over.” “Well, tell me what to do over, what needs to be taken out and added!” “I don’t know. You’re the scriptwriter, not me. So do it over.” I would sigh and trudge back to my typewriter. “Uh-huh. That’s better. But still not quite it. Looks like you had something with this phrase. Try developing that.” I would stare dully at “this phrase”. A phrase like any other. And to my mind, a fluke. I could just as easily not have written it. But... The scene was redone. He would read it and reread it, moustache bristling, then say indecisively, “We-ell... Alright, it’ll do for the time being... It’s something to go from, anyway... Now then, rewrite this dialogue. It sticks in my throat. Make it tie in with the scenes before and after.” “Doesn’t it tie in now?” “No.” “What don’t you like about it?” “I don’t know. Do it over and have it ready by tomorrow evening.” That is how we worked on the script that had been considered and approved at every level long before.

“Still, what should the Stalker be like in the new script?”

“I don’t know. You’re the scriptwriter, not me.”

Fine. Which is to say, it wasn’t fine, of course, but I was used to it. Before my brother and I had even begun to work on the project we realized that even Andrei Tarkovsky’s mistakes were brilliant and worth a dozen correct decisions by ordinary directors.

Some kind of intuition made me say, “Listen, Andrei, what do you need the science fiction in this film for? Maybe we’ll just say to hell with it?”

The grin that spread across his face—he looked like a cat that had swallowed a canary.

“You said it, I didn’t! I’ve wanted to for a long time, but I was afraid to suggest it. Didn’t want to offend you...”

In short, I flew to Leningrad the next morning. I am not going to describe what Boris and I went through because this article is about Andrei Tarkovsky, not us. The script we wrote was not a science fiction tale, but a parable, if a parable can be understood to mean an anecdote whose characters represent ideas and behavior typical of a given time. A fashionable Writer and an eminent Scientist enter the zone to have their most heartfelt wishes fulfilled, and their guide is an Apostle of a new dogma, a type of ideologist.

I returned to Tallinn exactly ten days later. Andrei met me

at the airport. We hugged. He asked, "Did you bring it?" I nodded, trying not to tremble. When we got to his home he took the manuscript from me, silently went into another room and shut the door behind him. The wives set about trying to entertain me and brought out the brandy (it was, in fact, my birthday). Naturally, no one could get anything down.

Some time passed. Probably about an hour.

The door opened and Andrei came out. His face was expressionless and only his moustache bristled, as it always did when he was lost in thought.

He looked at us vacantly, walked up to the table, speared a piece of food with a fork, put it in his mouth and chewed. Then, looking over our heads, he said, "For the first time in my life I have MY script."

On the evening of January 3, 1980, Andrei Tarkovsky and I spoke to the film distributors. The people gathered in that enormous auditorium had been entrusted with deciding what filmgoers would think of *Stalker* and therefore how many copies of the film should be made.

I came in time for the discussion after the showing. Andrei spoke. He explained the film, talked about his work on it and answered questions. I found them strange. Suddenly a rich bass exclaimed, "Who's going to watch that rubbish?" Approving laughter broke out. Andrei turned white and his hands formed fists. Trying not to look at him, I asked for the floor. But they were already leaving. God knows where they were going, those brilliant distributors. To a beer hall? To the urinals? Nowhere? As I spoke I watched the backs of their heads turn slowly towards me. Loudly talking and laughing among themselves, they slowly made their way up the aisles. Naturally the backs of their heads were different one from the other, but to me they all seemed fat and immense, and on each one gleamed the infamous words of complacency: "We don't need that!" I have never experienced anything like it.

As I recall we left the stage and went out onto the landing of the stairway. Andrei ground his teeth. My hands were shaking and I had a hard time lighting my cigarette.

A few men and women came up to us. Looking around uneasily, they murmured, "Please don't think... We're not all like that... We understand..."

For the 250 million Soviet filmgoers alone the distributors released 196 copies of the film.

Three copies for all of Moscow.

In the first months of its release 2 million people in Moscow saw *Stalker*.

There is much more I would like to relate about Andrei Tarkovsky, things I saw or was part of. For instance, the way he spent his free time, the kind of opinions he had, the kind of literature he preferred. I would like to, but space is limited.

I hope that the readers of this article will someday see a collection of his speeches and articles, in which he tells about himself.

1987

NOTES

Valentin Tolstykh, "In Place of a Foreword"

¹ V.I. Lenin, "Better Fewer, but Better", in: *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, p. 489.

² *Ibid.*, p. 488.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 487-488.

⁴ Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 57.

Chinghiz Aitmatov, "We Need a New Vision of the World" (*Izvestia*, June 19, 1987)

¹ Held in June 1987.

² Aitmatov is referring to a campaign Victor Astafiev, Valentin Rasputin, Sergei Zalygin, Vasily Belov and others conducted at national and Russian Federation writers' congresses and in the press which played an important role in stopping the project to reverse the flow of a number of rivers. By a joint resolution of the Party Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers, the USSR State Committee on Environmental Protection was formed (*Pravda*, January 17, 1988).

Alexander Alexandrov, "Look for Truth" (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, August 25, 1987)

¹ *Nikolai Gumilev* (1886-1921): Russian poet and founder of Acmeism, a trend in Russian poetry of the 1910s. His verse, often an apologia for "the strong man", is ornamental and refined. Gumilev was executed for allegedly

taking part in a plot to overthrow the Soviet government. The centenary of the poet's birth was widely marked in the Soviet press; a number of magazines published cycles of his poems, fragments of *African Diary*, and other materials.

² Ivan Karamazov: one of the heroes of *The Karamazov Brothers* (1880) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881).

³ *Oleg Koshevoi* (1926-1943), commissar of the Young Guard underground youth organization in the town of Krasnodon (Donbass) during the Second World War. Executed by the Nazis.

⁴ *Vera Kettlinskaya* (1906-1976): Soviet writer, author of the novel *Fortitude*, 1938, the autobiographical story, *Evening, Windows, People*, 1972, and other works.

⁵ Alexandrov is referring to the main character in Chinghiz Aitmatov's novel *The Executioner's Block* (1985).

Yuri Afanasyev, "From a Position of Truth and Realism" (*Sovetskaya Kultura*, March 21, 1987)

¹ The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in February 1956 where criticism was leveled at the Stalin cult of personality and related phenomena: deviations from Lenin's principles of building socialism, contempt for the law, etc.

² *Nikita Khrushchev* (1894-1971): Soviet Party leader and statesman. First Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee (1953-1964) and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers (1958-1964). He played an important role in exposing the Stalin personality cult and healing its consequences, e.g. rehabilitating men and women wrongly convicted of crimes during the repressions. Yuri Gagarin, the first cosmonaut, reported to Khrushchev upon his return to Earth (1961). From 1964 to the April 1985 Plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee Khrushchev's name was either passed over in silence or mentioned solely in the context of mistakes he made.

³ The last congress (March 1921) of the Communist Party Lenin attended. It was the occasion of a large discussion on the role of labor unions in building socialism. In addition, a resolution on Party unity was passed, banning factions and splinter groups.

⁴ *Mikhail Shatrov* (b. 1932): Soviet playwright, the author of a number of historical dramas on the Revolution—*The 6 of July*, 1973; *Bolsheviks*, 1967; *The Brest Peace*, 1986; *Onward, Ever Onward*, 1987.

⁵ *Nicholas II* (1868-1918): the last emperor of Russia (1894-1917).

⁶ *Alexander Kolchak* (1874-1920): an admiral and one of the leaders of the counter-revolution in Russia during the Civil War (1918-1920).

⁷ F. Nesterov, "Svyaz' vremen" (Through the Ages), *Molodaya Gvardia*, 1976.

⁸ *Georgi Plekhanov* (1856-1918) was a prominent figure in the Russian

and international Social Democratic movement and the organizer of the Marxist Emancipation of Labor Group (1883). He wrote a number of books and articles that played an important role in the development of the theory of scientific socialism in Russia. Plekhanov and Lenin were among the editors of Russia's first Social Democratic newspaper, the underground *Iskra* (1900-1903). Later, Plekhanov, like L. Martov (1873-1923), Pavel Axelrod (1850-1928) and several other members of the Party, fell out with Lenin and his supporters over basic questions regarding the strategy and tactics the proletariat should adopt in the Russian revolution. Plekhanov's faction was in the minority at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (1903) and thus came to be known by the Russian word for the minority – *menshinstvo* or Mensheviks.

⁹ *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 2, 1986.

¹⁰ *Mikhail Bakunin* (1814-1876): Russian revolutionary, theoretician of anarchism and one of the ideologists of the revolutionary Narodnik movement.

¹¹ *Pyotr Kropotkin* (1842-1921): Prince, Russian revolutionary, theoretician of anarchism, geographer and geologist. His memoirs are entitled *The Notes of a Revolutionary*.

¹² A novel by the Soviet writer Mikhail Sholokhov (1905-1984).

¹³ *Isaac Babel* (1894-1941): Soviet writer, author of *The Mounted Army*, 1926; *Odessa Stories*, 1931.

¹⁴ *Vsevolod Ivanov* (1895-1963): Soviet writer, author of *Partisans*, 1921, *Armored Train 14-69*, 1922, *Colored Winds*, 1922, and other novellas.

¹⁵ Gleb Panfilov (b. 1934): Soviet film director (*May I Have the Floor?*, 1976; *Vassa*, 1983).

¹⁶ *Pavel Filonov* (1883-1941), *Alexander Deineka* (1899-1969), *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin* (1878-1939): Soviet artists.

¹⁷ "Play, then, to burst the aorta." A famous line from a poem by Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938).

¹⁸ A film by the Soviet director Alexei German (b. 1938).

¹⁹ *Trial on the Road* (1971) directed by Alexei German and *Repentance* (1985) directed by the Georgian director Tenghiz Abuladze (b. 1924).

²⁰ The January 1987 Plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee.

Nina Andreyeva, "I Cannot Betray My Principles" (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 13, 1988)

"The Principles of Perestroika: Revolutionary Thinking and Action" (*Pravda*, April 5, 1988)

Alexander Gelman, "A Time to Gather Strength" (*Sovetskaya Kultura*, April 9, 1988)

Vladimir Svirsky, "History Is Silent" (*Izvestia*, July 20, 1987)

¹ The 1948 Session where genetics was branded an "ideologically alien" and "hostile" pseudo-science, while the theories and applied work of Academician Trofim Lysenko were declared the only profitable line of inquiry. All genetic research was brought to a halt, and geneticists who did not recant were persecuted.

² *Trofim Lysenko* (1898-1976): Soviet biologist and agronomist, member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences 1938-1956 and 1961-1962.

³ *Nikolai Vavilov* (1887-1943): Soviet scientist; one of the pioneers of genetics and selection in the Soviet Union. The first President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences (1929-1935). Vavilov founded the USSR Academy of Sciences Genetics Institute and headed it until his arrest in 1940. The centenary of Vavilov's birth was widely marked in the USSR. Numerous articles in the press described his role both as an outstanding scientist and as a man of firm conviction who refused under any circumstances to disavow his scientific beliefs.

⁴ "Down to Work", 1920.

⁵ *Pyotr Chaadayev* (1794-1856): Russian philosopher and essayist. Author of *Philosophical Letters*; following the publication of the first letter the government of Nicholas I declared Chaadayev insane. Svirsky quotes a passage from *The Apologia of a Mad Man* (1837).

⁶ Svirsky is referring to Leonid Brezhnev (1906-1982).

Anatoly Golovkov, Alexei Pavlov, "What All This Noise?" (*Ogonyok*, No. 2, 1987)

¹ *The Song of Moscow's Defenders* (1941, lyrics by Alexei Surkov).

² The first line of "Russia's Slanderers" (1831) by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837).

³ *Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin* (1826-1889): Russian satirical writer.

⁴ *Vladimir Dahl* (1801-1872): Russian writer, lexicographer and ethnographer; author of *A Defining Dictionary of the Living Russian Language* (in four volumes; 1863-1866).

Yuri Karyakin, "'Zhdanov Liquid' or Against Defamation" (*Ogonyok*, No. 19, 1988)

Igor Dedkov, "Literature and the New Way of Thinking"
(*Kommunist*, No. 12, 1987)

¹ *Yuri Trifonov* (1925-1981): Soviet writer.

² The words of the Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930).

³ *Ales Adamovich* (b. 1927): Byelorussian writer, author of *The Punitive Squads* and other novels.

⁴ *Vitaly Syomin* (1927-1978): Soviet writer, author of *The OST Breastplate* and other novels.

⁵ *Victor Rozov* (b. 1913): Soviet playwright.

⁶ *Alexander Volodin* (b. 1919): Soviet prose writer and playwright.

⁷ Mikhail Pryanin: the hero of the *Brothers and Sisters* tetralogy by the Soviet writer Fyodor Abramov (1920-1983).

⁸ *Valentin Ovechkin* (1904-1968): Soviet writer. His *Workdays in the District* essays (1952-1956) urgently called attention to the need for agricultural reforms.

⁹ Dedkov is referring to early works by the Soviet writers Grigory Baklanov (b. 1923) – *An Inch of Land* (1959), and Yuri Bondarev (b. 1924) – *The Battalions Request Fire* (1957).

¹⁰ *Vladimir Dudintsev* (b. 1918): Soviet writer, author of the novels *Not by Bread Alone* (1956) and *White Robes* (1987).

¹¹ *Nikolai Gogol* (1809-1852): Russian writer, author of the lyric novel *Dead Souls* (1842).

¹² *A Token of Disaster* (1984): a story by the Byelorussian writer Vasil Bykov (b. 1924).

¹³ *Andrei Platonov* (1899-1951): Soviet writer long misunderstood and unappreciated.

¹⁴ *Peasant Men and Women*, a novel by the Soviet writer Boris Mozhaev (b. 1923), which took a new look at the critical and complex problems of collectivization.

¹⁵ *Klimenty Timiryazev* (1843-1920): Russian biologist; one of the founders of the Russian school of plant physiology.

"Echoes Near and Far: An Interview with Daniil Granin" (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 27, 1987)

¹ *Vladimir Vernadsky* (1863-1945): Soviet scientist, founder of geochemistry, radiology and human ecology.

² Lines from a song by the Soviet writer and singer Bulat Okudzhava (b. 1924).

³ Rishina is referring to *White Robes*, *The New Appointment*, *Banishing of the Mirages* and *The Little Golden Cloud*.

⁴ *Sergei Zatygin* (b. 1913): Soviet writer. In late 1986 he was made editor-in-chief of *Novy Mir* magazine.

Bulat Okudzhava, "I Have Regained Hope" (*Moscow News*, May 31, 1987)

¹ *The Entente Cordiale*: an alliance between Great Britain, France and tsarist Russia formed between 1904 and 1907 that came to include over 20 nations during World War I when it was pitted against the German coalition. The Entente was hostile to the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia's withdrawal from World War I, and attempted to give the White Guards military support in the Civil War.

Readers' Letters on Anatoly Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, August 19, 1987)

¹ Anatoly Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, written in the 1960s, was published in *Druzhba Narodov* magazine in Nos. 4-6, 1987.

² *Sergei Kirov* (1886-1934): Soviet government and Party official. Kirov was actively involved in the Civil War. In 1926 he was appointed First Secretary of the Leningrad Regional and City Party Committee. In 1930 he was also made a member of the Party Politburo. Kirov's assassination on December 1, 1934, was used to justify the mounting arrests, which, according to Stalin's theory, were an inevitable part of "the aggravation of the class struggle" as socialism advanced.

Olga Kuchkina, "The Water of Life" (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, August 10, 1987)

Olga Kuchkina, "The Fierce Word" (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, October 6, 1987)

¹ Stalin repeatedly reduced the role of the individual to that of a "cog".

Yuri Burtin "To You, Not of My Generation..." (*Oktyabr*, No. 8, 1987)

¹ *Alexander Tvardovsky* (1910-1971): Soviet poet.

² In *Znamya*, No. 2, 1987 and *Novy Mir*, No. 3, 1987.

³ The poem *Tyorkin in the Underworld* was finished in the spring of 1954 and published in 1963.

⁴ *NEP*: the New Economic Policy adopted by the Party and the Soviet Government during the transition period from capitalism to socialism (1921-late 1930s).

⁵ V. Dementiev, "The Heart Remembers", *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, April 24, 1987.

⁶ Anticipated, in part, by Valentin Ovechkin's *Workdays in the District* essays (*Novy Mir*, 1952) and the first chapters of the poem *Horizon Beyond the Horizon*.

⁷ Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, "The Great Men of the Exile", in: *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, p. 314.

⁸ From "Talking with the Taxman about Poetry" (1926) by the Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930).

⁹ Apparently Burtin is referring to these words from Mayakovsky's autobiography: "Accepting or not accepting the revolution was never a question for me. *My revolution.*"

¹⁰ *Denis Fonvizin* (1744/45-1792): Russian writer and educator. *Alexander Radishchev* (1749-1802): Russian thinker and writer.

¹¹ V.I. Lenin, "In Memory of Herzen", in: *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 30.

Kirill Lavrov, "So What Can We Do?" (*Pravda*, December 19, 1987)

¹ The Moscow Arts Theater has now split into two companies, one headed by Oleg Yefremov, the other by Tatiana Doronina.

Eldar Ryazanov, "Why Did I Leave Television in the Era of Glasnost?" (*Ogonyok*, No. 14, 1988)

Alexei Simonov, "A Time to Confess, Not Preach" (*Sovetskaya Kultura*, January 21, 1988)

¹ Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) wrote in a letter to his brother that every real Russian intellectual had a moral duty "to squeeze the slave out of himself drop by drop".

² A line from a poem by the Soviet poet Boris Slutsky (1919-1986).

Olga Martynenko, "Vladimir Spivakov: A Conversation in the First Person" (*Moscow News*, June 21, 1987)

¹ *Rodion Shchedrin* (b. 1932): Soviet composer (operas *Not Just Love*, 1961, and *Dead Souls*, 1976; ballets *Carmen Suite*, 1967, and *Anna Karenina*, 1972).

Andrei Sakharov, "I Believe in Reason" (*Theater*, No. 8, 1987)

Boris Pilnyak, "The Hinterland" (*Znamya*, No. 5, 1987)

¹ PSs, SRs: the Popular Socialists and Socialist-Revolutionaries, two political parties in Russia active before 1917.

² The Food Army: military detachments which confiscated surplus food supplies from the rich and delivered them to the authorities for equitable distribution during the difficult years 1918-1921. They also did political work in rural areas.

"Letters by Mikhail Bulgakov", edited with an Afterword by Victor Losev (*Oktyabr*, No. 6, 1987)

The originals and copies of the letters are in Manuscripts Division of the Lenin Library in Moscow.

¹ *Nikolai Golovanov* (1891-1953): Soviet conductor, pianist and composer.

² *Alexei Svidersky* (1878-1933): head of the Chief Arts Department (Glaviskusstvo).

³ Play by Alexander Popovsky.

⁴ J.V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 2, Politizdat, Moscow, 1949, pp. 326-329 (in Russian).

⁵ *Lyubov Yevgenievna Belozerskaya*: Bulgakov's second wife (1925-1932).

⁶ *Yelena Sergeyevna Bulgakova*: Bulgakov's third wife from 1933 until his death.

⁷ *Pavel Popov* (1892-1956): Bulgakov's close friend and first biographer.

⁸ *Nikolai Yegorov*: manager of the Moscow Arts Theater.

Alexander Kamensky, "Color, Purity and Love: An Interview with Marc Chagall" (*Ogonyok*, No. 18, 1987)

Arkady Strugatsky, "As I Knew Him" (*Ogonyok*, No. 29, 1987)

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Andrei Sakharov

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