



# PROGRESS QUARTERLY

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ANTI-IMPERIALISM

# The State of Israel

*A Soviet Orientalist's study of Israel built from Israeli sources - the statistical abstracts, the Bank of Israel, the Jerusalem Post. Strongest on the economy and on migration, where she counts the people leaving as well as arriving.*

Galina Nikitina

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**Galina Nikitina's book is two books bound as one, and the seam is visible.** The main narrative — nine chapters on the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate, the Yishuv, the partition vote, the 1948 war, five Knessets, the Sinai campaign, immigration policy, agriculture, industry, foreign trade, American aid and West German reparations — closes in 1967. An Afterword then carries the story to July 1971 through the June war, Security Council Resolution 242, the Rogers plans and the Four-Power consultations. The book's research apparatus is Israeli and Western almost throughout: the Statistical Abstract of Israel, the Bank of Israel Bulletin, The Israel Economist, The Jerusalem Post, Keesing's Contemporary Archives, the Israeli Government Yearbook, Weizmann's and Abba Eban's memoirs. This is a working Orientalist's monograph, not a pamphlet, and it should be read as one — which is exactly what makes its failures worth naming precisely.

Start with what holds up, because a good deal does.

The economic chapters are the best thing in the book and remain useful. Nikitina tracks American official and unofficial transfers to Israel from 1948 to 1962, the West German reparations agreement of September 1952 and its industrial destination, the balance of payments, the structure of the state budget, the concentration of banking capital, and the peculiar tripartite economy of state, private and Histadrut sectors. She does this from Israeli official statistics, cited by table and page. Her recurring thesis — that Israel's development was import-financed and externally underwritten rather than a "modern miracle," that "Israel is a capitalist state with all the contradictions inherent in it" — is unremarkable now but was worth establishing then, and she establishes it with figures rather than assertion.

Her treatment of immigration is genuinely good social science. Against the Zionist account of return, she argues that "Jewish

immigration to Palestine was stimulated chiefly by external causes" — the persecutions in tsarist Russia, unemployment in Poland, "the genocide instituted in nazi Germany" — and she tests the claim the obvious way, by looking at where Jews actually went when they could choose. Between 1881 and 1930, 3,200,000 emigrated to the Americas; "only 120,000 went to Palestine." She then does something few writers on either side were doing in 1968: she counts the people leaving. Her Table 3 sets emigration against immigration year by year from the Mandate to 1969, arriving at 201,600 departures against 1,303,000 arrivals in twenty-one years, and notes drily that "Jews left the 'promised land' despite intensive Zionist propaganda." *Yerida* was a real and under-studied phenomenon. She saw it.

On Palestine she is, in the main, right, and right in ways that took mainstream Western historiography another decade or more to concede. The Balfour Declaration is treated as what it was — the outcome of negotiations between the World Zionist Organisation and a British government planning a Palestine campaign, an instrument of imperial policy issued as a letter to Lord Rothschild. She gives the land ownership figures at the moment of partition: "93 per cent by Arabs, and 7 per cent by Jews." She states that in 1948 "over 900,000 Arabs had to leave the country through fear of terrorist acts by Israeli extremists and, partially, under the influence of Arab nationalistic propaganda," that over 70 per cent of the Arab population of Palestine lost their homes, and that in 1967 "the Israeli invaders followed the pattern of the war of 1948–1949 by forcibly evicting the civilian Arab population." Israeli scholarship arrived at substantially this picture in the late 1980s, from the Israeli archives, and was denounced for it. Nikitina's numbers are high and her attribution of cause is tidier than the record allows, but the substance of the Nakba is in this book, in 1968, as fact. Her Afterword sets out Palestinian national rights in terms no revolutionary socialist need amend: self-determination, "the right of the refugees to return to their former places of residence and their right to self-defence," and against Israel "a policy of denying the Palestinian Arabs, expelled from their homeland and exposed

to untold suffering, the right to national existence." The occupation after 1967, the settlement programme, the house demolitions and the deportations are described, and described accurately.

She also does two things a propagandist would not have done, both buried in footnotes. When she reaches 29 November 1947 she prints the division: "The voting was as follows: 33, including the Soviet Union and the USA, for; 13 against; and 10, including Britain, abstentions." And when Israel is proclaimed on 14 May 1948 she records, again in a footnote, that the USSR extended *de jure* recognition on 17 May — three days ahead of Washington's *de jure* recognition, which she correctly dates to January 1949. The inconvenient fact about her own state is admitted. It is admitted in six-point type, and the main text immediately reframes the war that followed as one which "Britain and the USA provoked," but it is admitted.

What is not admitted anywhere is the Czechoslovak arms deal. Czechoslovakia appears once in this book, as a member of the UN Special Committee on Palestine. The rifles, machine guns and Avia fighters that reached the Haganah from Czechoslovakia in 1948 with Soviet approval — the decisive foreign military supply of that war — are absent. So is any account of why Moscow made that choice. The reader is left with a USSR that consistently sought a binational federal solution and, failing that, an even-handed partition, and with a 1948 war conjured entirely by Anglo-American intrigue. This is not an error of detail. It is the removal of the single episode that would force the book to explain its own government's conduct.

The second and larger silence is Soviet Jewry. Every one of this book's discussions of emigration concerns emigration from Israel. Birobidzhan does not appear. The Leningrad trial of 1970 does not appear. The refuseniks do not appear. The exit taxes imposed as this English edition was being prepared do not appear. What appears instead is a single sentence in Chapter 9 asserting that Zionist leaders interfere in Soviet internal affairs "by making an issue out of a non-existent Jewish problem." A book of 120,000 words on the State of Israel, published in Moscow in English in 1973, resolves the question of Soviet Jews by declaring that there is none.

Which brings us to the line this book was written across, and where it sits on it.

Nikitina knows the line exists and says so. She rejects theories of "Jewish exclusiveness" in her opening pages on the ground

that "Arguments of this kind have a dangerous and harmful racist hue." She writes that Zionism is used by racists and reactionaries as a foundation for stirring up anti-Semitism. And in Chapter 9 she states the principle outright: criticism of Zionism has "nothing in common with anti-Semitism." That is the correct position. It is also the position her own prose does not keep.

The World Zionist Organisation is described in Chapter 9 as an entity of which "It may be described as an octopus with numerous tentacles stretching throughout the world," and a few pages later the "Face to the Diaspora" campaign is said to be turning Israel "into a kind of octopus with arms stretching into all the countries of the world." The octopus straddling the globe is not a neutral figure of speech. It is one of the most heavily used images in the visual repertoire of European antisemitism, from tsarist cartoons through to the Nazi press, and it is being applied here to an organisation defined by Jewishness. Two pages further on, the diaspora Zionist bodies are said to constitute "a Zionist fifth column in other countries" — the dual-loyalty charge, the accusation that Jews abroad are agents of a foreign power, stated without qualification. The authority Nikitina cites for the claim that Israel's rulers are merely part of a "New York-based and US-controlled international Zionist concern" is an *Izvestia* article of 1 July 1967 by Y. Ivanov — on subject and date, the Yuri Ivanov who two years later published *Beware: Zionism!*, the central tract of the campaign that followed the break in relations. She reaches for the campaign's founding text, and inherits its imagery.

Then there is Kastner. In the middle of her chapter on domestic politics Nikitina writes that "The trial of Israel (Rudolf) Kastner in Budapest in May 1955" — a footnote adds that it exposed "the complicity of other Zionist leaders" — "confirmed the fact that prominent Israeli Zionist leaders had collaborated with the nazis in the criminal extermination of Jews during the Second World War, in Hungary in particular."

Almost every element of that sentence is wrong, and the errors run one way. There was no trial of Kastner in Budapest. The proceedings were held in Jerusalem, and Kastner was not the defendant: the Israeli state was prosecuting Malchiel Grünwald for criminal libel against him. Judge Halevi's judgment of June 1955 was devastating to Kastner and did bring down Sharett's government that month, which is the one thing Nikitina has right. She does not mention that the Israeli Supreme Court substantially overturned that judgment in 1958, nor that by then Kastner had been shot dead in the street in Tel Aviv. And a contested finding about the wartime conduct of one man

negotiating with Eichmann's office over Hungarian Jewish lives — the hardest and least resolvable moral terrain of the entire catastrophe — is converted, in a single clause, into "prominent Israeli Zionist leaders" collaborating "in the criminal extermination of Jews." The move from the particular to the collective is the whole of the trick, and it is the trick that made the Soviet collaboration theme antisemitic rather than merely wrong.

The same logic governs her page on reparations. Having quoted an Israeli newspaper's anguish that German industry "produced machines to make soap from their fathers' bones," she concludes that "Israel had neither legal nor moral rights to such compensation because it does not represent the interests of all the European Jews who suffered from fascism." The premise is arguable, and was argued at the time inside Israel from several directions. The conclusion is not. To move from Israel does not represent all Jewish victims to no moral right to compensation is to make the murdered a debating point. Note too what has to be missing for that sentence to be written: Hitler is not named anywhere in this book, the word Holocaust does not occur, and the destruction of European Jewry enters chiefly as a push factor in a migration analysis and as a claim Israel exploits. And when Nikitina reaches for the sharpest thing she can say about the Israeli army in the occupied territories in 1967, what she writes is that "the aggressor is using nazi methods."

So the placement is this. The book is not a forgery and not a hate tract; it is a substantial piece of applied economics and political history whose author states the distinction between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and then, at four or five specific points, walks straight through it — with the octopus, with the fifth column, with the generalised collaboration charge, with the denial of moral standing to reparations, and with the erasure of Soviet Jews. Those points are not incidental decoration. They are where the book stops arguing and starts recruiting.

The reply was available in English at the time, and it did not require choosing between the two halves of the question. Intercontinental Press — the Fourth International's weekly of record in these years — carried both arguments simultaneously and without embarrassment. On 31 March 1969 (vol. 7, no. 12) it published extracts from the New Year's manifesto of the Israeli Socialist Organisation, the Matzpen group, demanding withdrawal from the occupied territories, defending the rights of the Palestinian refugees, and cataloguing the curfews, collective punishments, deportations and dynamited houses that gave the lie to the "liberalism" of the occupation. Two

weeks later, on 14 April (vol. 7, no. 14), the same paper printed the protest that Sartre, Aragon, Beauvoir and Alfred Kastler had published in *Le Monde* against the Polish regime's campaign — a campaign conducted, in their words, under the pretext of anti-Zionism. In November 1969 (vol. 7, no. 37) it recalled that Rudolf Slánský and his co-defendants had been executed in Prague in 1952 on charges of "cosmopolitanism" and "Zionism," in a trial with unmistakable antisemitic overtones. And on 6 April 1970 (vol. 8, no. 13) Gerry Foley reviewed Ivan Shevtsov's new Moscow novel under the headline "Moscow Novel Attacks Trotsky as 'Zionist'," noting the revival of the Moscow-trial frame-ups together with the antisemitic slurs Stalin had used against the founder of the Red Army. Nikitina's book was in preparation while all four of those pieces were being written.

That is the position from which to read her. The Palestinians had, and have, a right to their land, their return and their state; the occupation was and is real; the Balfour Declaration was a colonial instrument and Nikitina is right about it. None of that requires the octopus. The Soviet state served neither cause: it voted for partition, recognised Israel first, armed it through Prague in 1948 when that suited its purposes, and after 1967 mounted an "anti-Zionist" campaign that reached back into the oldest inventory of European Jew-hatred for its images. Nikitina's book is the respectable edition of that campaign — footnoted, statistical, largely accurate on the economy, sound on Palestinian rights, and contaminated. Read it for the tables, and for the last pages, where the author notes the Israeli peace demonstrations under the slogan "Peace is dearer than territory" and the Black Panther march of May 1971 by "an organisation of Oriental Jews, the Sephardim" against discrimination — the moments when she looks at Israeli society and sees a class struggle rather than an octopus.

## ANTI-IMPERIALISM

# The War of Ideas in Contemporary International Relations

*The founder of the Institute of the USA and Canada explaining why detente stopped at the ideological front - published anonymously enough that readers could not tell the author had helped design the policy. Sound on the Western propaganda apparatus.*

Georgi Arkadyevich Arbatov

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**Chapter IV of this book contains a section headed "Why Peaceful Coexistence Is Not Possible in Ideology."** That sentence is the reason to read it. Everything else here — the survey of American propaganda machinery, the chapters on the crisis of bourgeois thought, the long historical excursus on propaganda from Philip of Macedon to the Nuremberg trial — is arranged around that proposition, and the proposition itself was Soviet state doctrine at the exact moment the Soviet state was signing agreements with Richard Nixon. Arbatov's task was to explain why the two things were not in contradiction. He performs it with unusual clarity, and in performing it he sets out, more plainly than most Soviet writers of the period dared, what détente was permitted to cover and what it was not.

The book was written before the détente it defends. Arbatov says so in his first sentence: "The Russian language edition of this book was brought out in the autumn of 1970." The English edition of 1973 reproduces that text with a new Author's Note bringing it up to date, and the update is where the political function shows. The Note is organised around the 24th Congress of the CPSU and its Peace Programme; it welcomes the USSR–FRG and Polish–FRG treaties; and it records that "President Richard M. Nixon's visit to Moscow and the treaties and agreements that were signed as a result of the talks are a considerable contribution not only towards improving the relations between the two countries but also towards strengthening world peace and security." Then, having said all that, it closes the door: "far from dying down, the ideological struggle remains acute in spite of the relaxation of international tension." And: "The ideological front, the battle for people's minds, remains one of the principal bridgeheads of that struggle." A Progress Publishers title in English is an export product, and one can read the commission off the page. Western readers were to be reassured that the Soviet Union

meant the treaties, and simultaneously informed that no ideological concession accompanied them.

The book tells you nothing about who wrote it. The Author's Note is signed "G. Arbatov" and that is the whole of the biography the volume supplies — no institute, no title, no affiliation. This matters, because the author was not a jobbing propagandist. Georgi Arbatov had founded the Institute of the USA and Canada of the Academy of Sciences in 1967 and directed it for nearly thirty years; he sat on the Central Committee; he advised Brezhnev and, later, Gorbachev; and he was among the very small number of Soviet officials who dealt continuously and directly with the American political establishment. He set out his own account of that career two decades later in *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (Times Books, 1992). None of this is in the book. A reader in 1973 encountering "G. Arbatov" would have had no way of knowing that the anonymous-sounding author of a Progress paperback was one of the architects of the policy the paperback was defending, and the anonymity is itself a small piece of the design: the argument is presented as scholarship rather than as doctrine, which is what made it useful.

Take the scholarship seriously first, because a good deal of it holds.

Chapter III, on imperialism's propaganda machine, is a survey of real institutions doing real things, assembled from American and West German sources that any reader could check. Arbatov is right that the Free Europe Committee, formally a private charity soliciting donations from individuals and Boy Scout troops, was nothing of the kind, and he quotes American authors on the point: "The Free Europe Committee has never opened its books to public scrutiny." He is right that "there is no doubt that its overall direction is in the hands of the US State Department and the CIA." He is right about the scale — Radio Free Europe's Munich operation, the relay station in Portugal, Radio Liberty broadcasting in seventeen languages

of the peoples of the USSR with "a staff of some 1,000" — and right that the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which he identifies as an organisation that "specialises in propaganda for intellectuals in Western Europe, Asia and Latin America," belonged in the same category of deniable state instrument. He is right that the CIA and USIA commissioned and secretly subsidised books and articles, and he quotes American journalism on the specific cases. And he correctly cites Senator Fulbright, in the New York Times of 21 February 1972, saying that the radios "should be given an opportunity to take their rightful place in the graveyard of cold war relics." All of this was true. Most of it had been forced into the open in the United States between 1966 and 1971, by Ramparts, by the New York Times, and by Senator Clifford Case's disclosure of the CIA's funding of the two radios. Arbatov's account of Western covert propaganda is not Soviet invention, and a reader who assumes it must be will be corrected.

What is odd is how much weaker his documentation is than the case allowed. He writes that the CIA's direction of the Free Europe Committee admits of "no doubt" and that its financing is "no secret" — but his footnotes go to Robert T. Holt's 1958 study, to a 1958 Reader's Digest article, and to a 1950 Daily Worker. On the Congress for Cultural Freedom he says only that it was a screen; he does not mention the CIA at all, though the exposure was six years old and had wrecked Encounter. He asserts where he could have proved. The most plausible explanation is that the book's Russian text was fixed in 1970 and only lightly amended, but the effect on a sceptical reader is unfortunate: the strongest evidence for his thesis is missing from the chapter that most needed it.

His larger indictment also lands. "Modern anti-communism is thus a mammoth ideological and political 'enterprise'," he writes, "and constitutes one of the foundations of the policies and ideology of imperialism. For its personnel, resources, capital investments and scale of activity it is the largest ideological 'enterprise' in the history of capitalism." As a description of the institutional weight of American anti-communism in 1970 — the funded institutes, the professionalised émigré organisations, the endowed chairs, the men who made careers of it — this is not caricature. He is on similarly firm ground when he observes that anti-communism served domestically as a licence to attack liberals and trade unionists who were not communists at all, and that the American Communist Party was far too small to account for the scale of the campaign mounted against it.

Now the doctrine, which is where the book turns.

Arbatov's formulation is careful and it is not evasive. Peaceful coexistence, he argues, is a form of the class struggle, not a suspension of it — he quotes the 23rd Congress to that effect — and since the two systems "compete for the support of the peoples, the war of ideas is inevitable." He rejects three alternatives by name: "ideological unity," the convergence theory, and an "ideological armistice," which he calls a project fit only for "people who do not understand the essence of the social processes taking place in the world." He records the decisive ruling: the demands for ideological concessions "were categorically rejected by the CC CPSU at its plenary meeting in April 1968, which underscored that peaceful coexistence in ideology was unacceptable." And he states the principle without softening: "There neither is nor can be room for compromise between the bourgeois and the proletarian world outlook."

Read as a statement about relations between states, this is defensible and even obvious. Nobody supposed that the SALT agreements obliged Moscow to stop publishing Lenin or Washington to stop publishing Hayek. Arbatov makes the reasonable version of the case at length, and makes it well: that ideological difference is not what causes wars, that "the stumbling-block on the path to disarmament is not any difference in ideology but the reluctance of the influential monopolies to part with the profits they are deriving from the arms race," that the United States and Tsarist Russia coexisted for a century across an ideological chasm.

But the doctrine does not stay between states, and Arbatov does not pretend that it does. The Conclusion says it outright: the ideological struggle operates "both on the international scene, and within society," where it "is a major independent form of the class struggle that requires special efforts." Chapter III spells out what those efforts are at home. Defence against imperialist psychological warfare, he writes, "demands the creation of a kind of immunity against these intrigues. This immunity is built up by the ideological tempering and firmness of the people, by vigilance, by unshakable class positions on the part of all workers of the ideological front." That is the whole argument in miniature, and its domestic consequence follows without a further step. If the ideological front cannot be relaxed while state relations relax; if vigilance is the mechanism of defence; and if disagreement inside the country is by construction an opening for an adversary who is known to be seeking exactly such openings — then a Soviet citizen who dissents is not a citizen with a wrong opinion. He is a breach in the perimeter. Arbatov never says this. He does not have to; the architecture says it for him.

What the book does not contain is therefore the most informative thing about it. In roughly 111,000 words on the war of ideas, published by the state that was at that moment prosecuting its critics, there is no discussion of any Soviet citizen who disagreed with the Soviet government. Not one is named. The word "dissident" occurs exactly once, in quotation marks, and refers to the repression of dissenters in capitalist countries at the turn of the twentieth century. Samizdat is not mentioned. The Chronicle of Current Events, then in its fifth year, is not mentioned. Censorship appears repeatedly and always as somebody else's practice — the book's one general remark on it is a parenthesis noting "the censorship (which exists in one form or another even in the most democratic bourgeois countries)," as though the institution were a bourgeois peculiarity. Glavlit does not appear. And the word "Stalin" does not appear in this book a single time. The Terror is reached only through the formula that "the dogmatic, stagnant trends, springing from the personality cult, and manifestations of subjectivism have been surmounted" — a sentence that converts the execution of most of Lenin's Central Committee into a methodological problem, now solved.

The sharpest of these silences concerns jamming. Arbatov devotes many pages to Radio Liberty's transmitters and their wattage; the only occurrence of the word "jamming" in the entire book is in a footnote about British black propaganda against Nazi Germany in the Second World War. The USSR was jamming Western broadcasts as he wrote. Radio Liberty was jammed without interruption from its founding; jamming of the Voice of America and the BBC was suspended in 1973, as a gesture toward the European security conference, and resumed after the invasion of Afghanistan. Against that background one sentence in Chapter IV deserves to be read twice, because it is the finest thing in the book and its author cannot have meant it as it reads: "The interest that people take in what is happening in the world cannot be killed in the same way that our planet cannot be partitioned into sealed compartments by erecting barriers that would be impenetrable to the gaze and to words." He wrote that about the West's inability to keep socialist ideas out. It is an exact description of what his own government was spending a fortune attempting.

The same chapter contains the book's most consequential passage, and it is the one that would matter within two years. Arbatov attacks the Western campaign for the free flow of information — "This is the purpose of the 'freedom of information' demanded by the imperialist powers, notably by the USA" — and argues that it serves commercial domination by the American wire services and that "the drive for unrestricted 'freedom of information' abroad pursues the aim of

facilitating espionage under the guise of news gathering." He then reports, accurately and with evident approval, that when Article 19 of the Universal Declaration was debated, "the US delegation flatly refused to add the words 'within limits not threatening the security of states'." He is right about the history and right that American enthusiasm for open information was not disinterested. But he has also, in 1973, written the Soviet brief against Basket Three of the Helsinki Final Act two years before Moscow signed it — the human-rights and information provisions that Soviet citizens would promptly cite against their own government, and for citing which they would go to camps. The theoretical groundwork for treating that appeal as hostile foreign activity is laid here, in advance.

On the specific historical record the book's falsifications are conventional and compact. 1956 in Hungary appears as "the assistance rendered to the working people of Hungary during the 1956 counter-revolutionary uprising"; Czechoslovakia in August 1968 receives the formula "the fraternal internationalist assistance to the Czechoslovak people," a phrase for an invasion by five armies against a communist party leadership that had asked for nothing of the kind. Both are listed, without irony, as proofs that the Soviet Union prevents imperialism from "exporting counter-revolution." Trotsky is named once in the entire volume, and inaccurately: the advocacy of a "revolutionary war" against the bourgeoisie of other countries in 1918 is attributed to "the 'Left' Communists and the Trotskyites" jointly. The revolutionary-war position in 1918 was Bukharin's and the Left Communists'; Trotsky's position at Brest-Litovsk was the quite different "neither war nor peace"; and Lenin's opponents in that argument were not "Trotskyites," a category that did not yet exist. The amalgam is small but it is characteristic — it merges two opposed positions into one heresy so that a single refutation can dispose of both.

And there is Orwell, whom the book meets twice. Both mentions are to the novel, not to a date: the volume is a first printing of 1973 and nothing in it postdates 1972. Arbatov classifies 1984 among "outright anti-communist concoctions," alongside Zamyatin's *We*, and adds a footnote arguing that "with all the anti-Soviet calumny contained in books like 1984, the disgusting processes described in them are reminiscent of capitalism," citing Adlai Stevenson on American informers. As a point about McCarthyism the observation is not silly. As criticism of Orwell it is a refusal to read: the book is dismissed in a subordinate clause by an author who has just finished explaining that the ideological front must never be relaxed, that vigilance is the citizen's duty, and that the free flow of information is a hostile operation.

The reply was made at the time, and it was not a defence of the CIA. In the weeks after the Moscow summit that Arbatov's Author's Note celebrates, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International issued a statement, dated 31 May 1972 and printed in Intercontinental Press on 12 June 1972 as "On the Betrayal of the Vietnamese at the Moscow Summit Meeting," observing that "the Kremlin chieftains clinked champagne glasses with war criminal Nixon" while Haiphong was being mined. The argument was pressed through the following year: a statement in Intercontinental Press of 15 January 1973 held that "the main cause of this isolation is the conservative policy of peaceful coexistence followed by the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies," and one of 5 February 1973 that "by arranging Nixon's visits to Moscow and Peking in 1972, these bureaucrats helped him to weaken the American antiwar movement." After the October war, a statement in the issue of 5 November 1973 concluded that "the policy of so-called peaceful coexistence can lead only to partial compromises between the interests of American imperialism and the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy." The charge was not that Moscow had been too friendly with Washington. It was that coexistence between the two states had been purchased with the interests of a revolution neither of them controlled — precisely the cost Arbatov's chapter is constructed to argue does not exist.

On the domestic half the same current answered in the register this book makes impossible. Writing on Soviet democracy in Intercontinental Press of 13 September 1976, Ernest Mandel set out both halves of the position in three sentences: "I completely reject Sakharov's current political position." "I unconditionally support his right to advocate these views freely and openly in the Soviet Union." "As Rosa Luxemburg put it so cogently, democracy is always freedom for dissenters." That distinction — between defeating an opponent's ideas and disabling him — is the one Arbatov's doctrine cannot make, because a doctrine under which the ideological front is a front, and citizens are its defensive perimeter, has no vocabulary for a disagreement that is merely a disagreement.

Read for what it is, this remains a valuable book: a lucid, well-sourced, internally consistent statement of what the Soviet leadership believed it was doing in 1973, written by a man who helped decide it, for an audience abroad whose reassurance was part of the policy. Its account of Western covert propaganda is largely accurate and should not be dismissed. Its account of the ideological struggle is accurate too — accurate about itself, which is rarer. Arbatov explains, in public and in English, why the relaxation of tension between

states would not be allowed to reach the people living inside one of them. He offers it as a reason for confidence. It reads now as a warrant.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

# Sholokhov: A critical appreciation

*Real textual scholarship on And Quiet Flows the Don: the magazine variants, the abandoned plans, the architecture of Virgin Soil Upturned - and Sholokhov's 1931 letter to Gorky on what actually caused the Veshenskaya rising, quoted at length and endorsed.*

Lev Grigorievich Yakimenko

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**This is a good book about a great one, and the interesting thing about it is not where it fails but exactly where it stops.**

Lev Grigoryevich Yakimenko was a literary scholar, not an apparatus functionary, and *Sholokhov: A Critical Appreciation* is recognisably the work of one. It contains close textual comparison of magazine and book versions, patient compositional analysis of how a novel's chapters are built, careful attention to imagery, and archival recovery of the author's correspondence. Progress Publishers put it out in English in 1973, but the date on the spine is the translation's. The latest sources Yakimenko cites are a Moscow Gorky volume of 1970 and a 1971 Moscow edition of *The Fate of a Man* used for quotation; there is nothing in the book that requires knowledge later than about 1970. The Russian title — *Tvorchestvo Mikhaila Sholokhova, "The Work of Mikhail Sholokhov"* — is flatter and more accurate than the English one Progress supplied. Read it as a text of the turn of the 1970s: written in the vocabulary the Twentieth Party Congress had licensed, published in English at the moment when that vocabulary was being quietly withdrawn.

The commission is not hard to reconstruct. Mikhail Sholokhov was the only Soviet Nobel laureate in literature the Soviet state was pleased to have. Bunin (1933) was an émigré; Pasternak (1958) was forced to decline; Solzhenitsyn's award in 1970, two or three years before this translation reached English readers, was a full-scale embarrassment. Sholokhov's prize in 1965 was the exception, and *And Quiet Flows the Don* was the one modern Soviet novel that Western readers who cared nothing for socialist realism read anyway. A monograph presenting that novel to the export market, in English, as the achievement of socialist realism rather than as an achievement in spite of it, was worth commissioning. Yakimenko's book does that job. It also, in places, does rather more, which is why it is worth republishing.

Take the rescue first, because it is substantial and because nothing said later is worth much unless this is said plainly.

Yakimenko's textual work is real scholarship. He tracks *And Quiet Flows the Don* through the magazine *Oktyabr* — book three beginning in issues 1–3 of 1929, interrupted, resuming in 1932 — and compares variants against the final text, showing for instance how a line in Grigory Melekhov's central monologue was cut from the 1932 magazine version as incompatible with the character, and how Sholokhov moved from direct statement of Grigory's doubts to a more oblique reported speech that leaves the question open. He reconstructs Sholokhov's changing plans for book four and for book two of *Virgin Soil Upturned* from interviews in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (February 1934) and *Izvestia* (March 1935), quoting the writer's own announcements of intentions he then abandoned. His analysis of the chapter architecture of *Virgin Soil Upturned* — how the meeting that votes to evict the kulak (well-to-do peasant) families in chapter thirteen is prepared by everything from chapter five onward — is the kind of thing criticism is for. So is his reading of Yakov Lukich Ostrovnov, the farm manager who is both a gifted agronomist genuinely excited by large-scale farming and a saboteur and accessory to murder; Yakimenko defends the character's coherence against critics who found him contradictory, and he is right. His pages on the passage where a pair of wild pigeons court in Razmyotnov's yard and send him to his wife's grave are unembarrassed literary appreciation of a high order.

Most valuable of all, he prints Sholokhov's letter to Gorky of 6 June 1931 at length. This is a document of the first importance and Yakimenko not only quotes it but endorses it. Sholokhov is defending the sixth part of the novel — the Veshenskaya rising of February 1919 — against the RAPP officials blocking its publication, and he tells Gorky flatly what caused the rising: "It arose as a result of exaggerated encroachments on the interests of the middle-peasant Cossacks." He goes on: "I had to show the negative aspects of the policy which deprived the Cossacks of their special status and encroached on the interests of the middle-peasant Cossacks, for otherwise I could

not reveal the causes of the uprising. For not only do people not rise up but even a flea doesn't bite just like that, without any reason." He explains that he introduced characters who "only pay lip-service to Soviet power" precisely to show "that these overzealous people distorted the idea of Soviet power". Yakimenko reinforces the point with Serafimovich writing in *Izvestia* in 1919 that "At times it was necessary to shoot Communist hangers-on and even Communists, who had disgraced themselves by abuse of their power and coercion", and that "the reform of the existing social structure was carried out without due regard for the special features of the economy, life and psychology of the Cossacks".

That is an honest passage about Red terror in the Don, printed in Moscow and exported in English. Yakimenko does not name the policy — the Orgburo directive of 24 January 1919 that ordered mass terror against Cossacks, the campaign known as decossackisation — but he lets Sholokhov describe its effects and he defends him for describing them. Note the analytic move, because everything that follows turns on it: revolutionary violence in excess of what the situation required is real, it has causes, it produces risings, and it is the work of "overzealous people" who "distorted the idea of Soviet power". Yakimenko has a working vocabulary for atrocity. Hold onto it.

Now the hard test, and the best thing in the book.

The central interpretive problem of *And Quiet Flows the Don* is that its hero ends outside the Revolution. Grigory Melekhov fights for the Reds, then commands an insurgent division against them, then fights with the First Mounted Army against Wrangel, then joins Fomin's outlaw band, and finally throws his weapons in the river and comes home to a son and nothing else. He is never reconciled. Soviet criticism argued about this for forty years, because a novel with a national hero who ends unreconciled is not obviously a novel the state can hold up as its own.

Yakimenko's answer is not evasion, and it deserves to be stated fairly. He insists on the tragedy. He gives it a full chapter and returns to it repeatedly. He writes that Grigory "broke with the past without accepting the future. He did not go as far as to completely renounce his class views and habits, and this was his tragedy". He tracks the moral destruction with real feeling — the drinking, the mother's reproach, the recurring image of the wolf, the great steppe-fire passage from the end of the novel, of which he says: "A broken, morally bankrupt and utterly unhappy man is the tragic image of Grigory we carry away from the last few pages of the novel." He is alert to how

Sholokhov works indirectly, revealing Grigory's turns of mind through the sequence of his questions rather than by description. This is genuine criticism of a tragic hero.

And then the tragedy is converted. "Sholokhov's sympathy with his hero, Grigory Melekhov, does not mean that he justifies him," Yakimenko writes; the novel offers "its author's clearly expressed condemnation (in which his own judgment has the support of history)". He praises socialist realism because "it refrained from idealising the innocent victims of history". Grigory's command of the rising "aggravated his guilt before the Soviet government and made his reconciliation with the people more difficult". The conclusion is stated as a demonstrated proposition: "Sholokhov's novel shows with a tremendously convincing force that there is no third way in the Revolution, that fighting against his people leads a man to moral bankruptcy and dehumanisation."

So: genuine tragedy, but tragedy of error — the aesthetic weight is granted in full and then made to carry a verdict. Grigory is not a victim, he is a man who chose wrongly and is condemned by history and by his author.

Two things break this reading, and both are visible in Yakimenko's own pages.

The first is that Sholokhov refused the verdict in advance. Yakimenko himself prints the writer's warning from *Izvestia* in March 1935: "Melekhov's destiny is a purely individual phenomenon and I have no intention of suggesting that it is typical of the middle-peasant Cossacks. I take him away from the Whites, of course, but I will not make a Bolshevik of him. He is no Bolshevik." A novelist who says he will not convert his hero is not writing a book whose point is that the hero should have converted. Yakimenko reads this as a caution against crude typology; it reads at least as easily as a refusal to supply the ending the doctrine wanted.

The second is the "third way" itself. Yakimenko describes the Veshenskaya insurgents accurately: they marched under red banners reading "Long Live the Soviets! Down with the Communists!", they kept "Comrade" as the form of address, they set up a Cossack republic, and they fought both the Whites and the Bolsheviks. He calls this "the kulak Socialist-Revolutionary slogan". It is a phrase doing an enormous amount of work. Soviets without Communists was not a kulak invention and not confined to the Don; it was the slogan of the Tambov peasant war of 1920–21 and, in substance, of the Kronstadt sailors in March 1921 — men who had been the shock troops of October two years earlier. That

the third way was defeated is a fact. That there could be no third way is a doctrine, and it is the doctrine on which the single-party state was built. Yakimenko has to write the sentence "there is no third way in the Revolution" because the alternative is to admit that in 1919, and again in 1921, large numbers of the labouring people the Revolution was made for concluded that the party had become something they had to rise against. Sholokhov's novel is great partly because it lets you feel why they concluded that. Yakimenko's criticism is good enough to transmit the feeling and obliged to gainsay the conclusion.

The second test is collectivisation, and here the book's silences are precise enough to be dated.

Give Yakimenko his due first, because he says more than a 1973 Progress title had to. He is sharp about Makar Nagulnov, the local Communist whose zeal shades into mania. He notes that Nagulnov "quotes Marx and Engels frequently enough, but does not understand the actual way the class forces are drawn up at all"; that Sholokhov repeatedly likens him to a bird of prey; that his "fanatical obsession makes him ready to go to the extremes of brutality". He quotes the appalling outburst in full — Nagulnov, told that Razmyotnov pities the children of the families he has been sent to dispossess, screaming "Is this how you serve the Revolution? Sorry for them? Why, I'd ... give me thousands of old men, children, women.... I'd do it with a machine-gun ... every one of 'em!" He says of Sholokhov that "true humanist writer that he is, he is quite merciless in exposing" what is unpleasant in Nagulnov. That is not whitewash.

But look at the frame. The clash between Nagulnov and Davidov is "essentially a reflection of the struggle between two styles of leadership: one the true Leninist approach, which sought to patiently explain and convince, and the other an anti-Party approach, which sought to overcome difficulties by frontal attack using threats and coercion." Coercion is a style. It is a deviation, individual and psychological, traceable to Nagulnov's war wounds and his fits. And the corrective, three times over, is Stalin's article "Dizzy with Success". It arrives with the post on 20 March, the Cossacks read it, the conspirators lose their following, and the old Cossack tells Polovtsev: "We're not against Soviet power, we're against the disorders in our own village." In this entire book Stalin appears essentially in no other role. Yakimenko is writing after the Twentieth Congress, he uses the phrase "the personality cult" without embarrassment when discussing literary genres, and the one thing Stalin is permitted to do in his pages is publish the article that stops the excesses.

"Dizzy with Success" appeared in Pravda on 2 March 1930. It blamed local officials for the results of a policy the Politburo had ordered, produced a mass exodus from the collective farms in the spring, and was followed by the resumption of the drive. The excesses were not a deviation from the policy; forced collectivisation was the policy, and the dispossession and deportation of roughly 1.8 million people to special settlements in 1930–31 was its execution. Yakimenko's Nagulnov is a man who took the line too far. Nagulnov's real-life counterparts were carrying out instructions. The Soviet citizen interviewed by Fourth International in June 1945 — a man broadly loyal to the regime, who defended Soviet wage differentials and thought the USSR socialist — put the ordinary fact plainly: "The kolkhozes (collective farms) were imposed almost exclusively by force, according to plans laid down by members of the Party."

And then there is 1932–33. Yakimenko does not pretend the years did not happen. Twice he approaches them. Sholokhov, he writes, "was forced to put aside his writing for some time, due to the difficult situation that arose on the Don in 1932–1933." And, more remarkably: "One cannot help wondering whether Sholokhov had intended writing of the gross distortions in the policy of collectivisation which had such tragic consequences in 1932 and 1933. That is a question that cannot be answered without the help of the author."

That sentence is the hinge of the whole book. It admits that something happened, that it was caused by policy, and that its consequences were tragic. It is more than most Progress volumes of the period concede about anything. And it stops there. The word famine does not occur in this book. Neither does starvation, in connection with 1933. No number is offered, no region named, no cause described. What happened on the Don in 1932–33 was that the grain quota was set beyond what the harvest could yield, that requisition brigades took seed grain and food stocks, that villages were blacklisted and cut off from supply, and that people died of hunger in the tens of thousands in the North Caucasus krai. Estimates of Soviet famine deaths across 1932–33 remain genuinely contested and range roughly from five to seven million, with the Ukrainian SSR and the Kuban and Don worst hit; the historiography argues about intent and about attribution by republic, but not about the deaths.

Now set that against the second half of Yakimenko's sentence: the question "cannot be answered without the help of the author." Sholokhov was alive. He was in his mid-sixties when this book went to press in Moscow, living at Veshenskaya, a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, the most decorated writer in the

country, and the most accessible subject a Soviet literary scholar ever had.

And the author had already answered, in print, thirteen years earlier. In 1957, writing under the title "Keep in Step with the Party, with the People", Sholokhov turned to the fortieth anniversary of Soviet power, apologised for how far writers had fallen behind the pace of events, and said this: "if you take a practical view of life, you'll agree that no particular harm was done because I did not go further than the 1930s in my *Virgin Soil Upturned*, but think how terrible it would have been if our agriculture and industry had still remained at the 1930s level!"

That is the answer. Not writing about 1932–33 did no particular harm; and the proper measure of the period is that output has risen since. A novelist who had described the destruction of his own district to the head of the government in 1933 was, by 1957, offering the tonnage figures as consolation.

What makes this decisive rather than merely sad is where the passage was printed. It is in *At the Bidding of the Heart*, a selection of Sholokhov's speeches and articles compiled by Y. Lukin and issued in English by Progress Publishers in 1973 — the same house, the same year, the same export list as the Yakimenko volume you are holding. A reader who bought both books was told by the critic that the question could not be answered without the author's help, and by the author, in the companion volume, that the question did not much matter.

The private truth was different, and Yakimenko cannot be blamed for not printing it. In the spring of 1933 Sholokhov wrote to Stalin from Veshenskaya describing the confiscation of food, the beatings and torture used by requisition brigades in his district, and mass starvation among collective farmers; he named officials and asked for grain and for an investigation. Stalin sent grain, ordered an inquiry — and replied that the peasants of the district were themselves waging a quiet war against Soviet power. Those letters were not published in the USSR until the era of glasnost. That is a real constraint and it should be stated as one. But it does not explain the sentence Yakimenko did print. He could have written nothing. Instead he wrote that the question cannot be answered, which was not true in 1970 and had not been true since 1957.

The companion volume seals it from the other end. At the *Bidding of the Heart* runs to some 104,000 words of Sholokhov's public prose across four decades, and the word famine does not occur in it either. Its earliest item of any kind

is dated 1934. The years 1929 to 1933 — collectivisation, dekulakisation, and the hunger that followed them through the district he lived in and wrote about — are simply not represented in his collected public writing. A piece in that volume called "Cossack Collective Farms", which a reader might reasonably expect to belong to the collectivisation years, turns out to be a harvest dispatch of 1941, full of Don horses and cavalry caps and women in the fields shouting after the conscripts: "Strike the nazi vipers dead!"

There is a second, smaller mark of the same pressure. Yakimenko quotes Sholokhov complaining that manuscripts deposited in the local archive for safekeeping were lost in the war — "the manuscripts of *Tales from the Don*, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, my correspondence with Stalin and Gorky, and other valuable material". Yakimenko prints the phrase "my correspondence with Stalin" and does not pause on it for a syllable. He pursues the Gorky letters and recovers a magnificent one. The Stalin correspondence he passes over in silence. And when he lists the Veshensky district Party officials who were Sholokhov's close friends in the 1930s — P. Lugovoi, P. Krasnyukov, T. Logachev, remembered for hunting trips and New Year parties and verse riddles for the children — he does not mention that these men were arrested in the Terror, or that Sholokhov went to Stalin to get them out. Lugovoi returns a few pages earlier as a memoirist, recalling Sholokhov's kerosene lamp burning past midnight. That is all the reader is told about him.

The chapter titled "The Enemies" completes the picture, and it needs a fair hearing. The enemies of *Virgin Soil Upturned* are real: Polovtsev is a White officer running a genuine armed conspiracy, Ostrovnov freezes the collective farm's oxen and is an accessory to the murder of the Khoprovs and starves his own mother to death. Sholokhov wrote them that way and Yakimenko reads them faithfully and well. But the chapter validates the category, and the category is the problem. In the world of the novel, resistance to collectivisation is conspiracy, directed by former officers, hoping for foreign deliverance. In the Don of 1932–33, the people who hid grain were hiding it because their children were starving. There is no room in "The Enemies" for them, and Yakimenko does not make room.

The third absence is the man himself, and it is total.

The Sholokhov of this book is an artist, a son of the Don, a deputy who never found his duties a burden, and a mentor who tells the Kazakhstan Writers' Congress that young writers should be trained as the golden eagle trains its young, driven higher and higher "so that they may become real golden eagles

in literature, and not bedraggled crows or domestic hens". The book's last pages are given to his views on criticism: that a young writer needs "open, unrestrained criticism", that partiality and group sympathies ruin literature, that inferior craftsmanship "is at the same time an ideological flaw".

In April 1966, at the Twenty-Third Party Congress, Sholokhov spoke about the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, tried two months earlier — "convicted of maligning the Soviet Union in their literary productions and given sentences of seven and five years respectively", as Intercontinental Press later put it — for publishing satirical fiction abroad under pseudonyms. He never used their names from the rostrum. He did not need to. He called them "these convicted apostates" and said he felt "doubly ashamed of people who are offering their services and applying for permission to go bail" for them. Then:

*"There are some who, invoking humanism, bewail the sternness of the verdict. I see here a group of delegates from the Party organisation of our Soviet Army, and I wonder what they would do if traitors were discovered in one of their units? Our soldiers know better than anyone else that humanism and slobbery are different things altogether. 'There's something else I'm thinking of. Had this happened in the memorable 1920s when cases were tried more by revolutionary justice than the strictly demarcated clauses of the Criminal Code, a very different, oh so very different punishment would have been meted out to these turncoats! And here, if you please, people are talking about the 'sternness' of the verdict!'"*

A Nobel laureate is telling a Party Congress that two writers in labour camps should have been shot. Having said it, he moved on without a pause to the pollution of Lake Baikal and a mismanaged vegetable-drying factory at Kalyazin.

It drew a reply. Lidia Chukovskaya, author of *The Deserted House*, "wrote an open letter to Mikhail Sholokov, the author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, denouncing him for demanding stiffer sentences for Andrei D. Sinyavsky and Yuli M. Daniel" — the spelling of his name is Intercontinental Press's own. Three years later Solzhenitsyn, expelled from the Writers' Union of the Russian Republic, threw the letter back at the men who had expelled him: "Thus neither [Mikhail] Sholokov nor all of you put together dared to answer the famous letter of Lidiya Chukovskaya, pride of Russian essayists." Both passages are in Intercontinental Press, vol. 7 no. 40, 1 December 1969, p. 1066. The letter itself appeared in English in *World Outlook* for 9 December 1966; that issue is not in the

archive from which this series works, and nothing here should be taken as standing in for the document.

Now watch what Progress did with that speech in 1973, because the two volumes handle it differently and the difference is instructive. At the *Bidding of the Heart* prints it in full, demand and all — Progress was not ashamed of it; in Moscow in 1973 it was a creditable thing to have said. But Y. Lukin, introducing that volume, also quotes the speech in his own essay, and he quotes exactly two paragraphs of it: the passage about how "Wherever and in whatever language Communists speak, we always speak as Communists." He stops there. The next paragraph of the speech — "It is a very different matter when an author writes one thing in the Soviet Union and publishes something else abroad" — is where the attack begins, and it is where Lukin's quotation ends. The compiler prints the knife and then, in his own voice, hands the reader the handle only.

Nor was 1966 the end of it. In August 1973 — the year this translation appeared in English — thirty-one Soviet writers signed an open letter condemning Andrei Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn. "Among the signers was Mikhail Sholokhov, Nobel prize-winning author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Sholokhov has previously sided with the bureaucrats against dissidents," Intercontinental Press reported on 10 September 1973. The English edition of Yakimenko's tribute and its subject's signature on that letter belong to the same twelve months.

Yakimenko goes further than Lukin. His book contains not one word about the trial, the speech, or the reply; nor about Sholokhov's part in the campaign against Pasternak. Instead it quotes the Stockholm address on the artist's duty "to tell people the truth, however bitter", and gives its closing pages to his advice on criticising the young with fatherly exigence. So the export list of a single publisher in a single year offers three treatments of the same event: the speech entire, the speech trimmed at the point where it turns ugly, and no speech at all. The silence is not accidental and it is not Yakimenko's alone. It is what a Soviet monograph on a living laureate was for.

One more thing must be reported accurately, because it is easy to get wrong in either direction. Yakimenko devotes a single sentence to the authorship controversy: describing the difficulties over book three, he writes: "The enemies of Soviet literature were doing their utmost to slander the writer, maintaining that he had plagiarised the first two books of the novel." That is the whole of it — no names, no account of the charge, no mention of the commission of writers who

investigated it in 1929 and published a defence of Sholokhov in Pravda, and no evidence adduced. The reader is told there was slander and that Sholokhov fought on.

The charge dates from the late 1920s, when it was said that a man in his early twenties from a remote village could not have written such a book and that he had used the papers of a dead Don writer. It was revived in 1974 — the year after this translation, so Yakimenko is not answering it — in a book published abroad under the initial "D", written by Irina Medvedeva-Tomashevskaya, with a preface by Solzhenitsyn. It stayed live, and it stayed dangerous. In March 1975 the dissident Marxist historian Roy Medvedev was called into the public prosecutor's office in Moscow and told to cancel a contract with a Western publisher for a book on Sholokhov; Medvedev held "that Soviet Nobel laureate Sholokhov did not write all of the novel *The Quiet Don*", and said his investigation was "continuing and he now claims to have located, hut not yet seen, the archives of Fyodor Dmitrievich Krukov, who he thinks wrote the major part of the book attributed to Sholokhov" — the mangled words are the scanned text's, and the writer's name is normally given as Fyodor Kryukov (Intercontinental Press, vol. 13 no. 14, 14 April 1975, p. 500). A state that prosecutes a question is not settling it, and Medvedev's claim about the Kryukov archives was never substantiated. The question has not been closed to universal satisfaction, but the weight of evidence has moved decisively. Statistical and computational studies of the text, beginning with the work of Geir Kjetsaa and his collaborators in the 1980s, found the disputed books consistent with Sholokhov's other writing and not with the proposed alternative author; and manuscripts of the first two books in Sholokhov's hand, long thought lost, were located in the 1990s and published in facsimile. Current scholarly opinion favours Sholokhov. The irony is that Yakimenko was better placed than he knew: his own patient collation of the Oktyabr\* variants against the final text — a writer visibly working and reworking his material over years — is exactly the sort of evidence that bears on the question, and he never thinks to use it, because in Moscow in 1970 the charge was not a question but an insult.

The argument Yakimenko is making had been answered before he made it, and answered on the ground he himself chooses.

The most striking episode in his book is Sholokhov's fight with the "orthodox" leaders of RAPP — the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers — who held up book three of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, scrawled "That's counter-revolution!" in the margin beside a line about Red Army men riding badly, and

demanded cuts that would have taken three-quarters of the text. Yakimenko is scathing about them: they had "a speculative approach to the historical process", using it "as an a priori postulate to 'sanctify' all past events". He is right. But the principle at stake had been stated plainly in 1923, in the essay "Communist Policy Toward Art", by the man whose name Yakimenko cannot print. "The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command," Trotsky wrote. "It can and must protect and help it, but it can only lead it indirectly." The whole quarrel over Sholokhov's sixth part was a quarrel about whether a literary bureau could tell a novelist what a rising had been caused by. Yakimenko wants the RAPP officials to have been wrong in that particular case. He cannot afford to say they were wrong in principle, because the apparatus that replaced RAPP in 1932 — the single Union of Soviet Writers, with socialist realism as its statutory method — claimed the same authority on a far larger scale, and it is that method Yakimenko spends his book celebrating as giving "the writer more scope for artistic expression than any other creative method".

The fuller answer came in June 1938, in a letter to Partisan Review published as "Art and Politics in Our Epoch", written while Sholokhov was completing the last part of the novel. Trotsky's judgment of the regime is unsparing and has worn well: "The October revolution gave a magnificent impetus to all types of Soviet art. The bureaucratic reaction, on the contrary, has stifled artistic creation with a totalitarian hand." Naming the writers then endorsing Vyshinsky's prosecutions or glorifying Stalin to order, he identifies the motive not as conviction but as fear — "It is not a 'creative hatred' that guides the pen of these writers but paralyzing fear" — and states the principle against which Yakimenko's whole enterprise has to be measured: "a truly revolutionary party is neither able nor willing to take upon itself the task of 'leading' and even less of commanding art, either before or after the conquest of power... Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them."

Honesty requires adding that in the same essay Trotsky overreached. He wrote that it was "impossible to read Soviet verse and prose without physical disgust", and dismissed the art of the Stalin period wholesale. That verdict was delivered in the year Sholokhov dated the draft of his eighth part, and it does not survive contact with *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Something was still being written in the USSR in 1938 that was not a manufactured myth, and a reply that could not see it was to that extent blunter than the case required. The interesting question is how. And the answer is on Yakimenko's own pages: because Sholokhov fought the literary bureau over

book three and won with Gorky's help, because he told an interviewer in 1935 that he would not make a Bolshevik of his hero and then did not, and because he wrote to Gorky in 1931 that people do not rise up for no reason. Sholokhov survived as an artist in the 1930s to the exact extent that he resisted being commanded. That is Trotsky's principle demonstrated, not refuted — and it is Yakimenko who supplies the evidence.

Where the same tradition was exact rather than sweeping, it has been vindicated completely. In July 1941, in "The Blind Alley of Soviet Literature", L. Yakovlev surveyed the flight of Soviet writers from contemporary subjects and dropped a footnote about those who still wrote about the civil war: "it is no simple task to provide a realistic depiction of the civil war without once mentioning the name of Leon Trotsky or other legendary heroes of the Red Army and always portraying Stalin as a genius" (Fourth International, vol. 2 no. 6, July 1941). That is a specific, testable claim about what a particular kind of book would have to leave out. Yakimenko's book is a study of the greatest civil war novel in Russian, running to something over 130,000 words in English. It discusses the Southern Front, Denikin's thrust towards Moscow, the First Mounted Army, the Red Army on the Don in 1919, and the rising in the Red Army's rear. It names Podtyolkov more than a dozen times. The name of the man who founded and commanded that army does not occur in it once. A reader in 1973 with no view whatever on Trotsky's politics would close this book unaware that he had existed.

In Sholokhov's own collected prose the name survives exactly once, and only as an epithet. Speaking in 1937 about the Spanish war, he told his audience that Soviet writers were "deeply perturbed by developments such as the events which took place in Catalonia a short while ago when Trotskyite-fascist elements, provoking certain groups of anarchists to action, attempted to organise a mutiny in the rear of the republican front with the aim of undermining the Popular Front" — and drew the moral from his own revolution: "Everyone knows that Soviet power waged an uncompromising struggle against the enemies of the working class, and we won because we ruthlessly smashed and routed all traitors to the cause." The Barcelona May Days of 1937 were the suppression of the POUM and the CNT by the Republic's own government, and the "certain groups of anarchists" were the largest workers' organisation in Catalonia. This is the same erasure viewed from the other side: a name that cannot appear as a person appears without difficulty as a category of enemy, and the workers killed in Barcelona enter Soviet prose only as its illustration.

The mechanism was described from inside four years later. In June 1945 Fourth International published an interview with a Soviet citizen who had left the USSR, and the interviewer asked him directly what he thought of *And Quiet Flows the Don* and of the fiction of collectivisation. He had read the novel and seen the film, and was "very fond of writers who wrote about the civil war". Asked about Trotsky, he answered without rancour and without hesitation: "He is no longer considered to have been the principal organizer of the Red Army." That is what a successful erasure sounds like when it is repeated back by someone who has simply never been told otherwise. Twenty-five years later Yakimenko wrote the book that assumption makes possible.

What, then, is this book for a reader now?

It is the best available Soviet account of the finest novel the Soviet Union produced, written by a scholar who could read, and it should be read for that. Yakimenko on the composition of *Virgin Soil Uplifted*, on Ostrovnov, on the pigeons in Razmyotnov's yard, on the drafts of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, is worth any reader's time. He is also the clearest available demonstration of what the doctrine cost. He possesses, on his own pages, a serviceable analysis of revolutionary excess: he applies it to the Don in 1919, where Sholokhov had already applied it and where the dead were safely distant. He cannot apply it to the Don in 1932–33, where the same requisition brigades, the same "overzealous people", and a policy signed at the top produced a far greater catastrophe. The tool is in his hand; he is not permitted to turn it around. And the writer he spent a career admiring had by then done the turning for him — describing that catastrophe to Stalin in 1933 and being told he was mistaken, then telling the reading public in 1957 that no particular harm had come of leaving it out. That is the shape of the book, and it is worth seeing whole: a man who could think, thinking as far as he was allowed to and stopping at a line he did not draw.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

# At the Bidding of the Heart

*Over a hundred of Sholokhov's articles, speeches, letters and interviews, gathered by Y. Lukin. A portrait of the writer assembled from his own words - and, in what it begins by omitting, a portrait of the man who assembled it.*

Mikhail Sholokhov

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**This is the companion volume to Lev Yakimenko's** Sholokhov: A Critical Appreciation, which Progress Publishers issued in English in the same year. That book was the criticism; this is the man. Y. Lukin has gathered something over a hundred of Sholokhov's articles, speeches, letters, telegrams and interviews, arranged them under three headings — Life, The Writer, Young People — and prefaced them with an essay of his own. The result is not a book Sholokhov wrote. It is a book made out of Sholokhov, and what makes it worth republishing is that a compilation reveals its compiler. Every anthology is an argument about what a life consisted of. This one can be checked against the life.

Start with the dates, because they are the first finding.

The earliest item in the entire volume is from 1934. The latest is the speech to the Twenty-Fourth Party Congress in 1971. Between those two points Lukin covers thirty-seven years densely — the war years almost month by month, the Nobel Prize in exhaustive detail, cosmonauts, fishery ministers, New Year greetings. Before 1934 there is nothing at all.

Sholokhov was thirty in 1934 and had been publishing for nine years. He had brought out *Tales from the Don*, three books of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, and the first book of *Virgin Soil Uplifted*. He had lived through collectivisation in the Veshenskaya district as a resident, not a visitor. He had fought a long battle with the RAPP officials over the sixth part of the novel and won it with Gorky's help. None of that period is represented. The volume opens in the year of the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers — the congress that dissolved the literary factions into a single Union and made socialist realism the statutory method. Lukin's Sholokhov begins existing as a public man at precisely the moment the public role was standardised.

That is the shape of the hole. Now the piece the reader will go looking for.

"Cossack Collective Farms" stands third in Part I, between "On the Don" and "Vileness", and the title promises the great subject. It is dated 1941. It is a harvest dispatch, written for *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the army paper — Sholokhov says so inside it — about the first wartime reaping on the Don six weeks after the German invasion. It opens: "Harvesting was in full swing on the boundless Don fields." Combine operators say their wives can replace them at the wheel; an elderly farmer says "Nature herself is for us and against Hitler"; carts move to the Grain Purveyance Stores "loaded high with sacks of newly reaped grain". A man at the Stalinets collective farm supplies the one sentence in the piece that touches collectivisation at all: "We stopped sweating once collective farms were started. Soviet power relieved us from backbreaking toil."

It is a competent, warm, entirely honourable piece of war reporting, and it has nothing whatever to do with what its title leads a reader to expect. Nothing in this book does. There is no article about collectivisation in it. The one moment the subject is named directly is a 1934 speech to workers at the Lenzavod factory, where Sholokhov mentions in passing that he "started writing my *Virgin Soil Uplifted* in 1930, hot on the heels of the happenings which radically changed the rural world: the elimination of the kulaks (well-to-do peasants) as a class, large-scale collectivisation, and the mass movement of the peasantry to unite into collective farms" — and then turns immediately to the difficulty of keeping up with a fast-changing subject. The words famine and starvation do not appear in the book in connection with 1932 or 1933. Neither year is mentioned. The one occurrence of the figure 1933 is a footnote reference to an issue of a literary journal.

Set that beside what we know Sholokhov was doing in the spring of 1933. From Veshenskaya he wrote to Stalin — at length, more than once — describing the requisition brigades in his district: food confiscated down to the last stocks, collective farmers beaten and tortured to make them give up grain they did not have, people dying of hunger. He named officials. He asked for grain and for an investigation. He got both; Stalin also replied that the peasants of the district were

themselves waging a quiet sabotage war against Soviet power. Those letters stayed unpublished in the USSR until glasnost, and Lukin in the early 1970s could not have printed them. That constraint is real and should be stated as one.

But the constraint does not cover the gap, because what Sholokhov could print in the 1930s was not nothing, and Lukin has printed some of it. Here is Sholokhov in 1934, in a foreword written for the English edition of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, answering British reviewers who had called his portrayal of reality cruel: "In the former case I accept the rebuke, for I think that a writer who varnishes reality to the detriment of truth and spares the feelings of his readers because he wants to adapt himself to them, is a bad writer. My novel is not one of those books people read during their after-dinner siesta, and the sole purpose of which is to help digestion." That was written for foreign readers in the year after the famine, by a man who had watched it and reported it privately to the head of the state. It is one of the finest sentences in this book and it convicts everything around it.

Hunger does appear once. In "A Word About Motherland", dated 1948, Sholokhov records an old collective farm chairman talking about the drought of 1946: "I think that in the old days half of the population would have died from hunger in a drought like that one. ... When we came to grief in that drought, the state helped us out with grain and seeds. We supported people in every way we could, we saw them through the trouble, and everyone survived." The drought of 1946 was followed by a famine across the grain regions of the USSR in 1946–47. It is much less studied than 1932–33 and its death toll is genuinely contested; serious estimates run to a million or more. Hunger is permitted into this book exactly once, in the past conditional, as something that would have happened under the old order and did not happen under the new.

Now the second matter, and it is the reason this volume is more interesting than its companion.

Yakimenko's monograph does not mention the trial of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, or Sholokhov's speech about them at the Twenty-Third Party Congress in April 1966. That silence was predictable. The prediction fails here. Lukin prints the speech. It is in Part I, in sequence, under the title "Speech at the 23rd Party Congress", complete, with no cuts marked and no editorial note.

The names are not in it. Sholokhov never used them from the rostrum. What he said is this:

*"It is a very different matter when an author writes one*

*thing in the Soviet Union and publishes something else abroad. He uses the same Russian language in both cases, but in the first for better camouflage, and in the second for desecrating this language with his rabid hatred and malice against everything Soviet, against everything that is precious and sacred to us."*

He moves to the metaphor the speech is remembered for — "there is nothing more blasphemous and vile than slandering one's own mother, insulting her maliciously, and raising one's hand to strike her!" — and then turns on the people who had petitioned for the defendants:

*"It's not the writers who have slandered our country and flung mud at what is very precious to us that I feel shame for. They are amoral. But I do feel shame for people who are trying to defend these writers, no matter what prompts them to do so. And I feel doubly ashamed of people who are offering their services and applying for permission to go bail for these convicted apostates."*

Then the sentence itself:

*"There are some who, invoking humanism, bewail the sternness of the verdict. I see here a group of delegates from the Party organisation of our Soviet Army, and I wonder what they would do if traitors were discovered in one of their units? Our soldiers know better than anyone else that humanism and slobbery are different things altogether. 'There's something else I'm thinking of. Had this happened in the memorable 1920s when cases were tried more by revolutionary justice than the strictly demarcated clauses of the Criminal Code, a very different, oh so very different punishment would have been meted out to these turncoats! And here, if you please, people are talking about the 'sternness' of the verdict!'"*

Sinyavsky had been given seven years, Daniel five. The "very different punishment" is not left to the imagination.

It ends with a defence of criticism: "do not worry about the safety of criticism in our country. We are supporting and developing criticism. And much sharp criticism has been voiced at the present congress too. However, slander is not criticism, and mud from a puddle is not paint from an artist's palette."

Two things must be said about the way this appears in the book, and they cut opposite ways.

The first is to Lukin's credit, or at least to his honesty as an

editor: he printed it. He could have dropped one item from a volume of a hundred and no reviewer would have noticed. He did not. A reader of this book in English in 1973 could read the whole thing in Sholokhov's own words and form a judgment.

The second is what Lukin does with it in his own introductory essay. He quotes the speech there too — and he quotes two paragraphs, the harmless ones about the Nobel address and about Communists speaking as Communists wherever they are, and stops. The paragraph he stops at is the one immediately preceding "It is a very different matter when an author writes one thing in the Soviet Union and publishes something else abroad." The excerpt is cut, to the sentence, at the edge of the thing the speech is famous for. Lukin knew exactly which paragraph he was leaving out. He put it back a hundred and fifty pages later, where nobody skimming an introduction would meet it.

Then look at what sits next to it. Lukin's arrangement is chronological, so he did not have to contrive this; the sequence made it for him. In December 1965 Sholokhov stood in Stockholm Town Hall and defined the writer's mission: "to be honest with the reader, to tell people the truth, perhaps the hard truth but always the brave truth." On 1 January 1966 he wished Pravda's readers a good year. On 10 January he thanked Leipzig University for a doctorate. In April he told the Congress that the sentences were too light. And the very next item in the book, from later in 1966, is a letter to a writers' meeting in Baku titled "A Humanist Is the Man Who Fights", which argues — about Vietnam, and it is a decent argument about Vietnam — that "a true humanist will fight to avert the hand of the murderer and render his evil will harmless, and not merely pity the poor victim". Five items, thirteen months. Nobody had to editorialise. The reader can watch it happen.

The reply came, and it came from Moscow. Lidia Chukovskaya, author of *The Deserted House*, "wrote an open letter to Mikhail Sholokov, the author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, denouncing him for demanding stiffer sentences for Andrei D. Sinyavsky and Yuli M. Daniel" — the misspelling is Intercontinental Press's. Three years later Solzhenitsyn, expelled from the Writers' Union of the Russian Republic, threw it in his expellers' faces: "Thus neither [Mikhail] Sholokov nor all of you put together dared to answer the famous letter of Lidiya Chukovskaya, pride of Russian essayists." Both passages are in Intercontinental Press, vol. 7 no. 40, 1 December 1969, p. 1066. Chukovskaya's letter itself appeared in English in *World Outlook* for 9 December 1966, an issue this series does not hold; nothing summarised here

should be read as standing in for the document.

And the year this translation reached English readers, he did it again. On 30 August 1973 thirty-one Soviet writers signed an open letter condemning Andrei Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn. "Among the signers was Mikhail Sholokhov, Nobel prize-winning author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Sholokhov has previously sided with the bureaucrats against dissidents," reported Intercontinental Press on 10 September 1973 (vol. 11 no. 31). Lukin's book and that signature are the same twelve months.

Now the harder question, which is what else the selection tells you, and here the book gives more than its compiler can have intended.

Trotsky's name occurs exactly once in these hundred-odd items. It is 1937, in "About the Soviet Writer", where Sholokhov is talking to a Spanish delegation about the civil war in Spain: "we are deeply perturbed by developments such as the events which took place in Catalonia a short while ago when Trotskyite-fascist elements, provoking certain groups of anarchists to action, attempted to organise a mutiny in the rear of the republican front with the aim of undermining the Popular Front." He draws the moral at once: "Everyone knows that Soviet power waged an uncompromising struggle against the enemies of the working class, and we won because we ruthlessly smashed and routed all traitors to the cause."

That is the Barcelona May Days of 1937, and the "Trotskyite-fascist elements" are the POUM, whose leader Andreu Nin was abducted and killed by Soviet agents in June of that year, and the anarchists of the CNT. It is the standard Comintern line delivered in the standard words. The single mention of Trotsky in a book by the greatest novelist of the Don is a slander about Spain, and it arrives with a rider recommending the method. This is what L. Yakovlev was describing four years later, in July 1941, when he surveyed the flight of Soviet writers from contemporary subjects, named Sholokhov first among "the outstanding Soviet writers" who had taken refuge in the past, and added the footnote: "it is no simple task to provide a realistic depiction of the civil war without once mentioning the name of Leon Trotsky or other legendary heroes of the Red Army and always portraying Stalin as a genius" (*Fourth International*, vol. 2 no. 6, July 1941).

Stalin, oddly, is nearly absent. He appears as a person exactly once in the whole volume: "We remember the words of Comrade Stalin: 'Great energy is born only for a great aim'", in

a 1952 report on the Volga-Don canal. Otherwise there are the Stalin Prize, Stalingrad, and silence. This is a 1973 compilation covering 1934 to 1971 and it has been swept. Whether Lukin cut Stalin out or Sholokhov simply said less about him than most, the effect is the same: a public career spanning the Terror, the war and the Twentieth Congress, from which the central political fact of half of it has been removed without trace.

There is also this, which is the most uncomfortable page in the book and which Lukin cannot have read closely. In March 1939, at the Eighteenth Party Congress, Sholokhov spoke — mostly about the paper allocation for fiction, an old grievance of his and a real one. He wanted more paper for the classics, and to explain why they deserved it he described what had been done to Russian writers:

*"And then there is that other category of writers who in the remote past were repaid for their genius with sentences of hard labour in Siberia and with banishment, they were pilloried, they were conscripted into the army as privates, they were crushed under by the obtuse might of the state machine and the church, or were simply killed with the hands of obligingly unscrupulous officers. The responsibility for this disgrace, this egregious shamelessness lies with the accursed regime which our people and our Party put an end to in 1917."*

Osip Mandelstam had died in a transit camp near Vladivostok three months earlier. Boris Pilnyak had been shot in April 1938. Isaac Babel was arrested six weeks after this speech and shot in January 1940. Sholokhov himself went to Stalin in these years to get his Veshenskaya friends out of the cells, and got some of them out. He knew. Standing at the rostrum in 1939 he denounced the persecution of writers, in the past tense, and assigned the responsibility to the tsars.

Give him what he is owed, because a great deal is owed and the case above is worthless without it.

The war journalism is not cynical and was not written from a desk in Moscow. "On the Way to the Front", "First Encounters", "Prisoners-of-War", "The Science of Hatred" and the letter to besieged Leningrad — "We know how hard it is for you to live, work and fight while surrounded by the enemy" — were produced under fire by a man who was there, and they hold up. The wounded birch in the shelled clearing that opens "The Science of Hatred", the ex-prisoner Kuznetsov in "On the Don" explaining quietly that he will take German privates prisoner but not their officers and asking his

neighbours' pardon for it — these are the work of a real writer doing war reporting properly, which is by listening.

The Twentieth Congress speech of February 1956 is genuinely brave and very funny. Sholokhov told the Congress that the Writers' Union's 3,773 members "largely consists of 'dead souls'", that its secretary's statistics on books published were "in plain words ... called eyewash", that the profession had "built ourselves a literary 'Dnieproges' dam from books written twenty or thirty years ago" and hid behind it, and that the writers of Moscow lived in "a sort of magic triangle: Moscow—dacha—seaside resort". He attacked Fadeyev, the Union's General Secretary, by name and to his face: "For years Fadeyev kept busy attending literary discussions, delivering reports, distributing the flats among writers and never wrote a word." Fadeyev shot himself three months later. And the speech's most quoted line is a good one: "Speaking directly with my own Party I have to say the truth, however bitter, about our literature."

Note what it is a speech about, though. It was delivered at the Twentieth Congress, and it contains not a syllable about the thing the Twentieth Congress was. The words personality cult do not occur anywhere in this book.

The same independence, and the same limit, marks the 1966 Congress speech. Having demanded harsher sentences, Sholokhov spent the second half of it on Lake Baikal, on a Volgograd factory that discharged untreated waste and killed sturgeon along four hundred kilometres of the Volga, on the pollution of the Don and the collapse of the Azov fisheries, and on the absurdity of Soviet planning, which he illustrated with a factory at Kalyazin rebuilt four times in ten years for four different products. He mocked a minister to his face and mocked himself for going begging: "you no longer address the Minister as 'Comrade Minister' in the formal manner, but ingratiatingly as 'Dear Ivan Ivanovich'." Almost nobody in that hall would have said any of it. It is real civic courage, spent on fish and slate and soya sauce, by a man who forty minutes earlier had regretted that two writers were not shot.

And there is one sentence in this book that answers Yakimenko's central evasion. Yakimenko wondered in print whether Sholokhov had meant to write about "the gross distortions in the policy of collectivisation which had such tragic consequences in 1932 and 1933", and concluded that the question "cannot be answered without the help of the author". Here is the author, in 1957, in a piece called "Keep in Step with the Party, with the People":

*"if you take a practical view of life, you'll agree that no particular harm was done because I did not go further than the 1930s in my Virgin Soil Upturned, but think how terrible it would have been if our agriculture and industry had still remained at the 1930s level!"*

He answered it himself. He stopped where he stopped, and he made a joke of it. Yakimenko, writing in Moscow around 1970, said the question could not be answered; the answer had been printed in 1957 and Lukin, in 1973, reprinted it.

The tradition this series writes from had described the machinery in 1936, in the seventh chapter of *The Revolution Betrayed*. Trotsky's account of Soviet literature under the bureaucracy is exact where it is not sweeping. The principle first: in the hottest years of the civil war it had been clear to the revolution's leaders that a government "could, guided by political considerations, place limitations upon creative freedom, but in no case pretend to the role of commander in the sphere of science, literature and art". Then the mechanism: "In the process of struggle against the party Opposition, the literary schools were strangled one after the other. ... The central organ of the party prints anonymous directive editorials, having the character of military orders, in architecture, literature, dramatic art, the ballet." Then the human consequence, in a sentence that is a map of this book: "Gifted writers who cannot do sufficient violence to themselves are pursued by a pack of instructors armed with shamelessness and dozens of quotations. The most eminent artists either commit suicide, or find their material in the remote past, or become silent."

Fadeyev took the first road. Sholokhov took the second and then the third, and said so out loud in 1957.

Trotsky also wrote, in the same chapter, that "Mediocre but 'right-thinking' storytellers like Serafimovich or Gladkov are inaugurated as classics", and closed it by predicting that the Thermidorian epoch would enter the history of art "pre-eminently as an epoch of mediocrities, laureates and toadies". Serafimovich is one of the two writers this book loves — he was the first to encourage Sholokhov in 1925, wrote the preface to his first collection, and gets a warm and filial birthday tribute here in 1938. And the verdict on the epoch is too broad, as an identical verdict of Trotsky's in 1938 was too broad: And *Quiet Flows the Don* was written inside that epoch and is not a mediocrity. The point survives the overreach, but the overreach should be admitted. A tradition that applies this standard to Progress Publishers has to apply it at home.

What is this book, then?

It is the record of an accommodation, assembled by an editor who was making a monument and who left the joins visible. Sholokhov did not lie in it very often. He complained about paper, about ministers, about the Azov fisheries, about writers who could not write. He reported a war honestly. He told English readers in 1934 that a writer who varnishes reality is a bad writer, and he was right, and he had already stopped short of the one subject he knew better than anyone alive. Between the letters he sent to Stalin in 1933 and the journalism he published in the same decade there is no overlap at all: the private testimony is a catalogue of starvation and torture, and the public work is a harvest report. He was not silenced. He divided himself, and went on producing at the top of his powers on one side of the division for another five years, and then mostly stopped.

The title Progress chose comes from a speech Lukin quotes in his essay, made to the Second All-Union Congress of Writers: "Our malicious enemies abroad allege that we, Soviet writers, write at the bidding of the Party. The fact of the matter is rather different, since each one of us writes at the bidding of his own heart—and our hearts belong to the Party and the people, whom we serve with our art." Read the whole sentence. The autonomy is asserted in the first half and handed over in the second, in the same breath, without any sense that something has been given away. That is the book, and it is a fair title for it. A writer of the first rank spent forty years explaining that his heart was his own and that it belonged to somebody else, and by 1966 the two propositions had stopped being distinguishable even to him.

# Where Are Trotskyites Leading the Youth?

*The fullest surviving specimen in English of official Soviet anti-Trotskyism written for students, issued at the height of the post-1968 radicalisation. Accurate on the founding of the Fourth International, silent on much else. Progress Publishers, 1973, with a new critical introduction by Dmitry Chasovennikov.*

Mikhail Basmanov

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**The Fourth International, Mikhail Basmanov tells his** reader on the book's first working page, was founded by people who "did not represent anyone except themselves." "It came about on a September day in 1938, when a score or so of people met in a small smoke-filled room in a Paris suburb." He is not wrong about the numbers or the place. Roughly twenty delegates did meet, for a single day, in a house at Périgny outside Paris. He is also right that the communiqué afterwards said Lausanne. What he offers as evidence of furtiveness — "the 'founders' of the 'Fourth International' were rather secretive about their affairs" — was in fact a security measure, and the reason for it is the first thing this book leaves out. The man who organised that conference, Rudolf Klement, had been abducted from his Paris flat in July 1938, some seven weeks earlier; a headless body recovered from the Seine was identified as his. Trotsky's son Leon Sedov had died in a Paris clinic in February under circumstances his father never accepted as natural. Ignace Reiss, who had broken with Stalin's intelligence service the year before, had been shot dead on a road near Lausanne in September 1937. Twenty people met in a private house and lied about the city because the people who organised their previous meetings were being killed.

None of this appears in *Where Are Trotskyites Leading the Youth?*, and it is worth establishing at the outset how comprehensive the omission is. Across roughly 24,000 words of Soviet history of the struggle against Trotskyism, the name Stalin does not occur once. Not in criticism, not in praise, not in passing. Nor do Klement, Sedov, Reiss, Barcelona, Budapest, Hungary or Czechoslovakia — and these are absences in the book, not artefacts of a bad scan; the misspellings under which a name can hide have been checked, and there is nothing under any of them. The agent of the 1920s is "the Communist Party," "the Communists," occasionally "the Party leadership," and Lenin, who is quoted throughout as though he had lived to conduct the expulsions himself. Trotsky's death is not mentioned; nor the Moscow trials; nor

forced collectivisation; nor the famine of 1932–33; nor Hungary in 1956; nor Czechoslovakia in 1968 — this last in a book addressed to the generation whose politics were made in 1968. The word "purge" does not appear. The Nazi–Soviet Pact does not appear. When Basmanov reaches the fate of the Left Opposition he writes a single sentence: "Trotskyite views were deemed incompatible with Party membership." Every one of the dozens of leaders expelled by the Fifteenth Congress in December 1927 who did not recant was exiled or imprisoned, and the great majority of them were shot between 1936 and 1938. The book's term for all of it is "deemed incompatible."

That silence is the book. Everything else follows from the need to maintain it.

About the author, the volume says nothing at all beyond the Russian signature on the last page. But Basmanov was not anonymous to the people he was attacking. He had been publishing in this field since at least 1967, when an article of his, "Trotskyism in the Service of Anti-Communism," came out of the Academy of Social Sciences of the CPSU Central Committee. The Fourth International's own weekly, then called *World Outlook*, translated it in full with critical notes on 22 March 1968, and described it as having been "prepared during 1967 by no less an institution than the Academy of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and put out under the signature of one M. Basmanov" — the order of authorship there is the editors' point, and it is a fair one. A second piece, "On Contemporary Trotskyism and Its Subversive Activities," ran in *Kommunist* No. 7 of 1969, the theoretical organ of the Soviet party's Central Committee; the American Communist Party reprinted it in *Political Affairs* under a title of its own invention, and Intercontinental Press translated it again from the Russian, with a reply, on 27 April 1970. He was, in the phrase used there, one of the Kremlin's leading "Trotskyologists"; two years later the same weekly listed him first among the "obscure apparatus-propagandists" whose decade of work the Central Committee was about to upgrade. His own footnote

here points the reader to a companion title, S. Dimitriev and V. Ivanov's *Historical Lessons of Lenin's Struggle Against Trotskyism*, "the same series." This is commissioned work in a commissioned series.

The commission is datable. Brezhnev's report to the Twenty-Fourth Congress in March 1971 named Trotskyism, in passing, as a danger. In *Kommunist* No. 18 for 1971, Boris Ponomarev, a secretary of the Central Committee, published a twenty-one-page article whose running subtitle was "Trotskyism — Weapon of Anti-Communism," and closed it with five explicit instructions to "our theoretical and propagandist cadres": lay bare the anti-Leninist essence of Trotskyism, and its "kinship with open anti-Communism, with opportunism of right and 'left' persuasions"; show its hostility to the working class by concrete examples; expose its false revolutionism and its disbelief in building socialism in single countries; show that it attacks the socialist countries rather than imperialism; and defend peaceful coexistence against the charge that it is class collaboration. Read the chapter headings of this book against that list and they match, in order. Basmanov is executing a directive, and the directive itself was a response to something real: after 1968 the sections of the Fourth International were recruiting students in France, Belgium, Japan, Britain and the United States, out of the same pool the pro-Moscow parties depended on. Basmanov says so. His chapter "Banking on Ignorance" is an anxious catalogue of the fact.

Because the argument must reach 1973 without passing through the 1930s, it has to be built out of substitutions, and they are visible. Take the war. Basmanov's third question to Pierre Frank — whose short history of the Fourth International, published in Paris in 1969, is the book's principal target — concerns the pre-war years, and he presses hard: "When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, the Trotskyites declared that the war continued to be an imperialist war and that the Soviet Union should not be given support." The second half of that is false: defence of the USSR against imperialist attack was a founding position of the Fourth International and remained one. But set that aside, because the first half describes a line that was indeed held between September 1939 and June 1941 — and it was held by the Communist International. From the signing of the Pact until the invasion, the Comintern's parties characterised the war as an imperialist war on both sides, dropped the anti-fascist front they had built since 1935, and in France sought permission to publish *L'Humanité* legally under German occupation. Basmanov's charge is a description of his own organisation's policy in those months, redirected. He can make it only

because the Pact is absent from his book.

Or take Spain. "During the civil war in Spain, the Trotskyites tried to break up the Popular Front and spread defeatist attitudes" — and that is all Spain gets. The POUM is not named. Andreu Nin, its leader, arrested in June 1937 and killed in Soviet hands outside Madrid, is not named. The Barcelona May Days are not named. There is a genuine complication here that an honest account would want, and it cuts across factional lines: the POUM was not the Spanish section of Trotsky's movement, and Trotsky attacked Nin severely for having signed the Popular Front pact at all. Basmanov could have used that. He does not, because using it would require saying what happened to Nin.

There is a simple test that can be run on a book like this. Basmanov names Trotsky 423 times in 24,000 words. He cites no work by Trotsky at all. The opening chapter, which carries the whole historical case, puts eleven separate passages inside quotation marks and attributes them to Trotsky or to "the Trotskyites"; it carries four references, and they are to Lenin's *Collected Works*, to the companion Soviet volume by Dimitriev and Ivanov, to William Z. Foster of the American Communist Party, and to a Moscow documentary collection of Comintern resolutions. Where a source is given for a Trotsky quotation anywhere in the book, it is a Communist Party newspaper: the line "No devil ever cut off his own claws," dated 1936, is footnoted to *Unsere Zeit*, the West German party's daily, for 29 January 1970. An opponent who is cited can be checked. An opponent who is only characterised cannot — and that is the practical function of the arrangement, whatever the intention behind it.

Checked against the texts, the attributions come apart in a particular way. Basmanov quotes a programmatic statement from "a letter addressed in 1928 to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern." The Fourth Congress met in 1922; the 1928 document is *The Third International After Lenin*, Trotsky's criticism of the draft programme submitted to the Sixth Congress, and its opening chapter reads: "not a single communist party can establish its program by proceeding solely or mainly from conditions and tendencies of developments in its own country." The qualification "solely or mainly" is what the sentence is about, and it is gone from Basmanov's version. Trotsky's very next sentence applies the rule to the Soviet party itself; the target is socialism in one country, not the existence of national programmes. Basmanov offers the sentence as proof that Trotsky "deprived individual national contingents of the working class of any concrete programme of action," which is a strange charge to rest on the

first page of a document that is itself a proposed programme. A few lines earlier he has Trotsky writing in 1906 that "it is hopeless to think that a revolutionary Russia could stand up in face of a conservative Europe." Trotsky wrote it in August 1917 — he said so from the platform in November 1926, "This I wrote in August, 1917, and I believe that it was perfectly right" — and he wrote it as the second half of a conditional whose first half has been removed, and paired with a clause about Germany that has also been removed: "And if this [the development of the revolution in other countries] were not to occur, it would be hopeless to think... that a revolutionary Russia, for instance, could hold out in face of conservative Europe, or that a socialist Germany could remain isolated in a capitalist world." The point is about isolation, not about Russian incapacity. The fragment as Basmanov prints it is the one Stalin used at the Seventh Plenum of the Comintern Executive in 1926, and Trotsky answered it there.

The same operation governs the book's central claim. Lenin, Basmanov writes, concluded "that in the epoch of imperialism the socialist revolution could initially win out in a few countries or even in one country," and this was "opposed by Trotsky." Trotsky's theses on permanent revolution say the opposite and say it plainly: "The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it," and "The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena." The dispute was over completion, never over beginning. Collapse the two and you have disposed of an argument that nobody made. It is worth adding that where Basmanov's charges are true they are sourced no better than where they are false: the August 1919 memorandum to the Central Committee proposing a cavalry corps "launched against India," on the argument that "the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal," is a real document and a damaging one, and it carries no footnote either.

There are smaller errors that indicate how the book was assembled. He reports that Max Shachtman "chaired the constituent congress of the 'Fourth International'" and held that the Soviet Union "did not differ in socio-economic structure from the imperialist states," a view Trotsky thought "extreme." Both halves are roughly true and the join is not: Shachtman moved to his position on the USSR in 1940 and split from Trotsky's movement over it, taking a substantial minority and the movement's magazine, *The New International*, with him — so that everything printed under that title from April 1940 onward belongs to a tendency that had broken with the Fourth International precisely over the question Basmanov is

discussing. Presented as a founding characteristic, it becomes evidence of what the International was; presented accurately, it is evidence that the International argued and divided over the nature of the USSR, which is the last impression the book wants to leave. On Trotsky's papers, Basmanov reports that the secret material was "not to be published until 1980," and adds that "historians must not have access to it." The closed section at Harvard opened in January 1980 and has been worked over by historians of every persuasion ever since; the Soviet archives on the same events remained shut for another decade.

The footnotes betray a second habit, and here the criticism has to be precise, because the footnotes are also the book's chief virtue. Basmanov reads the Trotskyist press seriously and widely. He cites *International Socialist Review*, *Quatrième Internationale*, *The Newsletter*, *Workers Press*, *Informations ouvrières*, *Jeune révolutionnaire*, *Lutte ouvrière*, *European Marxist Review* and *Revista Marxista Latinoamericana*. Very little Cold War writing in English in 1973 had that range. But those titles belonged to at least five organisations that had split from one another and regarded each other as enemies — the United Secretariat around Paris, the International Committee around Gerry Healy in London, the current grouped as "For the Reorganization of the Fourth International," the Posadas group in Latin America, and *Lutte ouvrière*, which was not in the International at all. Basmanov's own text names these bodies separately and describes their rivalry: he notes that the London International Committee and the Latin American Secretariat were "keeping close tab on what their rivals are up to." Then he attributes the statements of each to "the Trotskyites," singular.

The seam shows. Where he wants to prove that the Fourth International misjudged France before May 1968, he quotes *Avant-Garde*, the paper of the French section's youth organisation — and footnotes it not to *Avant-Garde* but to *The Newsletter*, the paper of Healy's Socialist Labour League, which had broken with the French section fifteen years earlier and was quoting it in order to attack it. He introduces the quotation as having appeared three months before the French working people took action in May and June 1968; the citation he gives is dated 18 February 1969 — nine months after. Cohn-Bendit's *Obsolete Communism* is quoted at length, but from *World Marxist Review*, Prague, not from the book. Where a source is a party journal, the charge tends to be at second hand.

Some charges are nonetheless substantially true, and the introduction to a volume like this is worth nothing if it will not say so. Juan Posadas did argue that a nuclear war would have

progressive consequences, and his followers did write about humanism as a bourgeois instinct. The position existed, it was monstrous, and no account of the period should pretend otherwise. But the chapter Basmanov builds on it is where his method is caught in the act, because for once he gives a page reference and the page can be turned. His three quotations — that a "communist society" could rapidly be constructed on the wreckage; that "the most destructive of wars will necessarily have the most progressive consequences"; that only those ready to settle accounts with capitalism "through a nuclear war" are true revolutionaries — are all footnoted to the *International Socialist Review* for 1963, No. 4, pages 132 and 134. That is the Fall 1963 issue, and the article on those pages is Farrell Dobbs and Joseph Hansen's "Reunification of the Fourth International," whose entire purpose is to explain why Posadas is not in the Fourth International. The first phrase appears there in the sentence "Posadas, in contrast, believes that a 'communist society' could rapidly be constructed on the wreckage" — "in contrast" to the view, stated immediately before it, that nuclear war "could well mean the finish of civilization if not all the higher forms of life on our globe." The second appears as the end of a sentence beginning "carries it to the absurd conclusion." The third is the authors quoting a Posadist paper as evidence against it. In the same issue, the congress resolution *Dynamics of World Revolution Today* states the majority's position in six words: "The goal must be to prevent an atomic world war." Basmanov has taken a document expelling a man's politics from a movement and printed it as that movement's politics.

He knew there was a disagreement, because his own source told him, and he wrote the knowledge into the book as a concession before cancelling it: "not all presentday Trotskyites openly agree with Posadas," he writes, and then convicts them anyway — "they share Posadas's ideas, even if they do not always say so in so many words." The reasoning is that since they oppose peaceful coexistence they must want the war; and the same issue he is holding rejects both, in one clause — "the utopian illusions of 'peaceful coexistence' and 'victory' in a nuclear world war." His description of entryism — "secret infiltration of various youth organizations" — is by contrast hostile in wording but accurate in substance; entry work was an avowed tactic, argued about openly in the International's congresses, and here he quotes correctly. The resolution is *Dynamics of World Revolution Today* and it does say what he says it says: the sections "have no choice but to practice 'entryism'; that is, to participate as an integrated component in the internal life of the mass movement." Basmanov's version reads "international life," which is probably a translator's slip and not a falsification. It is the one place in the book where a

Trotskyist document is quoted from itself, and it is accurate. That is not a coincidence.

More than that: the chapter "Students in the 1970s" is the best writing in the book, and it is not polemic at all. Basmanov argues that student militancy has socio-economic and not generational causes, that the expansion of higher education has changed the class composition of the student body, and that "the student today is no longer a potential member of the privileged sections of bourgeois society. At best, he faces the prospect of becoming an exploited wageworker." He records that bourgeois commentary a decade earlier had thought students wanted no more than "an auditorium to dance in all night and toilet paper for the student lavatories," and had been shocked. He concludes that "for all its shortcomings, the student movement has established itself as an important factor of the anti-imperialist struggle" and that "the process of radicalization itself must be welcomed." This is a serious analysis, and it is one the Fourth International would largely have accepted. The book's problem is not that its author was stupid. It is that a competent analyst was set to prove a predetermined conclusion.

That conclusion, and the tone of the whole, is fixed by the year. This is a détente book. The policy it defends against the Trotskyists is peaceful coexistence, and the chapter arguing for it is the calmest in the volume. The most revealing sentence Basmanov writes is a concession: "The Communists may not always be right, but one can hardly deny that they are the most influential political force of our day." It is an argument from weight, not from truth, and it is the argument of a state at the height of its international respectability explaining to nineteen-year-olds why a small organisation with no state behind it should be disregarded. His verdict — "present-day Trotskyism is a petty-bourgeois Left-extremist trend" whose adherents leave "disillusioned and heartsick," so that "many have rejected Trotskyism only to become totally indifferent to politics" — is offered as concern for the young. It reads as an inducement not to look.

A curiosity of the vocabulary is worth recording, because it says something about how these books were made. Ponomarev's directive had specified "opportunism of right and 'left' persuasions." Basmanov, executing it, uses the word "opportunist" exactly once in 24,000 words, inside a quotation from Lenin, and "revisionism" exactly once, inside a quotation from the German Trotskyists he is attacking. In his own voice he uses neither. What he uses instead is "pseudo-," fifteen times; "ultra-Left," thirteen; and then "provocative," "capitulation," "adventurism," "subversive." Four years later,

writing *The Revolutionary Vanguard* with B. M. Leibzon, he produces a book in which "opportunism" and its cognates appear eighty-three times. The word seems to have arrived with the collaborator. That is a small thing, but it is the kind of small thing that shows a genre assembled from interchangeable parts rather than written. And it makes the more important question easy to ask. Of any book that convicts an opponent of a political vice, one can ask whether the charge is fastened to an act that could be shown not to have happened, and whether the category could ever be turned on the author's own side. Basmanov answers the second himself, and the answer is no. The concession quoted a moment ago is the only one in the volume, and it is withdrawn a few pages later, where he explains that what the Trotskyists "claim are mistakes being made by the Communist parties" are in fact "falsifications of the strategic and tactical propositions of international Communist movement," and that "never has there been a party in history that has been more revolutionary than the Communist party." A mistake is something only the other side can have. The Fourth International's own congress documents of the following year, by contrast, print a section's dated self-criticism by name. The difference is not one of vocabulary. It is a difference in what the vocabulary is allowed to describe.

The reply already existed when this book was printed, and it is locatable. George Saunders's "Notes and Comments on the Basmanov Article" appeared in *World Outlook* on 22 March 1968, alongside a full translation of Basmanov's 1967 essay; his longer answer, "The Role of Basmanov in the New School of Stalinist Falsification," ran in *Intercontinental Press* on 27 April 1970, again with Basmanov's own text printed in full opposite it, so that readers could check. Saunders's notes take up precisely the ground this book avoids — the banning of the Left Opposition's platform before the Fifteenth Congress, the GPU raid on its printshop, the "Wrangel officer" who turned out to be a GPU agent, the rigged congress delegation, and the years of prison and camps that followed. He also did, in 1970, what this introduction has done in 2020: he went to the sources Basmanov cited and read them. He found that the Comintern journal cited for one charge did not contain it, and that on another point "the exact opposite of the view Basmanov attributes to the Trotskyists was expressed as recently as in the 1963 resolution of the Fourth International's Reunification Congress, which Basmanov previously indicated he had" read. The correction was in print three years before this book went to press, and this book repeats the practice. The same weekly reported, on 17 June 1974, the appearance of a further Moscow volume, *The Communist Struggle Against Trotskyist Ideology*, written jointly by Ponomarev with secretaries of the

Belgian and Canadian parties and Leo Figueres of the French — the same Figueres whom Basmanov quotes here on the Popular Front. The campaign this book belongs to was, by then, an international editorial project.

One last thing dates the book more sharply than any of its arguments. Basmanov's recurring charge against the French Trotskyists is that their recklessness "gave the authorities the pretext to act as champions of 'law and order.'" On 28 June 1973, while this volume was in production, the French Council of Ministers dissolved the *Ligue Communiste* by decree, following a demonstration against a meeting of the far-right *Ordre Nouveau*; sixty-five flats were raided the next morning; Alain Krivine and Pierre Rousset were held in prison. Both the Socialist Party and the French Communist Party issued statements defending the *Ligue's* right to exist, and *Intercontinental Press* reported the whole affair in its issue of 9 July 1973 under the headline "Pompidou Outlaws French Trotskyists." The French party's Political Bureau managed both things at once, in a single statement: its opinion of the ultraleft groups was "well known," and "on the political level, it fights their adventurist acts, which the regime uses as an excuse to attack civil liberties" — and then, "the French Communist party protests against the dissolution ordered against the *Ligue Communiste*," which "sets a grave precedent for democratic rights and freedoms in our country." (The scanned page reads "civU"; the scanner, not the party.) Basmanov's argument and the refutation of its consequences are in the same paragraph, written by the authority he is invoking. The organisation Basmanov spends a hundred pages describing as the beneficiary of bourgeois indulgence — "today, bourgeois propaganda is the Trotskyites' most reliable ideological ally" — was banned by a Western government in the year of his publication, and defended by the very Communist Party whose authority he invokes.

Basmanov's own standard is the fairest one to apply to him. Of Pierre Frank, whose history omits what Basmanov thinks damning, he writes: "if Frank fails to mention them in his book, it does not follow that it was not so. By omitting them from his 'history,' Frank simply misleads the youth." That is correct, and it is why this volume is worth reprinting. It is a document of exactly what the Soviet state was prepared to tell young people in 1973, and of what it could not say. It could not say Stalin. It could not say Barcelona, or Coyoacán, or Vorkuta, or Budapest. Prague it could say twice, both times as the place where a journal is printed. A book written to warn students against being misled is the most complete surviving specimen of the thing it warns against.

## PHILOSOPHY

# Problems of the History of Philosophy

*One philosopher's sustained argument about why philosophers disagree and whether they can ever stop - engaging Heidegger, Piaget and Reichenbach in the original, and quoting Lucretius for pleasure. Not a textbook and not a committee product.*

Theodor Oizerman

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**The first thing to say about this book is that it is not what a reader might expect from its title and its date.** It is not a symposium, not a collection of institute papers, not a committee product with a general editor's name on the spine. It is a single sustained argument of some 120,000 words by one man, Theodor Ilyich Oizerman, translated by Robert Daglish, and it is the fourth of his books to appear in this series. Its subject is not the history of philosophy in the ordinary sense — there is no march through the schools here — but the theory of that history: what philosophy is, why philosophers disagree, whether the disagreement can ever end. Oizerman calls this "historico-philosophical science" and treats it as a discipline with its own problems. Whatever one concludes about his answers, the questions are real ones, and he asks them at length.

## The date

The spine says 1973. The text does not.

The scholarly apparatus of this book — the working literature an author actually reads and argues with — stops in 1968. The most recent Soviet philosophical source cited is N. N. Semyonov in *Kommunist* no. 10 for 1968, which Oizerman quotes three times; the most recent Western source is Piaget's *Sagesse et illusions de la philosophie* (Paris, 1968). Nothing else in the argument's furniture is later. Every single citation dated after 1968 falls into one of two categories. Either it is a Progress Publishers English edition of a Marx or Engels classic — *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow, 1969), the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1969), *Selected Works* in three volumes (1970), *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1971), *Dialectics of Nature* (1972) — which is simply the translator swapping the author's Russian page references for the ones an English reader can follow; or it is the single quotation from Brezhnev's Central Committee report to the 24th Congress, sourced to 24th Congress of the CPSU

(Moscow, 1971), which sits at the very end of the concluding chapter.

So: a Russian text completed around 1968–69, carrying one paragraph updated to 1971, published in English in 1973. A four-year lag, which is modest by the standards of this catalogue but not nothing. The book belongs to the last years of the 1960s, and it should be read against them — against the Prague spring and its suppression in August 1968, an event this book does not mention and was in no position to mention.

The commission is legible from the back matter. Progress advertises Oizerman as a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences and notes that "Several of his books have been translated" — *The Formation of Marxist Philosophy*, it records, "has been published in German, Japanese, Polish and Hungarian", and other works in English, French, Spanish, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech and Greek. This is a détente-era export of scholarly respectability: proof that Soviet philosophy could argue with Heidegger and Reichenbach on their own ground and in their own languages. That was the sales pitch, and — this matters for what follows — it was to a large extent true.

## What is good here

A great deal, and the series' credibility depends on saying so plainly.

Oizerman writes as a man who has read the books he is discussing, in the languages they were written in, and who is interested in them. His chapter on the nature of philosophical problems opens on the observation that philosophy differs from the specialised sciences precisely by staying close to what everyone already knows: "Philosophy is mainly interested in what is known to everyone and yet still remains incomprehensible." He illustrates this with a page of ancient answers to ordinary questions that is genuinely delightful — Thales explaining magnetism by the soul, Heraclitus explaining why a drunk cannot stand up straight, and best of

all: "Lucretius asked why sea water is salty. His reply was that the sea sweats, and sweat, as everyone knows, is salty." A man writing to a formula does not stop to enjoy Lucretius.

The engagement with living Western philosophy is by name, at length, and from the primary texts in the original. His long section on Heidegger works through *Was ist das — die Philosophie?* in German and gives Heidegger's case a fair run before rejecting it: Heidegger's attack on the rationalist cult of reason, Oizerman concedes, contains "a fair portion of truth", and the verdict — "Heidegger tries to straddle both rationalism and irrationalism, but he develops a fatal list in the direction of the latter" — is a judgement, arrived at by reading, not an anathema. The Conclusion is built around a patient reconstruction of Hans Reichenbach's charge that philosophy, unlike physics, has never managed to teach "a common doctrine". Oizerman takes the charge seriously enough to organise his final chapter around answering it.

He is good, too, on a question that reaches beyond his subject: whether the history of philosophy can be told as a history of great men. His answer is no, and the reasoning is careful. To treat the philosopher as the ultimate rather than the immediate cause of his system is to smuggle in subjective idealism through the back door; "Hume could have been born a philosopher only in the England of the early 18th century." Against the romantic theory of heroes and the crowd he sets Francis Bacon, whom he quotes with evident approval: "For rightly is truth called the daughter of time, not of authority."

Hold that sentence. It is the best line in the book, and the book will not survive it.

Because the strongest chapter, and the one that makes this volume worth reprinting, is the last: "On the Nature of Philosophical Debate". Its opening section is an argument that disagreement is not a scandal in science but its normal working condition. "Anyone can adopt a pose of unshakeable impartiality, wave aside all polemics and spend his time spouting platitudes; but it is quite impossible for him or anyone else, in any field of knowledge, to say something new without the spur of passion and partiality." And, flatly: "But polemics or no, there is bound to be controversy." From there he builds an account of error as a productive moment in cognition rather than a stain to be removed — where truth is metaphysically counterposed to error, he argues, truth itself becomes metaphysical and "comes near to error" — and arrives at a formulation about truth that is very nearly a manifesto: it is self-critical, and it "implies an awareness of its own incompleteness, limitedness and need for development."

This is a Soviet academician, writing in Moscow in the late 1960s, mounting a defence of open philosophical argument out of Lenin's own epistemological notebooks. It is not nothing. It is the sound of a discipline arguing quietly for permission to work.

## The limiter, and the terminus

Now watch what happens next. Immediately after the passage on the fertility of error, Oizerman installs a brake:

*This dialectical principle of the relative opposition between truth and error has nothing to do with the unprincipled demand for toleration of error.*

One can read that as a routine guard against relativism, and in a Western journal it would be. Here it does other work. If error is fertile but its toleration is unprincipled, someone must decide, in each case, which is which — and the book never says who, because it does not have to. The answer arrives at the end, in the closing paragraphs of the Conclusion, where a treatise on why philosophers must be free to argue produces its final authority:

*In the Central Committee's report to the 24th Congress of the CPSU, Leonid Brezhnev said: "The struggle between the forces of capitalism and socialism on the world scene and the attempts of revisionists of all hues to emasculate the revolutionary teaching and distort the practice of socialist and communist construction require that we continue to pay undivided attention to the problems and creative development of theory."*

Truth, the daughter of time and not of authority, signing off with a quotation from the General Secretary. This is the same figure the reader will find in Oizerman's *The Main Trends in Philosophy*, also in this series, where an argument for the partisanship of philosophy closes on the 1986 Party Programme. Twenty years apart, two different books, the same door shutting at the end of the corridor.

## The footnotes

The house rule of this series is that where a book is silent on something central, the silence is the finding. Here the silence has an unusually precise shape, and it is in the footnotes.

Search this text and the following do not occur once: Zhdanov. Deborin. Stalin. Lysenko. Bukharin. Trotsky. The year 1947, in any connection with Soviet philosophy — its single

occurrence is the imprint date of a Moscow edition of Lucretius. Pod znamenem marksizma, or Under the Banner of Marxism, the journal. The phrase Menshevizing idealism. The word partiinost' (the English "partisanship" appears six times, in the ordinary epistemological sense, without the doctrine attached). "Alexandrov" occurs twice, and both times it is A. D. Alexandrov the mathematician, quoted on the subject-matter of mathematics. A book of eight chapters on the nature of philosophical debate contains no reference whatever to the debates that had actually taken place in the author's own institution within his own working life.

What it contains instead is this, in a footnote to the chapter on wisdom in the Middle Ages:

*"Stoicism in its vulgarised form," we read in Volume One, p. 383, of the History of Philosophy (Ed. G. F. Aleksandrov, B. E. Bykhovskiy, M. B. Mitin and P. F. Yudin) ...*

And this, in a footnote on Hegel's philosophy of nature, which cites the same multi-volume work and gives its date: the point has been made "particularly in the third volume of the History of Philosophy, published in 1943". (I have closed a line-break in the scan; the words are Oizerman's.) And this, from Chapter Two: "The question of man," M. B. Mitin writes, "is an old and eternally new problem" — sourced to Mitin's Philosophy and Modern Times (Moscow, 1960).

These are ordinary scholarly citations. They are presented exactly as the Piaget and the Heidegger and the Reichenbach are presented: as literature, to be used. And the men named in them are not ordinary.

G. F. Alexandrov ran the agitation and propaganda section of the Central Committee. In June 1947 Zhdanov intervened personally at a philosophy conference convened to discuss Alexandrov's History of West European Philosophy, and the charge — as the Fourth International reported it at the time — was that Alexandrov had "shown a servile adulation toward Western European thought" in his book on the history of philosophy. That is Ernest Germain, writing as the Belgian Marxist who would later publish under his own name of Ernest Mandel, in "Purge of Soviet Culture", Fourth International vol. 10 no. 11, December 1949. Twenty-four years later George Novack put the same episode more bluntly in Intercontinental Press — in July 1973, the very year this translation appeared: "In 1947, at Stalin's behest, his watchdog on the cultural front, Zhdanov, indicted the History of West European Philosophy by the unlucky G.F. Alexandrov, who saw something good in the works of Kant, Hegel and Fourier."

M. B. Mitin was one of the young philosophers who in 1930–31 denounced A. M. Deborin's school as "Menshevizing idealism", took the journal Under the Banner of Marxism away from it, and inherited the institutions. P. F. Yudin was the other. They ran Soviet philosophy for two decades. Some of those swept up in that reorganisation and in the years after it did not survive them.

So the discipline Zhdanov disciplined in 1947 was Oizerman's own discipline, and the man Zhdanov disciplined is the first name in one of Oizerman's footnotes, followed by the names of the two men who had run the field since the purge of 1931. The whole cast is present. Nothing is concealed — every name is printed, correctly spelled, with volume and page. What is absent is any indication that anything ever happened to any of them, or was done by any of them to anyone else.

There is one flicker. Introducing the state of the field, Oizerman writes that "The six-volume History of Philosophy (Moscow, 1957–1965) was the first attempt to make a global study of the development of all philosophy from the time of its inception to the present day." The first attempt. The Aleksandrov–Bykhovskiy–Mitin–Yudin volumes, which he footnotes twice, thereby cease to have been an attempt at all — quietly demoted, in a subordinate clause, without a word of explanation. That is as close as this book comes to a judgement on its own past, and it is delivered so softly that a reader who did not already know the history would not hear it.

Compare F. V. Konstantinov's Development of Revolutionary Theory by the CPSU (Progress, 1971), also in this series, which at least concedes that "The personality cult damaged the development of Marxist theory and philosophy." Oizerman cites Konstantinov twice, on ideology, and never on that. Compare Philosophy in the USSR (Progress, 1977), the profession's own collective self-portrait, in which the destruction of Soviet genetics and the events of 1947 survive as a period when "difficulties" arose and were subsequently "overcome". Oizerman does not even reach for the euphemism. His method is omission, and it is more complete.

Let the record be fair to him on one point. The history of philosophy was one of the very few fields in which serious Soviet scholarship remained possible after 1947, precisely because its subjects were dead and foreign and could not be interviewed by anybody. That was the permission. This book shows what the permission was worth: a real argument, in four languages, that a philosopher anywhere could read without embarrassment. It also shows what it cost. The one history the author was not permitted to write was the history of the room

he was sitting in, and a theory of philosophical debate that cannot describe the debates in its own building has a hole at its centre that no amount of Heidegger will fill.

## The reply

The anti-Stalinist left never reviewed Oizerman. A search of the collected English Trotsky, the *Biulleten' Oppozitsii*, the run of Fourth International for 1940–1956, Intercontinental Press for 1968–1977 and International Viewpoint returns his name nowhere. The tradition did not track Soviet academic monographs. What it tracked was the general question, and on the general question it produced, three years after this translation, a direct answer.

George Novack's "Freedom for Philosophy" appeared in Intercontinental Press, vol. 14 no. 12, 29 March 1976, under the standing head "On the Right to Think Without Reprisals or Constraint". It is a survey of the condition of philosophy across the postcapitalist states — Kolakowski stripped of his Warsaw chair in 1968, Karel Kosík's manuscripts seized by the Czechoslovak police in April 1975, the eight Praxis professors dismissed by the Serbian legislature in January 1975 — and it is scrupulous about the West too, noting that American philosophy departments rarely let a convinced Marxist present dialectical materialism to students, and that "few university philosophical departments treat dialectical materialism seriously, even though this world view has the broadest international influence."

On the Soviet Union in the exact years of this book, Novack's verdict is measured rather than triumphant, and it should be quoted in full because it concedes what Oizerman is owed: "The situation has also somewhat eased in the field of philosophy, though Soviet philosophers are far from enjoying freedom of expression even within the framework of the Marxist world outlook."

That is the frame this volume belongs in. And Novack states the principle that the volume cannot state for itself. A Marxist party, he argues, is entitled and indeed obliged to propagate dialectical materialism openly; the line is crossed elsewhere. Neither a party nor a state, he writes, nor its considerations of political expediency, "should dictate the writing or rewriting of the history of philosophy, dominate its life, or prescribe its course of development." And:

*But that is entirely different from adopting a state philosophy and then compelling everyone from the scholars and teachers in the universities to schoolchildren to pay*

*obedience to that viewpoint. That is as bad as enforcing a state religion.*

Novack then names the cost to the orthodoxy itself, and this is the sentence to set beside Oizerman's Chapter Eight: "When it encounters no strong and serious open challenges to its positions and formulas, official thought grows dull, slothful, and unsure of itself." Oizerman had argued, from Lenin, that controversy is the necessary form of the development of knowledge. Novack argues that a philosophy protected from controversy decays. They are the same proposition. One of the two men was free to follow it where it led.

His positive statement is the answer to the last page of this book: "A living and effective philosophy must earn and win conviction by the force of its arguments rather than by arguments of force." And: "Dialectical materialism wants free competition in philosophy as well as in the arts and sciences, just as its politics favors a plurality of parties in a socialist democracy." (Column breaks in the scan have been closed.)

The reader who wants to see what a history of philosophy written under no such constraint looks like has one further option, and it is a strange and moving one. In 1942, while the Socialist Workers Party was under federal prosecution under the Smith Act, Novack delivered nine lectures to party members and sympathisers in New York on the history of logic from Aristotle to Marx, revised and published as *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism* (5th ed., Pathfinder, 1971). He opens by remarking on the oddity of the occasion: revolutionists under government persecution in the middle of a world war, meeting not to decide anything but "for the purpose of studying a science which seems to be as remote as higher mathematics from everyday political struggle". Lecture IV is on Hegel's revolution in logic; Lecture VII on what Marx and Engels did to it; Lecture VIII on the categories. Lecture IX ends not with a Congress resolution but with an auto worker in a Detroit plant reasoning his way from a singular judgement about his own foreman to a general judgement about a class.

That is the same enterprise as Oizerman's — philosophy as the self-consciousness of an epoch, the class content of thought, the history of logic as a real history — pursued by a man with no institute, no Academy, no translation into Japanese, and no permission required from anyone. The comparison is not offered to belittle Oizerman, who was much the better-read of the two and knew far more philosophy. It is offered because the difference between the two books is not a difference of intelligence or of learning. It is a difference in what could be said at the end.

## How to read it

As theory of the history of philosophy, this is a serious book, and a reader can take a great deal from it: the treatment of philosophical problems as questions that cannot be left unanswered, the demolition of the great-man account of philosophical change, the whole of Chapter Eight on the necessity of debate, and a running engagement with twentieth-century Western philosophy that is more attentive and better-tempered than most of what Western philosophy was then saying about Marxism.

Read Chapter Eight first, and read it twice: once for the argument, which is good, and once for the brake at the end of it. Then turn to the footnote in Chapter One that names Aleksandrov, Bykhovsky, Mitin and Yudin, and consider what it cost to print those four names as though they were simply the editors of a book.

## HISTORY

# Soviet Peace Efforts on the Eve of World War II (September 1938 – August 1939)

*350 documents on the eleven months from Munich to the outbreak of war, many first published here - including the stenographic record of the failed Anglo-French-Soviet military talks of August 1939, where Voroshilov's one unanswered question is on the page.*

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the USSR

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**This is a book of 350 documents. The first is the Munich Agreement of 29 September 1938. The last, numbered 350, is a Soviet press communiqué of 1 September 1939 reporting the destruction of Japanese and Manchurian forces on the Khalkhin Gol. Between them lie eleven months of telegrams, embassy despatches, memoranda of conversations, military-intelligence reports and stenographic records of negotiation, most of them printed for the first time, many of them drawn from archives no independent scholar could then enter. The foreword states the scope plainly: "The documents included in this book cover the period from September 1938 to August 1939."**

Read that sentence again and the whole volume comes into focus. A collection about the eve of the Second World War stops on the day the Second World War began. And within its own declared span — September 1938 to August 1939 — it omits the single Soviet document of that period which redrew the map of Europe. The Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union, signed in Moscow by Molotov and Ribbentrop on 23 August 1939, is not printed here. Neither is the Secret Additional Protocol signed the same night, which divided Poland along the Narew, Vistula and San, assigned Finland, Estonia and Latvia to the Soviet sphere and Lithuania to the German, and noted Soviet interest in Bessarabia.

The book is not a forgery. Almost nothing in it is untrue. That is precisely what makes it worth republishing, and precisely how it works.

## The commission

The title page carries no editor and no institute, only "Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the USSR." This is a state document

about the state's own conduct, compiled by the ministry whose predecessor generated most of the papers, from archives the ministry controlled. The apparatus was both the actor and the archivist, and it decided what the record would consist of.

The occasion is visible in the foreword, which opens on the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the war — placing the composition of this English text in the mid-1970s, some years after the Russian original, whatever the date on the spine — and quotes Brezhnev speaking over American television that "more than 20 million Soviet citizens died in that war, 70,000 of our towns and villages were razed to the ground." That was the language of détente: the Soviet Union as the power that had bled most and therefore wanted peace most. The volume belongs to the Progress series "soviet foreign policy and international relations," and its target was the educated Western reader, the Western Communist Party lecturer, and the diplomatic historian who could be trusted to weigh documents and would find, on weighing these, that the Western democracies had wrecked the last chance to stop Hitler. It was ammunition in a real argument, and the ammunition was largely live.

## What is genuinely here

A reader who takes this book only as a fraud will be misled, and will miss its use.

The Soviet pursuit of collective security in the 1930s was not a fabrication invented later to cover the Pact. It was a real policy, pursued for years at real cost, and this volume documents it better than any Western collection of its date. Litvinov's League of Nations statement of 30 September 1938; the March 1939 proposal for a six-power conference of the USSR, Britain, France, Poland, Romania and Turkey; the offer of 17 April 1939 of a mutual assistance treaty and a military convention with Britain and France; the message of 10 May

that the "USSR would not refuse assistance to Poland if she desired it" — these are documents 3, 109, 110, 171 and 210, and they are what they appear to be.

More valuable still are the stenographic records of the Anglo-French-Soviet military talks of 12–21 August 1939, documents 314 to 342. Nothing else in print at the time gave the reader the texture of that failure. The British and French missions travelled to Moscow by slow steamer, arriving on 11 August after the British government had accepted talks on 25 July. The British delegation carried no authority to sign. Neither mission could answer the one question Voroshilov kept putting: would Poland and Romania permit Soviet troops to cross their territory to reach the Germans? On 22 August, in document 342, Voroshilov tells General Doumenc: "We have at present no subject for conversation. Until we receive a reply, all conversation is useless." He was not being obstructive. He was right that without transit the Soviet Union, having no common frontier with Germany, could not fight her.

And the volume proves the point from the other side. Document 335, a telegram from the French military attaché in Warsaw dated 19 August, records three hours spent with the Polish chief of staff searching "in vain for a compromise formula," and concludes: "Finally, upon agreeing it with Beck, we acknowledged that our delegation in Moscow could manoeuvre as if no question had ever been put to the Poles." The French had decided to bluff. That document is genuine, it comes from German archives, and it is damning.

So is the material on the parallel Anglo-German conversations of summer 1939 — the Wilson and Hudson soundings, and Ambassador Dirksen's report of 3 August, document 302, that for the British ruling circles "the ties that had been formed in the last few months with other Powers were only a subsidiary means which would cease to be operative as soon as agreement with Germany, the all-important objective worth striving for, had been really attained." Chamberlain's government was negotiating in Moscow while probing in Berlin. The foreword's charge that the Western powers hoped to turn German expansion eastward is not paranoia; it is a fair reading of a good deal of the evidence assembled here, and serious historians who share none of the compilers' politics — Michael Jabara Carley in 1939: *The Alliance That Never Was* (1999), Geoffrey Roberts in his work on Soviet foreign policy — have argued that Anglo-French reluctance was decisive.

It is worth saying that the sharpest hostile witness available concedes most of this. Ernest Mandel's *The Meaning of the Second World War* (Verso, 1986) is the Fourth International's

own full-length account of the war, written by a man who had spent it in the Belgian resistance and in a German camp, and who owed the Kremlin nothing. In chapter 2, "The Immediate Causes," Mandel grants the ground on which this volume stands: "Considering the wavering (to say the least) of the French and British governments over military collaboration in the event of a German aggression against Poland, the Soviet government had every right to ensure its immediate safety in case of a German conquest of that country" (p. 34). In chapter 10, "The Opening Gambit in Europe," he goes further than the compilers dared, and locates the failure squarely in Warsaw: "The refusal of the Polish regime to accept direct Soviet military assistance transformed the military negotiations between the Western allied general staffs and the Soviet government in the summer of 1939 into a farce" (p. 100). Documents 314 to 342 are the record of that farce, and the reader now has both the transcript and an independent judgement of what it means.

Mandel also complicates the foreword's central charge, which is a service. He does not think appeasement was an attempt to purchase German expansion eastward at Soviet expense. Chamberlain's policy, he argues in chapter 2, was "essentially a function of London's judgement of the time necessary to overcome Germany's lead in rearmament" — "an illusory and foolhardy attempt to outmanoeuvre Hitler, not an acceptance of a Europe dominated by Berlin" (p. 30). He concedes that "for a short time, some of the 'appeasers' played with the idea of diverting the aggressive dynamic of German imperialism against the USSR," but holds that after the occupation of Prague in March 1939 that idea was abandoned as suicidal for the British Empire. The reader should weigh this against Dirksen. The documents here are real; the inference the foreword draws from them is contested from the left as well as the right.

None of this is discredited by what follows. It is what makes what follows worth naming.

## The shape of the silence

Falsification by selection leaves a distinctive trace: an event that everything in the book points toward, and that the book will not reach.

The Pact is not absent from the volume in the sense of being unmentioned. It is present three times, each time at one remove, and never as a document.

It appears in the editorial notes, at note 33, which quotes the

Izvestia communiqué of 22 August 1939 announcing that Ribbentrop "will arrive in Moscow in a few days for talks." That is the announcement, not the treaty.

It appears in document 344, a telegram from the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Tokyo dated 24 August, reporting that news of the Pact "has made a strong impression here." The reader learns of the Pact through Japanese newspapers.

And it appears in document 347, a conversation of 26 August in which Lozovsky reassures the Chinese ambassador that the treaty "created an element of stability in the present unstable international situation."

Then, in document 348, Voroshilov's Izvestia interview of 27 August, comes the volume's real climax — and its most exposed moment. Asked about a Reuters report that he had told the missions the Pact ended the talks, Voroshilov replies that the causation ran the other way: "the USSR concluded the non-aggression pact with Germany because, amongst other things, the military negotiations with France and England had reached a deadlock as a result of insurmountable differences of opinion." The foreword builds its entire case on that sentence.

But look at the question immediately before it. Voroshilov is asked about a Daily Herald report that the Soviet mission had proposed to occupy, on the outbreak of war, "Wilno and Novogrudek on the northeast and the Provinces of Lwow, Tarnopol and Stanislav on the southeast." He answers: "That report is false from start to finish, its author is an insolent liar, and the paper which published this deceitful report by its diplomatic correspondent is a libelous paper."

Three weeks later the Red Army crossed into Poland and took, among other places, Wilno, Nowogródek, Lwów, Tarnopol and Stanisławów. The compilers of 1973 printed that denial without comment. They could do so only because the volume stops before the refutation arrives.

Mandel supplies, in one sentence, the answer that document 348 was constructed to make unavailable. In chapter 2 he writes: "But the Hitler-Stalin pact contained a secret protocol which, even before that conquest had commenced, implemented a fourth partition of Poland. Therewith Stalin gave the green light to Hitler's aggression, temporarily saving the Third Reich from the nightmare of a prolonged war on two fronts" (p. 34). A fourth partition: the phrase is exact, and it is what Voroshilov called an insolent lie. The proposal reported in the Daily Herald was not, so far as anyone has shown, ever put to the Anglo-French missions in those terms — the correspondent may well have been wrong about the meeting.

But the substance of the report, that the Soviet Union intended to take those territories when war came, was true, had already been agreed in writing four days before Voroshilov spoke, and was executed on 17 September. The denial is not evasive. It is a flat statement of the opposite of the fact, made by the man who had signed nothing but who knew what had been signed.

(A note on dates, because they are easily confused here. Mandel misdates the Secret Additional Protocol to 27 August 1939. It was signed on the night of 23 August, with the treaty itself. The 27th is the date of the Voroshilov interview, and of the Izvestia issue that carried it. Mandel's substance is right and his date is wrong; readers should not carry the error forward.)

Mandel also names the technique in general, and this volume is one of its most accomplished instances. "Russian historiography continues to deny this," he writes of the fourth partition, "by keeping silent about the secret protocol... Likewise, it draws a veil over Stalin's formal opposition to the survival of any Polish state" (p. 34). Writing in 1986, Mandel had in view a whole genre — the textbooks, the official chronologies, the multi-volume institute histories. What he describes as silence, this book performs as chronology. It does not assert that there was no protocol; assertion can be refuted. It fixes a terminus one day past the outbreak of war and lets the calendar do the concealing. That is the particular contribution of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the genre Mandel is describing, and it is more durable than a lie, because every individual page can be defended.

Note too how the second half of Mandel's sentence lands. This volume prints, as document 210, the message of 10 May 1939 that the "USSR would not refuse assistance to Poland if she desired it." The veil drawn over Stalin's opposition to the survival of any Polish state — a position that took written form in the German-Soviet negotiations of late September 1939 — is drawn by the same terminus that leaves document 210 standing as the last word.

What the terminus of 1 September 1939 excludes is therefore not incidental. It excludes the Soviet entry into eastern Poland on 17 September; the joint German-Soviet communiqué and the Boundary and Friendship Treaty of 28 September, with its further secret protocols; the ultimata to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that autumn and their annexation in the summer of 1940; the war with Finland; the annexation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina; the deportations of hundreds of thousands of Poles, Balts, Ukrainians and Jews to Kazakhstan and Siberia in four waves between February 1940 and June 1941; and the

shooting of some 21,857 Polish officers, police and officials at Katyn and elsewhere in the spring of 1940. Search the text and you will not find "September 17," or "Boundary and Friendship," or "deportation," or "Katyn." They are not denied. They are outside the frame.

Two smaller silences show the same method. The Soviet-German trade and credit agreement of 19 August 1939, which preceded the Pact by four days and began supplying the German war economy with Soviet grain, oil and manganese, is not among the documents; the only trace of it is the phrase "After the conclusion of the Soviet-German trade and credit agreement" inside the *Izvestia* announcement quoted in note 33. And Litvinov — the architect of collective security, a Jew, whose removal on 3 May 1939 was correctly read in Berlin as a signal — simply stops signing telegrams. His fall enters the book once, obliquely, in document 204 of 8 May, when the British ambassador asks "whether Litvinov's resignation from the post of People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs implied any change in the Soviet Union's foreign policy" and is told that nothing has changed.

The foreword supplies its own epitaph. Explaining the editorial conventions, it says of the passages cut from individual documents: "The omitted parts either have no bearing on the subject of the book or else are devoted to inconsequential matters." The principle governs the volume as a whole. What has no bearing on the subject is decided by the party that chose the subject.

The Secret Protocol was not a secret in 1973. Photographic copies of the German foreign ministry files had been captured in 1945 and the text published in English by the US State Department in *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939–1941* (1948), edited by Raymond Sontag and James Beddie — twenty-five years before this book. Moscow's position throughout was that the protocol was a Western forgery. That position was maintained until the commission chaired by Alexander Yakovlev reported and the Congress of People's Deputies condemned the protocols on 24 December 1989.

## What is actually in dispute

Honesty requires distinguishing the concealment, which is not arguable, from the interpretation, which is.

Whether the Pact was defensive is genuinely contested, and remains so. One tradition — Geoffrey Roberts is its most careful representative, and Carley supports much of its groundwork — holds that Soviet collective security was

pursued in good faith into August 1939, that the German option was a late improvisation forced by Anglo-French evasion and the Polish veto on transit, and that Stalin took the deal on offer when no other was. Against it, historians including Robert C. Tucker (*Stalin in Power*, 1990) and Zara Steiner (*The Triumph of the Dark*, 2011) argue that Stalin kept a German understanding in view for years and held both files open until one paid. The documents in this volume genuinely support the first reading of the period up to mid-August. They cannot settle the question, because the compilers withheld the file that would bear on it.

Mandel's own answer is a third thing, and it is worth stating because it is neither the volume's nor the Cold War historians'. He accepts that Soviet security was a real interest and that the Polish veto was real. He denies that this made the Pact defensive. "In these circumstances," he writes in chapter 10, "Stalin preferred to ally himself with the likely victor rather than with the probable victim" (p. 100) — a calculation, not an improvisation, resting on contempt for French and British fighting capacity and on being "fascinated and awestruck by the power of the German military machine." That preference, on his account, hardened after August into something worse than a manoeuvre: "the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939 appeared increasingly as a strategic orientation rather than a tactical move" (ch. 2, p. 33). The volume in your hands documents the deadlock. It cannot tell you whether the deadlock produced the decision or ratified one already taken, and the compilers made sure of that.

The "breathing space" argument is likewise real but not free. The Soviet Union gained twenty-two months. So did Germany, which used them to take Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries and France, and arrived in June 1941 with the resources of a continent. The new frontier was 200 miles further west, but the fortified line behind it had been dismantled and the new one was unfinished. The Red Army that met the invasion had been decapitated in 1937–38 — and Mandel's summary of the Terror's foreign-policy cost is the harshest sentence in his book: it "decapitated the Red Army, disorganised the defences of the country, delivered Poland and Europe to Hitler, and facilitated the Nazi attack on the USSR" (ch. 2, p. 33). And the Comintern's turn after August 1939 — Communist parties instructed to treat the war as an inter-imperialist quarrel, in France and Britain to oppose their own governments' war effort — cost the anti-fascist movement dearly at the moment fascism was winning. A respite is only worth what is done with it.

There is a further reason the terminus matters, which becomes

visible only in Mandel's later chapters. The territories acquired under the protocol did not remain an embarrassment to be forgotten; they became the Soviet war aim. In chapter 17, "The Aftermath," Mandel notes that for the first eighteen months of the German-Soviet war, Stalin's diplomacy amounted to seeking from Churchill "recognition of what had been obtained through the Hitler-Stalin pact: the Baltic States, the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia as well as Bessarabia and the Northern Bukovina" (p. 165). The Curzon line that Poland's government-in-exile spent two years refusing, and finally accepted, ran close to the line the protocol had drawn. The month this book will not print is the month that fixed the eastern frontier of post-war Europe. Mandel is not sentimental about the other party to that quarrel either: the Polish ruling class, he writes in chapter 16, "The Outcome," showed a "complete lack of realism, its chief characteristic ever since the formation of an independent Poland after WWI" (p. 153), and would have done better to deal with Moscow in 1942 — "not to mention prior to the war." He is describing the same refusal of transit that this volume documents. He simply does not think it absolves the other side.

## The reply

The anti-Stalinist left did not wait for 1989. Trotsky wrote on the Pact within weeks, most substantially in "The USSR in War" of 25 September 1939, collected in *In Defense of Marxism*; he argued that the Kremlin had entered the war on Hitler's side of the ledger while claiming neutrality, and that the annexations were the bureaucracy's expansion, not the revolution's. The argument split his own American organisation — Max Shachtman and James Burnham drew the conclusion that the USSR was no longer a workers' state, Trotsky did not — and the Manifesto of the Fourth International's emergency conference of May 1940, "The Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution," was written into that quarrel. It is a mark of the seriousness of the tradition that the Pact was the hardest question it ever faced, and that it argued the question in public while it was happening.

Mandel's book of 1986 is the mature form of that answer, written with the archives and the historiography of forty years in front of him, and it is the natural companion volume to this one. It concedes what the compilers are right about — the Anglo-French wavering, the Polish veto, the Soviet Union's entitlement to secure itself, the fact that the war's shape was settled on battlefields and not at Yalta. It refuses what they conceal. And in chapter 10 it states, in a single clause, the fact

that stands on the far side of this book's last page: "Stalin too lent a helping hand by cutting off the retreat road for the Polish army when it finally decided to withdraw, and by occupying the Polish Ukraine, thereby adding fuel to Polish anti-Russian sentiment" (p. 100). Mandel's verdict on the consequences is not triumphal. "The consequences of this cynical realpolitik for the Polish people's attitude towards the USSR remain disastrous to this day," he writes at the close of chapter 2. "It was certainly a concomitant cause of the unleashing of World War II."

The argument continued in the periodicals collected in this project's sibling archives. Mandel's "A new stage of de-Stalinization in the USSR" (*International Viewpoint* no. 143, June 1988) catalogues the indictments of Stalin then breaking into the Soviet press, including *Moskovskaya Pravda* of 18 May 1988 stating that the Pact "was a crime against the USSR." A year later, *International Viewpoint* no. 169 of 18 September 1989 carried "The secret protocols of the 'Hitler-Stalin pact'," noting that Moscow had at last conceded the protocols' existence and observing, correctly and without triumph, that "all the documents concerning the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact have been known in the West since the end of the Second World War and the Soviet press has revealed nothing new." What was new was the admission. The same issue carried reports from Estonia and the Baltic republics, where the anniversary of the Pact had just brought a million people into a human chain, on what the protocols had meant to the people living under them.

## How to read it

Take this book as two things at once. It is a real archive of the diplomacy of 1938–39, and on the Anglo-French side of that diplomacy it is often the best evidence in one volume; the compilers were not lying about Munich, or about the slow boat to Leningrad, or about Dirksen's despatches. It is also a demonstration of how a state falsifies without stating a falsehood — by fixing the terminus, choosing the subject, and letting the reader infer that what has not been printed did not happen.

The men whose telegrams fill these pages were not free agents. Litvinov was dismissed and survived; a great many of his colleagues in the diplomatic service did not survive the years just before this correspondence opens. They wrote under a discipline that later reached back and edited them. The volume they were made into thirty-five years afterwards is worth having, and worth reading with the missing month in front of

you.

SOVIET SOCIETY

# The Soviet Court

*The Soviet legal system described by the serving Minister of Justice: the people's courts, the lay assessors, the Procuracy, the advocates, the supervisory powers. Not a study but the ministry's own account of itself, issued for readers abroad.*

Vladimir Terebilov

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

### **Most books about a legal system are written by observers.**

This one was written by the man in charge of it. The dust jacket of the Progress edition states the fact without emphasis, in the middle of a paragraph about university degrees and conference attendance: "Since 1970 he is the Minister of Justice of the USSR." Vladimir Terebilov, born in Petrograd in 1916, a law graduate of Leningrad University in 1939, a soldier through the siege, afterwards an official of the Procurator's Office and the Supreme Court, was the serving head of the institution this book describes. He would hold the post until 1984, and then chair the Supreme Court of the USSR until 1989. The Soviet Court is therefore not a study. It is a ministry's account of itself, issued in English, for readers who would never see a Soviet courtroom.

The commission is legible in the back-cover copy, which invites the reader to "compare them for himself with the 194[8] Universal Declaration of Human Rights." That is the frame: an official reply, in the language of international circulation, to a specific and growing accusation. The accusation had a date.

In 1973 the Soviet legal system was doing something that this book does not mention. Pyotr Yakir and Viktor Krasin, two of the best-known figures of the Moscow opposition, were tried in Moscow that August and sentenced to three years imprisonment and three years exile under Article 70 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, which covers anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. Marilyn Vogt, reporting the case in *Intercontinental Press* of 10 September 1973, noted that "the trial was completely closed, the only reports on the proceedings being predigested ones issued by the Soviet Foreign Ministry's press department and by TASS," and that Yakir had by then been held over fourteen months, "in violation of a Soviet law that specifies a nine-month maximum for pre-trial confinement." The same paper had reported in June that a judicial-psychiatric commission ruled on 29

January 1973 that the former general Pyotr Grigorenko must continue compulsory psychiatric treatment, and described Vladimir Bukovsky, who had smuggled the Serbsky Institute's diagnoses to the West, as "himself now imprisoned." That autumn *Pravda* ran its campaign against Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn.

None of this appears in *The Soviet Court*. The words "anti-Soviet agitation" do not occur in it. Neither does "psychiatric" in any custodial sense, nor the name of any political defendant. This is a book about the Soviet judiciary published in the year of the Yakir–Krasin trial that does not know the Yakir–Krasin trial happened.

That is the second silence. The first is larger, and it is the one on which the book's credibility properly turns.

Chapter I contains a section called "The Judiciary in the Pre-War Period." It runs from the founding of the USSR Supreme Court in 1923 to the reorganisation of the People's Commissariats of Justice in December 1938 — that is, straight through the Terror. Here is what a Soviet Minister of Justice wrote in 1973 about his own institution in those years. Of the constitutional settlement: "The new Constitution of the USSR was adopted in December 1936. In accordance with it the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed, on August 16, 1938, a law on the judicial system of the USSR, the Union and Autonomous Republics." Of what that law achieved: "The 1938 Law on the Judicial System of the USSR, the Union and Autonomous Republics established a harmoniously structured judiciary and strictly defined the functions of Soviet courts at all levels." The section's remaining difficulty is administrative, and the book states it as the hard problem of the period: "Delineating the functions in guiding courts of law between the People's Commissariat of Justice as a state administrative body and the Supreme Court of the USSR as an organ of judicial supervision was a complicated problem."

Harmonious. Complicated. Those are the words. In roughly sixty-four thousand words, the name Stalin does not appear

once. Neither does Vyshinsky — Andrei Vyshinsky, Procurator-General of the USSR from 1935 to 1939, prosecutor of the Moscow trials, the most internationally famous Soviet lawyer who ever lived, and the author of the evidentiary doctrine that made those trials possible. The words purge, terror and repression do not occur. The year 1937 appears exactly once in the book, and it appears to record that Alexander Gorkin was elected Secretary of the Central Executive Committee. "Rehabilitation" occurs fifteen times and every occurrence concerns the re-education of convicted criminals; not one concerns the millions posthumously or belatedly rehabilitated after 1953, a process in which the Supreme Court of the USSR — the body Terebilov would later chair — was the principal instrument. A book cannot both claim its courts as a proud continuous institution since 1917 and decline to say what they did in 1937.

The most eloquent passage is one the author did not intend. Section 7 of Chapter I is called "Prominent Lawyers," and it offers short biographies of the founders. One of them reads:

*"Nikolai Krylenko made an important contribution to the building of the Soviet judiciary. He was born in 1885 in the Smolensk Region where his father was exiled under police surveillance for 'political unreliability'.... In 1931, he was appointed People's Commissar of Justice of the RSFSR and in 1936, People's Commissar of Justice of the USSR."*

Then a paragraph on his role in founding the Supreme Court, his chair at Moscow University, his doctorate of 1934, his eighty books. Then the next lawyer. Krylenko was arrested in January 1938 and shot on 29 July 1938, after a trial reported to have lasted twenty minutes. He was rehabilitated in 1955. A holder of Terebilov's own office was killed by the system Terebilov later administered, and the book that praises his contribution cannot say when or how he died. It is worth being exact here, because the point is easily overstated: of the jurists profiled, Krylenko is the one whose fate the omission conceals. Stucka died in 1932; Vinokurov and Antonov-Saratovsky survived. But the biographies are written in a house style that simply stops, and the reader is given no means of telling the difference between a career that ended and a life that was taken.

Against that background, read the chapter the book is built around, "Principles of Socialist Justice." Terebilov sets out the elective judiciary, the people's assessors, the independence of judges, the public nature of trials, the right to defence, equality before the law. The exposition is clear and, on its own terms, careful. It is also, at two points, self-refuting.

On independence, the book is emphatic: "Any interference in the adjudication of cases on the part of officials, government, Party or any other organs is totally impermissible." Two paragraphs later it writes: "These legal guarantees apart, great importance attaches to the instructions issued on this point by the organs of the Communist Party, which exercises political guidance of the state. But Party leadership does not interfere administratively in judicial activity." The load is carried entirely by the adverb. Party bodies issue instructions to which great importance attaches, and "keep an eye on the state of the eradication of crime"; they simply do not do so administratively. A judiciary independent of everything except the instructions of the single legal party is being described, in good faith, as independent.

On publicity, the book is expansive. Trials are open, covered by press, radio and television; courts hold travelling sessions in factories; and the purpose is frankly educational — "the more people attend the court sittings, the more chances there are that lessons will be learned contributing to the prevention of further crimes." The exception is narrow and reasonable-sounding: hearings may be closed where publicity "would be detrimental to the maintenance of state secrets," and Terebilov adds that "exceptions in Soviet law are minimal" and the practice "is adopted by all countries." He is right that all countries have such a rule. What he does not say is who decides what a state secret is, and the book has already told us. In Chapter III, listing the organs of preliminary investigation, it records that "investigators from the Committee of State Security under the Council of Ministers of the USSR are charged with investigating cases of espionage and other especially dangerous crimes against the state." Article 70 sat in precisely that chapter of the Criminal Code — especially dangerous crimes against the state. So the KGB investigated the political cases, the political cases involved state secrets, and cases involving state secrets were the ones the public could not attend. The whole political jurisdiction passes through the single clause the author calls minimal. Yakir and Krasin were tried behind it in the year this book appeared.

There is one flat error of fact, and it matters because the book volunteers it. Terebilov writes that "in December 1948, the Soviet Union signed and later ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," and quotes Article 11 on the presumption of innocence and the right to "a public trial." The Universal Declaration is a General Assembly resolution; it is not a treaty and was never open to signature or ratification by anyone. And on 10 December 1948 the Soviet Union did not vote for it. It abstained, together with the Byelorussian and Ukrainian SSRs, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Saudi

Arabia and South Africa. A Minister of Justice has misdescribed his own state's most-cited human rights commitment in the direction that flatters it.

None of which means the book is worthless, and a reader told that learns nothing. Most of *The Soviet Court* is about the courts most Soviet citizens actually met, and that account is broadly accurate and in places genuinely interesting. The people's assessors were real: two lay judges sitting with a professional judge, with equal voting rights, entitled to question witnesses and examine exhibits, the presiding judge voting last and enjoying, as the book puts it, "no privileges over the people's assessors." Assessors kept their wages while serving. From 1958 they were elected at workplace and residential meetings rather than in vast electoral districts, and Terebilov explains the change candidly — the old lists ran to "between 100 and 150 persons," so "the voters had a poor knowledge of the candidates nominated." Lay participation on that scale has no equivalent in most Western systems, and it was not decorative in ordinary criminal and civil work.

The account of legal aid is likewise substantially true. Every district and town had a legal advice bureau; defence counsel was mandatory in cases involving minors, persons unable to defend themselves, and any case in which a prosecutor appeared; where a defendant could not pay, the bar association was "duty bound to appoint an advocate and pay him the requisite fees out of its funds." From 1958 counsel could enter at the close of the preliminary investigation rather than only at trial. Ten thousand trade-union legal aid bureaus gave free advice. Divorce, housing, inheritance, labour disputes and ordinary theft were adjudicated by these courts, competently and cheaply, for people who in much of the world would have had no access to a lawyer at all. The chapters on civil procedure, arbitration between enterprises, comrades' courts, and the penal provisions on mitigation and conditional release are informative, and remain useful as a description of how the system was meant to work and largely did work in the ninety-odd per cent of its business that was not political. Where the book overreaches on this ground it is visible — the flat claim that the Soviet methods of reforming convicts "have nothing to do with claims about the notorious 'forced labour'" is an assertion and not an argument — but the underlying institutional description holds up.

The critique, then, is not that Soviet law was a fiction. It is that a second jurisdiction existed alongside the one described here: investigated by a security police answerable to the Party, prosecuted under articles of the code this book never names, heard behind a state-secrets exception this book calls minimal,

before audiences that were not the public. The Soviet Court is an honest guide to the first jurisdiction and a systematic denial that the second exists.

That denial was answered as it was made, and answered from the left. The Trotskyist press reported these trials continuously through 1973 — the Yakir and Krasin case, Grigorenko's confinement, the death in custody of Yuri Galanskov, who had been convicted under Article 70 — and it framed them, as Vogt did, as a revival of "the method of trial by 'confessions,' the central method used by Stalin in the notorious Moscow 'show trials' of 1936-38." The framing was not new in 1973. It goes back to the Dewey Commission's *Not Guilty* (1938), which examined the Moscow trial charges against Trotsky and found them fabricated, and to Trotsky's own *The Stalin School of Falsification*, whose subject was precisely the removal of names from Soviet histories. The structural argument — that a bureaucracy which had expropriated political power from the working class would require a legal apparatus that could be suspended at need — is *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), written while Krylenko was still People's Commissar of Justice and before he was arrested.

The most useful thing about this book is that it does not argue for arbitrary power. It argues, at length and with evident conviction, for legality, publicity, independence, defence and the equality of citizens before the law. Terebilov meant those principles; his ministry applied them daily in the courts that handled the country's ordinary business. What he could not do, from the office he held, was apply them to the cases that mattered most, or admit in print that his own predecessor had been shot. Read it for the system it describes accurately. Read the silences for the system it was written to conceal.

SOVIET SOCIETY

# The Future of Society

*The Soviet answer to Western futurology, written by the founder of Soviet forecasting studies alongside one of the Party's hardest ideologists - a genuine survey of the literature, and a verdict on it, at the height of both sides' confidence.*

Murad Saifulin

## Introduction to the 1973 Edition

**The Future of Society is a book about broken promises** that cannot see its own. It is a collective volume — twenty-odd hands, an editor, an "auxiliary" secretary keeping the team's papers in order — assembled by the Soviet Academy of Sciences establishment and put into English by Progress Publishers in 1973, under the editorship of Murad Saifulin. Its subject is the Western science of the future: the wave of "futurology," post-industrial theory and long-range forecasting that had crested in the capitalist world across the 1960s and was, in the very years this book was written, at its loudest. Its purpose is to demolish that literature and to set against it the one forecast the authors regard as scientific — the law-governed advance of all mankind to communism. It is, in other words, a Soviet entry in a global argument about who owned the future; and it is worth reading today precisely because the argument was settled, in a direction none of its authors foresaw, by history rather than by either side.

Establish the date first, because the spine misleads in the usual direction. The English is 1973; the Russian manuscript is a year or two older. Its horizon closes at the 24th Congress of the CPSU (March–April 1971) and the Ninth Five-Year Plan the Congress adopted, both quoted as the freshest word; nothing later intrudes. So the text belongs to 1971–72 — the Brezhnev high noon of détente and "developed socialism," after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 and after the Kosygin economic reforms of 1965 had unsettled the question of what a socialist economy was supposed to look like. Both of those events press on the book, as we shall see, though only one of them is named.

The roster of contributors matters, and it carries an irony the book never registers. The lead hand — author of the opening historical chapter and of the long technical section on forecasting — is I. V. Bestuzhev-Lada, who was not a marginal figure but the founder and public face of Soviet prognostika (forecasting studies), the USSR's own professional

futurologist. The seventh chapter of Part III, the assault on "bourgeois futurology" proper, is by Y. D. Modrzinskaya, a hard-line ideologist who appears elsewhere on this list as the author of *Leninism and the Battle of Ideas*. This is the structure of the whole enterprise: a genuine forecasting specialist supplies the technical ballast; a Party ideologist supplies the verdict. The Soviet Union built its own futures institute in order to prove that only Marxism-Leninism could tell the future — and then, in the volume you hold, spent most of its energy proving that the Western version was a fraud. What the book was for is legible in that division of labour. It is export ammunition in the détente-era battle of ideas: a demonstration, for Western readers and for the Communist parties abroad, that the confident new Western science of tomorrow was capitalism's ideology in a lab coat.

The frame is announced on the first page and never loosened. "The emergence of the Marxist doctrine of society," the Introduction declares, "marked the change-over of socialism from a utopia into a science." The communist future "ceased to be a dream of a model society appealing to reason and became a scientifically based prospect, proceeding from a profound analysis of the objective laws of social development." This is the oldest and best distinction in the tradition — Engels's separation, in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880), of the socialism that is invented by a good heart from the socialism that is read out of the movement of real history. Everything the book does to Western futurology follows from it. The utopian, and by the book's account the bourgeois forecaster, thinks up a future and imposes it on the facts; the scientific socialist deduces the future from the laws of the present. Bourgeois thought, unable to grasp those laws, produces forecasts that are "one-sided" — singling out "say, technology, or the political superstructure, or moral consciousness, or human organisational activity, or biological instincts" and making one of them absolute. It is a real and usable criticism, and where the book applies it with discipline it draws blood.

It draws the most blood on the technocrats. The chapters on the "single industrial society," on W. W. Rostow's stages of

growth, and on the technocratic idea of the future are the strongest thing here, and they should be credited plainly before anything else is said against the volume. On Rostow the book is simply right: *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960) "compresses the whole history of economic development into five 'stages of growth' invented by him, ignoring the changes in socio-economic formations and the class struggle which is the real driving force of history." The device of abstracting a curve of growth from the class relations that produce it is, the book says, "a fine specimen of the anti-scientific methodology of modern bourgeois political economy," and the judgement holds up better than Rostow's own confidence that the socialist countries, on reaching his fifth stage, "will have no alternative but to return to the capitalist path." On the technocratic literature generally — the transfer of decision from citizens to "experts," rebranded as freedom — the authors are sharp in a way that anticipates the Western left's own later critique of Bell and Galbraith. When a futurology treats "the imperatives of technology and organisation, not the images of ideology" as the thing that decides everything, it is smuggling in a politics while claiming to have retired politics; the book sees this clearly. So too with its recurring target, the "end of ideology": the announcement that ideology is over is itself, and obviously, an ideological act. None of this needs a Marxist to be true, but a Marxist saw it early, and the book deserves the credit.

The book is also, in patches, honest about its opponents in a way the export list rarely is. It concedes, against its own polemical grain, that "an evolution in the concrete forms of capitalist ownership is taking place, and Marxist science has not the slightest inclination to deny it." It even lets a hostile witness testify for the defence: when the West Berlin anti-communist economist Karl Thalheim tears into Jan Tinbergen's convergence thesis at a 1965 conference, the book reports his five objections and admits, "leaving aside the vocabulary used by this reactionary ideologist, one is bound to admit that his objections to the convergence theory are not void of realism." A volume capable of that sentence is not a folder of clippings. It is an argument, and it can be argued with.

Which brings us to the argument it most wants to win, and the one on which it most revealingly loses: convergence. The theory that the two systems — capitalist West and socialist East — were, under the common pressure of modern industry and technology, growing alike and drifting toward some managed, planned, expert-run hybrid was for these authors not one error among many. It was, they write, the theory that "occupies a special place among the fashionable socio-political

constructions of modern bourgeois ideology," and it earned that place because it was dangerous in a way the cruder Cold War theories were not. "A scientific analysis of the convergence theory shows its true colours as a form of anti-communism," the chapter runs, and "the special value of the convergence theory for imperialism lies in the fact that its anti-communist nature appears in disguised form." The formula it attacks is stated fairly: under the impact of the scientific-technological revolution, "capitalism is ostensibly changing its nature, becoming more like socialism, and socialism, in its turn, is evolving in the direction of capitalism." And the book's answer to it is a flat refusal: "Thus we see that capitalism remains capitalism, and socialism remains socialism. Socialism is not becoming less socialist, and capitalism is not becoming less capitalist."

Why the special vehemence? The book's stated reason is that convergence is a Trojan horse — a bait to lure the wavering intelligentsia and the "unstable, vacillating elements in the working-class and communist movement" away from revolution. That is part of it. But watch how the book rebuts convergence, because the manner of the refutation gives the game away. Its entire case rests on a single distinction: the form of ownership. Capitalism is private ownership of the means of production; socialism is public ownership; and no amount of superficial resemblance in planning technique, computer modelling or managerial hierarchy can bridge that gulf. To clinch it the authors reach for Marx, on the union of workers with the means of production: "The specific manner in which this union is accomplished," he wrote, "distinguishes the different economic epochs of the structure of society from one another." Ownership is the specific manner; ownership settles everything; case closed.

But the Marx sentence proves less than they need, and it points at exactly the thing they will not look at. The "specific manner in which this union is accomplished" is a question about control — about who commands the labour process and disposes of its product — and ownership on paper does not answer it. A state can own an economy and still be administered by a stratum that stands above the producers and disposes of the surplus in its own interest. That possibility is the whole content of the convergence question worth taking seriously: not the silly claim that the USSR was becoming a market economy, but the serious observation that a bureaucratically planned, hierarchical, expert-managed industrial order had grown up in the East that shared real features with the managed capitalism of the West. The book cannot examine that possibility, because to examine it would be to ask what the Soviet Union actually was — and the

answer the authors are permitted to give is fixed in advance: it is the realised first phase of the scientifically known communist future. So convergence must be refused not where it is weak but where it is strong. The refusal changes the subject from control to ownership, and having changed it, declares victory. Test the hypothesis on the text and it holds: in a long chapter the book never once asks who commands the Soviet plan. It asks only who holds the title deeds.

The anti-Stalinist left had asked the harder question forty years earlier, with the same instrument the book claims as its own. Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) is, among much else, the answer to convergence that this book mishandles — not because Trotsky thought the two systems were merging (he despised that idea too) but because he refused to let the ownership form close the inquiry. Nationalised property, he argued, was a conquest of the revolution and worth defending; but standing over that property was a bureaucratic caste that had "risen above a class which is hardly emerging from destitution," a caste that was, in the book's own words, "something more than a bureaucracy... the sole privileged and commanding stratum in the Soviet society." From this Trotsky drew the conclusion our authors cannot: "The Soviet Union is a contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism," in which the nationalised economy and the privileged caste coexist in tension, and "a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism." That is a transitional form — neither the promised future nor a return to the past, but a contested, unstable thing that could go either way. It is the category *The Future of Society* needs and is forbidden. The convergence theorists were crude; Trotsky was not; and the difference is that he could name the bureaucracy while they could only gesture at "managerism," and the book could name neither.

For the refusal to name the bureaucracy is of a piece with the book's deepest silence, and here the volume convicts itself out of its own mouth. Its charge against bourgeois futurology is that it postulates an arbitrary ideal, at variance with the objective trends of development, and dresses up a wish as a science. Turn that charge around. This book was written and published by the state that had made the most spectacular arbitrary forecast of the century. In October 1961 the 22nd Congress of the CPSU had adopted a Party Programme pledging to lay the material and technical base of communism "in the main" by 1980, and had told a whole generation, in a sentence every Soviet citizen knew, that it would live under communism. By 1971, when this book was drafted, that clock was running out and the goods were not going to be delivered.

And the book responds exactly as a regime manages an unkeepable promise — not by renouncing it, but by stretching it past the horizon. The 24th Congress's new formula, "developed socialist society," moves through these pages as the resting stage the earlier Programme had not mentioned; and the authors quietly rule that "the socialist phase... will take a relatively longer time than the transition period," that "the transition to communism requires lengthy and serious preparation, definite material and spiritual prerequisites." The 1980 deadline is never mentioned. It is simply dissolved into "developed socialism," an indefinitely extendable waiting room, while the book's Part V still proclaims "world communism is the splendid future of the whole of mankind" and pronounces, with no sense of the mirror it is holding, that "modern bourgeois ideologists insist that communism is an impossible Utopia."

By the book's own test — Engels's test — the 1961 Programme was utopian in the strict sense: an ideal thought up at the top, proclaimed as the society's "necessary state," and contradicted by the society's own development. The authors had the definition in their hands and the specimen in their passports, and the entire architecture of the book exists to keep the two apart. This is not a personal failing of any one contributor; it is the structural signature of the series. The instruments are precise and they are built to point in one direction only. A companion volume on the other side of the list makes the pattern unmistakable: Eduard Batalov's *The American Utopia* (Progress, 1985), from Arbatov's Institute of U.S. and Canadian Studies, applies the identical utopian/scientific distinction to American social dreaming with real skill — and never once completes the circuit back to the Soviet utopia its own theory describes. Two institutes, a decade apart, the same tool, the same exemption. The reflexivity test — can the category the book wields ever be turned on the author's own side? — returns the same answer both times: no.

The record needs correcting on one further point, because the book does not merely stay silent; at one moment it lies with confidence, and the lie has a body count behind it. The convergence chapter reaches, in passing, for the events of 1968, when Czechoslovakia "with the connivance of Right-wing opportunist, revisionist elements in the leadership of the Party and the country, counter-revolutionary, reactionary forces reared their heads with the aim of forcing the country out of the socialist community and restoring a capitalist order." That is the official justification for the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968, printed as fact. Elsewhere the book names the reform slogan of that Prague

spring — "socialism with a human face" — and files it among the imperialist devices for "ideological subversion." The Prague reformers were Communists attempting to democratise a Communist state; the tanks that stopped them were the answer the book endorses; and a volume that spends three hundred pages accusing others of fearing the future might have paused over a socialism whose response to the demand for a human face was armour. It does not pause. The silence about 1980 and the falsehood about 1968 are the same reflex: the future is guaranteed, the present is not to be examined, and anything that examines it is an enemy.

None of this makes the book worthless, and the lazy conclusion — that a Soviet polemic can be discarded unread — would waste what is genuinely here. Read for what it says about the West, *The Future of Society* is a competent and sometimes bracing critique of a body of thought that deserved criticism: Rostow's evasion of class, the technocrats' laundering of power as expertise, the self-serving announcement that ideology had ended. Those chapters can still be read with profit, and a reader coming to Bell, Aron and Galbraith would not be wasting an afternoon on the Soviet cross-examination of them. Read for what it cannot say about the East, the book becomes a more interesting document than its authors intended: an involuntary self-portrait of a state that had learned to describe, with real acuity, the machinery by which a ruling order manufactures dreams it cannot keep, and that could not, on pain of the whole enterprise, look in the mirror it was holding.

The reader who wants the mirror should go to the two texts the book keeps just out of frame. Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* is the short classic statement of the distinction that governs everything here, and it is worth reading beside this volume to watch how faithfully the authors apply its outward edge and suppress its reflexive one. Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* is the book that finishes the argument — that names the Soviet bureaucracy the convergence chapter cannot name, that supplies the category of a "contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism" which alone makes sense of the thing this volume was written to defend, and that, against every cynic then and since, refused to hand the future back to the utopians. Trotsky did not think the promise of abundance was a fairy tale; he called real communism "a really modest perspective" and thought it "pretty dull-witted" to call it utopian. The fraud, he insisted, was never the goal. The fraud was proclaiming the goal reached — announcing the paradise in order to sanctify the inequalities that proved it had not come. He had already given that fraud its Soviet name, writing of the 1936 Constitution as "the lie with which, as a mirror of

the ruling stratum, the new constitution is imbued," and he had already given the doctrine of a completed socialism inside a single backward country its correct label: "the utopian idea of an isolated socialist society." The revolutionary Marxist tradition did not lack the concept of a Soviet utopia. It coined it — and then spent its life insisting that the genuine future was worth fighting for precisely because it had not yet arrived.

# Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I

*The most influential single volume of the nineteenth century, in the 1887 English that Engels himself edited and Anglicised - with all the prefaces in which he and Marx argued over how it should be read.*

Karl Marx

## Introduction to This Edition

**No book has been more revered and less read than this one.** Capital was published in Hamburg in 1867, the only one of its three volumes Marx lived to see through the press; the second and third he left as manuscripts, and it fell to Engels to assemble them after his friend's death. It was the fruit of a quarter of a century — the long years in the Reading Room of the British Museum, kept alive by Engels's money and broken by the deaths of his children — and Marx knew it was unfinished even as it appeared. What appeared, and what you hold, is Volume One: the analysis of how capital produces itself, of the working day, of machinery, of the accumulation that made the modern world. It is the part of the design that Marx polished to a high finish, and it can be read on its own. That it can be read on its own is one reason it became something its author never intended it to be — a scripture.

The text here is the English of 1887, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling and edited by Frederick Engels, who checked it against the later German editions and Anglicised Marx's examples with his own hand. It is, in a real sense, Engels's English Capital as much as Marx's German one, and it carries the prefaces and afterwords — to the first German edition, to the French, to the second, third and fourth German, to the English — in which the two men argued over how the book should be read. Progress Publishers in Moscow reprinted this translation and sent it round the world in editions of a size no commercial house could match. To open it now is to open the most influential single volume of the nineteenth century in the words its authors approved for English readers.

What the book does supremely, it does from its first move. Marx does not begin with the state, or the market, or the great men of commerce; he begins with a single commodity, the "cell-form" of bourgeois wealth, because "the wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities." From that unremarkable object he draws the whole system out. The commodity has a use and a price, and the price conceals a

secret: that behind the equal exchange of things lies an unequal relation between people. This is the discovery on which everything turns — that the worker sells not labour but labour-power, the capacity to work, and that the working day is longer than the hours needed to reproduce its price, so that a surplus is pumped out in the very act of a fair bargain. Marx takes us, in one of the great sentences of the book, out of the marketplace "where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men," that "very Eden of the innate rights of man" ruled by "Freedom, Equality, Property," down into "the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face 'No admittance except on business.'" The critique of political economy is precisely this descent: the showing of exploitation inside, and not against, the rules of the fair exchange.

And it does something else that no economics textbook does: it names the enchantment. In the chapter on what Marx calls the fetishism of commodities, he shows how, under this mode of production, "a definite social relation between men" assumes "in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things." Human labour, coordinated through the market, comes back to its authors as the power of money and goods over them, as if value were a property of objects rather than a relation among people. This is the deepest thing in the book, and the most easily forgotten by those who would later turn Capital into a manual. Then there is the fury. The chapter on the working day is history and moral witness at once — the children in the match factories, the seamstresses worked to death — driven by a logic that Marx catches in the capitalist's own motto, "Après moi le déluge!" And the closing part, on so-called primitive accumulation, tears the polite story of thrift and enterprise to pieces: the real origin of capital was conquest, enslavement, enclosure and plunder, a history "written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire," so that capital comes into the world "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." The book ends on a prophecy stated as a law of the process itself: the centralisation of capital reaches a point where "the expropriators are expropriated."

It is an honest introduction that also says where the book is

unfinished, and it is unfinished in ways that matter. This is Volume One alone. The questions it postpones — how values become the prices we actually see, how the surplus is shared out among industrialists, merchants, bankers and landlords, how the system's crises arise and recur — Marx deferred to volumes he did not complete, and Engels had to reconstruct the third from drafts. Read without that knowledge, some of Volume One reads as more closed than Marx meant it. The passages on the "general law of capitalist accumulation," which describe a growing mass of misery at one pole and wealth at the other, were later taken as a flat prophecy that workers must grow absolutely poorer without end — a reading the twentieth century did not bear out and that Marx's own more careful formulations do not require. And *Capital* is a critique of the existing order, not a design for the next one: Marx says almost nothing here about how a socialist economy would actually be run, and he said little of it anywhere, on principle, distrusting recipes for "the cook-shops of the future." That silence is not a defect of the book. It became a problem only for those who wanted to quarry a blueprint out of it and, finding none, supplied their own while keeping his name on the cover.

Which is the question this great text puts to the state that canonised it: was that state consistent with the book it printed in millions? *Capital* was made the foundation stone of an official science, Marxist-Leninist political economy, taught by rote from Moscow to Vladivostok and codified in the manuals this very publisher issued — the Academy's fat Political Economy textbook, the potted primers that reduced three volumes to a set of laws to be recited. And the recitation inverted the book. *Capital* is, from its first page to its last, the critique of the commodity, of wage-labour, of money, of the fetishism by which human relations appear as the movement of things. The society that made it holy kept the wage and the money-form, set piece-rates of exactly the kind Marx anatomises in his chapter on piece-wages, imposed labour discipline and one-man management and the stopwatch, and measured its socialism in tons of pig-iron and plan-fulfilment percentages — the fetishism of the product raised to a principle of government. The book that taught workers to read the wage as the form which hides their exploitation was published, in vast printings, by a state that paid wages and jailed the workers who struck against them. Marx's own categories, turned homeward, described the thing that was banning their use.

The proof is in what the official science did with Marx's method. The writings in which that method is most alive — the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, with their

theory of alienated labour, and the Grundrisse, the vast notebooks in which *Capital* was drafted — were published late and handled at arm's length, because their Hegelian, humanist Marx, for whom communism was the overcoming of estrangement, embarrassed a doctrine that preferred its Marx in the form of iron laws. When Soviet scholars in the 1920s took the analysis of the value-form seriously and argued about it freely — Isaak Rubin's *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value* is the finest of that work — the debate was closed down by administrative means; Rubin was arrested at the decade's turn and perished in the purges. To study *Capital* had become dangerous; to quote it was compulsory. This is the exact signature of reification: a living argument frozen into an icon, the icon set up precisely so that no one need argue any more. The canonised *Capital*, like the embalmed body in the mausoleum, was the measure of the betrayal and not its cause.

None of which is a charge against Marx or against the revolution that first raised his book to a banner. The Bolsheviks who seized power in 1917 did so in a ruined and encircled country, and much of what hardened afterwards began as the improvisation of a siege — civil war, blockade, famine, the physical destruction of the very working class in whose name the state ruled. The tradition that kept faith with the living Marx located the degeneration there, in the isolation of the revolution once the German rising failed and in the usurpation of power by a privileged bureaucracy, and not in the founding analysis. It was Trotsky, in *The Revolution Betrayed*, who used Marx's own tools on the Soviet Union itself — asking what social relations lay behind the plan's fetish of output, whose labour the new stratum lived on — and thereby did what the textbooks forbade: he turned the critique of political economy on the state that had made it a catechism. That is the difference between the two Marxisms that share these pages. One recites that the commodity conceals a social relation and then forbids you to ask which social relation the recital conceals. The other reads the book as Marx wrote it, as an instrument for seeing through appearances, and is willing to point it anywhere.

So what is *Capital* worth now, a century and a half on and a generation past the state that claimed it? It is worth exactly what it always was and never was allowed to be: not a bible of "Marxist economics," not a plan for an economy, but the most powerful critique ever written of the way of producing wealth that still governs the planet. Its object has not gone away. The commodity still presents itself as an immense accumulation; labour is still bought as a capacity and worked for longer than it costs; the fetish still makes the movement of prices and shares look like a force of nature rather than the sum of what

people do to one another; and the blood and dirt of accumulation are still being shed, now in the mines and sweatshops and warehouses of a world market Marx could only glimpse. Read as its authors meant it, in Engels's careful English, *Capital* is a workshop and not a shrine — a way of thinking one is expected to use, and to turn, when the occasion demands, on any state or party that would rather one only knelt. The living current in Marxism, read against its embalming, is simply this book put back to work.