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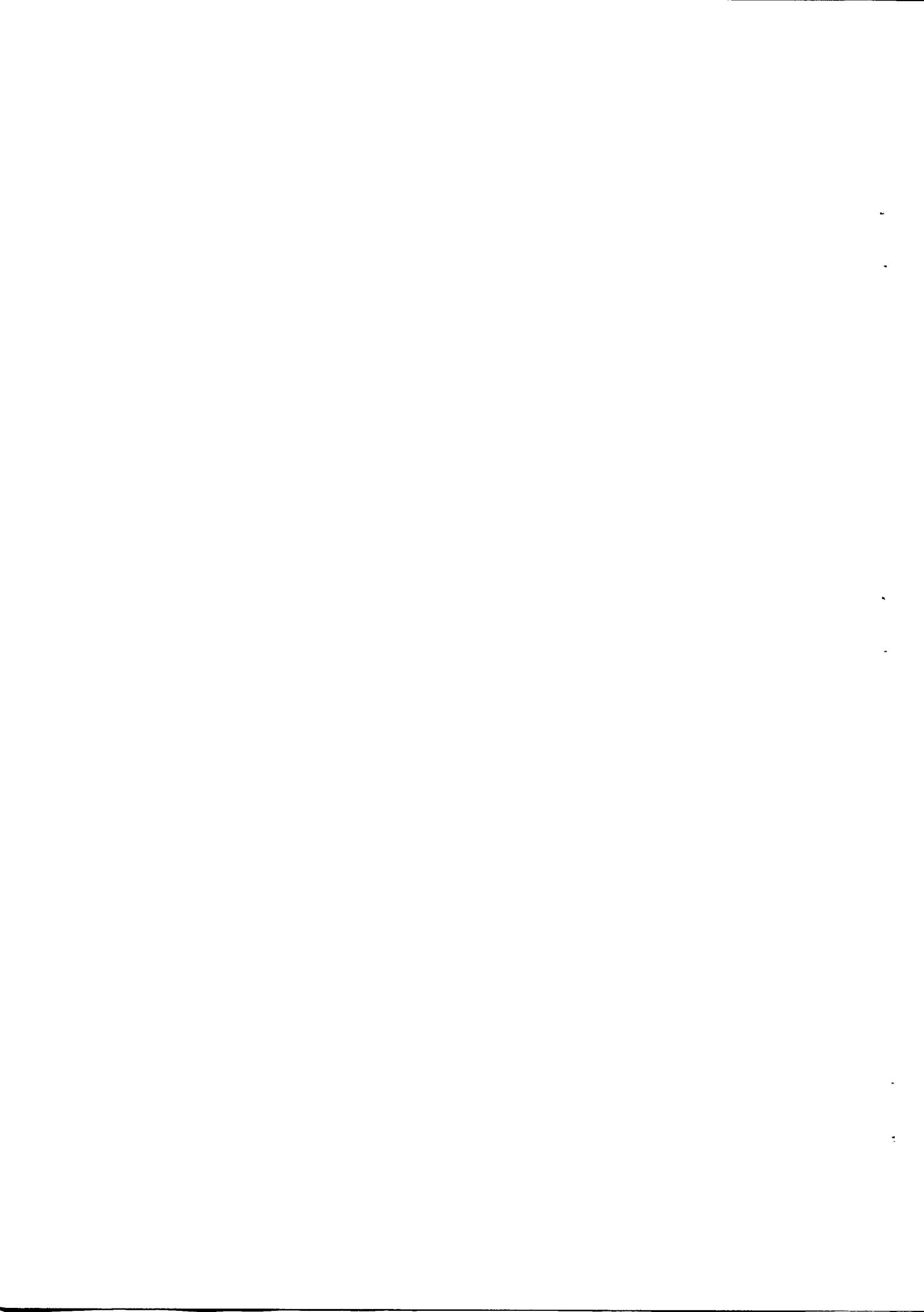
# **Marxism-Leninism and The Arts**

**by Bill Bland**

**Presentation to the Stalin Society, September 1999.**

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# MARXISM-LENINISM AND THE ARTS

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BY BILL BLAND

I should like to begin with a few definitions.

ART is a form of production in which the producer (the artist) strives by his product (the work of art) to create certain thoughts or feelings in the minds of its consumers.

A product which is exclusively artistic and has no other function is termed fine art.

A product which is primarily functional may be secondarily a work of art if its producer has been concerned not merely with its function, but also with creating certain thoughts or feelings in the minds of its users. Such art is termed applied art.

The content of a work of art is its subject.

The form of a work of art is the manner or style in which the artist has presented the content of his work of art.

Realism is a trend in art which seeks to represent its subject faithfully and truthfully,

## Art and Society

An artist is a member of society, so that the art of a particular period cannot but be influenced by the social environment existing in that time and place.

When and where a particular social system is in harmony with the needs of the mass of the people, the prevailing thought tends to be rational, favourable to science and optimistic, while the prevailing art tends to be realistic.

When and where a particular social system has outlived its usefulness to the mass of the people, the prevailing thought tends to be irrational, unfavourable to science and pessimistic, while the prevailing art tends to be unrealistic, tends to develop to a greater or lesser degree into abstraction.

SLIDE 1: MARGARITONE OF AREZZO: ALTAR-PIECE,

Thus, in Europe in the late Middle Ages, when the long-established system of feudalism was in decline, the prevailing art was typically Byzantine in style -- like this altar-piece in the National Gallery by Margaritone of Arezzo, painted in the late 13th century. By this time, painting from real life had come to be regarded as heretical, and artists tended to confine themselves to making virtual copies of works of art previously approved by the Church. Thus, Byzantine art tended to be flat and lifeless.

Then, in the 14th century, above all in Italy, the embryonic capitalist class began to exert its influence, giving rise to that flowering of science, art and culture which we call the Renaissance.

SLIDE 2 : CARAVAGGIO: 'THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS'.

The difference between this picture by Caravaggio and the previous one by Margaritone is not just a matter of improved technique, the use of light and shade, the mastery of perspective. The principal difference is that it is no longer based on previous works of art; it is painted from life, and it glows with realism.

SLIDE 3 : GIOVANNI BELLINI: 'THE DOGE LEONARDO LOREDANO'.

This sumptuous portrait of the Doge of Venice by Giovanni Bellini conveys with realism all the pomp and prosperity of the wealthy state of Renaissance Venice.

Most sitters of the Renaissance and the rising capitalist class felt self-confident, and did not demand that painters prettified them. Thus Oliver Cromwell ordered the painter Peter Lely to paint him 'warts and all'.

SLIDE 4 : ATTRIBUTED TO QUENTIN MASSYS : 'PORTRAIT OF AN OLD WOMAN'.

And this sitter no doubt gave the same instruction to her painter, the Flemish Quentin Massys.

SLIDE 5 : PIETER DE HOOCH : 'INTERIOR OF A DUTCH HOUSE'.

By the 17th century we find Dutch artists like Pieter De Hooch painting realistically the interior of bourgeois houses like this, in which he expresses his joy in painting sunlight. The figure standing before the fireplace was an afterthought added to improve the design of the grouping, and that is why the black-and-white tiles of the floor can be seen through the woman's skirt.

But when a social system ceases to serve the interests of the majority of the people -- for example, in France in the years immediately preceding the French Revolution of the 18th century -- sensitive artists, other than conscious revolutionaries, find reality too unpleasant and sordid to portray realistically, so they tend to reject realism in favour of falsity.

SLIDE 6 : JEAN-HONORE FRAGONARD : 'THE SWING'.

Jean Fragonard was court painter at Versailles in the years just before the French Revolution of the 18th century. This painting, 'The Swing' is typical of the artificiality of his work. The decadence of the court is concealed in a completely false world of eternal youth and perpetual pleasure, of endless summers filled with laughter and the scent of flowers.

By the 20th century, capitalism had reached the stage of imperialism, which Lenin called 'capitalism in decay' -- a stage where capitalism became ever more clearly contrary to the interests of the masses of the people.

In such a period, revolutionary artists may make use of realism to further the revolutionary cause.

But the honest, sensitive artist who is not a revolutionary, who sees no way out of existing social problems, finds reality too painful to portray truthfully, and consequently moves away from realism.

Even in the 19th century, artists like the British William Turner began to sense the poverty and exploitation which lay beneath the surface of Victorian prosperity, and to move away from realism.

SLIDE 7 : WILLIAM TURNER : 'RAIN, STEAM AND SPEED'.

In this late picture by Turner of a train crossing a viaduct, the train is not the realistic assembly of gleaming pistons which would have brought joy to the heart of George Stephenson. The train is no more than an impression, lost in the wild rush of colour of the elements and the steam from the engine.

Today, capitalism has been in increasing decay for almost a hundred years. Britain, once the workshop of the world, has been turned into an industrial museum; children leave school with the prospect of spending all their lives without work; in the heart of London thousands of people are forced to sleep in the streets winter and summer.

So, with the onset of imperialism, which is capitalism in its final stage of decay, reality has become uglier still, and honest, sensitive artists who are not socialists reject even the impression of reality.

#### Modern Trends in Non-Realistic Art

Among the many non-realistic artistic trends which arose in the 20th century was Cubism, associated particularly with the name of Pablo Picasso.

SLIDE 8 : PABLO PICASSO : 'GUITARIST'.

In later Cubism, the image is first cut up into geometrical forms, and then these are shifted around -- as in this painting by Picasso entitled 'Guitarist'.

SLIDE 9 : SALVADOR DALI: 'SUBURBS OF THE PARANOIC-CRITICAL TOWN'.

Another 20th-century non-realistic artistic trend was Surrealism, allegedly based on the subconscious mind, whose dreams were declared to be more real than objective reality. The

Spanish-born Salvador Dali deserted Cubism for Surrealism. His paintings, like this one entitled 'Suburbs of the Paranoic-Critical Town', are superficially naturalistic in appearance, but with objects in the weirdest juxtaposition -- a temple, an armchair, a horse's skull and a girl with a bunch of grapes.

Of course, this movement away from realism is not confined to the visual arts. In the theatre, for example, it has produced a whole trend known as 'The Theatre of the Absurd'. Here the term 'absurd' is used in the sense of 'incongruous', 'illogical', 'contrary to reason'. It is often humorous, but its humour comes, not from satire on real life, but from incongruity. It is the humour of Monty Python. It portrays life and the world as senseless and meaningless.

In his study of the subject, Martin Esslin writes:

"The Theatre of the Absurd is . . . part of the 'anti-literary' movement of our time, which has found expression in abstract painting".

A milestone in the development of the 'Theatre of the Absurd' was the play 'Waiting for Godot', written in French by the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett and first published in Paris in 1957.

The play is set in a country lane where two tramps are waiting for a mysterious person called Godot. As they wait, they converse in the manner of cross-talk comedians on the variety stage. Eventually a boy arrives and tells them that Godot is not coming that day. In the second act, they continue to talk as they wait for Godot, and again the boy comes to tell them that Godot won't be coming.

As one eminent critic has put it:

"'Waiting for Godot' is a play in which nothing happens -- twice!"

Here are the last few lines of the play:

RECORDING 1 : EXTRACT : 'WAITING FOR GODOT'.

VLADIMIR: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. . . . Unless Godot comes.

ESTRAGON: And if he comes?

VLADIMIR: We'll be saved.

ESTRAGON: Well? Shall we go?

VLADIMIR: Pull on your trousers.

ESTRAGON: What?

VLADIMIR: Pull on your trousers.

ESTRAGON: You want me to pull off my trousers?

VLADIMIR: Pull ON your trousers.

ESTRAGON: True.

VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go?

ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go".

They do not move, and the curtain falls.

The American playwright William Saroyan, says of the play, which he greatly admired:

"The play is about nothing. All is nothing. All comes to nothing".

In the field of music, the retreat from realism has taken the form of atonality. If you listen to this scale --

KEYBOARD DEMONSTRATION : INCOMPLETE DIATONIC SCALE.

-- something is clearly missing. We are left hanging in the air, waiting for 'the other shoe' to drop. Tonality is a system of relations between tones having a tonic or home pitch as its most important element. In atonal music, all sense of key or home pitch is lost. There are no longer 'consonances' and 'dissonances', but only varying degrees of dissonance.

Here is a piece of modern atonal music -- an extract from the opera 'The Lucky Hand' by the American composer Arnold Schoenberg.

RECORDING 2 : EXTRACT: ARNOLD SCHOENBERG: 'THE LUCKY HAND'.

Atonal composers claim that in rejecting tonality, they are liberating music from restrictions. Yet Bach, Mozart and Beethoven did not feel restricted by tonality.

The fact is that, unlike the music of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, atonal music fails to move listeners. It does not do so, it is unloved, because it has rejected melody; it has rejected realism.

What limits modern composers is not tonality, but paucity of ideas.

In some respects, the music of composers like Schoenberg has its counterpart in the junk music of 'pop'.

Here is an extract from the rendering of 'Filthy Lucre' by the 'Sex Pistols'.

RECORDING 3 : EXTRACT : THE SEX PISTOLS : 'FILTHY LUCRE'.

It is not accidental that pop concerts have become associated with drugs, for the music itself -- if one can call it that -- has many of the characteristics of a drug.

Capitalism in decay survives largely by applying the old Roman policy of 'Divide and Rule', by dividing black from white, office worker from manual worker, Muslim from Christian, Protestant from Catholic, and -- as in the case of 'pop' music -- young from old. Indeed, in a society where there is hopeless mass unemployment, the ideal young person for capitalist society may

well be one who is too stoned to do anything more than stagger down to the chemist and collect his methadone.

As George Melly puts it, 'pop' is

" . . . based on the corruption of standards deliberately engineered by skilful vested interests for their own gain.

Pop is in many ways an ersatz culture feeding off its own publicity".

### The Struggle over Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the science of quality in art.

Marx, Engels and Lenin did not develop a thoroughgoing theory of aesthetics.

As a result, although there was general agreement in Soviet Russia that in a socialist country, a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, culture should be 'proletarian culture', there was no agreement as to what 'proletarian culture' should be.

One influential view was put forward by Aleksandr Bogdanov, who became the leader of the 'Proletarian Cultural and Educational Association', known as 'Proletkult'.

The leaders of Proletkult denied that there was anything worth preserving in pre-socialist culture and held that 'proletarian culture' must be a new, specially created culture.

They also demanded that Proletkult should be 'independent', that is, not under the leadership of the Party.

Lenin was strongly opposed to Bogdanov's views, insisting that proletarian culture should be based on all that was good in the culture of the past, and that culture in Soviet Russia must be under the leadership of the Party.

As a result, 'Proletkult' declined in the 1920s and ceased to exist in 1932.

After Lenin's death in 1924, the struggle against Bogdanov's conception of 'proletarian culture' was led by Stalin.

In May 1925 Stalin laid the basis of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics when he put forward the view that proletarian culture should be socialist in content and national in form.

But at this time the Party was under the leadership of revisionist elements. The Political Bureau of the Central Committee elected after the 13th Congress in June 1924 consisted of Nikolai Bukharin, Lev Kamenev, Aleksey Rykov, Josef Stalin, Milhail Tomsky, Lev Trotsky and Grigory Zinoviev.



In other words, the Party leadership was dominated by revisionists, by concealed opponents of socialism.

As a result, the Party leadership rejected the views of Stalin and in June 1925 adopted a rambling, verbose resolution proclaiming the Party's complete neutrality in aesthetic matters.

In the period up to 1932, revisionist control over the arts was exercised through the 'Russian Association of Proletarian Writers', known as 'RAPP', headed by the Trotskyist Leopold Averbakh, who exercised what amounted to a personal dictatorship over the arts.

The leaders of RAPP adopted an extremely narrow attitude towards the arts, decreeing in 1930 (for example) that only literature which directly supported the Five-Year Plan should be published.

The result was a drying-up of creative sources and a narrowing-down of its themes.

Averbakh was the brother-in-law of Genrikh Yagoda, at this time Deputy Commissar for Internal Affairs, and used the security police to persecute Soviet artists who supported the views put forward by Stalin -- outstanding artists such as Maksim Gorky, Mikhail Sholokhov and Vladimir Mayakovsky.

The persecution of Gorky by the Soviet revisionists, particularly Zinoviev, became so severe that in 1921 Gorky was compelled to leave Russia and move to Italy.

The domination of the Party by revisionists was ended only in 1931, when Gorky felt it safe to return to the Soviet Union.

But concealed revisionists continued to plot against Gorky, and, at his public trial in 1938, Yagoda admitted having organised his murder.

One of most famous Soviet novels was 'The Quiet Don', by the Cossack writer Mikhail Sholokhov, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for the work.

'The Quiet Don' is an outspoken denunciation of the policy pursued by the Trotskyists towards the Cossacks. And almost immediately after the publication of its first volume in the literary journal 'October' in 1929, the Trotskyists began to circulate rumours that the work had not, in fact, been written by Sholokhov at all, but was a plagiarism.

As a result, the Party newspaper 'Pravda' organised a commission to investigate the allegations, and, after a full investigation this Committee reported that the allegations of plagiarism were totally unfounded.

However, in the 1970s, more than twenty years after the death of Stalin, the charges of plagiarism against Sholokhov were

revived in an anonymous pamphlet published in Paris with a foreword by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

The poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, widely regarded as the Soviet Union's greatest poet, although a member of RAPP was critical of that organisation's views on aesthetics, and as a result of the almost continuous violent attacks on his work as 'counter-revolutionary', Mayakovsky was driven to commit suicide in April 1930.

We have seen that in 1924 Stalin was the only Marxist-Leninist on the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

This situation was rectified by a carefully planned strategy, which involved temporary cooperation with the less dangerous revisionists in the leadership in order to remove the more dangerous. As a result of this strategy, the Political Bureau elected after the 12th Congress of the CPSU in February 1934 consisted of eight Marxist-Leninists and two still-concealed revisionists.

It is customary for learned professors to present the defeated revisionists as 'brilliant intellectuals' and Stalin as 'a dull-witted clod from the Caucasian backwoods'.

But the objective history of Stalin's successful struggle against the Opposition belies such an analysis.

#### The Development of Socialist Realism

Having defeated open revisionism in the political field, the Marxist-Leninists who now led the CPSU turned their attention to the development of a genuine proletarian culture.

The first step was to liquidate the existing cultural organisations under revisionist domination and to form new broad organisations in each field of culture -- organisations open to all cultural workers who supported Soviet power and socialist construction, with a Communist Party fraction in each to give Marxist-Leninist leadership.

So, in April 1932 the Central Committee of the Party dissolved the existing cultural organisations and established new broader organisations in each field of culture under Party leadership.

At the 17th Congress of the CPSU in January/February 1934, Lazar Kaganovich revealed that the initiative for these measures came from Stalin.

The single organisation created by this decree in the field of literature was 'the Union of Soviet Writers', in the field of musical composition 'the Union of Soviet Composers'.

It remained to lay down the principles of aesthetics which

Soviet artists would be asked to follow -- principles which came to be known as 'the method of socialist realism'.

The first recorded use of the term 'socialist realism' was in an article in the 'Literary Gazette' in May 1932.

Five months later, in October 1932, at an informal meeting in Gorky's flat, Stalin gave his support to the term.

### The Principles of Socialist Realism

Realism, as we have seen, is a trend in art which seeks to represent its subject faithfully and truthfully, in its development.

It must be distinguished from naturalism, which represents reality superficially and statically.

In fact, the world is in process of constant change and development, so that a work of art which fails to hint at the forces working beneath the surface is not a realist, but a naturalist, work.

For example, in 1907 Russia lay under the 'Stolypin Reaction': the organisations of the working class were being destroyed; the prisons were full of revolutionaries; Black Hundred terror raged unchecked. On the surface, it was a picture of unrelieved gloom for the masses of the people. Yet less than ten years later the whole rotten edifice of Tsarism was swept away in the October Revolution. Consequently, a novel written in 1907 which failed to at least hint at the revolutionary social forces operating beneath the surface would be a work not of realism, but of naturalism.

Marxist-Leninists understand that monopoly capitalism, imperialism, is moribund capitalism, capitalism which has outlived its usefulness to the mass of the people. Consequently, a 20th-century work of art which failed to suggest the underlying forces of the working class, of socialism -- forces which will bring about the socialist revolution -- is not a realist work. Twentieth -- and twenty-first -- century realism must be socialist realism.

The key word here is 'suggest'. A socialist realist work of art must not give the impression of being propaganda. As Engels put it in a letter of 1888:

"The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better the work of art".

These principles were embodied in the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Writers, adopted in 1934, which declared:

"Socialist realism demands from the author a true and historic depiction of reality in its revolutionary development".

Socialist realist art does not exclude distortion or exaggeration, as long as this departure from naturalism assists in bringing out the truth about the subject. Thus, a caricature of Margaret Thatcher showing her as a vulture with bloody talons would be much more realistic than a naturalistic portrait of her as a sweet, silver-haired granny.

However, socialist realist art is more than a passive reflection of reality: it must play an active role in building socialist consciousness.

In Stalin's famous phrase: the socialist realist artist is an engineer of the human soul.

Socialist realist art is, therefore, 'tendentious', 'partisan'. It makes no pretence of being neutral in the class struggle: it consciously sides with the working people and against their exploiters.

Of course, all art is selective in its subject matter, but to be realist this selection must be typical. For example, there may be in a country a real millionaire who gives away all his wealth to the poor, and fights the efforts of his relatives to have him declared insane. But he would be so exceptional that a true story based on him would present a completely false picture of millionaires. It would not be truly realistic. True realism, socialist realism, requires typicality in its selection of subject matter.

Romanticism is a form of art expressing intense emotion, and socialist realism in no way rejects the expression of emotion. However, the old type of romanticism, in the words of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetician Andrei Zhdanov, "depicted imaginary heroes and utopian dreams, Our romanticism must be a new type, based on reality. It must be revolutionary romanticism".

We have seen that the form of a work of art is the manner or style in which the artist has presented the content of his work. Where the artist gives priority to form over content, we encounter a deviation from realism known as formalism.

Finally, socialist realist art must be national in form, not cosmopolitan. To quote Zhdanov again:

"Internationalism in art does not spring from depletion and impoverishment of national art; on the contrary, internationalism grows where national culture flourishes. To forget this is to become a cosmopolitan without a country".

The First Congress of Soviet Writers, held in Moscow in August 1934, resolved that socialist realism should become the officially sponsored method in literature immediately, and subsequently in the other arts.

However, revisionism in the arts had not been completely defeated. Even at the Congress, Nikolai Bukharin attacked socialist realist poets as mere 'agitators', and praised apolitical writers, particularly Boris Pasternak.

Thus, the battle of ideas between Marxist-Leninists and revisionists in the field of the arts did not end in 1934, but continued.

For example, in November 1934 a new opera by Dmitry Shostakovich, 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk', had its premiere.

Based on a short story by Nikolai Leskov, it tells the story of Katerina Ismailova, the wife of a provincial merchant, who has an affair with a clerk in her husband's office, poisons her father-in-law, then joins her lover in strangling her husband, and finally murders her little nephew. For Leskov, Katerina was a depraved criminal, but Shostakovich presented the story as a tribute to women's liberation.

The opera was a particular success in America, the 'New York Sun' praising Shostakovich as

" . . . the foremost composer of pornographic music in the history of opera".

In January 1936 Stalin saw the opera for the first time, and walked out half-way through.

A few days later, 'Pravda' carried a leading article entitled 'CHAOS INSTEAD OF MUSIC', which strongly criticised the opera. The article was unsigned, but Shostakovich insists in his memoirs that it was written by Stalin.

The article declared:

"From the first moment, the listener is knocked over the head by an incoherent chaotic stream of sounds. The fragments of melody . . . are drowned in a sea of bangs, rasping noises and squeals, . . . and so it goes on right through the opera, Screams take the place of singing".

Shostakovich did not respond publicly to the criticism, but in December 1936 he withdrew his 4th Symphony, saying he was dissatisfied with it.

Most Western musicologists condemned the Party's criticism of Shostakovich as 'art criticism by politicians'.

But in fact criticism by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at this time was not 'criticism by politicians'. It

represented the collective opinion of the most advanced cultural leaders of the country.

The Western view that constructive Marxist-Leninist criticism is 'artistically harmful' is discounted by the fact that in November 1937 the first performance took place of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, inscribed

'Creative Reply of a Soviet Artist to Just Criticism'.

Here is an excerpt from the symphony.

RECORDING 4 : EXCERPT : DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH : SYMPHONY NO. 5.

This new symphony, written in the light of Marxist-Leninist criticism, was held by critics at home and abroad as by far Shostakovich's finest work to date,

Even such an anti-Soviet music critic as the American-born Peter Heyworth was later compelled to admit:

"If Shostakovich's weaknesses as a composer are to be attributed to the stultifying dogmas enforced by Zhdanov, why is his Symphony No. 12, written in the full flood of Khrushchev's thaw, by far his worst".

Of course, we know now that Shostakovich was not sincere when he pretended to accept the constructive criticism of the Party. He says in his memoirs:

"Stalin never had any convictions or ideas or principles. Stalin was half mad".

But Shostakovich's insincerity does not affect the validity of the Party's criticism of such works as 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk'.

In the final stages of the Second World War, revisionists felt confident enough to throw off their masks to some extent.

The Russian-born journalist Alexander Werth says in his book 'Russia: The Post-War Years':

"All kinds of Western ideas were being toyed with -- for instance, a project for publishing 'escapist' literature, including a series of hundreds of thrillers and detective stories, translated from the English and edited by Sergey Eisenstein.

A lot of light and entertaining book, plays and films would also be produced. Already in 1944 there were signs of decadence in Moscow -- amusingly escapist films with frivolous songs".

In June 1946 a poetry evening was organised in Moscow in honour of the revisionist poets Boris Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova,

It was this which stimulated the Marxist-Leninists to launch, in August 1946, a determined counter-attack against revisionism in the arts.

Incidentally, in 1946 Picasso joined the French Communist Party. But those who imagined that this might influence his art in the direction of socialist realism were sadly disappointed. The French Communist Party was already deep in the mire of revisionism -- and not only in the sphere of the arts -- and praised Picasso's art unreservedly.

When Stalin died in 1953, the Party commissioned Picasso to do a portrait of him for their literary journal 'Les Lettres Francaises'.

SLIDE 10 : PABLO PICASSO : 'STALIN'.

Although, unlike many paintings by Picasso, this portrait is recognisably that of a human being, its publication brought a host of angry letters from readers and the editors were compelled to print an apology for having published it.

In August 1946, the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted a decree sharply criticising the work of two Leningrad writers Mikhail Zoshchenko and Anna Akhmatova -- and two Leningrad magazines for having published their work.

In 1945, Zoshchenko had had a short story published entitled 'The Adventures of a Monkey', It tells the story of a monkey who escapes from a zoo, but finds life in the Soviet Union so 'awful' that he begs to be let back into captivity.

Criticising this story as 'anti-Soviet', Andrei Zhdanov described Zoshchenko as:

" . . . the apostle of empty-headedness and cheapness, a literary slum-rat, unprincipled and conscienceless".

On the poetry of Akhmatova, Zhdanov said:

"Anna Akhmatova . . . is one of the standard-bearers of the meaningless, empty-headed, aristocratic school of poetry.

It is the poetry of a spoiled woman-aristocrat, frenziedly vacillating between boudoir and chapel",

Similar campaigns against revisionism were launched in the theatre, in the cinema and in the figurative arts, so that by the late 1940s a comprehensive foundation of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics based on socialist realism had been laid, with Stalin and Zhdanov playing leading roles in its formulation.

However, it is clear that the picture commonly drawn in anti-socialist writings of artists in the time of Stalin suffering 'persecution' because of their artistic creations, is based only on presenting the non-publication and non-circulation

of anti-socialist art, and constructive criticism of other art, as 'persecution'.

In fact, the artists most strongly criticised in Stalin's time -- such as the composers Prokofiev and Shostakovich and the writers Akhmatova, Bulgakov, Pasternak and Zoshchenko -- all died peacefully in their beds.

In fact, the first case in Soviet history of criminal proceedings against artists because of their work occurred long after Stalin's death -- in 1966 in the time of the revisionist Leonid Brezhnev, when Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel faced charges in connection with their writings.

In fact, Stalin had respect for artists who were honestly anti-socialist, did not regard them as significantly dangerous to socialism, and on many recorded occasions personally intervened to assist them to be given commissions in fields such as translation where he felt they could do no harm.

And on socialist realism, even such an anti-Soviet propagandist as Alexander Werth felt compelled to say:

"There is an incontrovertible basis of truth in the Russian case. . . . The West cannot afford to ignore some of its own weaknesses, and it is not enough to sneer at Zhdanov's theses and to pretend that all is well with Western art and Western literature"

The people for whom Stalin had no respect and whom he regarded as a serious danger to socialism were the concealed enemies of socialism, people who pretended to be Marxist-Leninists and socialists, but in reality plotted to destroy socialism everywhere.

The history of the last forty years has shown the correctness of Stalin's view.

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