

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

**A.A. ZHDANOV**

*ON*  
*LITERATURE,*  
*MUSIC*  
*and*  
*PHILOSOPHY*

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A.A. Zhdanov (1896-1948) was a lifelong member of the Bolshevik Party. For many years leader of the Party in Leningrad, he was entrusted with the city's defence during the war. In 1938 he was elected to the Political Bureau of the Party's Central Committee and was entrusted with leadership of propaganda and agitational work. An outstanding Marxist theoretician, he made a number of brilliant reports on questions of literature, art, philosophy and the international situation.

Three works translated here are among the most important contributions defining and clarifying the new socialist attitude to art and literature; the fourth deals with the role of Marxist philosophy.

The first, on literature, outlines the outstanding tasks in the development of Soviet literature. This was a speech at the first Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers, where the main report was made by Maxim Gorky. The second was occasioned by criticisms made of two Leningrad journals for publishing inferior stories and poems — in particular, the story *Adventures of a Monkey* by Mikhail Zoshchenko, and poems by Anna Akhmatova.

The speech on music was delivered at a conference of Soviet composers, at which the work of leading composers was under review, following criticisms of a new opera, *The Great Friendship*, by Muradeli.

The speech on philosophy was delivered at a philosophical conference called to review G. Alexandrov's textbook on the history of philosophy.

The translations were prepared and edited by Eleanor Fox, Stella Jackson and Harold C. Feldt for the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR.





# ON LITERATURE

## I

*Speech at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers,  
1934*

Comrades, permit me to bring to the first Congress of Soviet Writers and through the Congress to all writers in the Soviet Union, at the head of whom stands the great proletarian writer Maxim Gorky, ardent Bolshevik greetings on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR and of the Council of People's Commissars.

Comrades, your congress meets at a time when the fundamental difficulties facing us on the path of socialist construction have already been overcome, at a time when our country has finished laying the foundations of a socialist economy, all of which is linked with the victory of the policies of industrialization and the building up of state and collective farms.

Your congress meets at a time when the socialist way of life has incontrovertibly and finally triumphed, thanks to the leadership of the Communist Party, guided by Comrade Stalin, that genius and our leader and teacher.

Moving consistently from stage to stage, from victory to victory, from the fires of the civil war to the period of restoration and thence to the socialist reconstruction of the whole national economy, our Party has brought the country to victory over the capitalist elements, which have been ousted from every sphere of the national economy.

The USSR has become an advanced industrial country and a country with the greatest socialist agriculture in the world. The USSR has become a country of advanced socialist culture, a country in which our Soviet culture is developing and growing, etched in brilliant colours.

The parasite classes have been done away with, unemployment and the pauperism of villages are non-existent, city slums have disappeared, because the socialist system has been victorious in our country. The entire face of the Soviet land has changed. People's consciousness has radically altered. Workers and collective farmers, the builders of socialism, have become the celebrities of our land.

The strengthening of the internal and external position of the Soviet Union, the growth of its international importance and authority, its significance as a shock-brigade for the world proletariat and a powerful bulwark of the coming world proletarian revolution, are all very closely linked with the victories of socialism in our country. At the 17th Party Congress, Comrade Stalin made an unsurpassed and brilliant analysis of our victories and the reasons for them, and of our position at the present time. He laid down a program of further work for completing the building of a classless socialist society.

Comrade Stalin made an extensive analysis of backward sectors of our work and of difficulties, to overcome which our Party carries on an unceasing daily struggle, leading the many millions of the working class and of the collective farm peasantry. It is imperative to put an end to the backwardness of such important branches of the national economy as rail and water transport, goods turnover and non-ferrous metal-

lurgy. Livestock breeding, being one of the most important branches of our socialist agriculture, must be developed.

Comrade Stalin thoroughly exposed the root causes of our difficulties and shortcomings. They derive from the fact that organizational and practical work are not keeping pace with the requirements of the Party's political line and the demands arising from the carrying out of the Second Five-Year Plan. That was why the 17th Party Congress raised in all its amplitude the task of bringing our organizational work to the level of the mighty political tasks facing us.

Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, the Party is organizing the masses for the struggle to destroy capitalist elements once and for all, to eradicate the vestiges of capitalism in our economy and in people's minds, and to complete the technical reconstruction of our national economy. The eradication of vestiges of capitalism in people's consciousness means struggle against every vestige of bourgeois influence over the proletariat, against laxity, frivolity or idling, against petty-bourgeois licence and individualism, against graft and dishonesty towards social property.

We hold a trusty weapon to overcome all the difficulties in our path. This weapon is the great and invincible teaching of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, now being put into practice by our Party. Their great banner is triumphant and it is to that triumph that we owe the assembly of this first congress of Soviet writers. Had there been no such victory, there would have been no congress. Only Bolsheviki could bring together such a congress.

The successes of Soviet literature are conditioned by the successes of socialist construction. The growth of Soviet lit-

erature reflects the successes and achievements of our socialist system. Our literature is the youngest of all the literatures of all countries and peoples. At the same time, it has the greatest idea-content and it is the most advanced and revolutionary.

There does not exist and never has existed any literature other than Soviet literature to organize the working people and the oppressed in a struggle to destroy utterly any and every kind of exploitation and to shake off the yoke of wage slavery.

There is not and never has been a literature making its basic subject-matter the life of the working class and the peasantry and their struggle for socialism. There does not exist in any country in the world a literature to defend and protect the equality of rights of the working people of all nations and the equality of rights of women. There is not, nor can there be in any bourgeois country, a literature to wage consistent war on all obscurantism, mysticism, hierarchic religious attitudes and threats of hell-fire, as our literature does.

*Only Soviet literature could become and has in fact become such an advanced, thought-imbued literature. It is one flesh and blood with our socialist construction.*

Soviet writers have already written a good number of talented books, correctly and truthfully depicting the life of our Soviet land. We already have several names of whom we may be justly proud. The great body of Soviet authors is now fused with the Soviet power and the Party, having the aid of Party guidance and the care and daily assistance of the Central Committee and the unceasing support of Comrade

Stalin. All the contradictions between our system — that of victorious socialism — and the dying, decaying capitalist system, can be distinguished with the greatest clarity in the light of the successes of our Soviet literature.

What can the bourgeois writer write or think of, where can he find passion, if the worker in the capitalist countries is not sure of his tomorrow, does not know whether he will have work, if the peasant does not know whether he will be working on his bit of land or thrown on the scrap heap by a capitalist crisis, if the working intellectual is out of work today and does not know whether he will have work tomorrow?

What can the bourgeois author write about, what source of inspiration can there be for him, when the world, from one day to the next, may be plunged once more into the abyss of a new imperialist war?

The present position of bourgeois literature is such that it is already incapable of producing great works. *The decline and decay of bourgeois literature derive from the decline and decay of the capitalist system and are a feature and aspect characteristic of the present condition of bourgeois culture and literature.* The days when bourgeois literature, reflecting the victories of the bourgeois system over feudalism, was in the heyday of capitalism capable of creating great works, have gone, never to return. Today a degeneration in subject matter, in talents, in authors and in heroes, is in progress.

Mortally afraid of the proletarian revolution, fascism is wreaking vengeance on civilization, dragging men back to the darkest and most barbaric periods of human history, throwing on to the bonfires and barbarically destroying the

works of some of the finest men humanity has produced.

A riot of mysticism, religious mania and pornography is characteristic of the decline and decay of bourgeois culture. The “celebrities” of that bourgeois literature which has sold its pen to capital are today thieves, detectives, prostitutes, pimps and gangsters.

All this is characteristic of the section of literature that seeks to conceal the decay of the bourgeois system, seeks in vain to prove that nothing has happened, that everything is as it should be “in the state of Denmark” and that there is as yet no decay in the capitalist structure. The bourgeois writers who feel the state of affairs more acutely are steeped in pessimism, uncertainty as to the morrow, praising the dark night, and lauding pessimism as the theory and practice of art. And it is only a small section — the most honest and far-sighted of the writers — who are seeking to find a way out along other paths, in other directions, linking their fate with the proletariat and its revolutionary struggle.

The proletariat of the capitalist countries is already forging its army of writers and artists — revolutionary writers, the representatives of whom we are glad to be able to welcome here today at the first Soviet Writers’ Congress. The number of revolutionary writers in the capitalist countries is still small but it is growing and will grow with every day’s sharpening of the class struggle, with the growing strength of the world proletarian revolution.

*We are firmly convinced that the few dozen foreign comrades we have welcomed here constitute the kernel, the embryo, of a mighty army of proletarian writers to be created by the world proletarian revolution in foreign countries.*

Such is the position in the capitalist countries. The opposite is true of our country. Our Soviet writer draws the material for his work, his subject matter and characters, his literary language and words, from the life and experience of the people of Dnieprostroi and Magnitostroi, from the heroic epic of the *Chelyuskin* expedition, from the experience of our collective farms, from the creative work now in full swing in the four corners of our land.

In our country the main heroes of a literary work are the active builders of the new life — men and women workers and collective farmers, Party and state workers, engineers, Komsomols, Pioneers. These are the main types and heroes of our Soviet literature. Our literature is imbued with enthusiasm and heroism. It is an optimistic literature, not, it should be said, in any purely physical sense of “inner” feeling. It is a fundamentally optimistic literature, since it is the literature of the rising proletarian class, today the only progressive and advanced class. Our Soviet literature is strong because it serves a new cause — the cause of socialist construction.

Comrade Stalin has called our writers, “engineers of the human soul”. What does this mean? What obligations does such an appellation put upon you?

It means, in the first place, that you must know life to be able to depict it truthfully in artistic creations, to depict it neither “scholastically” nor lifelessly, nor simply as “objective reality”, but rather as reality in its revolutionary development. The truthfulness and historical exactitude of the artistic image must be linked with the task of ideological transformation, of the education of the working people in

the spirit of socialism. This method in fiction and literary criticism is what we call the method of socialist realism.

Our Soviet literature is not afraid of being called tendentious, for in the epoch of class struggle there is not and cannot be any classless, non-tendentious and “apolitical” literature.

And it seems to me that any and every Soviet writer may say to any dull-witted bourgeois, to any philistine or to any bourgeois writers who speak of the tendentiousness of our literature: “Yes, our Soviet literature is tendentious and we are proud of it, for our tendentiousness is to free the working people — and the whole of mankind — from the yoke of capitalist slavery.”

To be an engineer of the human soul is to stand four-square on real life. And this in turn means a break with old-style romanticism, with the romanticism which depicted a non-existent life and non-existent heroes, drawing the reader away from the contradictions and shackles of life into an unrealizable and utopian world. Romanticism is not alien to our literature, a literature standing firmly on a materialist basis, but ours is a romanticism of a new type, revolutionary romanticism.

We say that socialist realism is the fundamental method of Soviet fiction and literary criticism, and this implies that revolutionary romanticism will appear as an integral part of any literary creation, since the whole life of our Party, of the working class and its struggle, is a fusion of the hardest, most matter-of-fact practical work, with the greatest heroism and the vastest perspectives. The strength of our Party has always lain in the fact that it has united and unites efficiency and



practicality with broad vision, with an incessant forward striving and the struggle to build a communist society.

*Soviet literature must be able to portray our heroes and to see our tomorrow. This will not be utopian since our tomorrow is being prepared by planned and conscious work today.*

One cannot be an engineer of the human soul without skill in writing, and it is necessary to note that the writer's technique has many specific characteristics. You have many weapons at your disposal. Soviet literature has every opportunity of using all these weapons (genres, styles, forms and methods of literary creation) in all their variety and fullness, in seeking to make use of all the finest that has been created in this sphere by *all previous epochs*. From this standpoint, mastery of technique and critical assimilation of the literary heritage of every epoch are tasks that must be executed if you are to become engineers of the human soul.

Comrades, the proletariat is the sole heir of the best in the treasure house of world literature, as in other spheres of material and spiritual culture. The bourgeoisie has squandered the literary heritage and we must bring it together again carefully, study it and then, having critically assimilated it, move forward.

To be an engineer of the human soul means fighting actively for craftsmanship in words, quality in work. Our literature is not yet meeting the demands of our epoch. The weaknesses in our literature reflect the fact that consciousness is lagging behind economic life, a state of affairs from which, obviously, our writers are not exempt. That is why unceasing work on educating themselves and improving their ideological weapons in the spirit of socialism are the

indispensable conditions without which Soviet writers cannot change the consciousness of their readers and thus be engineers of the human soul.

We need great skill in our creative works and in this respect the help of Alexei Maximovich Gorky is invaluable — invaluable the help he gives the Party and the proletariat in the struggle for quality in literature, for craftsmanship in language.

Soviet writers have therefore all the necessary conditions for creating works worthy of our epoch, works from which contemporaries may learn, and works for future generations to take pride in.

All the conditions for Soviet literature to produce works worthy of the adult and mature masses have now been created. After all, it is only our literature which is able to be so closely linked with its readers and with the whole life of the working people as is the case in the USSR. This present congress is particularly revealing. The congress was not prepared by writers alone. The whole country prepared it with them. In this preparatory work there were plainly apparent the true sympathy with which Soviet writers are surrounded by the Party, the workers and collective farm peasantry and also the demands the working class and the collective farmers make of Soviet writers.

In our country alone are literature and the writer raised to such heights.

Organize the work of your congress, and the future work of the Union of Soviet Writers, so that the work of the writers accords with the socialist victories achieved.

*Create works of great craftsmanship, of profound ideologi-*

*cal and artistic content,*

*Be the most active organizers of the remoulding of people's  
consciousness in the spirit of socialism,*

*Stand in the front ranks of the fighters for a classless socialist  
society!*

## II

### *Report on the Journals "Zvezda" and "Leningrad", 1947*

#### MISTAKES OF TWO LENINGRAD JOURNALS

It is clear from the Central Committee's decision that *Zvezda's* worst mistake has been that of allowing the writings of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova to appear in its pages. It is, I think, hardly necessary for me to instance Zoshchenko's "work" *The Adventures of a Monkey*. You have certainly all read it and know it better than I do. The point of this "work" of Zoshchenko's is that in it he portrays Soviet people as lazy, unattractive, stupid and crude. He is in no way concerned with their labour, their efforts, their heroism, their high social and moral qualities. He never so much as mentions these. He chooses, like the cheap philistine he is, to scratch about in life's basenesses and pettinesses. This is no accident. It is intrinsic in all cheap philistine writers, of whom Zoshchenko is one. Gorky often used to speak of this; you will remember how, at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, he stigmatized the so-called *literati* who can see no further than the soot on the kitchen range and in the boiler room.

*The Adventures of a Monkey* is not a thing apart from the general run of Zoshchenko's stories. It is merely as the most vivid expression of all the negative qualities in his "literary work" that it has attracted the critics' attention. Since he returned to Leningrad after the evacuation, he has, we know, written several things demonstrating his inability to find an-

anything positive whatever in the life of Soviet people or any positive character among them. He is in the habit of jeering at Soviet life, ways and people, as he does in *The Adventures of a Monkey*, and of concealing his jeers behind a mask of empty-headed entertainment and pointless humour.

If you take the trouble to read his *Adventures of a Monkey* more closely you will find that he makes the monkey act as a supreme judge of our social customs, a dictator of morality to Soviet people. The monkey is depicted as an intelligent creature capable of assessing human behaviour. The writer deliberately caricatures the life of Soviet people as unattractive and cheap, so as to have the monkey pass the judgement, filthy, poisonous and anti-Soviet as it is, that living in the zoo is better than being at liberty, that you can draw your breath more freely in a cage than among Soviet people.

Is it possible to fall morally and politically lower than this? How can the people of Leningrad tolerate such rubbish and vulgarity in the pages of their journals?

The Leningraders in charge of *Zvezda* must indeed be lacking in vigilance if a “work” of this sort is offered to the journal’s Soviet readers, if it is found possible to publish works steeped in the venom of bestial enmity towards the Soviet order. Only the scum of the literary world could write such “works”, and only the blind, the apolitical could allow them to appear.

Zoshchenko’s story is said to have gone the rounds of Leningrad’s variety halls, The leadership of educational work in Leningrad must have fallen to a low level indeed for such a thing to be possible.

Zoshchenko has managed to find a niche for himself in

the pages of an important Leningrad journal and to popularize his loathsome “moral lessons” there. And yet *Zvezda* is a journal purporting to educate our young people. Is that a task to be coped with by a journal that has taken a low un-Soviet writer like Zoshchenko to its heart? Is *Zvezda’s* editorial board unaware of what he is?

It is not so long ago — early 1944, in fact — that *Bolshevik* published an article sharply critical of Zoshchenko’s book *Before Sunrise*, which was written at the height of the Soviet people’s war of liberation against the German invaders. In this book Zoshchenko turns his low, cheap little self inside out, and delights to exhibit himself to the public gaze; indeed, he does it with gusto, crying: See what an oaf I am!

It would be hard to find in our literature anything more revolting than the “lesson” Zoshchenko teaches in this book, *Before Sunrise*, where he portrays himself and others as lewd and repulsive beasts with neither shame nor conscience. Such was the “lesson” he offered Soviet readers when our people were shedding their blood in an unprecedentedly bitter war, when the life of the Soviet state hung by a thread, when the Soviet people were making countless sacrifices to defeat the Germans. Far in the rear, entrenched in Alma-Ata, Zoshchenko was doing nothing to help. *Bolshevik* publicly castigated him, and rightly, as a low slanderer having no place in Soviet literature.

But he snapped his fingers at public opinion. Less than two years later, friend Zoshchenko struts back to Leningrad and starts making free use of the pages of the Leningrad journals. Not only *Zvezda* but *Leningrad*, too, welcomed his

stories. Variety concert halls were rapidly made available. Moreover, he was allowed to occupy a leading position in the Leningrad section of the Union of Soviet Writers and to play an active part in the literary affairs of Leningrad.

What grounds have you for letting him roam at will through the parks and gardens of Leningrad literature? Why have Leningrad's active Party workers and the Leningrad Writers' Union allowed such shameful things to occur?

Zoshchenko's thoroughly rotten and corrupt social, political and literary attitude does not result from any recent transformation. There is nothing accidental about his latest "works". They are simply the continuation of his literary "legacy" dating from the twenties.

Who was he in the past? He was one of the organizers of the literary group known as the Serapion Brothers. And when the Serapion Brothers group was formed, what was he like socially and politically? Let me turn to *Literaturniye Zapiski* (3, 1922) where the founders of this group expounded their creed. This journal contains, among other things, Zoshchenko's *credo*, in an article entitled "About Myself and a Few Other Things". Quite unashamed, he publicly exposes himself and states his political and literary "views" with the utmost frankness. Listen to what he says:

"...It is very difficult to be a writer, on the whole. Take this business of ideology... Writers are expected to have an ideology nowadays... What a bore! How can I have any 'definite ideology', tell me, when no Party really attracts me? From the Party members' point of view I am not a man of principle. What of it? For my part, I

may say: I am not a Communist, nor a Socialist-Revolutionary, nor a Monarchist, but merely a Russian, and a politically amoral one, at that... Honest to God, I don't know to this day what Party, well, Guchkov... say, belongs to. Heaven knows what party he's in; I know he isn't a Bolshevik, but whether he's a Socialist-Revolutionary or a Cadet I neither know nor care." And so on and so forth.

What do you make of that sort of "ideology"? Twenty-five years have passed since Zoshchenko published this "confession" of his. Has he changed since? Not so that you would notice it. Not only has he neither learned anything nor changed in any way in the last two and a half decades, but with cynical frankness he continues, on the contrary, to remain the apostle of empty-headedness and cheapness, a literary slum-rat, unprincipled and conscienceless. That is to say, now as then he cares nothing for Soviet ways, now as then he has no place in Soviet literature and opposes it.

If he has nevertheless become something approaching a literary star in Leningrad, if his praises are sung on Leningrad's Parnassus, we can but marvel at the lack of principle, of strictness, of discrimination, in the people who paved the way for him and applauded him.

Allow me to instance one more illustration of what the Serapion Brothers, so-called, were like. In the same issue of *Literaturniye Zapiski* (3, 1922) another Serapionist, Lev Lunts, also tried to expound the ideological basis of the harmful trend represented by the Serapion Brothers, which is alien to the spirit of Soviet literature. Lunts wrote:



“We gathered together at a time of great political and revolutionary tension. ‘He who is not with us is against us’, we were told on all hands ‘Who are you with, Serapion Brothers’, we were asked, ‘with the Communists or against them, for the revolution or against it?’ And so, who are we with, Serapion Brothers? We are with the hermit Serapion. Officialdom has ruled Russian literature too long and too painfully. We do not want utilitarianism. We do not write for propaganda purposes. Art is real, like life itself, and like life it exists because it must, without purpose or meaning.”

Such was the role allotted to art by the Serapion Brothers, depriving it of all ideological content or social significance; they proclaimed the non-ideological nature of art, demanding art for art’s sake, without purpose or meaning. This is nothing but a plea for philistinism, superficiality and lack of political belief.

What conclusion does this lead to? Zoshchenko does not like Soviet ways: so what would you advise us to do? Adapt ourselves to him? It is not for us to change our tastes. It is not for us to alter our life and our order to suit him. Let him change; and if he will not, let him get out of Soviet literature, in which there can be no place for meaningless, cheap, empty-headed works.

This was the Central Committee’s starting point in adopting its decisions on *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*.

I will now turn to the literary “work” of Anna Akhmatova. Her works have been appearing in the Leningrad journals recently as an example of “increased output”. This is as

surprising and unnatural as it would be if someone were to start issuing new editions of the works of Merezhkovsky, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Mikhail Kuzmin, Andrei Bely, Zinaida Hippus, Fyodor Sologub, Zinovyeva-Annibal, and so on and so forth; that is, of all the writers whom our advanced public and literary circles have always considered to be representatives of reactionary obscurantism and perfidy in art and politics.

Gorky once said that the ten years from 1907 to 1917 might well be called the most shameful, the most barren decade in the history of Russian intellectuals; in this decade, after the 1905 Revolution, a great many of the intellectuals spurned the revolution and slid down into a morass of pornography and reactionary mysticism, screening their perfidy with the “pretty” phrase: “I too have burned all I revered and have revered what I burned.”

It was during these ten years that there appeared such perfidious works as Ropshin’s *The Pale Horse* and the writings of Vinnichenko and other deserters from the camp of revolution to that of reaction, hastening to dethrone the lofty ideals that the best and most progressive representatives of Russian society were fighting for. It was then that there rose to the surface Symbolists, Imagists and decadents of every shape and hue, disowning the people and proclaiming the thesis of “Art for Art’s sake”, preaching the meaninglessness of literature and screening their ideological and moral corruption behind a pursuit of beauty of form without content. All of them were united in their brutish fear of the coming workers’ revolution. Suffice it to recall that one of the most notable “theoreticians” in these reactionary literary

movements was Merezhkovsky, who called the coming workers' revolution "the approaching rabble" and greeted the October revolution with bestial malice.

Anna Akhmatova is one of the representatives of this idea-less reactionary morass in literature. She belongs to the "Acmeist" literary group, who in their day emerged from the ranks of the Symbolists, and she is one of the standard-bearers of the meaningless, empty-headed, aristocratic-salon school of poetry, which has no place whatever in Soviet literature. The Acmeists represented an extremely individualistic trend in art. They preached "Art for Art's sake", "Beauty for Beauty's sake", and had no wish to know anything about the people and the people's needs and interests, or about social life.

This was a bourgeois-aristocratic trend in literature, appearing at a time when the days of the bourgeoisie and of the aristocracy were numbered, when the poets and theoreticians of the ruling classes were trying to hide from harsh reality in the mists and clouds of religious mysticism, in paltry personal experiences and in absorption in their own petty souls. The Acmeists, like the symbolists, decadents and other representatives of the disintegrating bourgeois-aristocratic ideology, were preachers of defeatism, pessimism and faith in a hereafter.

Akhmatova's subject-matter is individualistic to the core. The range of her poetry is sadly limited; it is the poetry of a spoiled woman-aristocrat, frenziedly vacillating between boudoir and chapel. Her main emphasis is on erotic love-themes interwoven with notes of sadness, longing, death, mysticism, fatality. A sense of fatality (quite comprehensible

in a dying group), the dismal tones of a deathbed hopelessness, mystical experiences shot with eroticism, make up Akhmatova's spiritual world; she is a left-over from the world of the old aristocracy now irrevocably past and gone, the world of "Catherine's good old days". It would be hard to say whether she is a nun or a fallen woman; better perhaps say she is a bit of each, her desires and her prayers intertwined.

*"But I vow by the garden of angels,*

*By the miraculous icon I vow,*

*I vow by the child of our passion..."*

— from *Anno Domini*, by Anna Akhmatova.

Such is Akhmatova, with her petty, narrow personal life, her paltry experiences, and her religiously mystical eroticism.

Her poetry is far removed from the people. It is the poetry of the ten thousand members of the elite society of the old aristocratic Russia, whose hour has long since struck and left them with nothing to do but sigh for "the good old days", for the country estates of Catherine's time, with their avenues of ancient lime trees, their fountains, their statues, their arches, their greenhouses, summerhouses and crumbling coats of arms, for aristocratic St. Petersburg, for Tsarskoye Selo, for the railway station in Pavlovsk, and for other relics of the nobility's culture. All of these have vanished into the irredeemable past. The few representatives of this culture, so foreign to the spirit of the people, who have by some miracle lived on into our own times, can do nothing but

shut themselves up in themselves and live with chimeras. “*All has been plundered, betrayed and sold*”, writes Akhmatova.

Osip Mandelstam, a prominent Acmeist, wrote this, not long before the revolution, on the social, political and literary ideals of this little group: “The Acmeists share their love of organism and organization with the physiologically perfect Middle Ages...” “The Middle Ages, with their own peculiar way of estimating a man’s relative weight, felt and recognized it in every individual irrespective of merit...” “Yes, Europe once passed through a labyrinth of filigree-fine culture, when abstract being, personal existence, wholly undorned, was valued as an outstanding achievement. This gave rise to the aristocratic intimacy binding everybody, so foreign to the spirit of ‘equality and fraternity’ of the great revolution...” “The Middle Ages are dear to us because they had so highly developed a sense of boundaries and dividing lines...” “A noble mixture of rationality and mysticism, and a perception of the world as a living equilibrium, make us feel a kinship with this age and prompt us to draw strength from the works that appeared on Romance soil about the year 1200.”

These statements of Mandelstam’s contain the Acmeists’ hopes and ideals. “Back to the Middle Ages” was the social idea of this aristocratic-salon group. “Back to the monkey” choruses Zoshchenko. Incidentally, the Acmeists and the Serapion Brothers are of the same descent. Their common ancestor was Hoffman, one of the founders of aristocratic-salon decadence and mysticism.

Where was the need to popularize Akhmatova’s poetry

all of a sudden? What has she to do with Soviet people? What need is there to offer a literary pulpit to all these defeatist and un-Soviet literary trends?

We know from the history of Russian literature that the reactionary literary trends to which the Symbolists and the Acmeists belonged tried time and time again to start a crusade against the great revolutionary-democratic traditions of Russian literature and against its foremost representatives, tried to deprive literature of its high ideological and social significance and to drag it down into the morass of meaninglessness and cheapness.

All these “fashionable” trends have been engulfed and buried with the classes whose ideology they reflected. What, in our Soviet literature, has remained of all these Symbolists, Acmeists, Yellow Shirts, Jacks-o’-Diamonds and *Nichevoki* (“Nothingsers”)? Nothing whatever, though their crusades against the great representatives of Russian revolutionary-democratic literature, Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, Herzen, Saltykov-Shchedrin, were launched noisily and pretentiously and just as noisily failed.

The Acmeists proclaimed it their motto “not to improve life in any way whatever nor to indulge in criticism of it”. Why were they against improving life in any way whatever? Because they liked the old bourgeois-aristocratic life, whereas the revolutionary people were preparing to disturb this life of theirs. In November 1917 both the ruling classes and their theoreticians and singers were pitched into the dustbin of history.

And now, in the twenty-ninth year of the socialist revolution, certain museum specimens reappear all of a sudden

and start teaching our young people how to live. The pages of a Leningrad journal are thrown wide open to Akhmatova and she is given *carte blanche* to poison the minds of the young people with the harmful spirit of her poetry.

One of the issues of *Leningrad* contains a kind of digest of the works written by Akhmatova between 1909 and 1944. Among the rest of the rubbish, there is a poem she wrote during evacuation in the Great Patriotic War. In this poem she describes her loneliness, the solitude she has to share with a black cat, whose eyes looking at her are like the eyes of the centuries. This is no new theme: Akhmatova wrote about a black cat in 1909, too. This mood of solitude and hopelessness, which is foreign to the spirit of Soviet literature, runs through the whole of Akhmatova's work.

What has this poetry in common with the interests of our state and people? Nothing whatever. Akhmatova's work is a matter of the distant past; it is foreign to Soviet life and cannot be tolerated in the pages of our journals. Our literature is no private enterprise designed to please the fluctuating tastes of the literary market. We are certainly under no obligation to find a place in our literature for tastes and ways that have nothing in common with the moral qualities and attributes of Soviet people. What instructive value can the works of Akhmatova have for our young people? They can do them nothing but harm. These works can sow nothing but gloom, low spirits, pessimism, a desire to escape the vital problems of social life and turn away from the broad highway of social life and activity into a narrow little world of personal experiences. How can the upbringing of our young people be entrusted to her? Yet her poems were readily

printed, sometimes in *Zvezda* and sometimes in *Leningrad*, and were published in volume form. This was a serious political error.

It is only natural, in view of all this, that the works of other writers, who were also beginning to adopt an empty-headed and defeatist tone, should have started to appear in the Leningrad journals. I am thinking of works such as those of Sadofyev and Komissarova. In some of their poems they imitate Akhmatova, cultivating the mood of despondency, boredom and loneliness so dear to her.

Needless to say, such moods, or the extolling of them, can exert only a negative influence on our young people and are bound to poison their minds with a vicious spirit of empty-headedness, despondency and lack of political consciousness.

What would have happened if we had brought our young people up in a spirit of despondency and of disbelief in our cause? We should not have won the Great Patriotic War. It is precisely because the Soviet State, and our Party, with the help of Soviet literature, had brought our young people up in a spirit of optimism and with confidence in their own strength, that we were able to surmount the tremendous difficulties that faced us in the building of socialism and in defeating the Germans and the Japanese.

What does this mean? It means that by printing in its pages cheap and reactionary works devoid of proper ideas, side by side with good works of rich content and cheerful tone, *Zvezda* became a journal having no clear policy, a journal helping our enemies to corrupt our young people. The strength of our journals has always lain in their optimistic



revolutionary trend, not in eclecticism, empty-headedness and lack of political understanding. *Zvezda* gave its full sanction to propaganda in favour of doing nothing.

To make matters worse, Zoshchenko seems to have acquired so much power in the Leningrad writers' organization that he even used to shout down those who disagreed with him and threaten to lampoon his critics in one of his forthcoming works. He became a sort of literary dictator surrounded by a group of admirers singing his praises.

Well may one ask, on what grounds? Why did you allow such an unnatural and reactionary thing as this to occur?

No wonder Leningrad's literary journals started giving space to cheap modern bourgeois literature from the West. Some of our men of letters began looking on themselves as not the teachers but the pupils of petty-bourgeois writers, and began to adopt an obsequious and awestruck attitude towards foreign literature. Is such obsequiousness becoming in us Soviet patriots who have built up the Soviet order, which towers higher a hundredfold, and is better a hundredfold, than any bourgeois order? Is obsequiousness towards the cheap and philistine bourgeois literature of the West becoming in our advanced Soviet literature, the most revolutionary in the world?

Another serious failing in the work of our writers is their ignoring of modern Soviet subjects, which betrays on the one hand a one-sided interest in historical subjects and on the other an attempt to write on meaningless, purely amusing subjects. To justify their failure to keep pace with great modern Soviet themes, some writers maintain that the time has come to give the people meaningless and "entertaining"

literature, to stop bothering about literature's ideological content.

This conception of our people, of their interests and requirements, is entirely wrong. Our people expect Soviet writers to understand and integrate the vast experience they gained in the Great Patriotic War, to portray and integrate the heroism with which they are now working to rehabilitate the country's national economy.

A few words on the journal *Leningrad*: Zoshchenko's position is even stronger here than in *Zvezda*, as is Akhmatova's too. Both of them have become active powers in both journals. Thus *Leningrad* is responsible for having put its pages at the disposal of such cheap writers as Zoshchenko and such salon poetesses as Akhmatova.

The journal *Leningrad* has, however, made other mistakes also.

For instance, take the parody of *Evgeny Onegin* written by one Khazin. This piece is called *The Return of Onegin*. It is said to be frequently recited on the variety concert platforms of Leningrad.

It is hard to understand why the people of Leningrad allow their city to be vilified from a public platform in such a way as Khazin vilifies it. The purpose of this "satire" is not simple ridicule of the things that happen to Onegin on finding himself in modern Leningrad. The point is that Khazin essays to compare our modern Leningrad with the St. Petersburg of Pushkin's day, and for the worse. Read just a few lines of this "parody" attentively. Nothing in our modern Leningrad pleases the author. Sneering in malice and derision, he slanders Leningrad and Soviet people. In his opin-

ion, Onegin's day was a golden age. Everything is different now: a housing department has appeared, and ration cards and permits. Girls, those ethereal creatures so much admired of Onegin, now regulate the traffic and repair the Leningrad houses and so on and so forth. Let me quote just one passage from this "parody":

Our poor dear Evgeny  
Boarded a tram.  
Never had his benighted age known  
Such a means of transportation.  
But fate was kind to Evgeny;  
He escaped with only a foot crushed,  
And only once, when someone jabbed him  
In the stomach, was he called an idiot.  
Remembering ancient customs,  
He resolved to seek satisfaction in a duel:  
He felt in his pocket, but  
Someone had taken his gloves,  
A frustration that reduced  
Onegin to silence and docility.

That is what Leningrad was like before, and what it has turned into: a wretched, uncouth, coarse city; and that is the aspect it presented to poor dear Onegin. It is in this vulgar way that Khazin describes Leningrad and its people.

The idea behind this slanderous parody is harmful, vicious and false.

How could the editorial board of *Leningrad* have accepted this malicious slander on Leningrad and its magnifi-

cent people? How could Khazin have been allowed to appear in the pages of the Leningrad journals?

Take another work, a parody on a parody by Nekrasov, so written as to be a direct insult to the memory of the great poet and public figure Nekrasov, an insult that ought to arouse the indignation of every educated person. Yet *Leningrad's* editorial board did not hesitate to print this sordid concoction in its columns.

What else do we find in *Leningrad*? A foreign anecdote, dull and shallow, apparently lifted from hackneyed anecdote-books dating from the late nineteenth century. Is there nothing else for *Leningrad* to fill its pages with? Is there really nothing to write about in *Leningrad*? What about such a subject as the rehabilitation of the city? Wonderful work is being done in Leningrad; the city is healing the wounds inflicted during the siege; the people of Leningrad are imbued with the enthusiasm and emotion of post-war rehabilitation. Has anything on this appeared in *Leningrad*? Will the people of the city ever live to see the day when their feats of labour are reflected in the pages of this journal?

Further, let us take the subject of Soviet woman. Is it permissible to cultivate in Soviet readers the disgraceful views on the role and mission of women that are typical of Akhmatova, and not to give a really truthful concept of modern Soviet woman in general and the heroic girls and women of Leningrad in particular, who unflinchingly shouldered the heavy burden of the war years and are now self-sacrificingly working to carry out the difficult tasks presented by the rehabilitation of the city's economic life?

The situation in the Leningrad section of the Union of

Soviet Writers is obviously such that the supply of good work is now insufficient to fill two literary journals. The Central Committee of the Party has therefore decided to cease publication of *Leningrad*, so as to concentrate all the best literary forces in *Zvezda*. This does not mean that Leningrad will not, in suitable circumstances, have a second or even a third journal. The question will be settled by the supply of notable literary works. Should so many appear that there is no room for them in one journal, a second and even a third may be started; it all depends on the intellectual and artistic quality of the works produced by our Leningrad writers.

Such are the grave errors and failings laid bare and detailed in the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on the work of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*.

## LENINISM AND LITERATURE

What is the cause of these errors and failings?

It is that the editors of the said journals, our Soviet men of letters, and the leaders of our ideological front in Leningrad, have forgotten some of the principal tenets of Leninism as regards literature. Many writers, and many of those working as responsible editors, or holding important posts in the Writers' Union, consider politics to be the business of the Government or of the Central Committee. When it comes to men of letters, engaging in politics is no business of theirs. If a man has done a good, artistic, fine piece of writing, his work should be published even though it contains vicious elements liable to confuse and poison the

minds of our young people.

We demand that our comrades, both practising writers and those in positions of literary leadership, should be guided by that without which the Soviet order cannot live, that is to say, by politics, so that our young people may be brought up not in the spirit of do-nothing and don't-care, but in an optimistic revolutionary spirit.

We know that Leninism embodies all the finest traditions of the Russian nineteenth-century revolutionary democrats and that our Soviet culture derives from and is nourished by the critically assimilated cultural heritage of the past.

Through the lips of Lenin and Stalin our Party has repeatedly recognized the tremendous significance in the field of literature of the great Russian revolutionary democratic writers and critics Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Plekhanov. From Belinsky onward, all the best representatives of the revolutionary democratic Russian intellectuals have denounced "pure art" and "art for art's sake", and have been the spokesmen of art for the people, demanding that art should have a worthy educational and social significance.

Art cannot cut itself off from the fate of the people. Remember Belinsky's famous *Letter to Gogol*, in which the great critic, with all his native passion, castigated Gogol for his attempt to betray the cause of the people and go over to the side of the Tsar. Lenin called this letter one of the finest works of the uncensored democratic press, one that has preserved its tremendous literary significance to this day.

Remember Dobrolyubov's articles, in which the social

significance of literature is so powerfully shown. The whole of our Russian revolutionary democratic journalism is imbued with a deadly hatred of the Tsarist order and with the noble aspiration to fight for the people's fundamental interests, their enlightenment, their culture, their liberation from the fetters of the Tsarist regime. A militant art fighting for the people's finest ideals, that is how the great representatives of Russian literature envisaged art and literature.

Chernyshevsky, who comes nearest of all the utopian socialists to scientific socialism and whose works were, as Lenin pointed out, "indicative of the spirit of the class struggle", taught us that the task of art was, besides affording a knowledge of life, to teach people how to assess correctly varying social phenomena. Dobrolyubov, his companion-in-arms and closest friend, remarked that "it is not life that follows literary standards, but literature that adapts itself to the trends of life", and strongly supported the principles of realism, and the national element, in literature, on the grounds that the basis of art is life, that life is the source of creative achievement and that art plays an active part in social life and in shaping social consciousness. Literature, according to Dobrolyubov, should serve society, should give the people answers to the most urgent problems of the day, should keep abreast of the ideas of its epoch.

Marxist literary criticism, which carries on the great traditions of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, has always supported realistic art with a social stand. Plekhanov did a great deal to show up the idealistic and unscientific concept of art and literature and to defend the basic tenets of our great Russian revolutionary democrats, who taught us

to regard literature as a means of serving the people.

Lenin was the first to state clearly what attitude towards art and literature advanced social thought should take. Let me remind you of the well-known article, *Party Organization and Party Literature*, which he wrote at the end of 1905, and in which he demonstrated with characteristic forcefulness that literature cannot but have a partisan adherence and that it must form an important part of the general proletarian cause. All the principles on which the development of our Soviet literature is based are to be found in this article.

“Literature must become partisan literature”, wrote Lenin. “To offset bourgeois customs, to offset the commercial bourgeois press, to offset bourgeois literary careerism and self-seeking, to offset ‘gentlemanly anarchism’ and profit-seeking, the socialist proletariat must put forward the principle of *partisan* literature, must develop this principle and carry it out in the completest and most integral form.

“What is this principle of partisan literature? It is not merely that literature cannot, to the socialist proletariat, be a means of profit to individuals or groups; all in all, literature cannot be an individual matter divorced from the general proletarian cause. Down with the writers who think themselves supermen! Down with non-partisan writers! Literature must become *part and parcel* of the general proletarian cause. ...”

And further, from the same article: “It is not possible to live in society and remain free of it. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actor is merely a masked dependence (hypocritically masked perhaps) on the moneybags, on bribes, on allowances.”



Leninism starts from the premise that our literature cannot be apolitical, cannot be “art for art’s sake”, but is called upon to play an important and leading part in social life. Hence derives the Leninist principle of partisanship in literature, one of Lenin’s most important contributions to the study of literature.

It follows that the finest aspect of Soviet literature is its carrying on of the best traditions of nineteenth-century Russian literature, traditions established by our great revolutionary democrats Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky and Saltykov-Shchedrin, continued by Plekhanov and scientifically elaborated and substantiated by Lenin and Stalin.

Nekrasov declared his poetry to be inspired by “the Muse of sorrow and vengeance”. Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov regarded literature as sacred service to the people. Under the tsarist system, the finest representatives among the democratic Russian intellectuals perished for these high and noble ideas, or willingly risked sentences of exile and hard labour.

How can these glorious traditions be forgotten? How can we pass them over, how can we let the Akhmatovas and the Zoshchenkos disseminate the reactionary catchword “art for art’s sake”, how can we let them, behind their mask of impartiality, impose ideas on us that are alien to the spirit of the Soviet people?

Leninism recognizes the tremendous significance of our literature as a means of reforming society. Were our Soviet literature to allow any falling off in its tremendous educational role, the result would be retrogression, a return “to the Stone Age”.

Comrade Stalin has called our writers engineers of the human soul. This definition has a profound meaning. It speaks of the enormous educational responsibility Soviet writers bear, responsibility for the training of Soviet youth, responsibility for seeing to it that bad literary work is not tolerated.

There are people who find it strange that the Central Committee should have taken such stringent measures as regards literature. It is not what we are accustomed to. If mistakes have been allowed to occur in industrial production, or if the production program for consumer goods has not been carried out, or if the supply of timber falls behind schedule, then it is considered natural for the people responsible to be publicly reprimanded. But if mistakes have been allowed to occur as regards the proper influencing of human souls, as regards the upbringing of the young, then such mistakes may be tolerated. And yet, is not this a bitterer pill to swallow than the non-fulfilment of a production program or the failure to carry out a production task? The purpose of the Central Committee's resolution is to bring the ideological front into line with all the other sectors of our work.

On the ideological front, serious gaps and failings have recently become apparent. Suffice it to remind you of the backwardness of our cinematic art, and of the way our theatre repertoires have got cluttered up with poor dramatic works, not to mention what has been going on in *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. The Central Committee has been compelled to interfere and firmly to set matters right. It has no right to deal gently with those who forget their duties with regard to the people, to the upbringing of our young people. If we

wish to draw our members' attention to questions relating to ideological work and to set matters right in this field, to establish a clear line in this work, then we must criticize the mistakes and failings in ideological work severely, as befits Soviet people, as befits Bolsheviks. Only then shall we be able to set matters right.

There are men of letters who reason thus: since during the war, when few books were printed, the people were hungry for reading matter, the reader will now swallow anything, even though the flavour be a trifle tainted. This is not in fact true, and we cannot put up with any old literature that may be palmed off on us by indiscriminating authors, editors and publishers. From Soviet writers the Soviet people expect reliable ideological armament, spiritual food to further the fulfilment of construction and rehabilitation plans and to promote the development of our country's national economy. The Soviet people desire the satisfaction of their cultural and ideological needs, and make great demands on men of letters.

During the war force of circumstances prevented us from satisfying these vital needs. The people want to understand current events. Their cultural and intellectual level has risen. They are often dissatisfied with the quality of the works of art and literature appearing in our country. Certain literary workers on the ideological front have not understood this and are unwilling to do so.

The tastes and demands of our people have risen to a very high level, and anyone who cannot or will not rise to this level is going to be left behind. The mission of literature is not merely to keep abreast of the people's demands but to

be always in the vanguard. It is essential that literature should develop the people's tastes, raise their demands higher and higher still, enrich them with new ideas and lead them forward. Anyone who cannot keep pace with the people, satisfy their growing demands and cope with the task of developing Soviet culture, will inevitably find himself no longer in demand.

The lack of ideological principles shown by leading workers on *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* has led to a second serious mistake. Certain of our leading workers have, in their relations with various authors, set personal interests, the interests of friendship, above those of the political education of the Soviet people or these authors' political tendencies. It is said that many ideologically harmful and from a literary point of view weak productions are allowed to be published because the editor does not like to hurt the author's feelings. In the eyes of such workers it is better to sacrifice the interests of the people and of the state than to hurt some author's feelings. This is an entirely wrong and politically dangerous principle. It is like swopping a million rubles for a kopeck.

The Central Committee of the Party points out in its resolution the grave danger in substituting for relations based on principle those based on personal friendship. The relations of personal friendship regardless of principle prevailing among certain of our men of letters have played a profoundly negative part, led to a falling off in the ideological level of many literary works and made it easier for this field to be entered by persons foreign to the spirit of Soviet literature. The absence of any criticism on the part of the leaders of the Leningrad ideological front or of the editors

of the Leningrad journals has done a great deal of harm; the substitution of relations of friendship for those based on principle has been made at the expense of the people's interests.

Comrade Stalin teaches us that if we wish to conserve our human resources, to guide and teach the people, we must not be afraid of hurting the feelings of single individuals or fear bold, frank, objective criticism founded on principle. Any organization, literary or other, is liable to degenerate without criticism, any ailment is liable to be driven deeper in and become harder to cope with. Only bold frank criticism can help our people and overcome any failings in their work. Where criticism is lacking, stagnation and inertia set in, leaving no room for progress.

Comrade Stalin has repeatedly pointed out that one of the most important conditions for our development is for every Soviet citizen to sum up the results of his work every day, to assess himself fearlessly, to analyse his work bravely, and to criticize his own mistakes and failings, pondering how to achieve better results and constantly striving for self-improvement. This applies just as much to men of letters as to any other workers. The man who is afraid of any criticism of his work is a despicable coward deserving no respect from the people.

An uncritical attitude, and the substitution of relations of personal friendship for those based on principle, are very prevalent on the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers. The Board, and its chairman Comrade Tikhonov in particular, are to blame for the bad state of affairs revealed in *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, in that they not only made no attempt to

prevent the harmful influence of Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and other un-Soviet writers penetrating into Soviet literature, but even readily permitted styles and tendencies alien to the spirit of Soviet literature to find a place in our journals.

Another factor contributing to the failings of the Leningrad journals was the state of irresponsibility that developed among the editors of these journals, the situation being such that no one knew who had the overall responsibility for the journal or for its various departments, so that any sort of order, even the most rudimentary, was impossible. The Central Committee has, therefore, in its resolution, appointed to *Zvezda* an editor-in-chief, who is to be held responsible for the journal's policy and for the ideological level and literary quality of its contents.

Disorder and anarchy are no more to be tolerated in the issuing of literary publications than in any other enterprise. A clear-cut responsibility for the journal's policy and contents must be established.

You must restore the glorious traditions of Leningrad's literature and ideological front. It is a sad and painful thing to have to admit that the Leningrad journals, which had always sponsored the most advanced ideas, have come to harbour empty-headedness and cheapness. The honour of Leningrad as a leading ideological and cultural centre must be restored. We must remember that Leningrad was the cradle of the Bolshevik Leninist organizations. It was here that Lenin and Stalin laid the foundations of the Bolshevik Party, the Bolshevik world outlook and Bolshevik culture.

It is a point of honour for Leningrad writers and Party

members to restore and carry further these glorious traditions. It is the task of the Leningrad workers on the ideological front, and of the writers above all, to drive empty-headedness and cheapness out of Leningrad literature, to raise aloft the banner of Soviet literature, to seize every opportunity for ideological and literary development, not to leave up-to-date themes untreated, to keep pace with the people's demands, to encourage in every possible way the bold criticism of their own failings, criticism containing no element of toadying and not based on friendships and group-loyalties — a genuine, bold, independent, ideological, Bolshevik criticism.

By now it should be clear to you what a serious oversight the Leningrad City Committee of the Party, and particularly its propaganda department and propaganda secretary Comrade Shirokov (who was put in charge of ideological work and bears the main responsibility for the failure of these journals), have been guilty of.

The Leningrad Committee of the Party committed a grave political error when it passed its resolution at the end of June on *Zvezda's* new editorial board, in which Zoshchenko was included. Political blindness is the only possible explanation of the fact that Comrades Kapustin (Secretary of the City Committee of the Party) and Shirokov (the City Committee's propaganda secretary) should have agreed to such an erroneous decision. All these mistakes must, I repeat, be set right as quickly and firmly as possible, to enable Leningrad to resume its participation in the ideological life of our Party.

We all love Leningrad; we all love our Leningrad Party

organization as being one of our Party's leading detachments. Literary adventurers of all sorts who would like to make use of Leningrad for their own ends must find no refuge here. Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and the like have no fondness for Soviet Leningrad. It is other social and political ways and another ideology that they would like to see entrenched here. The visions dazzling their eyes are those of old St. Petersburg, with the Bronze Horseman as its symbol. We, on the contrary, love Soviet Leningrad, Leningrad as the foremost centre of Soviet culture. Our ancestors are the glorious band of great revolutionary and democratic figures who came from Leningrad and whose direct descendants we are. Modern Leningrad's glorious traditions are a continuation of those great revolutionary-democratic traditions, which we would not exchange for anything else in the world.

Let the Leningrad Party members analyse their mistakes boldly, with no backward glances, no taking it easy, so as to straighten things out in the best and quickest way possible and to carry our ideological work forward. The Leningrad Bolsheviks must once more take their place in the ranks of the initiators, of the leaders in the shaping of Soviet ideology and Soviet social consciousness.

How could the Leningrad City Committee of the Party have permitted such a situation to arise on the ideological front? It had evidently become so engrossed in day-to-day practical work on the rehabilitation of the city and the development of its industry that it forgot the importance of ideological and educational work.

This forgetfulness has cost the Leningrad organization dear. Ideological work must not be forgotten. Our people's



spiritual wealth is no less important than their material wealth. We cannot live blindly, taking no thought for the morrow, either in the field of material production or in the ideological field. To such an extent have our Soviet people developed that they are not going to swallow whatsoever spiritual food may be dumped on them. Such workers in art and culture as do not change and cannot satisfy the people's growing needs may forfeit the people's confidence before long.

Our Soviet literature lives and must live in the interests of our country and of our people alone. Literature is a concern near and dear to the people. So the people consider our every success, every important work of literature, as a victory of their own. Every successful work may therefore be compared with a battle won, or with a great victory on the economic front. And conversely, every failure of Soviet literature hurts and wounds the people, the Party and the state profoundly. This is what the Central Committee was thinking of in passing its resolution, for the Central Committee watches over the interests of the people and of their literature, and is very greatly concerned about the present state of affairs among Leningrad writers.

People who have not taken up any ideological stand would like to cut away the foundations from under the Leningrad detachment of literary workers, demolish their work's ideological aspect and deprive the Leningrad writers' work of its significance as a means of social reform. But the Central Committee is confident that Leningrad's men of letters will nevertheless find in themselves the strength to put a stop to any attempts to divert Leningrad's literary detach-

ment and journals into a groove of empty-headedness and lack of principle and political consciousness. You have been set in the foremost line of the ideological front, you are facing tremendous and internationally significant tasks; and this should intensify every genuine Soviet writer's sense of responsibility to his people, his state and his Party, and his sense of the importance of the duty he is carrying out.

Whether our successes are won within our own country or in the international arena, the bourgeois world does not like them.

As a result of the Second World War the position of socialism has been strengthened. The question of socialism has been put down on the agenda of many countries in Europe. This displeases the imperialists of every hue: they fear socialism and our socialist country, an example to the whole of progressive mankind. The imperialists and their ideological henchmen, writers, journalists, politicians and diplomats, are trying to slander our country in every way open to them, to put it in a false light, to vilify socialism. The task of Soviet literature in these conditions is not only to return blow for blow to all this vile slander and all these attacks on our Soviet culture and on socialism, but also to make a frontal attack on degenerating and decaying bourgeois culture.

However fine may be the external appearance of the work of the fashionable modern bourgeois writers in America and Western Europe, and of their film directors and theatrical producers, they can neither save nor better their bourgeois culture, for its moral basis is rotten and decaying. It has been placed at the service of capitalist private ownership, of the selfish and egocentric interests of the top layer of

bourgeois society. A swarm of bourgeois writers, film directors and theatrical producers are trying to draw the attention of the progressive strata of society away from the acute problems of social and political struggle and to divert it into a groove of cheap meaningless art and literature, treating of gangsters and show-girls and glorifying the adulterer and the adventures of crooks and gamblers.

Is it fitting for us Soviet patriots, the representatives of advanced Soviet culture, to play the part of admirers or disciples of bourgeois culture? Our literature, reflecting an order on a higher level than any bourgeois-democratic order and a culture manifoldly superior to bourgeois culture, has, it goes without saying, the right to teach the new universal morals to others.

Where is another such people or country as ours to be found? Where are such splendid human qualities to be found as our Soviet people displayed in the Great Patriotic War and are displaying every day in the labour of converting our economy to peaceful development and material and cultural rehabilitation? Our people are climbing higher and higher every day. No longer are we the Russians we were before 1917; no longer is our Russia the same, no longer is our character the same. We have changed and grown along with the great changes that have transfigured our country from its very foundations.

Showing these great new qualities of the Soviet people, not only showing our people as they are today, but glancing into their future and helping to light up the way ahead, is the task of every conscientious Soviet writer. A writer cannot tag along in the wake of events; it is for him to march in the

foremost ranks of the people and point out to them the path of their development. He must educate the people and arm them ideologically, guiding himself by the method of socialist realism, studying our life attentively and conscientiously and trying to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of our development.

At the same time as we select Soviet man's finest feelings and qualities and reveal his future to him, we must show our people what they should not be like and castigate the survivors from yesterday that are hindering the Soviet people's progress. Soviet writers must help the people, the state and the Party to educate our young people to be optimistic, to have confidence in their own strength and to fear no difficulties.

Hard as bourgeois politicians and writers may strive to conceal the truth of the achievements of the Soviet order and Soviet culture, hard as they may strive to erect an iron curtain to keep the truth about the Soviet Union from penetrating abroad, hard as they may strive to belittle the genuine growth and scope of Soviet culture, all their efforts are foredoomed to failure. We know our culture's strength and advantages very well. Suffice it to recall the great success of our cultural delegations abroad, of our physical culture parades and so on. It is not for us to kowtow to all things foreign or to stand passively on the defensive.

If in their heyday the feudal order and then the bourgeoisie were able to create art and literature asserting the establishment of the new order and singing its praises, then we who form a new socialist order embodying all that is best in the history of civilization and culture are yet fitter to create the most advanced literature in the world, far surpassing

the finest literary examples of former times.

What is it that the Central Committee requests and wishes?

The Central Committee of the Party wishes the Leningrad Party members and writers to understand clearly that the time has come for us to raise our ideological work to a high level. The young Soviet generation will be called upon to consolidate the strength and power of the socialist Soviet order, to make full use of the motive forces of Soviet society to promote our material and cultural progress. To carry out these great tasks, the young generation must be brought up to be steadfast and cheerful, not to balk at difficulties but to meet and know how to surmount them. Our people must be educated people of high ideals, tastes and moral and cultural demands. It is necessary to this end that our literature, our journals, should not hold aloof from the tasks of the day but should help the Party and the people to educate our young people in the spirit of supreme devotion to the Soviet order and service in the interests of the people.

Soviet writers, and all our ideological workers, are now standing in the foremost fighting line; for our tasks on the ideological front, and those of literature above all, have not been removed but, on the contrary, are growing more important in conditions of peaceful development.

It is not a removal of literature from contemporary problems that the people, the state and the Party want, but the active incursion of literature into every aspect of Soviet life. Bolsheviks set a high value on literature and have a clear perception of its great historical mission of reinforcing the people's moral and political unity, educating them and con-

solidating their ranks. The Central Committee wishes us to feed the human spirit abundantly, regarding the attainment of cultural wealth as a chief task of socialism.

The Central Committee of the Party feels sure the Leningrad detachment of Soviet literature is morally and politically sound and will quickly set its mistakes right and take its due place in the ranks of Soviet literature.

The Central Committee feels sure the failings in the work of Leningrad writers will be overcome and the ideological work of the Leningrad Party organization soon raised to the level now required in the interests of the Party, the people and the state.

## ON MUSIC

*Concluding Speech at a Conference of Soviet Music Workers,  
1948*

### TWO TRENDS IN MUSIC

Comrades, allow me first of all to make some remarks about the character of the discussion which has developed here.

A general appraisal of the situation in music shows that matters are unsatisfactory. It is true that various shades of opinion became apparent during discussion. Some speakers said that the weakness lay in organizational matters and pointed out the poor state of affairs in criticism and self-criticism, and the incorrect methods of leadership in music matters, especially in the Union of Composers. Others, while endorsing criticism of organization, pointed also to weaknesses in the ideological direction of Soviet music. Still others tried to minimize the acuteness of the situation or attempted to remain silent on unpleasant questions. But however varied the details, the general tone of the discussion shows that things are unsatisfactory.

I do not wish to bring "dissonance" or "atonality" into this appraisal, although atonality is now the fashion. I do not wish to deny the achievements of Soviet music. They exist, of course; but it must be admitted that our achievements in music are altogether insignificant by comparison with achievements in other spheres. Take literature, for example. Some of the big journals are experiencing real diffi-

culties in using all the material in their editorial files which is well worth publishing. No such “output” can be boasted of in music. We note progress in films and plays too, but nothing in music.

Music has got left behind — that is the general tone of the contributions to the discussion.

It is clear that things are not normal either in the Union of Composers or in the Committee for Art Affairs. The Committee has not been mentioned much and has been insufficiently criticized. At any rate, more was said about the Union and criticism of it was sharper. Yet the role which the Committee played was a sorry one. Behind the pretence of standing wholeheartedly for the realist trend in music it has in every way abetted the formalist trend. By putting the representatives of the formalist trend on a pedestal it has greatly contributed to the disorganization and ideological confusion among the ranks of our composers. Being, moreover, ignorant and incompetent in music matters the Committee just drifted along with the formalist sect of composers.

The Organizational Committee of the Union of Composers has been compared both to a monastery and to a GHQ without an army. There is no need to dispute either comparison. If the destiny of Soviet music is to be in the privileged hands of a select circle of leading composers and critics — critics chosen for their servility and the atmosphere of adulation with which they surround the composers; if there is a lack of creative discussion in the Union and a stale, stuffy atmosphere which segregates the composers into top-grade and second-rate; and if the fashion at Union conferences is either respectful silence or awe-struck praise of the



chosen few, then it is clear that the situation on the musical Olympus is indeed alarming.

The harmful trend in criticism and the absence of discussions in the Union must be gone into. Lack of creative discussions, criticism and self-criticism means that there is no advance, and that the sources of development are drying up and stagnation is setting in.

It is no accident that people taking part for the first time in a conference on questions of music are astonished at the presence of such irreconcilable contradictions within the Union of Composers, with its conservative organizational system and the allegedly ultra-progressive views of its present leadership in the creative sphere. We know that the Union leadership has inscribed upon its banner such promising slogans as an appeal for innovation and for the renunciation of archaic traditions, and a call to struggle against “epigonism”<sup>1</sup> and so on.

It is curious, however, that the very people who wish to appear the extreme radicals and even arch-revolutionaries in their work and who aspire to the role of overthrowers of antiquated criteria — these same people, in so far as they participate in the activity of the Union of Composers, prove to be extremely backward and recalcitrant when it comes to introducing something new or making changes; they are conservative in their methods of work and leadership and frequently and willingly bow to bad traditions in organizational questions. The reason for this is not far to seek. When pompous phraseology about an alleged new trend in Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> *Epigonism*, from *epigone*, an inferior follower or imitator.

music is combined with by no means progressive action, then that fact alone is enough to cause legitimate doubt as to the progressive character of the ideological and creative tendencies resulting from such reactionary methods.

All of you realized very well that the organizational aspect of any matter is of great importance. It is clear that a serious spring-cleaning is needed, a fresh wind to purify the air in the composers' and musicians' organization, so that a normal atmosphere may be established for the development of creative work.

The fundamental problem is nevertheless not that of organization — important as it is — but that of the trend of Soviet music. The discussion which has developed here tends to blur that problem. We must bring clarity into the question of the development of music, just as you are aiming at clarity in musical phrasing. The discussion has definitely brought out in relief two trends in music, and although some comrades tried not to call a spade a spade and the game is being played only partly in the open, it is clear nevertheless that a struggle between the trends is taking place, and that attempts are being made to substitute one for another.

Moreover, some of the comrades have asserted that there is no need to raise the question of a struggle between trends since there has been no qualitative change, and that we have here merely a development of the classical school in Soviet conditions. They said that the principles of classical music are undergoing no revision and that there is consequently nothing to argue or make a fuss about. The entire problem is being reduced by them to a matter of individuals mending their ways, of isolated cases of enthusiasm for technique, of

naturalist lapses here and there, and so on.

The fact that such an evasion of the issue is taking place calls for a closer examination of this struggle between two trends, since it is, of course, not only a case of the roof of the Conservatoire leaking and needing repair, as Comrade Shebalin has put it so aptly. That would be a matter which could be quickly rectified. It is a case of a far larger crack having appeared in the foundations of Soviet music.

All the speakers have shown that the leading part in the creative activities of the Union of Composers is being played at present by a definite group. The names of the following comrades have been mentioned: Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, Khachaturyan, Popov, Kabalevsky and Shebalin. Is there any other name you would like to add?

VOICE: Shaporin.

ZHDANOV: When mention is made of any leading group holding the reins, those are the names most frequently cited. Let us consider these comrades, who are also the leading figures of the formalist trend in music, a trend which is fundamentally wrong.

The comrades in question have contributed to the discussion and have stated that they, too, are dissatisfied with the lack of criticism in the Union of Composers, with the fact that they are being overpraised, that they feel a certain loss of contact with the main body of composers and with concert audiences. It was hardly necessary, however, to wait for the production of a not very successful — or not at all successful — opera, before stating such truths. These admissions could have been made much earlier, but the crux of the matter is that the regime of the formalist sect in the mu-

sical organizations has not been entirely unpleasant, to put it mildly, for the leading group of our composers. It has required a discussion in the Central Committee of the Party for the comrades to discover the fact that this regime has its negative side. However that may be, before the conference not one of them thought of changing the state of affairs in the Union of Composers.

It has been said here that the time has come for radical changes. One cannot but agree. Inasmuch as the dominating positions in Soviet music are held by the comrades I have named, and inasmuch as any attempts to criticize them would have brought about an explosion and an immediate rallying against such criticism, in Comrade Zakharov's words, the conclusion must be drawn that the "cosy" atmosphere of stagnation and personal relations which they now wish to condemn as undesirable was in fact created by them.

Some leading comrades of the Union of Composers have asserted here that there is no oligarchy in the Union. But then the question arises: Why do they cling to the leading positions in the Union? Do they like power for its own sake? Have they developed a sort of administrative itch, so that they merely want to rule a little, like Vladimir Galitsky in *Prince Igor*? Or has this domination been established in the interests of a definite trend? I think that the first conjecture can be discarded and that the last is nearer the truth. We have no reason to say that the management of the Union has no connections with a trend. We cannot bring such a charge against Shostakovich, for instance.

It follows, then, that domination was maintained in the interests of a trend.

There is in fact, then, a sharp though hidden struggle between two trends taking place in Soviet music. One trend represents the healthy, progressive principles in Soviet music, based on the acceptance of the immense role to be played by the classical heritage, and in particular, by the Russian school, in the creation of a music which is realist and of truthful content and is closely and organically linked with the people and their folk music and folk song — all this combined with a high degree of professional mastery. The other trend represents a formalism alien to Soviet art, a rejection of the classical heritage under the banner of innovation, a rejection of the idea of the popular origin of music and of service to the people, in order to gratify the individualistic emotions of a small group of select aesthetes.

The formalist trend brings about the substitution of a music which is false, vulgar and often purely pathological, for natural, beautiful, human music. Furthermore, it is characteristic of this trend to avoid a frontal attack and to screen its revisionist activities by formally agreeing with the basic principles of socialist realism. This sort of underhand method is, of course, nothing new. History can show many instances of revisionism behind the label of sham agreement with a given teaching. This makes it all the more necessary to reveal the real essence of the formalist trend and the damage it has done to the development of Soviet music.

As an example, there is the attitude towards the classical heritage. There is no indication whatever that the supporters of the formalist school are carrying on and developing the traditions of classical music, however much they may protest to the contrary. Any listener will tell you that the works of

Soviet composers of the formalist type differ fundamentally from classical music. Classical music is marked by its truthfulness and realism, its ability to blend brilliant artistic form with profound content, and to combine the highest technical achievement with simplicity and intelligibility. Formalism and crude naturalism are alien to classical music in general and to Russian classical music in particular. The high level of the idea content in classical music springs from the recognition of the fact that classical music has its sources in the musical creative powers of the people, in a deep respect and love for the people, their music and song.

What a step backward it is along the highroad of musical development when our formalists, undermining the foundations of true music, compose music which is ugly and false, permeated with idealist sentiment, alien to the broad masses of the people, and created not for the millions of Soviet people, but for chosen individuals and small groups, for an elite. How unlike Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Dargomyzhsky, Mussorgsky, who considered the basis for development of their creative power to be the ability to express in their works the spirit and character of the people. By ignoring the wants of the people and its spirit and creative genius, the formalist trend in music has clearly demonstrated its anti-popular character.

If a certain section of Soviet composers favour the theory that they will be appreciated in fifty or a hundred years' time, and that their descendants, if not their contemporaries, will understand them, then the situation is really terrifying. To become accustomed to such an attitude is extremely dangerous. Such a theory indicates an estrangement from

the people. If I, a writer, an artist, a critic, or a Party worker, do not count on being understood by my contemporaries, for whom then do I live and work? Would this not lead to spiritual sterility and a dead end? We hear that the theory is offered as consolation to our composers by certain toadying music critics. How can composers remain indifferent to counsel of that sort and not at least haul its advocates before a court of honour?

Half-forgotten by us seem to be the clear statements about the popular roots of music by the “Mighty Few”<sup>1</sup> and subsequently too by V.V. Stasov, the great music scholar, when he associated himself with them. Half-forgotten is Glinka’s “The people create the music — we, the artists, merely arrange”. We forget, too, that the classical composers never disdained any genres as long as they helped to spread the art of music among the broad masses of the people. Yet you even shun opera as a musical genre and consider it secondary to instrumental and symphonic music, and in your supercilious attitude towards song, choral and concert music you deemed it beneath your dignity to satisfy the demands of the people in this respect. But Mussorgsky set the “Gopak” to music, and Glinka used the “Komarinsky” for one of his best works. It has, in fact, to be admitted that Glinka, the landowner, Serov, the civil servant, and Stasov, the nobleman, were more democratic than you.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Mighty Few” was a group of Russian musicians formed in 1861 by M.A. Balakirev. Others associated in the group were Cui, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and, to a limited extent, Tchaikovsky.

It is not enough to give glowing assurances that you are all for popular music; if you are, then why is so little folk music used in your compositions? Why do deficiencies still crop up which Serov already criticized when he pointed out that “academic”, i.e. professional, music was developing parallel with, and independent of, folk music? Is our instrumental and symphonic music developing in close interplay with folk music? No. On the contrary. There is an undoubted gulf, created by the lack of appreciation of folk music by our symphony writers. Let us recall how Serov described his attitude to folk music. I have in mind his article *The Music of South Russian Song* in which he says:

“Folk songs are musical organisms which are in no way the work of individual creative talent but compositions of the whole people, and by all their attributes far removed from artificial music. These flowers break through the soil into the light quite of their own, as it were, and grow to full resplendence without the slightest thought about authorship and composers’ rights and therefore little resemble the hothouse products of the learned composers’ activity. So it is that, above all, in folk song we find unaffected creative genius and the wisdom of simplicity, as Gogol puts it so aptly in *Dead Souls*, which is the supreme charm and secret of any work of art.

“As a lily in its magnificent raiment of purity puts to shame the glitter of brocade and precious stones, so is folk music, in its childlike simplicity, a thousand times richer and stronger than all the complexities of scholastic invention taught by pedants in conservatoires and music academies.”

How well and forcefully this is said! How true the for-



mulation of the main issue: that the development of music must proceed on a foundation of interplay, that is by enriching “academic” music from folk music. This theme has practically disappeared from our theoretical and critical articles today.

## NATIONAL MUSIC

Let me now deal with the relationship between national and foreign music. Some comrades here have quite correctly stated that there is a passion for, and even a certain orientation towards, contemporary Western bourgeois music, the music of decadence; and that this represents one of the basic features of the formalist trend in Soviet music.

The relationship between Russian music and the music of Western Europe was dealt with very well by Stasov in his article *Drag-chains on the New Russian Art*, in which he says:

“It would be ridiculous to disavow science and knowledge in any sphere, including that of music. But only the new Russian musicians, who are not burdened down by the long series of scholastic periods of the Europe of previous centuries, are able to look science full in the face: they honour it and make use of its blessings, but they do so without exaggerated deference. They repudiate the inevitability of dry and pedantic excess, and reject the acrobatic diversions of science to which thousands of people in Europe attach so much significance. And they do not believe that it is necessary to remain long years in passive submission before its sacred ritual mysteries.”

That is what Stasov said about West European classical

music. As regards contemporary bourgeois music, it would be useless to try and profit from it, since it is in a state of decay and degradation and the grovelling attitude towards it is therefore ridiculous.

Research in our Russian, and later, Soviet music must lead to the conclusion that it grew and developed into a mighty force because it managed to stand on its own feet and find its own particular roads of development, which enabled it to disclose the wealth of the inner world of our people.

Those who consider that the full flowering of national music, whether Russian music or that of the other peoples of the Soviet Union, indicates any diminution in the internationalism of art, are making a serious mistake. Internationalism in art does not spring from the depletion and impoverishment of national art; on the contrary, internationalism grows where national culture flourishes. To forget this is to lose one's individuality and become a cosmopolitan without a country.

Only a people that has a highly developed musical culture of its own can appreciate the musical riches of other nations. It is impossible to be an internationalist in music or in anything else unless one loves and respects one's own people. All the experience of the USSR testifies to that. Our internationalism in music and respect for the creative genius of other nations is therefore based on the enrichment and development of our national musical culture which we can then share with other nations, and is not based on an impoverishment of national art, blind imitation of foreign styles, and the eradication of all national characteristics in

music. All this should be borne in mind when dealing with the relationship between Soviet and foreign music.

When we speak of the formalist trend having broken with the principles of the classical heritage we must also mention the minimizing of the role of program music. This has already been mentioned here, but the principal point of the problem has not been properly clarified.

It is quite obvious that program music has become so rare that it is almost non-existent. Matters have reached a point where the content of a composition is elucidated only after its publication. A whole new profession has come into being among the critics — that of the interpreters of new compositions, who try to decipher *post factum* and on the basis of personal intuition the content of newly published compositions, the obscure meaning of which is said to be not always clear to the composers themselves. The neglect of program music is also a departure from progressive traditions. It is well known that Russian classical music was as a rule program music.

The question of innovation has been raised here. Innovation has been shown to be one of the main characteristics of formalism. But innovation is not an end in itself. The new must be better than the old, otherwise it is meaningless. It seems to me that the disciples of formalism use this word chiefly to make propaganda for bad music.

The term innovation must not be applied to any and all cases of eccentricity and distortion. If one does not want merely to use big words, then one must be clear about that from which it is necessary to break away in the old, and that which should be attained in the new. If that is not done,

then talk about innovation can have only one meaning: revision of the foundations of music and a breaking away from laws and standards of music which must not be abandoned, not because of any conservative attitude, but because a breakaway does not in any way represent innovation.

Moreover, innovation does not always imply progress. Many young musicians are being confused by being told that unless they are original they are not new and would become imprisoned in conservative traditions. Since, however, innovation is not synonymous with progress, the spreading of ideas of this sort means gross delusion, if not deceit. Furthermore, the “innovations” of the formalists are not new at all, since all their “novelty” brings to mind contemporary decadent bourgeois music of Europe and America. This is where we should look for the real “epigones”.

You will remember that at one time in all primary and secondary schools there was a passion for “experimental” methods and the “Dalton Plan”, according to which the part of the teacher was reduced to a minimum, and every pupil had the right to decide upon the subject of a lesson. The teacher would arrive in class and say: “Now, what shall we take today?” The pupils would reply: “Tell us about the Arctic” — “Tell us about the Antarctic” — “Tell us about Chapayev” — “Tell us about Dnieprostroy”.

This was called an “experimental” method, but meant in fact that the whole organization of study went topsyturvy: the pupils came to dominate the teacher, textbooks were treated in helter-skelter fashion, there was no system of marking. All this was innovation, but I ask you, was this innovation progressive?

We know that the Party has abolished these “innovations”. Why? Because, although very “left” in form, they were reactionary through and through and were leading to the nullification of the school.

Take another example. The Academy of Arts was established not long ago. Painting is your sister-muse. As you know, at one time there were strong bourgeois influences at work in painting which came to the surface now and again under extremely “left” flags and attached to themselves names like futurism, cubism, and modernism. Under the slogan of “Overthrow rotten academism” they called for innovation, and this innovation reached its most insane point when a girl, for instance, would be portrayed with one head and forty legs, one eye looking at you and the other at the North Pole.

How did all that end? With a complete fiasco of the new trend. The Party fully re-established the significance of the classical heritage of Repin, Bryullov, Vereshchagin, Vasnetsov and Surikov. Did we act correctly when we defended the treasure-house of classical painting and destroyed the liquidators of painting? Perhaps the continued existence of “schools” of this kind did not mean the liquidation of painting? Or did the Central Committee, in saving the classical heritage in painting, act in a conservative manner and under the influence of “traditionalism” and “epigonism” and so on? Utter nonsense, of course!

Thus it is in music, too. We do not assert that the classical heritage represents the absolute peak of musical culture. If we said that it would be tantamount to admitting that progress came to an end with the classics. Up to now, how-

ever, the classics remain unsurpassed. This means that we must learn and continue to learn, and that we must adopt all that is best in the classics and all that is essential for the further development of Soviet music.

Our young people are frightened away from learning from the classics by a lot of chatter about “epigonism”. The slogan now has it that the classics must be outdone. That would be very good, of course. But in order to outdo the classics they must first be equalled, yet you dismiss the stage of equalling them as though it were a stage already reached. But to give frank expression to what goes on in the minds of a Soviet audience one would have to say that it would do no harm if more compositions appeared among us which approached classical music with regard to content, form, polish and beauty of melody. If that be “epigonism” then I suggest that there would be nothing discreditable in being an “epigone”.

## NATURALISM

Now to go on to the subject of naturalist distortion: it has become clear here that departures from the natural and healthy standards of music are on the increase. Elements of crude naturalism are penetrating more and more into our music. Ninety years ago Serov warned against the passion for crude naturalism in the following words:

“In nature there is an infinity of sound of the most diverse and varied description. In some cases they can be given names like noise, thunder, rumble, crackle, splashing, droning, humming, tinkling, howling, creaking, whistling, talk-

ing, whispering, rustling and so on; in others they cannot be expressed in speech. Any of these sounds are used as material in the musical language only in exceptional cases as, for example, the ringing of bells, the clashing of cymbals, the tinkling of a triangle, or the sound of drums and tambourines and so on. The musical material proper is sound of a special character.”

Is it not true and right that in musical compositions the sound of cymbals and drums should be the exception and not the rule? Is it not clear that not every natural sound should be taken into musical creations? Yet how frequent among us is this unforgivable passion for vulgar naturalism, which to all intents and purposes is a step backwards.

It has to be said frankly that a great number of works by contemporary composers are so saturated with naturalistic sounds that they remind one either of a dentist’s drill or a musical murder, if you will excuse the expression. Only, mind you, there is no force whatever behind it all.

This is the first step beyond the limits of the rational, beyond the limits not only of normal human emotions but of normal human intellect. There are, it is true, fashionable “theories” to the effect that a pathological condition is a higher state, and that schizophrenics and paranoiacs can attain spiritual heights in their ravings unattainable by an ordinary person in a normal state. These “theories” are not, of course, fortuitous. They are very characteristic of the period of decay and corruption of bourgeois culture. But let us leave all these “experiments” to the insane and let us ask for normal, human music from our composers.

What has been the result of the disregard of the laws and

standards of musical creation? Music has taken revenge on those who attempted to mutilate it. When music ceases to have content and to be highly artistic, and becomes crude, ugly and vulgar, it ceases to fulfil the demands which are the reasons for its existence. It ceases to be music.

You may be surprised that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party asks for beauty and grace in music. Yes, we declare that we are for beautiful and graceful music, for a music which is capable of satisfying the aesthetic requirements and artistic tastes of the Soviet people; and these requirements and tastes have developed to an incredible extent. The people assesses a musical composition according to how profoundly it reflects the spirit of our epoch and people, and according to how intelligible it is to the wide masses.

For what is it in music that is proof of genius? It is not something that can only be grasped by a small group of aesthetes: a musical work is proved to be a work of genius by the scope of its content and depth, by its skill, and by the number of people who appreciate it, by the number of people it is able to inspire. Not all that is readily grasped is a work of genius, but all that is real genius is readily grasped, and the greater the genius the more intelligible is it to the broad masses of the people.

A.N. Serov was profoundly right when he said that “but for the genuinely and timelessly beautiful in their art there would be admiration neither for Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, nor for Raphael, Titian and Poussin, nor for Palestrina, Handel and Gluck...”

The greater a work of music, the more responsive the



chords it strikes in the human spirit. From the point of view of musical perception man is such a miraculous receiver, working on thousands of wavelengths — I daresay there are better comparisons — that for him the tone of one note, the sound from one string, or a single emotion, is insufficient. A composer capable of striking only one answering note, or only a few strings, is inadequate, since modern man — and particularly our Soviet man — is a highly complex organ of receptivity. Glinka, Tchaikovsky and Serov wrote of the Russian people as being highly developed musically, and this at a time when classical music had not yet found a wide understanding among them. In the years of Soviet power the people's musical culture has developed to an extraordinary degree. The artistic tastes of our previously merely musical people have become greatly enriched, thanks to a wide dissemination of classical music.

If you have allowed music to become impoverished, and if, as in Muradeli's opera, the full possibilities of an orchestra and abilities of singers are not utilized, then you have ceased to satisfy the musical demands of your audience. As you sow, so you shall reap. Do not let composers who have written works unintelligible to the people think that, while the people may not understand this music now, they will do so when they have become more mature. The people do not need music which they cannot understand. The composers ought to reproach themselves instead of the people; they should subject their work to a critical appraisal in order to understand why they did not please their people, why they did not merit approval, and in order to understand what they have to do to make themselves understood by the peo-

ple and win their approval. That is the foundation upon which one's creative work must be reorganized.

## PROFESSIONAL SKILL

Now I want to go on to deal with the danger of losing professional skill. Formalist distortion impoverishes music and at the same time brings with it the danger of professional skill being lost. In this connection we must examine another widespread error — that of believing that classical music is rather simple, and that modern music is more complex; of believing that the complication in technique of modern music represents a step forward, since all development proceeds from the simple to the more complex and from the particular to the general.

It is not true that complication of any kind whatever is the equivalent to a growth in skill. Whoever thinks that any kind of complication represents progress makes a profound mistake. Here is an example. We know that literary Russian makes use of a great number of foreign words, and we know that Lenin ridiculed the misuse of foreign words and that he came out strongly for a cleansing of the native language of foreign-bred impurities. A complication of the language by way of introducing a foreign word for which there is a full equivalent in the Russian language never did represent a progressive step. For instance, the foreign word *losung* [German for "slogan"] has now been replaced by the Russian word *prizyv*, and does not an exchange of this kind represent a step forward? So it is in music, too. A purely superficial complication of composition methods camouflages a ten-

dency to impoverish music.

Musical language is becoming inexpressive. So much that is crude and vulgar and false is being introduced into music that it is beginning to fail in its function, which is to provide pleasure.

Or is the aesthetic significance of music to be abolished? Is that what innovation means? Is music a soliloquy — the composer talking to himself? And if that is the case, why inflict it on the people? This music becomes anti-popular and super-individualist, and the people have every right to be indifferent to its fate and are indifferent to it. If an audience is expected to praise music which is crude, ugly and vulgar, and based on atonality and continuous dissonance, and if false notes and combinations of false notes become the rule, and assonance the exception, then the fundamental standards of music are being abandoned.

The sum total of this represents a threat to the existence of music, just as cubism and futurism have as their aim nothing more nor less than the decay of painting. Music which deliberately ignores the normal human emotions and jars the mind and nervous system can never be popular, or of use to society.

The narrow passion for symphonic music without text has been mentioned here. It is incorrect to ignore all the many genres of music. What it leads to can again be seen in the example of Muradeli's opera. Just call to mind how liberal the great masters of the art were in this respect. They well understood that the people demanded music in a variety of genres. Why are you so unlike your great predecessors? You are far more hard-hearted in this than those who occu-

ped the summit of their art and yet wrote songs for the people — solo, choral and orchestral.

Melodiousness is beginning to disappear. A passionate emphasis on rhythm at the expense of melody is characteristic of modern music. Yet we know that music can give pleasure only if it contains the essential elements in a specific harmonic combination. One-sided emphasis leads to a violation of the correct interaction of the various elements of music and cannot, of course, be accepted by the normal human ear.

The use of instruments for purposes outside their functions also comes under the heading of distortion; when, for example, the piano is turned into a percussion instrument. The role of vocal music is being curtailed for the benefit of a one-sided development of instrumental music. Vocal music itself concerns itself less and less with the demands of the normal standards of singing. The criticisms from the vocalists, expressed here by Comrades Derzhinskaya and Katulskaya, must be taken into the fullest consideration.

All these and similar departures from the standards of the art of music represent not only a violation of the fundamentals of musical sound but also an assault upon the fundamental physiology of normal human hearing. Unfortunately the theory which deals with the physiological effect of music on the human organism has been insufficiently developed. It should be borne in mind, however, that bad, unharmonious music undoubtedly disturbs the balance of mental and physiological functions.

## TASKS OF SOVIET MUSIC

What conclusions can be drawn? The significance of the classical heritage must be fully restored. The danger of destruction threatening music from the formalist trend must be stressed and this trend must be condemned as an assault upon the edifice of the art created by the great masters of musical culture. Our composers must reorientate themselves and turn towards their people. All of them must realize that our Party, expressing the interests of our state and our people, will support only a healthy and progressive trend in music, the trend of Soviet socialist realism.

Comrades, if you value the lofty calling of Soviet composer, you must prove yourselves capable of serving your people better than you have done up to the present. You are facing a serious test. The formalist trend in music was condemned by the Party twelve years ago. Since then the Government has awarded Stalin prizes to many of you, among them those guilty of formalism. The rewards you received were in the nature of a substantial advance payment. We did not consider that your compositions were free of defects, but we were patient, expecting our composers to find within themselves the strength to choose the right road. But it is now clear to everybody that the intervention of the Party was necessary. The Central Committee tells you bluntly that our music will never win glory along the road you have chosen.

Soviet composers have two highly responsible tasks. The chief one is to develop and perfect Soviet music. The other is to protect Soviet music against penetration by elements of bourgeois decay. We must not forget that the USSR is now the true custodian of the musical culture of mankind just as

she is in all other fields, too, a bulwark of human civilization and culture against bourgeois corruption and decay.

We must take into account the fact that alien bourgeois influences from abroad will muster what remains of a capitalist outlook in the minds of some Soviet intellectuals in frivolous and crazy attempts to replace the treasures of Soviet musical culture by the pitiful tatters of modern bourgeois art. For this reason not only the musical but also the political ear of Soviet composers must be very sensitive. Your contact with the people must be closer than ever before. The ear for music must be an “ear for criticism” too. You should keep track of the various stages through which art is passing in the West. But it is your task not only to prevent the penetration of bourgeois influences into Soviet music: it is your task, too, to consolidate the supremacy of Soviet music and to create a mighty Soviet musical culture which will embody all that is best from the past, and which will reflect Soviet society of today and enable the culture and the communist consciousness of our people to attain still greater heights.

We Bolsheviks do not deny our cultural heritage. On the contrary, we subject to a critical study the cultural heritage of all peoples and all ages in order to draw from it all that can inspire the working people of Soviet society to great achievements in labour, science and culture. You must help the people in this; and if you do not set yourselves this task and devote yourselves wholeheartedly to it and give to it all your enthusiasm and creative ardour, you are not fulfilling your historic role.

Comrades, we would very much like — we fervently wish — to have in existence among us our own “Mighty

Few”, a group which would be more numerous and more influential still than that which in its day sent the fame of its talents around the world and glorified our people. In order to achieve this you must clear out of your path all that might weaken you and select only the means and equipment which will make you strong and mighty. If you use to the full our great musical heritage and at the same time develop it in the spirit of the new demands of our great epoch, you will become a Soviet “Mighty Few”. We want to see this backwardness through which you are passing overcome as quickly as possible, so that you can the sooner re-orientate yourselves and become a glorious cohort of Soviet composers, the pride of the entire Soviet people.

## ON PHILOSOPHY

*Speech at a Conference of Soviet Philosophical Workers, 1947*

Comrades, the discussion of the book by Comrade Alexandrov has not been confined to the subject under debate. It has transcended it in breadth and depth, posing also more general questions of the situation of the philosophical front. The discussion has been transformed into a kind of all-Union conference on the condition of our scientific work in philosophy. This, of course, is quite natural and legitimate. The creation of a textbook on the history of philosophy, the first Marxist textbook in this sphere, represents a task of enormous scientific and political significance. It is therefore not accidental that the Central Committee has given so much attention to the question and has organized the present discussion.

To prepare and write a good textbook on the history of philosophy means to equip our intellectuals, our cadres, our youth with a new, powerful ideological weapon and at the same time to take a great step forward in the development of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Hence, the high level of the requirements for such a textbook was expressed in the discussion. The extension of the range of the discussion has, therefore, been profitable. Its results will, without doubt, be great, the more so since we have here dealt not only with questions connected with the evaluation of the textbook, but also with the broader problems of philosophical work.

I shall permit myself to discuss both themes. It is not at all my intention to summarize the discussion — this is the



task of the author. I speak as a participant in the debate.

I ask in advance to be excused if I have recourse to quotations, although Comrade Baskin has repeatedly warned all of us against this procedure. Of course, it is easy for him, an old philosophical sea wolf, to plough through seas and oceans without navigation instruments, by the eye of inspiration, as sailors say. But you will have to permit me, a novice, treading for the first time the unsteady deck of the philosophical ship in time of terrible storm, to use quotations as a sort of compass which will prevent me from being driven off my correct course.

I now pass to the remarks on the textbook.

## I. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF COMRADE ALEXANDROV'S BOOK

I believe that from a textbook on the history of philosophy we have a right to demand the fulfilment of the following conditions, which, in my opinion, are elementary.

(1) It is necessary that the subject — the history of philosophy as a science — be precisely defined.

(2) The textbook should be scientific — i.e., based on fundamental present-day achievements of dialectical and historical materialism.

(3) It is essential that the exposition of the history of philosophy be a creative and not a scholastic work; it should be directly linked with the tasks of the present, should lead to their elucidation, and should give the perspective for the further development of philosophy.

(4) The facts cited should be fully verified.

(5) The style should be clear, precise and convincing.

I consider that this textbook does not meet these demands.

Let us begin with the subject of science.

Comrade Kivenko has pointed out that Comrade Alexandrov does not present a clear idea of the subject of the science, and that although the book contains a large number of definitions having individual importance, in that they illuminate only individual aspects of the question, one does not find in the work an exhaustive general definition. That observation is entirely correct.

Neither is the subject of the history of philosophy as a science defined. The definition given on page 14 is incomplete. The definition on page 22, italicized, apparently as a basic definition, is essentially incorrect. Should one agree with the author that “the history of philosophy is the history of the progressive, ascending development of man’s knowledge of the surrounding world”, it would mean that the subject of the history of philosophy coincides with that of the history of science in general, in which case philosophy itself would appear as the science of sciences. This conception was long ago rejected by Marxism.

### *Materialism versus Idealism*

The author’s assertion that the history of philosophy is also the history of the rise and development of many contemporary ideas is likewise incorrect because the concept “contemporary” is here identified with the concept “scientific”, which, naturally, is erroneous. In defining the subject

of the history of philosophy it is necessary to proceed from the definition of philosophical science given by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

“This revolutionary side of Hegel’s philosophy was adopted and developed by Marx. Dialectical materialism no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences. Of former philosophy there remains the science of thought and its laws — formal logic and dialectics. And dialectics, as understood by Marx, and in conformity with Hegel, includes what is now called the theory of knowledge, or epistemology, which, too, must regard its subject matter historically, studying and generalizing the origin and development of knowledge, the transition from non-knowledge to knowledge.” — (Lenin, *Karl Marx*.)

Consequently the scientific history of philosophy is the history of the birth, rise and development of the scientific materialist world outlook and its laws. Inasmuch as materialism grew and developed in the struggle with idealist trends, the history of philosophy is at the same time the history of the struggle of materialism with idealism.

As to the scientific character, depth and breadth of the book from the standpoint of its utilizing contemporary attainments of dialectical and historical materialism, in this respect, too, it suffers from many serious inadequacies.

### *A Revolution in Philosophy*

The author describes the history of philosophy and the development of philosophical ideas and systems as a smooth, evolutionary process through the accumulation of

quantitative changes. The impression is created that Marxism arose simply as the successor to preceding progressive teachings — primarily the teachings of the French materialists, of English political economy, and the idealist school of Hegel.

On page 475 the author states that the philosophical theories formulated before Marx and Engels, although occasionally containing great discoveries, were not fully consistent and scientific in all their conclusions. Such a definition distinguishes Marxism from pre-Marxist philosophical systems only as a theory fully consistent and scientific in all its conclusions. Consequently, the difference between Marxism and pre-Marxist philosophical teachings consists only in that the latter were not fully consistent and scientific; the old philosophers merely “erred”.

As you see, it is a question here only of quantitative changes. But that is metaphysics. The rise of Marxism was a genuine discovery, a revolution in philosophy. Like every discovery, like every leap, like every break in gradualness, like every transition into a new condition, the rise of Marxism could not have occurred without the previous accumulation of quantitative changes — in the given instance, the stages of development of philosophy prior to the discovery of Marx and Engels. But the author obviously does not understand that Marx and Engels created a new philosophy, differing qualitatively from all previous philosophical systems, however progressive they were.

The relation of Marxist philosophy to all preceding philosophies and the basic change which Marxism effected in philosophy, transforming it into a science, is well known to

all. All the more strange, therefore, is the fact that the author focuses his attention, not on that which is new and revolutionary in Marxism, but on that which united it with the development of pre-Marxist philosophy. And yet Marx and Engels stated that their discovery meant the end of the old philosophy.

*Marxism and the End of the Old Philosophy*

Evidently the author does not understand the historical process of the development of philosophy. One of the essential shortcomings of the book, if not the principal one, is its ignoring of the fact that in the course of history, not only do views on this or that philosophical question undergo change, but the very range of these questions, the very subject of philosophy, undergoes a constant change, which is in complete conformity with the dialectical nature of human cognition and should be clear to all real dialecticians.

On page 24 of his book, expounding the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, Comrade Alexandrov writes: "Philosophy as an independent sphere of knowledge arose in the slave society of ancient Greece." And further: "Philosophy, arising in the sixth century B.C. as a special sphere of knowledge, became widely diffused."

But can we speak of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks as a special, differentiated sphere of knowledge? On no account. The philosophical views of the Greeks were so closely interwoven with their natural science and with their political views that we should not, and have no right to, transfer to Greek science our own division of the sciences,

the classification of the sciences which came later. Essentially, the Greeks knew only one, undifferentiated science, into which there entered also their philosophical conceptions. Whether we take Democritus, Epicurus or Aristotle — all of them in equal degree confirm the thought of Engels that “the oldest Greek philosophers were at the same time investigators of nature”. (Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, p. 245.)

The unique character of the development of philosophy resides in the fact that from it, as the scientific knowledge of nature and society developed, the positive sciences branched off one after another. Consequently, the domain of philosophy was continually reduced on account of the development of the positive sciences. (I might add that this process has not ended even up to the present time.) This emancipation of the natural and social sciences from the aegis of philosophy constitutes a progressive process, for the natural and social sciences as well as for philosophy itself.

The creators of the philosophical systems of the past, who laid claim to the knowledge of absolute truth in the ultimate sense, were unable to further the development of the natural sciences, since aspiring to stand above the sciences, they swaddled them with their schemes, imposing on living human understanding conclusions dictated, not by real life, but by the requirements of their philosophic system. And so philosophy was transformed into a museum in which were piled the most diverse facts, conclusions, hypotheses, and simply fantasies. If philosophy was nevertheless able to serve as a means of surveying phenomena, of contemplation, it still was not suitable as an instrument for

practical influence on the world, as an instrument for understanding the world.

The last system of this kind was the system of Hegel, who attempted to erect a philosophical structure, subordinating all other sciences, pressing them into the Procrustean bed of its own categories. Hegel counted on solving all contradictions, but fell into a hopeless contradiction with the dialectical method which he himself had divined but not understood, and hence applied incorrectly. But:

“...As soon as we have once realized... that the task of philosophy thus stated means nothing but the task that a single philosopher should accomplish that which can only be accomplished by the entire human race in its progressive development — as soon as we realized that, there is an end of all philosophy in the hitherto accepted sense of the word. One leaves alone ‘absolute truth’, which is unattainable along this path or by any single individual; instead, one pursues attainable, relative truths along the path of the positive sciences, and the summation of their results by means of dialectical thinking.” (Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 25.)

The discovery of Marx and Engels represents the end of the old philosophy, i.e., the end of that philosophy which claimed to give a universal explanation of the world.

Comrade Alexandrov’s vague formulations blur the great revolutionary significance of the philosophical discoveries of Marx and Engels, since he emphasizes that which connected Marx with the antecedent philosophers, but fails

to show that with Marx there begins a completely new period in the history of philosophy — philosophy which for the first time has become science.

*A Scientific Philosophy of the Proletariat*

In close connection with this error, we find in Alexandrov's book a non-Marxist treatment of the history of philosophy as the gradual change from one philosophical school to another. With the appearance of Marxism as the scientific world outlook of the proletariat ends the old period in the history of philosophy, when philosophy was the occupation of isolated individuals, the possession of philosophical schools consisting of a small number of philosophers and their disciples, detached from life and the people, and alien to the people.

Marxism is not such a philosophical school. On the contrary, it supersedes the old philosophy — philosophy that was the property of a small elite, the aristocracy of the intellect. It marked the beginning of a completely new period in the history of philosophy, when it became a scientific weapon in the hands of the proletarian masses in their struggle for emancipation from capitalism.

Marxist philosophy, as distinguished from preceding philosophical systems, is not a science above other sciences; rather, it is an instrument of scientific investigation, a method, penetrating all natural and social sciences, enriching itself with their attainments in the course of their development. In this sense Marxist philosophy is the most complete and decisive negation of all preceding philosophy. But



to negate, as Engels emphasized, does not mean merely to say “no”. Negation includes continuity, signifies absorption, the critical reforming and unification in a new and higher synthesis of everything advanced and progressive that has been achieved in the history of human thought.

Hence it follows that the history of philosophy, inasmuch as there exists the Marxist dialectical method, must include the history of the preparatory development of that method, showing that which conditioned its rise. Alexandrov’s book does not give the history of logic and dialectics, does not show the development of the logical categories as the reflection of human practice; because of this the quotation from Lenin in the introduction to the book, to the effect that every category of dialectical logic should be considered a nodal point in the history of human thought, hangs in the air.

Entirely indefensible is the fact that the book brings the history of philosophy only up to the rise of Marxist philosophy, that is, to 1848. Without presenting the history of philosophy during the last hundred years, the work naturally cannot be considered a textbook. Why the author has so pitilessly wronged this period remains a mystery, and no explanation is to be found either in the preface or in the introduction.

Nor is the reason indicated for the failure to include the history of the development of Russian philosophy. It is not necessary to emphasize that this omission involves principle. Whatever the author’s motives for excluding the history of Russian philosophy from a general history of philosophy, its omission objectively means belittlement of the role of Rus-

sian philosophy; it artificially divides the history of philosophy into the history of Western European and of Russian philosophy. The author makes no attempt to explain the necessity for such a division. This separation perpetuates the bourgeois division into “Western” and “Eastern” culture and presents Marxism as a regional “Western” current.

On page 6 of the introduction, the author ardently argues the reverse position:

“Without studying diligently and utilizing the profound criticism of the philosophical systems of the past given by the classics of Russian philosophy, it is impossible to achieve a scientific understanding of the development of philosophic thought in Western European countries.”

Why, then, did the author fail to adhere to this correct position in his book? This remains absolutely incomprehensible and, taken together with the arbitrary termination at 1848, it produces a vexing impression.

The comrades who spoke in the discussion have also pointed out the gaps in the presentation of the history of the philosophy of the East.

It is clear that for this reason as well the book requires radical revision.

Some comrades have indicated that the introduction to the book, which obviously should present the author’s *credo*, correctly defines the tasks and methods of the investigation of the subject, but that the author somehow has not fulfilled his promises. I believe that this criticism is inadequate; for

the introduction itself is faulty and cannot stand up to criticism.

I have already mentioned the incorrect and inaccurate definition of the subject of the history of philosophy. But that is not all. The introduction contains other theoretical errors. Some comrades have pointed out the strained manner in which the author, dealing with the foundations of the Marxist-Leninist history of philosophy, refers to Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Lomonosov, who, of course, have no direct relation to the question under discussion. The question, however, involves more than this. The quotations from the works of these great Russian scientists and philosophers were badly selected. The theoretical propositions which they contain are from the Marxist point of view incorrect and, I would add, even dangerous. I have not the slightest intention of casting any aspersion on the quoted authors, since the quotations were selected arbitrarily and are related to questions that have nothing in common with the subject with which the author is dealing. The point is that the author refers to Chernyshevsky in order to show that the founders of different, although contradictory, philosophic systems must regard one another tolerantly.

Allow me to cite the quotation from Chernyshevsky:

“The heirs of scientific work rise against their predecessors whose work served as the point of departure for their own labours. Thus, Aristotle took a hostile view of Plato, thus Socrates thoroughly humiliated the Sophists, whose heir he was. In modern times there are also many examples of this. But there are happy instances when

founders of a new system understand clearly the connection of their judgements with the ideas of their predecessors and modestly consider themselves their disciples; when in disclosing the inadequacy in the ideas of their predecessors, they at the same time clearly manifest how much these ideas contributed to the development of their own. Such was the case, for instance, in the relation of Spinoza to Descartes. To the honour of the founders of modern science, it must be said that they look upon their predecessors with respect and almost filial affection, fully acknowledging the greatness of their genius and the noble character of their teaching, in which they indicate the germs of their own views.”

Inasmuch as the author offers this quotation without reservation, it obviously appears to be his own point of view. If that is so, the author actually takes the position of denying the principle of the party character of philosophy, inherent in Marxism-Leninism.

It is well known with what passion and irreconcilability Marxism-Leninism has always conducted the sharpest struggle against all enemies of materialism. In this struggle Marxist-Leninists subject their opponents to ruthless criticism. An example of Bolshevik struggle against the opponents of materialism is Lenin's book, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, in which every sentence is like a piercing sword, annihilating an opponent. Lenin wrote:

“The genius of Marx and Engels consisted in the very fact that over a long period, nearly half a century, they developed materialism, that they further advanced one funda-

mental trend in philosophy, that they did not confine themselves to reiterating epistemological problems that had already been solved, but consistently applied — and showed *how* to apply — *this same* materialism in the sphere of the social sciences, mercilessly brushing aside as litter and rubbish the pretentious rigmarole, the innumerable attempts to ‘discover’ a ‘new’ line in philosophy, to invent a ‘new’ trend and so forth...

“And finally, take the various philosophical utterances by Marx in *Capital* and other works, and you will find an *invariable* basic motif, viz., insistence upon *materialism* and contemptuous derision of all obscurantism, of all confusion and all deviations towards *idealism*. All Marx’s philosophical utterances revolve within these fundamental opposites, and, in the eyes of professional philosophy, their defect lies in this ‘narrowness’ and ‘one-sidedness’.” (V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.)

Lenin, we know, did not spare his opponents. In all attempts to blur and reconcile the contradictions between philosophical tendencies, Lenin always saw the manoeuvre of reactionary professorial philosophy. How then after that could Comrade Alexandrov appear in his book as a preacher of toothless vegetarianism in relation to philosophical opponents, presenting unqualified tribute to professorial quasi-objectivism, when Marxism arose, developed and triumphed in a merciless struggle against all representatives of the idealist tendency?

Comrade Alexandrov does not confine himself to this. He constantly applies his objectivist ideas throughout the book. It is not accidental, therefore, that Comrade Alexan-

drov, before criticizing some bourgeois philosopher, pays “tribute” to his merits and burns incense to him. Let us take, for example, the teaching of Fourier on the four phases in the development of mankind.

The great achievement of the social philosophy of Fourier, says Comrade Alexandrov,

“...is his theory of the development of mankind. In its development society passes, according to Fourier, through four phases: (1) ascending disintegration; (2) ascending harmony; (3) descending harmony; (4) descending disintegration. In the last stage mankind experiences a period of senility, after which all life on earth comes to an end. Inasmuch as the development of society proceeds independently of human will, a higher stage of development arises just as unfailingly as the change of seasons. From this Fourier drew the conclusion of the inevitable transformation of the bourgeois system into society in which free and collective labour would prevail. True, Fourier’s theory of development of society was limited by the conception of the four phases, but for that period it represents a great step forward.”

There is not a trace of Marxist analysis in this. By comparison with what does the theory of Fourier represent a step forward? If its limitation consisted in that it spoke of four phases of the development of mankind, with the fourth phase constituting descending disintegration, as a result of which all life on earth comes to an end, then how shall we understand the author’s criticism of Fourier that his theory

of social development is limited within the confines of the four phases, when the fifth phase for mankind could consist only of life in the hereafter?

Comrade Alexandrov finds it possible to say something good about almost every philosopher of the past. The more eminent the bourgeois philosopher, the greater the flattery that is offered him. All of this shows that Comrade Alexandrov, perhaps without being aware of it, is himself a captive of bourgeois historians, who proceed from the assumption that every philosopher is first of all a professional associate, and only secondarily an opponent. Such conceptions, if they should take hold among us, would lead inevitably to objectivism, to subservience to bourgeois philosophers and exaggeration of their services, towards depriving our philosophy of its militant offensive spirit. And that would signify the departure from the basic principle of materialism — its principle of direction, its partisanship. Well did Lenin teach us that “materialism includes, so to speak, partisanship, i.e. the obligation when estimating any event to adopt directly and frankly the viewpoint of a definite social group”.

The exposition of philosophical views in Alexandrov's book is abstract, objectivist, neutral. Philosophical schools are placed one after another or one near the other in the book, but are not shown in struggle against one another. That, too, is a “tribute” to the academic professorial “tendency”. In this connection, it is apparently not accidental that the author's exposition of the principle of partisanship in philosophy is not satisfactory. The author refers to the philosophy of Hegel as an example of partisanship in philosophy; and the struggle of antagonistic philosophies has

for him its illustration in the struggle of the reactionary and progressive principles within Hegel himself. Such a method of demonstration is not only objectivist eclecticism, but it clearly embellishes Hegel, inasmuch as in this way one wants to show that in Hegel's philosophy there is as much progressive as there is reactionary content.

To conclude on this point, I may add that Comrade Alexandrov's method of evaluating various philosophical systems — "along with merits there are also shortcomings", or "the following theory is also of importance" — is extremely vague, is metaphysical, and can only confuse the issue. It is incomprehensible why Comrade Alexandrov chose to pay tribute to the academic scientific traditions of the old bourgeois schools, forgetting the fundamental principle of materialism which demands irreconcilability in the struggle against one's opponents.

A further remark. A critical study of philosophical systems must have an orientation. Philosophical views and ideas long slain and buried should not attract much attention. On the other hand, philosophical systems and ideas still current, which, their reactionary characters notwithstanding, are being utilized today by the enemies of Marxism, demand especially sharp criticism. This includes particularly neo-Kantianism, theology, old and new editions of agnosticism, the attempts to smuggle God into modern natural science, and every other cookery that has for its aim the freshening up of stale idealist merchandise for the market. That is the arsenal which the philosopher lackeys of imperialism make use of at the present time in order to give support to their frightened masters.



## *On the Method of Dialectical Materialism*

The introduction to the book also contains an incorrect treatment of the notions of reactionary and progressive ideas and philosophical systems. The author states that the question of the reactionary or progressive character of one or another idea or philosophical system should be determined on the basis of historical conditions. Time and again, however, he ignores the established position of Marxism that the same idea can be reactionary or progressive under different concrete historical conditions. By obscuring this point, he creates an opening for the smuggling in of the idealist conception of ideas as independent history.

While the author correctly notes that the development of philosophical thought in the final analysis is determined by the material conditions of social life and that the development of philosophical thought has only relative independence, he repeatedly violates that basic position of scientific materialism. Time and again he presents the various philosophical systems without relating them to their actual historical environment, and without showing the social and class roots of this or that philosopher.

That is the case, for instance, with his exposition of the philosophical views of Socrates, Democritus, Spinoza, Leibniz, Feuerbach and others. Such a method is clearly not scientific; it justifies the assumption that the author has slipped into the habit of treating the development of philosophical ideas as independent of history, a distinguishing characteristic of idealist philosophy.

The failure to show the organic connection of this or

that philosophical system with its historical environment is evident even where the author attempts to give an analysis of that environment. What we have in those instances is a purely mechanical, formal, and not a living organic connection. The divisions and chapters dealing with the philosophical views of a particular epoch, and those discussing the historical circumstances, revolve upon parallel planes, while the presentation of the historical data — the link of causation between the basis and superstructure — is given as a rule unscientifically, and in a slipshod manner. It does not provide material for analysis but rather presents an inadequate frame of reference.

Such, for example, is the introduction to Chapter VI, entitled “Eighteenth-Century France”, which is utterly irrelevant and which in no way elucidates the sources of the ideas of French philosophy in the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Consequently, the ideas of the French philosophers lose their connection with the epoch and begin to appear as independent phenomena of some kind. Allow me to quote this:

“Beginning with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, France, after England, gradually takes the road of bourgeois development, experiencing radical changes in a hundred years in its economy, politics and ideology. Although still backward, the country began to free itself of its feudal inertia. Like many other European states of that time, France entered the period of primary capitalist accumulation.

“The new bourgeois social structure was rapidly tak-

ing shape in all spheres of social life, quickly giving rise to a new ideology, a new culture. About that time we witness in France the beginning of a rapid growth of such cities as Paris, Lyons, Marseilles and Havre, and of the development of a strong merchant fleet. International trading companies arose one after another, and military expeditions were organized which conquered a number of colonies. Trade grew rapidly. In the years 1784-1788 the turnover of external trade reached 1,011,600 livres, exceeding more than four times the trade of 1716-1720. The growth of trade was facilitated by the Treaty of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) (1748) and the Treaty of Paris (1763). Especially significant was the trade in books. Thus, for instance, in 1774 the turnover in the book trade in France reached 45 million francs, while in England it stood only at 12-13 million francs. France held nearly half the gold supply of Europe. At the same time France still remained an agrarian country. The overwhelming majority of the population was agrarian.”

That, of course, is no analysis; it is merely an enumeration of a number of facts set forth without relation to one another, but simply in juxtaposition. It is obvious that from these data as “basis” one cannot derive any characteristic of French philosophy, the development of which appears detached from the historical conditions of the France of that period.

Let us take as a further example the description of the rise of German idealist philosophy. Alexandrov writes:

“Germany in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries was a backward country with a reactionary political regime. Feudal-serf and artisan-guild relations prevailed in it. At the end of the eighteenth century the urban population was less than 25 per cent of the total, while the artisans constituted only 4 per cent. Corvée, quit-rent, serfdom, and guild restrictions hindered the development of embryonic capitalist relations. Moreover, the country was split up into excessively numerous political divisions.”

Comrade Alexandrov cites the percentage of urban population in Germany to illustrate the backwardness of that country and the reactionary character of its state and social political structure. But in that same period the urban population of France was less than 10 per cent of the whole; nevertheless, France was not a backward feudal land, as was Germany, but the centre of the bourgeois revolutionary movement in Europe. Consequently, the percentage of urban population itself does not explain anything. More than that, the fact itself must be explained by the concrete historical conditions. This, too, is an example of the inept use of historical material to explain the rise and development of one or another form of ideology.

Alexandrov writes further:

“The most prominent ideologists of the German bourgeoisie of that period — Kant, and later Fichte and Hegel — expressed through their idealist philosophies, in an abstract form, conditioned by the narrowness of

German reality, the ideology of the German bourgeoisie of that epoch.”

Let us compare this cold, indifferent, objectivist statement of facts, from which it is impossible to understand the causes for the rise of German idealism, with the Marxist analysis of the conditions of that time in Germany, presented in a living, militant style, which stirs and convinces the reader. This is how Engels characterizes the situation in Germany:

“...It was all one living mass of putrefaction and repulsive decay. Nobody felt himself at ease. The trade, commerce, industry and agriculture of the country were reduced to almost nothing; peasantry, tradesmen and manufacturers felt the double pressure of a blood-sucking government and bad trade; the nobility and princes found that their incomes, in spite of the squeezing of their inferiors, could not be made to keep pace with their increasing expenditures; everything was wrong, and a general uneasiness prevailed throughout the country. No education, no means of operating upon the minds of the masses, no free press, no public spirit, not even an extended commerce with other countries — nothing but meanness and selfishness — a mean, sneaking, miserable shopkeeping spirit pervading the whole people. Everything worn out, crumbling down, going fast to ruin, and not even the slightest hope of a beneficial change, not even so much strength in the nation as might have sufficed for carrying away the putrid corpses

of dead institutions.” (Frederick Engels, *The State of Germany* in the *Northern Star*, October 25, 1845; Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, Erste Abteilung, Band IV, p. 482.)

Compare this clear, sharp, exact, profoundly scientific characterization given by Engels with that which Alexandrov gives and you will see how badly Comrade Alexandrov utilizes the material already available in the inexhaustible wealth left us by the founders of Marxism.

The author has failed to apply the materialist method to the exposition of the history of philosophy. This deprives the book of scientific character, making of it, to a considerable extent, an account of the biographies of the philosophers and their philosophic systems, unrelated to historical conditions. This violates the principle of historical materialism:

“All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be individually examined before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-legal, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc., notions corresponding to them.” (Engels to Conrad Schmidt, August 5, 1890.)

The author, further, sets forth unclearly and inadequately the purpose of the study of the history of philosophy. Nowhere does he emphasize that one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy and its history is to continue the development of philosophy as a science, to deduce new laws,

to verify its propositions in practice, to replace old theses with new ones. The author proceeds chiefly from the pedagogical aspects of the history of philosophy, from the cultural-educational task. And so he gives to the whole study of the history of philosophy a passive, contemplative, academic character. That, of course, does not correspond to the Marxist-Leninist definition of philosophical science, which, like every science, must continuously be developed, perfected, enriched by new propositions, while it discards the obsolete.

The author concentrates on the pedagogical aspects, thus placing limitations on the development of the science, as through Marxism-Leninism had already reached its apex and as though the task of developing our theory were no longer a main task. Such reasoning is inconsistent with the spirit of Marxism-Leninism inasmuch as it introduces the metaphysical idea of Marxism as a completed and perfected theory; it can lead only to the drying up of living and penetrating philosophical thought.

### *Philosophy and the Natural Sciences*

Likewise unsatisfactory is the author's treatment of the development of the natural sciences in that period when the history of philosophy could not be expounded apart from the successes of the natural sciences without direct harm to science. Thus, Comrade Alexandrov fails to clarify the conditions for the rise and development of scientific materialism on the granite foundation of the achievements of modern natural science.

In expounding the history of philosophy, Alexandrov

managed to sever it from the history of the natural sciences. It is characteristic that the introduction, which sets forth the main premises of the book, fails to mention the interrelation of philosophy and the natural sciences. The author does not refer to the natural sciences even when such silence would seem impossible. Thus, on page 9, he writes: "Lenin in his works, particularly in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, studied the Marxist theory of society in all its aspects and further developed it." In speaking of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Comrade Alexandrov managed to say nothing about the problems of natural science and its connection with philosophy.

One is struck by the extremely poor and abstract characterization of the level of natural science at various periods. Thus, with regard to the natural science of the ancient Greeks, we read that there took place "the birth of the sciences of nature". With regard to the epoch of the later scholasticism (twelfth to thirteenth centuries) we read that "there appeared many inventions and technical improvements".

Where the author attempts to clarify such vague formulations, we get only an inadequately connected enumeration of discoveries. Moreover, the book contains flagrant errors, disclosing an amazing ignorance of questions of natural science. Of what value, for instance, is this description of the development of science in the epoch of the Renaissance:

"The learned Guericke constructed his famous pneumatic pump, and the existence of atmospheric pressure which replaced the notion of vacuum, was demonstrated practically at first through the experiment



with hemispheres at Magdeburg. In the course of centuries people argued about the location of the centre of the universe, and whether our planet was to be considered that centre. But then Copernicus made his entrance into science, and later Galileo. The latter proved the existence of spots on the sun and their change of position. He saw in this, and other discoveries, confirmation of the teaching of Copernicus on the heliocentric structure of our solar system. The barometer taught people to forecast the weather. The microscope replaced the system of conjectures regarding the life of the minutest organisms and played a large part in the development of biology. The compass helped Columbus to prove by experience the spherical structure of our planet.”

Nearly every one of these sentences is absurd. How could atmospheric pressure replace the notion of vacuum? Does the existence of atmosphere negate the existence of vacuum? In what way did the movement of the sunspots confirm the teaching of Copernicus?

The idea that the barometer forecasts weather is in the same unscientific vein. Unfortunately, even today people have not yet fully learned how to forecast the weather, as is well known to all of you from the practices of our own Weather Bureau.

Further, can the microscope replace the system of conjecture? And, finally, what is this “spherical structure of our planet”? Until now it has seemed that “spherical” could refer only to shape.

Alexandrov’s book is full of such pearls.

But the author is guilty of even more fundamental errors of principle. He states that the way was prepared for the dialectical method by the advances of natural science "as early as the second half of the eighteenth century". This basically contradicts Engels' well-known statement that the dialectical method was prepared for by the discovery of the cellular structure of organisms, by the theory of the conservation and transformation of energy, by the theory of Darwin. All these discoveries date from the nineteenth century. On this false assumption, the author proceeds to enumerate the discoveries of the eighteenth century and speaks extensively of Galvani, Laplace and Lyell, but as regards the three great discoveries indicated by Engels he limits himself to the following:

"Thus, for instance, already during the life of Feuerbach, there was established the cellular theory, the theory of the transformation of energy, and there appeared the theory of Darwin on the origin of species through natural selection."

Such are the basic weaknesses of the book. I shall not digress upon incidental and secondary weaknesses; neither will I repeat the highly valuable remarks of criticism, from the theoretical and the practical standpoint, which have been made during the discussion.

The conclusion is that the textbook is bad, that it must be basically revised. But such revision means first of all overcoming the false and confused conceptions which are manifestly current among our philosophers, including leading

ones. I now pass to the second question, the question of the situation on our philosophical front.

## II. THE SITUATION ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRONT

The fact that Comrade Alexandrov's book was accepted by the majority of our leading philosophical workers, that it was presented for a Stalin prize, that it was recommended as a textbook and received many laudatory reviews, shows that other philosophical workers obviously share the mistakes of Comrade Alexandrov. This bespeaks a most unsatisfactory situation on our theoretical front.

The fact that the book did not evoke any considerable protest, that it required the intervention of the Central Committee, and particularly Comrade Stalin, to expose its inadequacies, shows the absence of developed Bolshevik criticism and self-criticism on the philosophical front. The lack of creative discussions, of criticism and self-criticism, could not but have a harmful effect upon our scientific work in philosophy. It is known that philosophical works are entirely insufficient in quantity and weak in quality. Monographs and articles on philosophy are a rare occurrence.

Many have spoken here of the need for a philosophical journal. The need for such a journal is questionable. We have not yet forgotten the deplorable experience with the periodical *Under the Banner of Marxism*. It seems to me that the present possibilities for publishing original monographs and articles are not utilized adequately.

Comrade Svetlov stated here that the reading public of

*Bolshevik* is not the public for theoretical works of a special character. I think that this is entirely incorrect and proceeds from an obvious underestimation of the high level of our readers and their demands. Such an opinion, it seems to me, comes from a failure to understand that our philosophy is not the property merely of a group of professional philosophers, but belongs to our entire Soviet intelligentsia. There was definitely nothing bad in the tradition of the advanced Russian magazines of the pre-revolutionary epoch, which published, along with articles on literature and art, scientific works, including philosophical studies. Our magazine *Bolshevik* speaks to a far larger audience than any philosophical journal, and to enclose the creative work of our philosophers in a specialized philosophical journal, it seems to me, would create the danger of narrowing the basis of our philosophical work. Please do not take me for an opponent of a journal. It seems to me that the paucity of philosophical studies in our journals and in *Bolshevik* invites us to begin to overcome this weakness in their pages first, especially in the journals which from time to time even now publish philosophical articles of scientific and social interest.

Our leading philosophical institute — the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences — in my opinion, presents a rather unsatisfactory picture, too. It does not gather to itself the workers in the periphery, and, having no connection with them is therefore not in reality an institution of an All-Union character. Philosophers in the provinces are left to themselves, although they represent a great force which unfortunately is not utilized. Philosophical studies, including works submitted for university degrees,

turn for their themes toward the past, toward quiet and less responsible historical subjects of the type of “The Copernican Heresy — Past and Present”. This leads toward a certain reviving of scholasticism.

From this point of view the dispute about Hegel which took place here appears strange. The participants in that dispute forced an open door. The question of Hegel was settled long ago. There is no reason whatsoever to pose it anew. No material was presented here beyond that which had already been analysed and evaluated. The discussion itself was irritating in its scholasticism and as unproductive as the probings at one time in certain circles into such questions as to whether one should cross oneself with two or with three fingers, or whether God can create a stone which he cannot lift, or whether the mother of God was a virgin. Urgent present-day problems are hardly dealt with at all.

All this taken together is pregnant with great dangers, much greater than you imagine. The gravest danger is the fact that some of you have already fallen into the habit of accepting these weaknesses.

### *Advancing Our Philosophical Front*

Our philosophical work does not manifest either a militant spirit or a Bolshevik tempo. Considered in that light, some of the erroneous theses of Alexandrov’s textbook reflect the lag on the entire philosophical front, thus constituting, not an isolated accidental event, but an entire phenomenon.

We have often used in our discussion the term “philo-

sophical front". But where is this front? When we speak of the philosophical front, it immediately suggests an organized detachment of militant philosophers, perfectly equipped with Marxist theory, waging a determined offensive against hostile ideology abroad and against the survivals of bourgeois ideology in the consciousness of Soviet people within our country — a detachment ceaselessly advancing our science, arming the working people of our socialist society with the consciousness of the correctness of our path, and with scientifically grounded confidence in the ultimate victory of our cause.

But does our philosophical front resemble a real front? It resembles rather a stagnant creek, or a bivouac far from the battlefield. The field has not yet been conquered, for the most part contact with the enemy has not been established, there is no reconnaissance, the weapons are rusting, the soldiers are fighting at their own risk and peril; while the commanders are either intoxicated with past victories, or are debating whether they have sufficient forces for an offensive or should ask for aid from the outside, or are discussing to what extent consciousness can lag behind daily life without appearing to lag too far.

At the same time our Party urgently needs an upswing of philosophical work. The rapid changes which every new day brings into our socialist life are not generalized by our philosophers, not illuminated from the viewpoint of Marxist dialectics. This only renders more difficult the conditions for the further development of philosophical science. As a result, the development of philosophical thought proceeds to a considerable extent apart from our professional philos-

ophers. This is entirely impermissible.

The cause for the lag on the philosophical front is not, of course, connected with any objective conditions. The objective conditions are more favourable than ever. The material awaiting scientific analysis and generalization is unlimited. The causes for the lag on the philosophical front must be sought in the subjective sphere. These causes are basically the same as those disclosed by the Central Committee in analysing the lag in other sectors of the ideological front.

As you will remember, the decisions of the Central Committee on ideological problems were directed against formalist and apolitical attitudes in literature and art, against bowing before foreign influences and for militant Bolshevik partisanship in literature and art. It is known that many groups of workers on our ideological front have already drawn proper conclusions from the decisions of the Central Committee and have achieved considerable successes along these lines.

But our philosophers have lagged behind. Apparently they have not taken note of the absence of principle and idea-content in philosophical work, of the neglect of present-day themes, the existence of servility and fawning before bourgeois philosophy. Apparently they believe that a turn on the ideological front does not concern them. It is clear now that the turn is necessary.

A considerable share of responsibility for the fact that the philosophical front does not stand in the first ranks of our ideological work rests, unfortunately, upon Comrade Alexandrov. He does not possess, unfortunately, the ability for sharply critical disclosure of the weaknesses of his own

work. He evidently overestimates his own powers and does not rely on the experience and knowledge of the collective body of philosophers. Moreover, he relies too much in his work on a narrow circle of intimate collaborators and admirers. Philosophical activity has somehow been monopolized by a small group of philosophers, while a larger number, especially in the provinces, have not been brought into leading work.

Correct mutual relations among philosophers have thus proved themselves infringed upon.

It is clear that the creation of such a work as a textbook on the history of philosophy is beyond the capacity of one man and that Comrade Alexandrov from the very beginning should have drawn upon a wide circle of authors — dialectical materialists, historical materialists, historians, natural scientists, and economists. In thus failing to rely upon a large group of competent people, Comrade Alexandrov chose an incorrect method of preparing his book.

This fault must be corrected. Philosophical knowledge naturally is the property of the whole collective body of Soviet philosophers. The method of drawing in a large number of authors is now being applied to the editing of the textbook on political economy which should be ready in the near future. Into this work there have been drawn wide circles, not only of economists, but also of historians and philosophers. Such a method of creative work is the most reliable.

This implies also another idea — that of uniting the efforts of ideological workers in various fields, who at present have insufficient contact with each other, for the solution of



large problems of general scientific significance. Thus we secure reciprocal activity among the workers in various branches of ideology and are assured that we will advance, not helter-skelter, but in an organized and unified manner, and consequently with the greatest guarantee of success.

*Criticism and Self-Criticism — The Special Form of Struggle  
Between the Old and the New*

What are the roots of the subjective errors of a number of leading workers on the philosophical front? Why did the representatives of the older generation of philosophers in the course of the discussion justly reproach some of the young philosophers for their premature senility, for their lack of militant tone, of combativeness? Obviously, there can be only one answer to this question — insufficient knowledge of the foundations of Marxism-Leninism and the presence of remnants of the influence of bourgeois ideology.

This expresses itself also in the fact that many of our workers still do not understand that Marxism-Leninism is a living, creative theory, continuously developing, continuously enriching itself on the basis of the experience of socialist construction and the achievements of contemporary natural science. Such underestimation of this living revolutionary aspect of our theory cannot but lead to the abasement of philosophy and its role.

It is precisely in this lack of militancy and fighting spirit that we must look for the reasons some of our philosophers fear to apply themselves to new problems — to present-day questions, to the solution of problems which are daily posed

by practice, and for which philosophy must provide an answer. It is time to advance more courageously the theory of Soviet society, of the Soviet state, of contemporary natural science, of ethics and aesthetics. It is necessary to put an end to a cowardice alien to Bolshevism. To permit stagnation in the development of theory means to dry up our philosophy, to deprive it of its most valuable feature — its capacity for development, and to transform it into a dead and barren dogma.

The question of Bolshevik criticism and self-criticism is for our philosophers not only a practical but a profoundly theoretical matter.

Since the inner content of the process of development is the struggle of opposites, as dialectics teach us, the struggle between the old and the new, between the dying and the rising, between the decaying and the developing, our Soviet philosophy must show how this law of dialectics operates in conditions of socialist society and wherein lie the specific characteristics of its operation. We know that in a society divided into classes the operation of this law is different from its operation in our Soviet society. Here is a broad field for scientific investigation, and none of our philosophers has cultivated that field. This notwithstanding the fact that our Party long ago discovered and placed at the service of socialism that particular form of revealing and overcoming the contradictions of socialist society (such contradictions exist and philosophy cannot avoid dealing with them) — that particular form of struggle between the old and the new, between the dying and the rising, in our Soviet society, which is known as criticism and self-criticism.

In our Soviet society, where antagonistic classes have been eliminated, the struggle between the old and the new, and consequently the development from the lower to the higher, proceeds not in the form of struggle between antagonistic classes and of cataclysms, as is the case under capitalism, but in the form of criticism and self-criticism, which is the real motive force of our development, a powerful instrument in the hands of the Party. This is incontestably a new form of movement, a new type of development, a new dialectical law.

Marx stated that earlier philosophers only explained the world, while the task today is to change the world. We have changed the old world and built a new one, but our philosophers, unfortunately, do not adequately explain this new world, nor do they adequately participate in transforming it. In the discussion there were several attempts, as it were, "theoretically" to explain the causes of that lag. It was stated, for instance, that the philosophers worked too long as commentators, and for this reason did not pass in due time to original monographs. This explanation may sound well, but it is not convincing. Of course, the philosophers must now place creative work in the forefront, but that does not mean that the work of commentary, or rather of popularization, should be given up. Our people need it just as much.

### *The Corrupt Ideology of the Bourgeoisie*

We must now quickly make up for lost time. Problems do not wait. The brilliant victory of socialism, achieved in the Great Patriotic War, which was at the same time a bril-

liant victory for Marxism, sticks in the throat of the imperialists.

Today the centre of the struggle against Marxism has shifted to America and Britain. All the forces of obscurantism and reaction have today been placed at the service of the struggle against Marxism. Brought out anew and placed at the service of bourgeois philosophy are the instruments of atom-dollar democracy, the outworn armour of obscurantism and clericalism: the Vatican and racist theory, rabid nationalism and decayed idealist philosophy, the mercenary yellow press and depraved bourgeois art.

But apparently all these are not enough. Today, under the banner of “ideological” struggle against Marxism, large reserves are being mobilized. Gangsters, pimps, spies and criminal elements are recruited.

Let me take, at random, a recent example. As was reported a few days ago in *Izvestia*, the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, edited by the existentialist, Sartre, lauds as some new revelation a book by the writer Jean Genet, *The Diary of a Thief*, which opens with the words: “Treason, theft and homosexuality — these will be my key topics. There exists an organic connection between my taste for treason, the occupation of the thief, and my amorous adventures.” The author manifestly knows his business. The plays of this Jean Genet are presented with much glitter on the Parisian stage and Jean Genet himself is showered with invitations to visit America. Such is the “last word” of bourgeois culture.

We know from the experience of our victory over fascism into what a blind alley idealist philosophy has led whole nations. Now it appears in its new, repulsively ugly

character which reflects the whole depth, baseness and loathsomeness of the decay of the bourgeoisie. Pimps and depraved criminals as philosophers — this is indeed the limit of decay and ruin. Nevertheless, these forces still have life, are still capable of poisoning the consciousness of the masses.

Contemporary bourgeois science supplies clericalism and fideism with new arguments which must be mercilessly exposed. We can take as an example the English astronomer Eddington's theory of the physical constants of the universe, which leads directly to the Pythagorean mysticism of numbers which, from mathematical formulae, deduces such "essential constants" as the apocalyptic number 666, etc. Many followers of Einstein, in their failure to understand the dialectical process of knowledge, the relationship of absolute and relative truth, transpose the results of the study of the laws of motion of the finite, limited sphere of the universe to the whole infinite universe and arrive at the idea of the finite nature of the world, its limitedness in time and space. The astronomer Milne has even "calculated" that the world was created 2 billion years ago. It would probably be correct to apply to those English scientists the words of their great countryman, the philosopher Bacon, about those who turn the impotence of their science into a libel against nature.

In like measure, the Kantian subterfuges of contemporary bourgeois atomic physicists lead them to deductions of the "free will" of the electron and to attempts to represent matter as only some combination of waves and other such nonsense.

Here is a colossal field of activity for our philosophers,

who should analyse and generalize the results of contemporary natural science, remembering the advice of Engels that materialism “with each epoch-making discovery, even in the sphere of natural science... has to change its form...” (Fredrick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 36.)

Upon whom, if not upon us — the land of victorious Marxism and its philosophers — devolves the task of heading the struggle against corrupt and base bourgeois ideology? Who if not we should strike crushing blows against it?

### *The Triumph of Marxism*

From the ashes of the war have arisen the new democracies and the national liberation movement of the colonial peoples. Socialism is on the agenda in the life of the peoples. Who, if not we — the land of victorious socialism and its philosophers — should help our friends and brothers beyond our borders to illuminate their struggle for a new society with the light of scientific socialist understanding? Who if not we should enlighten them with the ideological weapon of Marxism?

In our country the vast expansion of socialist economy and culture is in progress. The steadfast growth of the socialist understanding of the masses makes ever greater demands upon our ideological work. What is taking place is a broad assault upon the vestiges of capitalism in the consciousness of the people. Who but our philosophers should head the ranks of the workers on the ideological front, applying in full measure the Marxist theory of knowledge in generalizing the vast experience of socialist construction and

in solving the new tasks of socialism?

In the face of these great tasks one might ask: Are our philosophers capable of undertaking these new obligations? Is there enough powder in our philosophical powder-horns? Has our philosophical power weakened? Are our philosophical cadres capable, with their own inner strength, of overcoming the defects of their development and reconstructing their work anew?

There can be but one answer to this question. The philosophical discussion has shown that we have these forces, that they are by no means small, that they are capable of exposing their own errors in order to overcome them. We need only more confidence in our forces, more testing of our forces in active battles, in posing and solving burning present-day problems. It is time to put an end to the non-militant tempo of our work, to shake off the old Adam and to begin to work as Marx, Engels and Lenin worked, as Stalin works.

Comrades, as you may remember, Engels in the past greeted the appearance of a Marxist pamphlet in 2,000 or 3,000 copies and characterized this as a great political event of vast significance. From such a fact, insignificant by our standards, Engels drew the conclusion that Marxist philosophy had taken deep roots in the working class. What are we to say of the penetration of Marxist philosophy into broad strata of our people; what would Marx and Engels have said if they knew that in our country philosophical works are distributed among the people in tens of millions of copies? This is a real triumph of Marxism, and it is a living testimony to the fact that the great teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and

Stalin have become in our land the teaching of the entire people. On this foundation, which has no equal in the world, our philosophy should flourish. May you be worthy of our epoch, the epoch of Lenin and Stalin, the epoch of our people, our victorious people.