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THE SOVIET WRITER AND SOVIET CULTURAL POLICY

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This working paper is another study in the series prepared under Project CAESAR. Project CAESAR is designed to provide detailed analyses from all intelligence sources of developments affecting leading members of the Soviet hierarchy, their political and personal associations, policies with which they have been identified, and political institutional changes which affect the Soviet leadership situation.

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THE SOVIET WRITER AND SOVIET CULTURAL POLICY

Summary and Conclusions

"The lag between literature and life"--the official Soviet euphemism for the failure of writers to fulfill their propagandistic mission--has assumed unique and even dramatic characteristics in the period since Stalin's death. The pressure for greater creative freedom, appearing initially in 1953 as cautious protests by veteran writers against the standards of the Stalin era and developing later into headlong assaults by both old and young writers, was officially condoned until it came into open conflict with the dictates of political orthodoxy. When the official brakes and the pressure for retrenchment were applied, in early 1954 and again in late 1956, it was expected that literature would return to its traditional position as the handmaiden of politics. Instead, in a remarkable display of intransigence, the Soviet literary profession--at least its most influential and talented members--continued to resist being wooed or cajoled into total submission. In their resolute and protracted feat of resistance, Soviet writers have demonstrated a measure of personal integrity and unity of purpose unmatched by any other segment of Soviet society.

As a result of the fluctuations in official policy and the durability of the pressures for liberalization, Soviet literature has been carried beyond the confines of the Stalin era. While continuing to suffer from prescriptions of content, stereotypes of character, and distortions of truth, Soviet literature has in recent years probed areas of human activity rarely frequented during Stalin's lifetime. Not only did the heretical literary works (e.g., Ehrenburg's The Thaw, Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone, and Literaturnaya Moskva II) depart from earlier conventions and taboos, but even the officially approved works (e.g., Korneychuk's Wings, Nikolayeva's Battle on the Way, and Kochetov's The Brothers Yershov) mirrored some of the more unseemly aspects of Soviet society. Even more significant than the changes in literary content has been the striking change in the intellectual milieu governing creative activity. The opening of wider avenues of communication within the literary profession since 1953 has led to the emergence of a kind of intellectual life impossible under Stalin. The

change in the intellectual climate, which was dramatized by the outbursts of nonconformity in 1956, has been most clearly reflected in the willingness of increasing numbers of writers to express their genuine convictions in public, even though these views have repeatedly been at odds with established norms. The fact that such expressions of candor and conviction have continued to manifest themselves is a measure of the greater toleration accorded writers during the post-Stalin period.

One of the more important aspects of the change in the intellectual climate has been the transformation of attitudes among leading members of the literary profession. Writers who in the past were consistently conformist have in the more relaxed conditions of the post-Stalin period appeared as ardent advocates of greater freedom in the arts. Ilya Ehrenburg has stood at the forefront of the erstwhile official apologists who, while continuing to render Caesar his due at international conferences and official functions, have plugged for a widening of the frontiers in their own professional life. Capitalizing on their international prestige and loyal service to the regime, these veterans have sought to remove the trammels on creative initiative and place Soviet literary activity on a sounder footing.

By virtue of their exceptional talents and enormous prestige, the established writers have been able to exert a far greater influence than their numbers imply--a fact that has been a constant source of concern to the regime in its efforts to recruit new talents more receptive to official dictate. Proof of the intellectual appeal of such literary veterans as Ehrenburg, Tvardovsky, and Panferov has been reflected in the moderate treatment accorded their iconoclasm, as well as in their retention of influential positions in the literary profession. Although members of the older generation of Soviet writers have passed through official censure relatively unscathed, they have, by implication, frequently been charged with actively encouraging the spread of undesirable attitudes among the "politically undeveloped" younger writers--a generation which has shown surprisingly little respect for the traditions of the past.

The tenacity with which heretical opinions have survived in the Soviet literary community, as well as the success enjoyed by writers in evading official controls and resisting

official pressures, has in part resulted from the more moderate policies of the post-Stalin regime. Instead of bludgeoning writers with indiscriminate personal attacks, purges, or worse, the regime has sought to persuade and convert writers to its cause. This policy has been calculated to stimulate creative output while at the same time keeping dissidence within bounds. However, because the controls imposed have not been rigid enough to prevent questioning and the concessions to writers not extensive enough to satisfy them, this policy has perpetuated the very element of resistance that it was designed to curb.

The continued vitality of the pressures for liberalization might also be explained by the nature of the creative process itself. Most Soviet writers are probably as strongly committed psychologically to the principle of creative freedom as their Western counterparts. To those--probably the vast majority of writers--who have made peace with their environment in the belief that their ideals can be realized within the official framework, conformity with official values has probably not involved any severe violations of conscience. To those with unusual talent who aspire to capture artistically the depth and variety of human experience, however, the official prescriptions and proscriptions have generated resentment and disgust. From this group have come the standard-bearers of artistic integrity who have served as a rallying point for those anxious to defend and expand the scope of creative activity.

Despite its political overtones, the movement to emancipate Soviet literature from the false values and bureaucratic controls of the past has been largely apolitical in character. What the Soviet writers have demanded--and this is clear from their works of art and public speeches--is not so much to be free to attack the prevailing ideology, or even to discuss political issues, but simply to describe life as they see it without constant reference to ideology. Bored or disgusted with the artificial stereotypes of good and evil and irritated by constant official interference, they long for an opportunity to create with greater originality and variety. Instead of attempting to challenge the foundations of the political order which they have come to accept in principle, the writers have appealed for a measure of professional autonomy under which they could freely espouse the very ideals to which the regime is publicly committed.

Apart from their determination to write spontaneously and honestly, there was probably no defined aim uniting the bolder voices in the Soviet literary community. In demanding adherence to truth in art, many of them sincerely believed they were advancing official objectives as well as expressing the "wisdom of the masses." In most instances the exposures of bureaucratic abuses in belles-lettres reflected not only a devotion to truth and individual human values, but also a primitive faith in socialist and patriotic ideals. In short, what the more outspoken writers were asserting was essentially a morale indictment of corruption, inhumanity, and injustice, but in so doing they probably conceived themselves not as the opponents of the regime but as the bearers of its conscience.

While ostensibly moral and apolitical in tone and professional in purpose, however, the demands of Soviet writers for greater creative latitude have inevitably had far-reaching political implications in the eyes of the regime. In attempting to depict reality as their consciences guide--not as the regime sees it--the writers have, in effect, threatened to usurp the party leadership's role in diagnosing and prescribing for the ills of Soviet society. Khrushchev made this clear at the Third Writers' Congress in May 1959 when he asserted, "Listen, dear friends. If there is anyone who discloses and lays bare deficiencies and vices and whose hand does not falter in this process, it is the party and its central committee." Sensitive about its prerogatives, the party leadership has always feared all pretensions of professional autonomy which might lead to the spread of political heresy. Recognizing the power of the press and mindful of the undesirable political attitudes expressed and encouraged by the literature of the "thaw," the regime has always jealously guarded its monopoly in the molding of public opinion.

In view of the basic conflict between the purposes of art and politics, the prospects for a durable accommodation between writer and regime in the USSR appear to be remote. Given the formidable organizational weapons at its disposal, the regime apparently is capable of keeping pressures within the literary community under control. In fact, under Khrushchev's leadership the regime seems supremely confident that events outside the realm of letters will ultimately prove more decisive in shaping popular attitudes than the ideas expressed by Soviet intellectuals. Nevertheless, as long as the regime remains committed to the policy of "comradely persuasion"--admittedly an improved though still imperfect technique of control--at least some writers will continue to press for an expansion of artistic and intellectual horizons.

Introduction

Because of the essentially personal nature of artistic creation and the enormous influence exerted--even within a totalitarian society--by individual artistic personalities on the moods of their community, it is necessary to exercise considerable caution in any discussion of an official cultural policy. In the Soviet context, the cultural milieu is officially regarded as one of the many domains of the state, and the artist is viewed as a "transmission belt," an "engineer of the human soul," whose function is to popularize official directives, to exhort and reform the citizen until his goals and those of the state coincide. To fulfill the assignments of the state, the artist has been saddled with a huge, overlapping bureaucratic apparatus which has interfered with his traditional function of observing and portraying life. The fact that Soviet art, music, and literature are subservient to party directives and controls, however, makes neither the nature of that art nor the official direction simple.

To achieve its propagandistic functions, the Soviet literary profession, now numbering nearly 5,000 members, has been organized on a comprehensive national scale, exalted to a lofty social status, and supported with generous emoluments. The regime has harnessed the literary profession with an elaborate system of controls--the party apparatus, the writers' organizations, editorial boards, repertory councils, and governmental censorship--and has thrust on all writers the artistic credos of "socialist realism" and "party-mindedness" (partiynost) under which they are obliged to portray reality not as they see it but as the shifting needs of the regime demand. All the instrumentalities of persuasion and coercion have been employed to win writers to the Communist cause, to induce them to create works that will not only conform with official ideology but will attain lasting artistic quality.

Although socialist realism and partiynost have long been proclaimed the official credos of Soviet literature, these concepts have never been satisfactorily defined in theory or practice. In general, they have come to represent an idealized approach to life, the leitmotiv of which is the march of Soviet society under the direction of the Communist party along the road to Communism. The social evils--"survivals of capitalism"--encountered on the way must, according to the official prescription, be treated as transitory and be overcome by "positive

struggle." The Soviet writer is thus placed in the position of a visionary who must describe in positive terms a life that he has never seen and yet present it as the reality of the present day. Nevertheless, the ambiguities in the official criteria, as well as the changes in the political climate, have afforded Soviet writers a greater degree of latitude in plying their craft than is generally recognized. Even during periods of severest political controls, some Soviet writers have through sheer force of talent been able to bend to their own purposes the official dicta to which others have been subservient.

Despite these severe limitations on creative activity, the position that literature occupies in the USSR exceeds by far the limits to which it is confined in the West. This is due not only to a strong literary tradition dating back to the 19th century, but also to the conditions governing intellectual and social life in the USSR. As opposed to the dull,stereotyped, and monolithic outpourings of the Soviet propaganda machine, literature provides a refuge from the unremitting pressures of everyday Soviet life. By opening to the reader a world of sense and emotion denied him by official press, Soviet literature performs a social function and exercises a public influence quite comparable to that of the "human interest" journalism of the West. This function and this response give the Soviet writer an incomparably greater status vis-a-vis the public than that of his Western counterpart and explain the acute sensitivity of the Soviet regime to literary developments.

The relationship between the regime and the writer has been further complicated by the enormous growth of the Soviet reading public and the historical role of literature in a country with few other attractions. Schooled in the great traditions of the 19th century literary classics and enlarged by the process of mass education, the Soviet reading public has developed a powerful taste for good literature and a surprising immunity against political pamphleteering--a fact evidenced by the striking preference for pre-Soviet literature at all times since the revolution. To be read, a work of art must be believed, and to be believed, it must mirror a reasonably accurate image of Soviet society. Hence, to secure official sanction as well as popular approval, the writer must attempt to reconcile the conflicting demands of the conformity and creativity--a politically delicate and artistically difficult undertaking.

Thus it has never been possible to understand Soviet culture either as a mechanical reflection of political events or as an isolated and autonomous phenomenon. During the post-Stalin period the cultural scene has been unsettled by the appearance of new tensions and confusions which have assailed both the bureaucracy and the artistic intelligentsia and have caused them at times to interact with each other in unprecedented ways.

In any brief historical sketch of Soviet cultural policy it is difficult to avoid setting arbitrary periods in time and giving the impression of a sudden raising and lowering of a curtain on a series of self-contained scenes. At times during the period under review, dramatic scenes which were interrupted by abrupt descents of the official curtain continued to be staged in the wings and even in the orchestra itself. At other times, the apparent contradictions and confusion in official cues had lingering effects neither anticipated nor desired by the official prompters. Yet in retrospect it can be seen that processes of change gradually crystallized into patterns of development which may be identified as distinct phases of the post-Stalin cultural policy.

Relaxation of Restraints (Spring 1953 - Spring 1954)

The Official "Thaw". The postwar literary purge conducted under the imprimatur of the party decrees of 1946-1948,* which attempted to place Soviet literature in a rigid party strait jacket, had run its course well before Stalin's death, and had left in its wake an art so sterile that it threatened to undermine the very purposes for which it was officially designed. In the atmosphere of pervasive controls and fear, the Soviet literary community was driven down a blind alley of conformity without creativity. The fact that something was seriously amiss in Soviet literature came to be recognized by even the regime itself, as was evidenced by the increased volume of critical comment that began in the central press in the summer of 1950. Playwriting in particular was attacked, perhaps because the nearly empty theaters publicly dramatized the failure of the numerous ideologically satisfactory plays. The situation on the cultural front reached such proportions that Malenkov, in his central committee report to the 19th party congress in October 1952, castigated the "falseness and rot" in Soviet literature and appealed for greater imagination and variety. While calling for new Gogols and Shchedrins who, with the fire of their satire, would "burn away everything... that retards progress," however, Malenkov emphasized that the basic standards of Soviet literature remained unchanged.

In response to the officially encouraged "thaw," the symbol popularized by the title of Ilya Ehrenburg's subsequently published novel, the pent-up yearnings of the cultural intelligentsia for greater creative latitude began gradually but unmistakably to break through after the death of Stalin. The initial reactions to the official overtures, which were expressed in literary discussions and critical articles long

*The term "Zhdanovshchina" was coined in the West to describe the postwar cultural purge supervised by Soviet politburo member Andrey Zhdanov. This term is misleading, however, since the most repressive phase of this purge, involving the arrests and/or executions of "homeless cosmopolitans," occurred after Zhdanov's death in August 1948.

before they appeared in belles-lettres, were reserved in character and limited in scope. More emotional than intellectual in nature, the early critical stirrings were directed not so much at the root of the cultural malaise--rigid orthodoxy and ubiquitous controls--as at its more pronounced symptoms--the dehumanization of the arts, the artificiality of artistic stereotypes, and the lack of integrity in artistic work. A reorientation toward individual rather than social themes and a rediscovery of basic human values, such as love, honesty, and sincerity, became the hallmarks of the first probing criticisms of the Soviet scene in the period immediately following Stalin's death.

Protest Against Dehumanization of Literature. One of the first emotional protests against the sterility of the past, an outburst that was echoed during 1953 by several first-rank Soviet writers, dramatists, and composers, was expressed by the young Leningrad poetess Olga Berggolts in Literary Gazette on 16 April 1953. Berggolts deplored the absence of love and other human emotions in Soviet lyric poetry. She complained:

> In a great many of our lyrical poems the most important thing is lacking: humanity, the human being. I don't mean that human beings are not represented at all. Indeed they are, human beings of all types and professions; we are confronted with bulldozer and steam-shovel operators; we are confronted with horticulturists--often well, sometimes brilliantly, described. But they are all seen from the outside, and the most important thing of all is lacking in our poetry--a lyric hero with an individual relationship to the world, to the countryside.

The protest against the virtual exclusion from Soviet literature of personal problems and human emotions and the almost pathological obsession with dams, tractors, and factories soon developed into wide admissions in the party press and cultural journals of serious deficiencies in Soviet culture. In June and July 1953 Pravda criticized playwrights for the "dull," "superficial," and "colorless" plays which were "schematic portrayals of conflict." Calling for a "bold, creative search for the new," Pravda sharply attacked the Soviet Writers' Union for not developing "bold and principled" criticism and self-criticism. To encourage more

flexibility and stimulate such criticism, as well as to adopt the regime's newly revived political principle to all organizations, Pravda demanded the introduction of "collective leadership" into all professional unions of cultural workers.

Official dissatisfaction with the state of literature was buttressed by equally critical outbursts by the writers themselves. At a conference of young critics in September, the elderly poetess and Stalin prize winner, Vera Inber, warned that "all is not well in our poetry" and that the Soviet public was tired of "the same steamshovel, the same dam, the same road." She also deplored the harsh attitude of Soviet critics who tended to regard the writer as "an enemy who stood on the other side of the literary barricade." At the same conference the old novelist and playwright Konstanin Paustovsky found it necessary to remind his audience that writing and criticism constituted a "high calling," and that the writer's "creative individuality" should be granted due respect.

Among the issues which began to emerge with biting force in the gradually broadening discussion was the question of the writer's own responsibility for the integrity of his work. The June edition of Novy Mir carried a long poem entitled "Distance Beyond Distance" by its editor, the distinguished poet Aleksandr Tvardovsky; this was the first work to focus attention on the problem of the "inner editor" in the writer's mind. Tvardovsky pointed to the lack of courage on the part of the writer as one of the main reasons for the sterility of Soviet literature. His point was driven home by the playwright A. Salynsky, writing in Literary Gazette on 20 October. "The saddest thing," Salynsky observed, "is that some writers have not freed themselves from the 'internal censor' which for so long sat at the side of the writer and bound his thought, his tongue, saying: 'This is possible, but this is impossible.' But why should anything actually be impossible? After all, Soviet writers, even when sharply criticizing negative phenomena of our life, affirm the positive ideal of the Communist way of life!"

The views expressed by Tvardovsky, Salynsky, and others during the official "thaw" after Stalin's death represented a current of thought which persisted within the cultural intelligentsia, despite subsequent changes in official policy. According to this point of view, writers could regain the artistic self-respect that they had surrendered under Stalinism only by ridding themselves of the "internal censor"--the reluctance to speak the

truth because of obsessive fear of committing mistakes. By affirming the Communist ideal, as did Salynsky and others, writers and intellectuals were requesting permission to show their loyalty to the regime in the free expression of thought and creative activity unencumbered by artificial limitations.

Appeals for Greater Latitude. By the fall of 1953 the official campaign for "the new, the bold, and the expressive" had begun to elicit a variety of unusual responses which not only enlarged the scope of the literary discussion but also began to challenge long-standing literary conventions and political taboos. In a lengthy article in the October issue of Znamya, Ilya Ehrenburg, long a bellwether of the party line under Stalin, directed a sharp attack at literary critics, charging them with responsibility for the wretched state of Soviet literature. Giving vent to the writers' desires to abandon literature by decree for genuine literary expression, Ehrenburg ridiculed the Soviet bureaucratic practice of ordering writers to compose a novel or play in the same way an individual would order a suit from his tailor. Even writers living under tsarism had a better time of it, he declared, drawing by implication an invidious comparison with the Stalin era. Ehrenburg asserted that the "commands" by critics were unsuited to the field of literature, insisting that "a writer writes a book because it is necessary for him to say something of his own about people."

The criticisms voiced by Ehrenburg were supplemented by such prominent literary politicians as Konstantin Simonov and Aleksandr Fadeyev. At the October 1953 plenum of the board of the Soviet Writers' Union, which was devoted to the need to revitalize drama, Simonov lamented that publishing houses, fearful of "burning their fingers," were not reprinting works from the 1920s and 1930s and that theaters were not presenting plays from those years, even though these works had previously been condemned as outmoded and ideologically deficient. Simonov also called for a revival of the classics. At the same session, the former secretary general of the union, Aleksandr Fadeyev, proposed an amnesty for writers who had been blacklisted because of one mistake. Such writers should be shown the error of their ways and forgiven, Fadeyev declared.

It was not until the appearance of the article by V. Pomerantsev "On Sincerity in Literature" in the December 1953 issue of Novy Mir, however, that the literary discussion unfolded into sharp controversy. Pomerantsev's article was significant not

only for its use of parables and vignettes in a heretical vein and its treatment of aspects of Soviet life rarely discussed in print, but also for its impassioned appeal for greater confidence in the maturity of the creative artist's own judgment--a theme which was to be fully developed by the so-called "dissident" writers in 1956 and 1957. Pomerantsev drew attention to one of the basic problems confronting the Soviet writer: the difficulty of engaging the interest of readers while portraying only a fictionalized account of Soviet life.

Attacking the prevalence of stereotypes in Soviet literature and the artificial limitations on writing, Pomerantsev called on authors to portray concrete problems rather than to gloss over realities. He castigated doctrinaire critics and impudently taunted the Writer's Union: "I have heard that Shakespeare was not a member of any union, yet he did not write badly!" But his most telling barb, which was to draw the ire of official critics, was his insistence that sincerity should be the primary measure of creative art. "Don't think about prosecution," he advised writers. "Don't feel compelled to set down your conclusions; don't let yourself write a single line that you do not feel. Be independent!"

Although Pomerantsev and Ehrenburg did not challenge the ultimate authority of the regime in things literary, by implication they were striking at party controls and the havoc those controls caused to the creative imagination of the literary artist. By insisting that the real artistic test of a work of literature was its sincerity, Pomerantsev was, in effect, questioning the prescribed tests of socialist realism and partiynost and thus, by implication, condemning the whole body of postwar literature which had subscribed to those tests.

Official Restraints Without Repression (Spring 1954 - Spring 1956)

Tightening the Reins. By spring 1954 the original efforts of the regime to promote some relaxation in the literary sphere ran up against the problem of genuine criticism of official policies. The frank exposures of cultural stagnation and the outspoken calls for creative individuality by literary critics, as well as the appearance of certain plays and novels in a similar vein, soon began to rankle the regime and its cultural henchmen. Pomerantsev was sharply attacked in Literary Gazette on 30 January 1954, and during the remainder of the year there were few authoritative articles bearing on literary policy or theory which did not deal harshly with the hapless champion of sincerity who stood convicted of "philistinism, apoliticism and subjectivism."

The first clear indication that the regime had misgivings on the issue of loosening the bonds on its writers came in a Pravda editorial of 12 April 1954. While continuing on the one hand to rebuke those who painted Soviet reality in "idyllic tones" and ignored the many shortcomings in writing, the editorial criticized those who went "to the opposite extreme" and described only "negative phenomena." "This," Pravda warned, "has been particularly noticeable recently in dramaturgy as well as in individual articles of criticism." The first frost was in the air.

The new stiffening became evident almost immediately. On 28 April the presidium of the Soviet Writers' Union announced the expulsion of four playwrights, A. Surov, N. Virta, T. Galsanov, and L. Korobov, from its membership "as people who have committed a number of amoral and antisocial acts incompatible with the calling of a Soviet writer." Ironically, the deeds of moral instability of which these playwrights were accused were the very same traits they had attacked in their works. The subsequent criticisms of their plays--Virta's The Fall of Pompeyev and Surov's Respectable People--for having "falsely presented faults of the way of life of individual, morally unstable members of (Soviet) society as typical and almost leading traits of (Soviet) reality" suggested the real reasons behind their expulsion.

The officials responsible for control over the cultural community, increasingly concerned with the nonconformist attitudes expressed during the "thaw," now applied themselves to checking these tendencies. On 25 May in a Pravda article devoted to the Second Writers' Congress scheduled for "early in the autumn," the first secretary of the Writers' Union, Aleksey Surkov, set the tone of the official reaction by reasserting the principles of socialist realism and partiynost laid down in 1934 and invoked in the central committee decrees of 1946-48. Warning that these principles must not be questioned, Surkov lowered the boom on those who had sought to accelerate the cultural "thaw." From the vigorous reactions of the literary bureaucracy--the officials of the Writers' Union and the staffs of such papers as Pravda, Izvestia, and Literary Gazette--which was charged with instant and effective clarification and dissemination of changes in the party line, it was clear that the return to conventional formulations brought a feeling of relief among the defenders of the status quo.

Preparations for the Second Writers' Congress. While preparations for the Writers' Congress were under way in the spring and summer of 1954, the press flayed the various deviant works, a few of which had previously been praised or had escaped criticism. Pomerantsev's article, Vera Panova's novel The Seasons, Leonid Zorin's play The Guests, and Ehrenburg's novel The Thaw all came under heavy criticism for mirroring "only the darker aspects of life," "distorting Soviet reality," "caricaturing our artistic life," and challenging the "Leninist principle of partiynost in literature." The official complaint against these works was not that they exposed social evils and bad characters but that they treated these evils and characters as endemic to the Soviet scene, if not actually products of the system, instead of as disgusting excrescences of the past.

Official criticism of the deviants and their works was also accompanied by changes in the staffs of the offending literary journals. The editors of October, Fyodr Panferov and I. Paderin, were removed in June 1954. In August, after a meeting of the presidium of the Writers' Union, the journal Novy Mir was censured for having published the Pomerantsev article and others, and its editor-in-chief, Tvardovsky, who admitted the error of his ways, was replaced by Simonov. At the same time, the secretariat of the union was ordered to improve its guidance of the journals under its jurisdiction.

While the official spokesmen thus reasserted their control, many of the writers who had responded too eagerly to the relaxed atmosphere now retreated with alacrity before the blasts of editorials and "discussion" meetings. Whatever confusion had arisen out of the regime's efforts to pry writers and artists away from the "safe" formulas and worn clichés they had parroted under Stalinism was dissipated with relative ease--in marked contrast with the foot-dragging and defiance which was to greet a similar policy shift in late 1956.

At the same time, however, there were a few outbursts of self-assertion which marred the official facade of cultural orthodoxy and harmony. Ilya Ehrenburg refused to yield under the barrage of criticism of his novel The Thaw. The novel, as its title suggests, described with unusual frankness the rigors of life under Stalin and the hopes and promises of changes in the period that followed Stalin's death. The novel, published in the May issue of Znamya, was attacked on 6 June in Komsomolskaya Pravda. Despite the heavy attacks that followed, particularly the lengthy and detailed criticism by Simonov in the 17 and 20 July issues of Literary Gazette, Ehrenburg rejected the interpretations of his critics and asserted that "accusations built on speculations" did harm to the cause of Soviet literature. Ehrenburg's ability to avoid recantation was probably a result of official disinclination to make a spectacle over a prominent and loyal public servant.

By the fall of 1954 the official campaign for orthodoxy had brought to an end the public demands of writers for greater latitude in literary expression and reduced the theoretical level of literary discussion to where it had been under Stalin. In the official criticisms and denunciations, however, there appears to have been a conscious effort to avoid the heavy damage to literature which characterized the witch hunts of the past. The more moderate and reasonable tone of the many articles and editorials that appeared in the periodical press prior to the Writers' Congress indicated that a serious effort was being made to preserve the literary activity of writers and make them adapt to the party line, rather than banish them from the cultural scene. The fact that the congress had to be postponed several times gave some indication that the literary bureaucracy was taking deliberate pains to create an atmosphere of unanimity in the literary community.

Criticism of Literary Bureaucracy. One of the consequences of the bans imposed by the regime at this time was a shift from public discussion of controversial aesthetic issues to examination of the shortcomings of the Writers' Union, the administrative organ responsible for the day-to-day direction of Soviet literature. Criticism of the union was reflected on many levels--in the central press and at the preliminary congresses of writers in the provinces and national republics. The criticism ranged from complaints of neglect of national literatures and of younger writers to charges of preoccupation with organizational problems, excessive bureaucracy, and favoritism to older writers.

On 26 October, Literary Gazette carried a letter from seven prominent writers--Veniamin Kaverin, Emmanuel Kazakevich, Mikhail Lukonin, Samuil Marshak, Konstantin Paustovsky (see page 6), Nikolay Pogodin, and Stepan Shchipachov--which stated that the Writers' Union had been transformed "from a creative organization into a kind of department of literary affairs." The writers, several of whom were to suffer official censure two years later for their participation in the outburst of nonconformity that attended de-Stalinization, proposed a reorganization of the union involving a transfer of the functions of the various literary commissions under the union to creative groups centered around various journals, each headed by leading writers.

This remarkable proposal was met with a heated reply in Literary Gazette on 11 November by Vassily Azhayev, a member of the presidium of the Writers' Union and head of the literary commission for young writers. Charging that the proposal contained "the clear thought of liquidation of the union itself," Azhayev demanded instead a further strengthening of the organization. While the heated exchanges and the subsequent rejoinders in the press were inconclusive with regard to the organization of the union, they did reveal the depth of feelings separating the literary intelligentsia from the cultural bureaucrats.

The Second Writers' Congress. At the Second Writers' Congress--which finally convened in December 1954, 20 years after the first such congress--the regime made a pointed effort to heal old sores by avoiding discussion of

sensitive, controversial issues. In the formal reports the literary spokesmen--Surkov on the general literary situation, Simonov on prose, Samed Vurgun on poetry, Aleksandr Korneychuk on drama, and Sergey Gerasimov on films--cautiously labored the "safe" topics and persistently reaffirmed all the postwar party-line clichés on what Soviet literature should be. There were, nevertheless, occasional flickers of independence and criticism in the speeches of Mikhail Sholokhov, Ehrenburg, Berggolts, and other top writers who voiced discontent with the course of Soviet literature and criticism of the unlimited control of the literary bureaucracy over writers and literary taste. Without questioning the final authority of the party in literature, they appealed for a more democratically run literary organization and for greater latitude of expression for the individual writer.

The relative boldness of these criticisms at the congress suggested that the freer atmosphere in 1953 and 1954 had developed a certain persistence of its own which precluded a return to Stalinist intellectual confinement. The regime clearly did not wish to set the clock that far back. Instead, the regime, under Khrushchev's emerging influence and power, was attempting to use the congress as a vehicle for developing literary creativity within the framework of party guidance and through the established formula of "criticism and self-criticism" among the writers themselves.

New Literary Currents. Although the Second Writers' Congress closed on a predominant note of orthodoxy tempered by moderation, there were signs of change in the actual life and work of the Soviet literary community. The softening of Stalinist repression, the disclosures of economic shortcomings, and the reinvigoration of positive party activity--all these measures in the realm of official policy had begun to be felt in the cultural sphere. Writers who in the past had been under a heavy cloud of suspicion or worse began to return to creative activity. Works that had been previously banned were reprinted or restored in the repertoires of Soviet theaters. And in creative writing itself, the subject matter was slowly broadened in range to include topics rarely mentioned in the past. Under the impetus of the changes in the political life of the country, many of the pillars of orthodoxy began to crumble, leaving in their trail an extremely complex situation.

The reappearance of veteran writers who had been purged or whose works had been suppressed during the heyday of Stalinism marked an important change in the atmosphere governing Soviet literary development. In March 1954 the journal Krokodil carried an article by the satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko, and in December an anthology devoted to the Second Writers' Congress, Leningrad Almanac, contained several poems by Anna Akhmatova. Thus after a long period of enforced absence this pair of distinguished writers who had been labeled by Andrey Zhdanov the "scum of literature" (Zoshchenko) and a "cross between a nun and a whore" (Akhmatova) were quietly reinstrated to creative activity from which they had been removed after their expulsion from the Writers' Union in 1946.

Other returnees in 1954 were the drama critics Ye. Kholodov, D. Danin, and Yu. Yuzovsky, the "homeless cosmopolitans" who had disappeared in early 1949 at the height of the postwar literary purge. Also noteworthy was the publication of ten poems by Boris Pasternak in the April 1954 issue of Znamya. The publication of the poems, which were to form part of the last chapter of Pasternak's then unfinished novel, Doctor Zhivago, marked the return to creative writing of one of the leading figures of the Soviet literary world after a self-imposed absence of almost 20 years. The return to the literary scene of individuals victimized by Stalinist repression--a process which continued throughout 1955 and was to be accelerated by developments at the 20th party congress--could not but create a powerful new stimulus for the very intellectual trends anathemized by the regime. That the literary authorities were aware of this danger was made apparent by criticism of Zoshchenko and Pasternak already in June 1954.

The official rehabilitation of works long suppressed was a parallel development. On 17 March 1955, Trud announced the forthcoming publication of the collected works of Sergey Yesenin, the highly individualistic "hooligan poet" of the NEP (New Economic Policy) period whose works had been taboo since his suicide in 1925. In May, Vladimir Mayakovsky's popular play The Bedbug, a satire on Soviet bureaucracy, was enthusiastically received in Moscow, where it had not been staged since the early 1930s. In October the emigré Russian author Ivan Bunin, whose work had been praised by Konstantin Fedin at the Writers' Congress,

was honored on the occasion of his 85th birthday, and a collection of his works was scheduled for publication. The series of literary revivals was highlighted in early February 1956 by the celebration with great fanfare of the 75th anniversary of Fyodr Dostoyevsky's death. It was clear from the official treatment of the Dostoyevsky anniversary--the emphasis on his sympathy for the "humiliated and injured" rather than on his "excessive individualism" and religious fervor--that a pragmatic decision had been reached to quit kicking a great national asset under the counter and to start trading on it.

Although the process of rehabilitation was at first confined only to the works of authors who had merely fallen into official disfavor or represented heretical schools of thought, it was extended on the eve of the 20th party congress to the works of those who had actually been liquidated as "enemies of the people." On 24 January 1956, Literary Gazette announced the formation of "Commissions for the Literary Heritage" of the Yiddish poet David Bergelson and the Jewish writers Leib Kvitko and B. Yasensky, all of whom had vanished during the purge of "homeless cosmopolitans" in late 1948 and early 1949 and had been executed in 1952, apparently on direct orders from Stalin. Thus, even before Stalin was formally denigrated by Khrushchev the regime had begun quietly to exhume the literary works of Stalin's purge victims.

The content of literary works was also affected by the changes in official policies. Encouraged by the official downgrading of the secret police, the official disclosures of agricultural stagnation, and the like, writers gradually began to explore relatively uncharted areas. While ostensibly attempting to serve the party in exposing shortcomings, many writers, in "struggling to establish the triumph of the new over the old," were to lift the veil of secrecy from the unseemly sides of Soviet reality. The truths thus revealed were only partial in nature, as were the official disclosures, but the cumulative effects would in time prove to be sufficient to arouse the ire of the literary authorities and ultimately the regime itself.

The series of sketches of Soviet rural life, District Routine by Valentin Ovechkin, which first appeared

in Novy Mir before Stalin's death and continued in installments in Pravda and Novy Mir until late in 1956, illustrates some of the changes in the content of Soviet literature. While remaining within the prescribed ideological limits, Ovechkin was able to depict with unusual candor much of the ugliness of Soviet rural life that had been concealed for years. His sketches achieved spectacular success largely because his critical protrait of agricultural management, of the strong-arm methods of rural party leadership, coincided with reforms anticipated or undertaken by the regime. Ovechkin was tolerated as long as the "negative" features he described were attributed to human failings and not to the Soviet system. By late 1956, however, when a wave of critical ferment shook the literary world, Ovechkin's sharp pen began to irritate the regime. He was reprimanded by the party central committee for his "arbitrary" and "insulting" article in the 2 October 1956 issue of Literary Gazette, and less than a year later he was removed from the editorial board of the same newspaper.

The trend toward greater realism tempered by dashes of optimism about the future and faith in the wisdom of the party continued to develop after the Second Writers' Congress, despite admonitions against "one-sided" portrayals of reality. The admixture of increasingly heavy doses of "negative" elements along with the "positive" and the treatment of delicate political issues in belles-lettres raised difficult problems for both the writers and the custodians of orthodoxy. Thus in December 1954 local critics conspicuously avoided reviewing Ukrainian playwright and central committee member Aleksandr Korneychuck's controversial play, Wings, which dealt with the abuses of the secret police under Beria and with other social evils of Stalin's day. The play had been running in Kiev at the time of the Writers' Congress, but it was not until the favorable reception by Khrushchev and other party leaders at the Moscow premiere in late February 1955 that the play was regarded as an artistic as well as a political success. Hence the tendentiousness demanded of Soviet writers and the subordination of art to politics pointed up the pitfalls facing those with the temerity to portray some of the unvarnished realities of everyday life.

The contradictions in the official efforts to encourage a more differentiated literature while at the same time maintaining orthodoxy were illustrated in an editorial in the December 1955 issue of Kommunist, the party's theoretical organ. Belaboring the tendency of some Soviet writers to "varnish our reality," the editorial attacked attempts to reduce the diversity of artistic styles and forms to crude "dogmatic formulas." The editorial's failure to provide a clear blueprint for writers to follow, however, was symptomatic of the countervailing trends at work. Despite the retention of the Stalinist ideological legacy, the partial break with the past in official policy had contributed to the creation of a climate of both dissatisfaction and expectation within the Soviet cultural community. The official departures from Stalinism had already set into motion forces which would seek expression in the literary world along lines considered inimical by the regime.

De-Stalinization in Literature (Spring-Fall 1956)

Psychological Impact of De-Stalinization: The shock administered by Khrushchev's revelations at the 20th party congress had a powerful disruptive effect on the Soviet literary world. The destruction of the Stalin myth, which had long served as the keystone of orthodoxy, bred confusion in the ranks of the cultural intelligentsia and shattered the facade of unity so carefully cultivated by the regime's literary spokesmen in the months following the Writers' Congress. Against the background of the countervailing tendencies in the Soviet literary world and the inconsistencies in official policy, the party congress seemed to offer the long-awaited assurance that the party would look tolerantly on those yearning for greater creative freedom, provided their general loyalty to the purposes of the regime was not in doubt. At the same time, the open attack on the Stalin cult raised a chain of doubts about long-accepted concepts of Stalinist literature and the controls set up to enforce them.

Reactions to de-Stalinization varied widely within the literary community at large. Among the bolder writers, restive under the restraints of party controls and opposed to the false values of Stalinist literature, de-Stalinization was regarded as vindication of their long-endured sufferings and an invitation to greater freedom of expression. The literary bureaucrats, whose reputations were discredited and authority impaired by Khrushchev's disclosures, felt only disgust and despair, sharpened at times by a sense of personal guilt. Others who had faithfully supported the official line--the so-called literary "varnishers"--were temporarily shaken but recovered in time to identify themselves with what they believed to be the purposes of the regime. In general, de-Stalinization gave impetus to those seeking a change in the literary status quo and temporarily disarmed those responsible for its defense.

From the upsurge of critical spontaneity that followed the party congress, it was clear that de-Stalinization had produced a painful awakening of individual conscience and social courage in the minds of many Soviet writers. Appalled by their own timid acquiescence to distortions of truth in the past, many writers became vividly aware for the first time of the need for personal integrity and civic

consciousness in their art. Fadeyev's suicide in May 1956 and Simonov's mea culpa in the December issue of Novy Mir provided eloquent testimony that not even the party stalwarts were immune to pangs of conscience. Under the impact of the profound change in mood and outlook, truth became a literary watchword, and, one by one, writers arose after the party congress to renounce the "half-truths" of the past. In a tribute to Fadeyev published in the June issue of Novy Mir, Simonov deplored the officially dictated revision of Fadeyev's novel The Young Guard after the war and described the change in the cultural milieu as follows: "A painful but essential respect for truth..., thank heaven, has again generally been taking root in our country in the last few years."

"Ideological Confusion." The expansive spirit of optimism which infected broad segments of the cultural intelligentsia in the aftermath of the party congress manifested itself in various ways: in the demands of writers and critics for more freedom in the choice and treatment of subjects; in the rehabilitation of the literature of the 1920s and of writers and critics victimized during Stalin's purges; in the sharp increase in the number of translations of foreign works and of contemporary Western plays performed on the Soviet stage and in the publication of works that pleaded the cause of the individual against the abuses of bureaucracy. There was also a noticeable trend toward greater freedom of debate on literature and the arts both at public meetings and in the press. The actual intensity of the polemics within the Soviet intelligentsia in 1956, a phenomenon reflected only indirectly in the Soviet press, was vividly documented in the novel The Brothers Yershov, which appeared two years later.

The cultural scene was witness to a surge of literary activity in the spring and summer of 1956. A host of new literary publications appeared, including Neva, Moskva, Nash Sovremennik, and Literaturnaya Moskva. Moreover, the process of rehabilitation begun on the eve of the congress was sharply accelerated by the posthumous rehabilitation of half the Soviet authors purged during the 1930s and 1940s. Some of their works were published or plans for such publication were announced. Many foreign works of art appeared in carefully edited anthologies or in Inostrannaya Literatura, a new journal devoted to translations and critical discussions of foreign works, later to be denounced for their "ideologically hostile" content.

The revised attitude toward hitherto condemned individuals and the general reassessment of doctrine encouraged writers to defy once again the political and ideological conventions. In the period following the congress it became fashionable to deride propagandistic literature and to place aesthetic criteria foremost in the evaluation of artistic works. Literary journals began to publish more nonpolitical poetry; art and music magazines devoted more and more attention to problems of form and style; the theater took a sharper turn toward experimentation and adventure; and short stories and novels began to probe into aspects of Soviet life long denied to domestic readers.

The change in the climate was reflected perhaps most clearly in the creative output of the community of Moscow writers, comprising the largest and by far the most influential branch of the Writers' Union. The party congress had barely concluded when a group of Moscow writers completed work on an 800-page anthology entitled Literaturnaya Moskva I, which included Akhmatova's lyric poetry, Pasternak's essay on translating Shakespeare, and an impassioned poem, Morning, by the young writer Robert Rozhdestvensky. With the exception of Rozhdestvensky's poem, which appealed for a break with the injustices of the past on the grounds that "in the end man perishes if he conceals his illness," the anthology contained little that could disturb the literary watchdogs.

In November, however, the Moscow writers issued a second volume of collected works which literally abounded in materials of a highly unorthodox nature--Aleksandr Yashin's Levers, Nikolay Zhdanov's Journey Home, Yury Nagibin's Light in the Window, Venyamin Kaverin's Searches and Hopes, and Aleksandr Kron's Notes of a Writer. The tenor and content of the many works contained in Literaturnaya Moskva II, all of which were subjected to sharp criticism in the party and literary press, provided a candid answer to the questions raised by the the official attack on Stalin. The frank exposures of the evils of bureaucracy, careerism, callousness, hypocrisy--in short, Stalinism--revealed the restive mood of the Moscow writers. The dramatist Kron expressed the spirit of irreconcilability toward the wrongs of the past as follows:

> The re-establishment of truth is necessary not for settling old accounts (nothing more harmful than that could be imagined) but for the sake of truth itself. The covering-up of contradictions that exist is sometimes justified by the slogan: 'consolidation of all creative forces.' But this is poor consolation. The disease must be cured, not hidden.

Works in a similar vein made their appearance in the late summer and fall, despite the rising tide of vocal opposition from the spokesmen of orthodox literature. Ironically, the journal Novy Mir, which two years earlier had undergone a change of editors to ensure its doctrinal purity, led the parade of literary nonconformity. On its pages there appeared in rapid-fire succession Daniil Granin's short story Personal Opinion (June), Semyon Kirsanov's poem Seven Days of the Week (September), and Vladimir Dudintsev's novel Not by Bread Alone (August-October). Also indicative of the avant-garde role performed by Novy Mir in this period was the fact that Boris Pasternak submitted the manuscript of his novel Doctor Zhivago to the journal. Since the genre of the work was clearly outside the mainstream of Soviet literary development, its rejection by the journal's editorial board in September was not surprising.

The departures from orthodoxy in belles-lettres were matched in the field of literary criticism, which had been relatively quiescent during the previous two years. At an expanded meeting of the presidium of the Writers' Union in July, Simonov, Kirsanov, and others made straightforward demands that writers be granted a greater role in the selection of works to be published. The poet Aleksandr Bek, departing from his earlier subservience to the literary bureaucrats, denounced the system of censorship as "intolerable" and called for voluntary censorship exercised by the writers themselves. He cited as examples the continued suppression of several of Pasternak's poems and the fact that the latter's long-heralded novel had not yet appeared.

The rash of critical articles demanding greater creative freedom, including an effort by Simonov to redefine socialist realism as a "world outlook" rather than as a "method," was climaxed by the appearance in the November issue of Problems of Philosophy of a lengthy article

titled "On the Problem of the Lag in Drama and the Theater." In one of the most outspoken published attacks against official interference in the arts, the article, by the drama critics B. Nazarov and O. Gridneva, blamed the stagnation in Soviet drama on the "ignoring of the objective laws of artistic creation, the hypertrophy of editing, and the creation of a bureaucratic hierarchy in art." In the name of Leninism they appealed for a restoration of full confidence in the "creative intelligentsia" and for extensive self-government for the theater. "Is it necessary to prove," they asked,"that in 1956 our artistic intelligentsia has greater right to trust than in 1930?"

In articles in the press and in speeches at various literary meetings, writers and literary critics attempted to expand the scope of their creative activity beyond the limits accepted by the regime. In calling for a return to the situation in the 1920s,when different literary trends were allowed to compete, or in criticizing "all of the achievements of Soviet literature in the past 20 years," they were in effect advocating the abandonment of the official standards of socialist realism and partiynost. In attacking the bureaucratic controls on the arts, some writers were arguing that official guidance should be exercised only through "comradely criticism" and trust in the writers' loyalty to the party. Simonov's assertion that socialist realism was a "world outlook" and not a "method" implied that a writer in his work should be guided by his conscience as a loyal Communist and not by the dictates of party and ministerial bureaucrats. In short, the writers and critics were appealing for freedom of the press within the bounds of political loyalty and individual conscience.

Official Confusion. Despite this upsurge of critical ferment, the period following the 20th party congress was not a time of uninterrupted calls for greater freedom in the field of literature. As in other fields, the Soviet press printed a number of warnings and rebukes which indicated both that the regime intended to establish clear limits to the process of de-Stalinization and that it would not tolerate attempts to push this process far beyond those limits. As early as April, an article in Kommunist reiterated Khrushchev's condemnation at the party congress

of efforts to apply the principle of "peaceful coexistence" to the sphere of ideology and rebuked the "attacks in various forms against party leadership in literature and the arts." On 8 May an editorial in Literary Gazette sharply criticized writers and critics who had asserted that art should not be the handmaiden of politics and had called for a return to the freer literary atmosphere of the 1920s.

These and other sallies by the regime's cultural spokesmen, however, failed to stem the course of critical ferment, and through most of 1956 these demands appeared to be a rear-guard action by outnumbered forces. The refusal of many writers to acknowledge official signals which in the past had invariably produced desired results represented a unique situation reflecting the unsettled conditions that attended de-Stalinization. Lacking clear and authoritative guidance and wracked by long-standing personal feuds, the cultural bureaucrats were powerless to stem the adverse course of events. In light of this situation, it was understandable why 1956 was later referred to as "the black year" in the official literary calendar.

The confusion in the literary world has perhaps fostered by the regime's efforts to relax some of its direct controls over cultural institutions while at the same time upholding the traditional standards of literary production. In late September a decree of the USSR Ministry of Culture granted theaters greater autonomy in selecting repertoires and in staging new productions and abolished the practice of commissioning authors to write plays. Similar rights were granted publishing houses in the publication of fiction and the republication of works in magazines, according to an article in Kommunist No. 3, 1957. Coming on the heels of the de-Stalinization campaign, the official efforts to loosen the strait-jacket controls of the Stalin era whetted the appetites of those demanding even greater latitude than the regime was prepared to grant.

Reassertion of Orthodoxy (Fall 1956 - Spring 1957)

Vigorous Official Counterattack. By late fall 1956, when the dispute in the literary field became caught up in the backwash of the political crisis in Eastern Europe, it was clear that occasional official warnings and mild rebukes were not enough to arrest the drift of events. The domestic challenge raised by the outspoken demands of many writers for a basic relaxation of party controls and a revision of the tenets of socialist realism was accentuated by the developments in Poland and Hungary, where, as Khrushchev later stated, the "counterrevolution used certain writers for its vile purposes." The lesson of Hungary provided a strong case for a return to outright repression and rigid Stalinist controls over cultural policy. Ilya Ehrenburg reportedly told a Western journalist privately that after the Hungarian events some officials wanted to return to a hard line, and it is conceivable that Molotov, who assumed responsibility for cultural affairs sometime after his replacement as foreign minister in June, was among those favoring the adoption of such a policy. "Sober heads prevailed," however, according to Ehrenburg, and the regime eschewed a return to full repression.

Beginning in mid-November, the regime launched a massive propaganda counterattack designed to reassert the validity of the party decisions of 1946-1948 within a more sharply constricted official framework of de-Stalinization in which the virtues of the Stalin era overshadowed the vices. Coinciding with a general tightening on the ideological front which later came under the heading of "antirevisionism," the official campaign singled out the most flagrant violations of literary orthodoxy, warned against the inroads of pernicious "bourgeois" influences, particularly on the Soviet stage, and denounced the manifestations of "bourgeois nationalism" in the national republics. Although the drive against literary nonconformity relied primarily on ideological pressure and "organizational measures," it assumed particularly threatening overtones during the winter months of 1956-1957, when it was supplemented by an officially sponsored "vigilance" campaign. In the tense atmosphere of vigilantism after Hungary, when the press was filled with charges against "rotten elements," the specter of repression hung heavily over the cultural scene.

The stiffening of Soviet cultural policy in the fall of 1956 was influenced in large part by the events in Hungary. With the leadership divided as well as deeply involved in urgent problems outside the field of culture, however, it is possible that the cultural bureaucrats were able to exercise a somewhat freer hand in cultural affairs in this period. In this situation it was natural for the cultural overseers, caught off balance by de-Stalinization, to react promptly and vigorously in defense of their prerogatives. Confronted by a direct challenge to their authority, they responded in conventional terms--warnings, reprimands, expulsions--to directives from higher authority which a few months earlier had produced little effect.

The sharp change in atmosphere was clearly reflected in the treatment of Dudintsev's novel, Not by Bread Alone, which became the object of heavy censure by the hard-line party spokesmen, as well as the rallying point of the advocates of creative freedom. Dudintsev's description of the struggle of an idealistic inventor, Lopatkin, against the entrenched bureaucracy--personified by the careerist Drozdov--became the focal point of official attacks not because it contributed something new, but rather for its synthesis of diverse views already expressed by other writers. The fact that the novel received an enthusiastic public response, particularly among university students in Moscow, Leningrad, and elsewhere, also contributed to the regime's increasingly belligerent reaction.

On 22 October 1956, Dudintsev's novel was discussed in Moscow at a meeting sponsored by the Moscow writers' organization. While "a certain segment" of the participants mildly criticized it, on the whole the work found stanch supporters who used it to fire broadsides at Stalinism. For example, the inflammatory speech by the writer Konstantin Paustovsky, which was secreted to the West and published in the Paris L'Express on 29 March 1957, not only applauded Dudintsev's novel but pictured his villain, the powerful bureaucrat Drozdov, as a mass affliction of Soviet society. In general, the book was praised for its boldness, and the relatively mild criticisms at this meeting were directed less at the content of the novel than at Dudintsev's manner of presenting his material. The novel was also favorably reviewed in Trud, the trade union newspaper, on 31 October.

In November, however, under the stimulus of the furor over the novel among university students and intellectuals, as well as of the adverse repercussions abroad, the regime's reaction changed sharply. Dudintsev and his novel were attacked in Literary Gazette on 24 November and in Izvestia on 2 December, and during the next three months both author and work were condemned at numerous party and writers' meetings and in equally numerous press reviews.

The decision to single out Dudintsev's book for censure was apparently reached after deliberations at party headquarters. According to a rumor then circulating in Moscow, the novel was discussed at a meeting held in November by the cultural department of the party central committee. The rumor alleged that several persons attending the meeting, including party secretary Furtseva, opposed publication of the novel in book form, but that Shepilov favored publication in a small edition in order to avoid "making a martyr out of Dudintsev." It allegedly was decided at that time to publish a limited edition of 30,000 copies, although Minister of Culture Mikhaylov had earlier stated that the work was scheduled for mass publication.

The massive propaganda campaign against Dudintsev's novel was paralleled by sharp attacks on other "works written in the spirit of oppressive nihilism" and articles challenging the party line in the arts. The article by the drama critics Nazarov and Gridneva (see page 22) was subjected to sustained criticism by Pravda, Izvestia, Kommunist, Minister of Culture Mikhaylov, and Molotov, and in January the editors of Problems of Philosophy recanted for having "committed a serious error in publishing the article which contained an incorrect, harmful thesis directed against party guidance of literature." At the same time, officials in the USSR Ministry of Culture, noting with "serious alarm" that "negative tendencies have recently appeared in repertoire practice," deplored the weakening of official supervision of the theater resulting from the decision to grant theater directors greater powers. The "organizational measures" they advocated to correct these tendencies were soon evidenced by the removal in January of four editors from the magazine Theater.

Following the circulation of a secret central committee letter, "On Strengthening Ideological Work," to lower party units in December 1956 and early January 1957, the official

witch hunt gained momentum. The letter, which was directed at the general laxity in ideological discipline, had specifically condemned the writers Paustovsky and Berggolts for their inflammatory attacks on party controls in literature. It was followed by a steady stream of articles and editorials in January calling to task the editor Novy Mir, Konstantin Simonov, the editors and authors of the second volume of Literaturnaya Moskva, and numerous other writers and critics. Attention was drawn to the infiltration of "bourgeois" ideology in the cultural scene by way of cultural imports. The list of "ideologically hostile" Western plays was extended, and theater directors were condemned for having recommended a number of "harmful" Western plays for production. The intensive hunt for heresy and the harsh insistence on orthodoxy seemed to foreshadow a return to the cultural isolation and rigid controls of the past.

Official Reconsiderations. Just as the official drive appeared to be getting into high gear, there were signs early in 1957 that the Soviet leadership was entertaining second thoughts about the propriety of some of the tactics reminiscent of the worst days of the Stalin era. The shift in the official line in the direction of a more subtle tack coincided, significantly, with Khrushchev's resurgence in the political arena in late January and also with Shepilov's assignment, following his replacement as foreign minister on 13 February, as party secretary in charge of culture. The new approach appeared to reflect a conviction that a system of individual rewards and reprimands, meted out in an atmosphere of paternalistic justice, called "comradely persuasion," would prove more effective than physical repression in handling intellectual and cultural discontent.

An article by Ilya Ehrenburg in Literary Gazette on 9 and 12 February, which Ehrenburg later asserted was published with full approval of party authorities, provided the first tip-off on the new line. Protecting himself by favorable reference to the 20th party congress and stressing the need for ideological struggle against "bourgeois" philosophy, Ehrenburg appealed for more sophisticated treatment of cultural works for a public which, in his view, was both literate and "politically mature." He defended the establishment of broad cultural contacts with the West and obliquely supported, without citing them by name, the young Soviet authors whose works had been condemned as being too critical of Soviet life. If

Ehrenburg's article was, in fact, officially inspired, it was probably designed to reassure writers that the regime had no intention to return to the sterile policies of the past. That such was the case was suggested by the affirmative reply of USSR Minister of Culture Mikhaylov on 12 February to an unprecedented interpolation of 14 deputies to the Supreme Soviet, including the writers Ehrenburg, Korneychuk, and Tikhonov, as to whether or not the Soviet Government favored cultural ties with all countries.

Other signs of the limited scope of the official campaign were also evident in events in February and March 1957. The writer Nikolay Virta, who had been expelled with great fanfare from the Writers' Union in 1954, was reinstated in early February. Moreover, at the First All-Union Congress of Artists, held between 28 February and 8 March, the ultraconservative group headed by A. Gerasimov was removed from the monopolistic position it had occupied during the Stalin era. While the official spokesmen at the congress continued to brand wholesale denunciations of the Stalin period as "anarchistic," the speeches of various delegates showed that individual works embodying the worst excesses of the Stalin era could still be attacked with impunity.

Perhaps the most important events foreshadowing a change of official attitude were Shepilov's keynote speeches to the Artists' Congress (28 February - 8 March) and the Second Congress of Soviet Composers (26 March - 5 April). Marking his debut as party secretary in charge of culture, Shepilov laid down the guidelines of what developed into a concerted effort by the regime to reconcile the conflicting elements in the cultural world to official policies. Although Shepilov was later denounced in official media for his "liberal position" in art and, in a manner characteristic of Soviet political tradition, made the scapegoat for all the ills besetting Soviet culture, the kernel of his ideas was in fact later incorporated into official policy and sanctified as Khrushchev's own handiwork.

In his two speeches Shepilov took great pains to point out that the continuation of party control over the arts did not mean a return to rigid administrative controls or capricious bureaucratic tutelage. While upholding socialist realism as the only acceptable artistic method, Shepilov attacked the practice of using it as a club for forcing all Soviet

artists to adhere to a single style. He maintained that the official artistic standards permitted considerable room for creative individuality through the selection of subject, style, and technique, and he insisted that ideological "mistakes" be corrected by "comradely persuasion" by the party and not by "administrative injunction and ear-boxing." From the tone of his speeches, which were well received by delegates at both congresses, it appeared that the regime was seriously intent on taming the dissident elements instead of destroying them and was anxious to bring them into line by the application of verbal and organizational pressures behind the scenes.

"Comradely Persuasion": Theory and Practice (Spring 1957 - Summer 1959)

The "Feat of Silence". Despite the announced intention to rely on persuasion and pressure, the development of the more moderate policy was anything but smooth and consistent. This was inevitable as the regime tried to work out a modus vivendi with writers whose services were needed in molding public opinion but whose hunger for creative independence had been increasingly fed during the post-Stalin period. Thus, as regime spokesmen strove to keep the creative talents of writers within officially approved confines, the writers, emboldened by their unwonted freedom from repression, continued to agitate for a broadening of that framework. The result was, in Surkov's words, "a year of fierce and furious battles" between regime spokesmen and literary "revisionists."

The first such clash occurred at the two-day plenum of the Moscow branch of the Writers' Union in early March 1957. Called to discuss prose writing in 1956, the meeting was expected to discipline the many Moscow writers whose works were then under heavy official fire. None of the offending authors backed down, however, with the exception of Simonov, who took the opportunity to trim his sails partly to the prevailing official wind. Dudintsev not only defended his much-debated novel but spiritedly protested official restrains. "I think," he said, "that we might be allowed, like beginners, to try to swim on our own, to take our chance of drowning. But, alas, I always feel a halter, like the harness by which children are sometimes supported. And it keeps me from swimming." Kaverin, Kirsanov, Aliger, and Yevgeniy Yevtushenko, the young poet whose long poem Winter Station had aroused bitter official criticism, also spoke out defiantly. From the cryptic account of the meeting in Literary Gazette, it appeared that "passions flared," an "unworkmanlike atmosphere" prevailed, and many "nihilistic sentiments and "demagogic statements" were expressed. The charge that "many venerable writers" had used "various subterfuges to avoid participation in the work of the plenum" indicated that the dissidents had at least the passive support of many older, established writers. Where the emotional sympathies of many elements of the Moscow intelligentsia, particularly students, lay was evident from the press complaint that the session had been attended by many "nonprofessionals" who had created "unhealthy disturbances."

The March plenum was the high point of open dispute between the opposing forces in the Soviet literary world. The refusal of the dissident Moscow writers to knuckle under to mounting official pressure was a graphic illustration of the lessening of the fear which had gripped the Soviet intelligentsia during Stalin's lifetime. Behind these bold, dissident voices, as far as the regime was concerned, stood the influential Moscow branch of the Writers' Union, representing a third of the country's writers. It was evident that the writers, left to their own devices, had reached a deadlock that could be resolved only by high-level intervention.

Such intervention occurred on 13 May when Khrushchev addressed a meeting of writers at party headquarters on the eve of the third plenum of the board of the Writers' Union, the first to be held since the 20th party congress. Although Khrushchev's speech was not announced in the Soviet press until more than two months later, the tactics of the regime spokesmen at the May plenum gave some indication of its contents. The attack against the dissident writers was pressed with renewed vigor at the May plenum, which was attended by party secretaries Shepilov and Pospelov. The writers and editors of the controversial anthology Literaturnaya Moskva II and others were again condemned by regime spokesmen, and in a significant departure designed to isolate the dissidents and discredit the Moscow branch, writers from the provinces were encouraged to attack the entire "Moscow writers' milieu." One of their proposals--that a separate Writers' Union for the RSFSR be created--was obviously designed to provide a counterpoise to the Moscow branch, which had become a rallying center for greater freedom.

The sharpness of the attacks on the Moscow writers at the May plenum, as well as the encouragement of ambitious second-rate writers from the provinces, marked a turning point in the campaign against dissident writers. Khrushchev's intervention had brought to bear the full weight of party authority behind the regime spokesmen, thereby transforming the literary dispute into a party issue subject to the full sanctions of party discipline.

The reaction of the Moscow writers to this formidable pressure was as unexpected and surprising as it was frustrating to the literary bureaucrats. In a so-called "feat of

silence," many of the leading Soviet writers expressed their displeasure with the stage-managed proceedings by either absenting themselves or refusing to take part in the debate. Fedin, head of the Moscow branch, was one of the few major writers to participate in the debate, but his refusal to join in the categorical condemnation of the dissidents and his defense of the work of the Moscow branch against the attacks by provincial writers aroused displeasure both during and after the plenum. In their ostentatious silence in the face of official intimidation--a feat repeated a few weeks later in Leningrad--the dissidents revealed a degree of personal and civic courage unprecedented in recent Soviet history. Faced with the alternatives of abject capitulation or total abandonment of literature, they chose instead to band together in a community of silence in anticipation of a more favorable turn in the climate of creative activity.

The stubborn silence by the recalcitrant writers infuriated the regime spokesmen. Leonid Sobolev, a nonparty member who was later chosen to head the organizing committee of the new RSFSR Writers' Union, branded the silence service to the foreign enemy. He attacked the spectacle of silence in an angry tirade:

> Your silence is dangerous. It disorients readers. What does it indicate? A haughty disregard for the opinion of others? A disdainful conviction of one's own infallibility? The drama of sacrifices? Pardon us, but we do not understand, and the people do not understand.

Nevertheless, despite impassioned declamations from all sides, the plenum ended on 17 May with no evidence that the dissidents had been "persuaded" to yield.

Two days later, at a government dacha near Moscow, a reception was held by party and government leaders for prominent writers, artists, and composers. Most members of the party presidium and secretariat were present, and Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Shepilov were among the speakers at the dinner. Pravda reported on 20 May that a "lively exchange of opinions" had taken place which, according to diplomatic sources in Moscow, appears to have involved a sharp altercation between Khrushchev poetess Margarita Aliger. It appears that when Khrushchev alluded to the "counterrevolutionary" role of the Hungarian

writers and charged that the Hungarian regime committed a grave mistake in failing to shoot two leaders of the Petofi Circle--the literary group that played a major role in fomenting the revolt--he was interrupted by Aliger, who inquired, "Are you threatening us?" Khrushchev reportedly answered, "No, we extend our hand to Soviet writers. But they should realize that if they oppose us, our hand will not tremble." Khrushchev's pointed reply, which was deleted from the published version of his speech that appeared in late August, left no doubt regarding the seriousness with which the regime viewed dissidence among creative writers and was a clear warning that those who continued to defy the official line would leave themselves open to the serious charge of "counterrevolutionary" activity.

Although Khrushchev's speech left no alternative but total submission to official policy, there was considerable delay and circumvention in the responses of the dissidents. Literary Gazette charged on 21 May that Literaturnaya Moskva II had been published "without an editorial board approved by the party," and in early June at a joint meeting of the party organization of the Moscow branch with the board of the Writers' Union, the editors and writers of the anthology continued to resist charges by Surkov that they were secretly upholding a "literary-political platform not in conformity with the party's policy in the field of literature."

Kazakevich, Yashin, and Aliger broke their silence to defend their positions as party members against these serious charges of having an opposition platform, but their remarks were rejected as "one-sided," insincere, and lacking in self-criticism. Dudintsev and Kaverin were also accused of "demagogic tirades" and "intolerance of criticism." The party organization of the Moscow branch condemned the dissident writers for "factionalism" and voted to expel Vladimir Rudny, one of the editors of the controversial anthology and an editor of the house organ of the Moscow writers, Moskovskiy Literator, from the party committee.

Placed on the defensive by this use of strong party discipline, the dissident Moscow writers began gradually to yield. Kazakevich, Aliger, and Bek were the first to surrender, recanting in person or by letter, at a general meeting of Moscow writers on 11 June. Significantly, Aliger's letter of recantation was not deemed fit for publication until 8 October.

Other errant writers followed suit at subsequent meetings in Moscow and elsewhere during the remainder of the year; in many instances their recantations were evidently incomplete and unsatisfactory, however, since they continued to be attacked for either boycotting writers' meetings or failing to "disarm" themselves completely. For example, at the fourth plenum of the board of the Writers' Union in mid-February 1958, Aliger, Kazakevich, and Ovechkin--all party members--were criticized because of their absence, and Rudny was attacked for continuing to maintain silence. Despite official claims of an "atmosphere of unanimity" in the literary world, there were many indications that resistance to the official line had not been completely stamped out. The formal, piecemeal recantations submitted grudgingly under duress were a far cry from the full cooperation demanded by the regime.

Khrushchev's Literary Program. Following the ouster of the "antiparty group" in June and the official linking of the defeated faction with dissident writers, a comprehensive and authoritative statement of official policy was issued under Khrushchev's signature and entitled, "For a Close Link between Art and Literature and the Life of the People." Khrushchev's literary pronouncement, which appeared on 28 August, was an abridged version of his speeches of 13 and 19 May and his talks to party activists in July--all delivered during the heat of battle against nonconformity. Although the short-term results of Khrushchev's intervention in the arts in May had already been reflected in the recovery of initiative on the part of regime spokesmen, the long-term effects were still in the making. In light of the continued foot-dragging by the formerly restive writers, it appeared that the decision to publish an abridged and evidently toned-down version of Khrushchev's speeches was part of a deliberate effort to provide a more durable basis for the restoration of orthodoxy in the Soviet cultural world.

Khrushchev's pronouncement, which was hailed as a basic "party document" binding on all creative artists and was greeted by a massive propaganda campaign, essentially represented a powerful restatement of party doctrine and guidance in the arts. Condemning the "misrepresentation of reality" in works of literature and the departures from the political line of the party, Khrushchev threw his full support behind the official spokesmen whose influence and prestige had dropped sharply after Stalin's death and who had thereby suffered most

from the de-Stalinization campaign. He reiterated the partial rehabilitation of Stalin, "in whom we all sincerely believed," and he expressed sympathy for the literary "varnishers" who had suffered abuse in the aftermath of de-Stalinization. In short, by supporting the long-standing official tenets and their stanchest adherents, Khrushchev attempted to restore the equilibrium upset by his own actions at the 20th party congress.

In addition, Khrushchev hinted at a series of remedial measures designed to restore order in the literary world. Pointing to the "unhealthy and harmful" tendencies exhibited by such literary journals as Novy Mir, he warned that the press, the "main ideological weapon" of the party, could not be entrusted to "unreliable hands." His assertion that the press "must be in the hands of the most loyal, most trustworthy, and politically steadfast people--people who are devoted to our cause" foreshadowed a series of changes in the composition of the editorial staffs of literary journals. Mindful of the disruptive influence exerted by the Moscow writers, Khrushchev came out strongly in favor of the formation of a new literary organization for the RSFSR--one which would dilute the power of the dominant Moscow branch in the Union of Soviet Writers. Finally, Khrushchev endorsed the establishment of closer contacts between the party leadership and men of letters. He praised the usefulness of "comradely meetings and talks with writers and artists on key questions of ideological work," pointing to his own frank discussions with various writers at party headquarters.

Thus while Khrushchev's sharp comments about Aliger and Dudintsev indicated that he would not hesitate to apply direct pressure if creative artists remained out of line, he did not close the door on errant writers. He spoke approvingly of Tvardovsky and Panferov, whose past work had come under sharp official criticism but who were later accepted into the fold after "friendly conversation." Moreover, his favorable comments about the nonparty writer Sobolev and the latter's subsequent elevation to a leading position in the literary bureaucracy indicated that writers loyal to the party line could look for official patronage, inferior literary talents notwithstanding. By holding out the olive branch to the nonconformists in one hand and offering lucrative favors to ambitious newcomers in the other, Khrushchev strove to generate pressures within the Soviet literary community which would

splinter and ultimately dissipate the forces of resistance and restore harmony. "Comradely persuasion" rather than outright repression remained the order of the day in Khrushchev's thinking, even though that concept had undergone considerable stress and strain since its original formulation.

Immediately after the announcement of Khrushchev's dictum, the organizing committee of the forthcoming RSFSR Writers' Union was formed. The large representation of provincial writers on this body, along with the inclusion of many regime mouthpieces from Moscow, ensured the predominance of trusted personnel in positions of leadership along lines advocated by Khrushchev. The formal subordination of the obstreperous Moscow branch to the new organization and the transfer to the latter's jurisdiction of the Moscow publications October and Moscow provided a powerful organizational damper on the unruly elements in the capital.

As a follow-up to Khrushchev's article, the editorial boards of many leading literary journals were subjected to a series of administrative shake-ups. The process of weeding out "unreliable" editors was conducted gradually and selectively, with none of the fanfare associated with the much-publicized purge of the magazines Leningrad and Zvezda in 1946. Beginning in mid-1957 and continuing well into 1958, the journals October, Moscow, Theater, and Novy Mir underwent changes of varying degree in their management.

Although the succession of changes was designed to establish a corps of spokesmen attuned to the requirements of the party line, the results at time left much to be desired. For example, Tvardovsky and Panferov, both of whom had gained Khrushchev's favor by their alleged penitence, used their newly won editorships on Novy Mir and October, respectively, to lash out scornfully at their more orthodox critics. Works in a heretical vein continued to find outlets in literary organs long after the editorial purge, a fact which underlines the limits of the official campaign.

In addition to the editorial shake-ups, steps were taken to tighten institutional controls over the Soviet stage, a backtrack from the liberal reforms of 1956. In July 1957 local cultural officials were ordered by the USSR Ministry of Culture to check theatrical repertoires for their ideological soundness, and in September 1958 the republic ministries of culture were

instructed to bolster their repertoire units with "qualified workers." A month later it was announced that a Repertory Council would be created under the USSR Culture Ministry--a measure apparently designed to revive many of the controls formerly exercised by the all-powerful Chief Repertory Committee, which had held tight rein over theatrical art throughout much of Soviet history.

As the pendulum of official policy swung back in the aftermath of Khrushchev's intervention in the arts, there were signs that the regime had to resist pressures from ultraconservatives who favored the reintroduction of more severe disciplinary measures against the recalcitrants. Such pressures were evident in Anatoliy Sofronov's article "Nightmare and Reality" in Literary Gazette of 7, 10, and 14 December, as well as in Vsevelod Kochetov's novel The Brothers Yershov, which appeared in mid-1958. In Sofronov's article--a provocative diatribe against the "negative trends" in Soviet literature and their purveyors--Mayakovsky's poetic slogan "He who does not sing with us is against us" was revived as a weapon against the recalcitrants. Sofronov's thinly veiled threat provoked a furor in Soviet literary circles, and responsible officials from Surkov on down quickly repudiated the article for its "excessively sharp tone," emphasizing that patience and indoctrination were more suitable than repression in imposing officially approved practices among writers. The sharpness of the polemics between the different schools of thought highlighted the split in the Soviet literary world, as well as the problem confronting the regime.

Among the more subtle tactics adopted by the regime in the period following Khrushchev's pronouncement was an attempt to play down the scope of literary dissidence in public statements and to rely more heavily on pressure applied through party and literary channels to keep writers in line. In contrast to the prolonged and widely publicized denunciatory campaigns of the Stalin era, which tended to dramatize controversies and make martyrs of the victims, regime spokesmen began to emphasize harmony in the literary ranks and treat dissidence as an isolated, historical phenomenon. Khrushchev's speech at a party and government reception for "leading intelligentsia" on 8 Febraury 1958 was devoid of personal recriminations, concentrating instead on the "splendid unity" between Soviet intellectuals and the party. In adopting this

approach in the face of recurrent manifestations of obstinacy and heresy among writers, Khrushchev and the literary bureaucrats evidently were anxious to stimulate literary output without dramatizing dissidence.

That such considerations governed the policy of relative restraint were suggested by Surkov's remarks during an interview with Gerd Ruge, the West German correspondent in Moscow, in the summer of 1958. According to Surkov, Ehrenburg's controversial novel The Thaw had scarcely been noticed either in the USSR or abroad until it was criticized by Simonov in a lengthy polemic published in Literary Gazette. The novel then became a cause celebre. When the second part of the novel appeared in early 1956, however, the literary bureaucrats held their fire, since they had, in Surkov's words, already "used up all their critical arguments," and as a result it was relegated to relative oblivion. This lesson apparently was not lost to the literary bureaucrats, in view of their handling of Ehrenburg's subsequent works--in particularly his essay "The Lessons of Stendhal," which appeared in the June 1959 issue of Inostrannaya Literatura. Ehrenburg's pointed attack on dictatorial control of the arts met relatively light criticism in the Soviet press, but, according to [redacted] Ehrenburg was sharply rebuked at the fourth plenum of the board of the Writers' Union in February 1958. The regime obviously chose to restrict Ehrenburg's sophisticated and clearly heretical ideas to a limited audience of professionals rather than attract widespread interest by publicly condemning a prominent public figure.

As a counterweight to the heretical tendencies of some older writers and the "unhealthy moods" of many younger ones, the regime attempted to encourage the advancement of relative unknowns in the younger generation who would then owe their literary careers to the party. Already at the Second Writers' Congress in 1954, Surkov had reported that the proportion of writers under 30 in the union was much smaller than in 1934, and more than three years later he lamented: "The Writers' Union is getting old; for example, in its Moscow branch barely 10 percent of the writers are below the age of 40." The seriousness of the problem of youth recruitment was apparent from Surkov's statement of April 1958 that Yevtushenko, who had been widely criticized for his "rotten moods," was the only poet "of Komsomol age"--14 to 27--to join the Moscow branch in recent years.

Despite official encouragement, many young people simply resisted entry into the hazardous field of literature. Some Soviet students with literary leanings informed Gerd Ruge that the present generation of literary officials and editors--whom they termed "opportunists"--presented a major barrier to entry into the profession. Others with talent preferred to work as translators because they were unwilling to submit to criticism and tutelage by party and literary bureaucrats.

Also in keeping with the more subtle approach to cultural nonconformity, a central committee decree was issued on 28 May 1958 which "rectified errors" of the Stalin period. The decree rescinded the party decree of February 1948 against the prominent composers Shostakovich, Prokofyev, Khatchaturyan, and others. By removing a major source of grievance and rectifying an injustice of the Stalin era, the regime attempted to create an atmosphere of confidence among loyal artists. The new decree, however, was careful to reaffirm the basic principles of Soviet art laid down in the 1948 decree so as to prevent any misinterpretation of the new measure as a retreat from orthodoxy or as a portent of "indiscriminate rehabilitations" of deviant artists.

The more flexible policy of persuasion and pressure, coupled with high-level party intervention on an ad hoc basis, was designed to redirect the talents and energies of the Soviet literary community back to the traditional purposes of the regime--"to aid the party in the solution of contemporary problems." With the re-establishment of control over the commanding heights of literary criticism, increasing attention was paid in the spring and summer of 1958 to the question of "contemporaneity" as the focal point of creative activity. Just as writers after World War II were enjoined to write about the five-year plan instead of about controversial aspects of the war, authors, playwrights, and movie scenarists now were exhorted to forget the unsavory past and concentrate on current themes. The demands for "contemporaneity" received particularly heavy stress during the preparations for the RSFSR and All-Union Writers' Congresses scheduled for October and December 1958 respectively. The appeals for inspirational literature about the "transition to Communism," backed by an imposing array of institutional pressures, were the official antidote to the lingering hangover of literary dissidence.

Literary Stalemate. While the official drive for conformity made marked gains in restoring a semblance of order to the Soviet literary scene, it failed to resolve the issues that had given rise to the conflict. Reluctant to invoke the punitive measures necessary to prevent questioning of official standards and relying instead on manipulation of political forces in the literary community, the regime's efforts met with only limited success. Khrushchev's intervention in the arts enabled the conservative elements to gain undisputed control of the organizational command posts and succeeded in temporarily muffling the more pronounced dissident outbursts, but it did not elicit the full cooperation of the "disoriented" writers who made up in professional prestige and artistic talent what they lacked in numbers. The continued failure of many eminent writers to participate at literary meetings, the delays in the publication of their long-awaited works, the occasional defiant statements by writers at public meetings, and the repeated postponement of the writers' congresses--all of these highlighted the difficulties encountered by the regime in securing the kind of unanimity which was the traditional hallmark of Soviet cultural life.

One of the immediate effects of Khrushchev's intervention was a temporary freeze-up in controversial literature as writers marked time and literary journals began to play safe. During the fall of 1957, translations, memoirs, and historical and documentary materials devoted to the 40th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution filled the pages of literary journals. The organs of the press were also swamped with editorials and articles lauding Khrushchev's endorsement of official doctrine and his criticism of the "thaw" writers. Official critics were preoccupied with repulsing the attacks of Yugoslav and Polish revisionists on Soviet literary doctrine and practice. Although a number of errant writers finally broke their silence and yielded to official pressure, only a few showed convincing signs that they had fully reformed. Some were obviously indignant over the fact that their honest efforts to elaborate artistically the official line of the 20th party congress had been labeled subversive.

With the announcement in February 1958 that the Third Writers' Congress would be convened in December, it appeared that conditions in the literary world had sufficiently stabilized to permit a public airing of opinion. There were continuing signs, however, that such was not the case. The steady stream of complaints that new literary works failed to capture

"the greatness of our everyday affairs" or that authors "feared to touch the big and sharp themes of life" indicated that all writers had not yet been transformed into active and enthusiastic propagandists for the regime. The continued attacks on unorthodox literary works and defiant speeches at literary meetings, as well as the significant admission that "almost all" of the senior "literary masters" had retreated into the relatively safe field of writing about the past, reflected failure to secure unequivocal cooperation of all segments of the literary community.

The tensions and conflicts wracking the Soviet literary world were brought into the open with the appearance of Vsevelod Kochetov's aggressively orthodox novel The Brothers Yershov in the summer of 1958. The novel was remarkable for its vivid description of the Soviet intellectual scene before and after the 20th party congress. Kochetov's tirade was directed against the "rotten liberalism" of the Soviet intelligentsia which had manifested itself on the pages of Novy Mir and in the works of Ehrenburg, Dudintsev, and the dramatist Nikolay Pogodin. Not only did Kochetov denounce the "thaw" conditions that had permitted the "repulsive insects to crawl from their holes," but he even censured his heroes severely for their lack of vigilance. In stressing the theme of danger from those unreconciled to the regime, Kochetov strongly advocated the restoration of rigid party controls in art, backed by administrative sanctions whenever necessary.

Judging from the enthusiastic reception in party and literary organs of Kochetov's polemic, the work reflected the sentiments of an influential segment of Soviet opinion and clearly represented the political and literary platform of the archconservatives. In a review by Yu. Zhdanov in Literary Gazette of 6 September, the novel was hailed as "the reply of a Bolshevik artist to some writers...who wavered in the complex conditions of the struggle against bourgeois ideology, who became victims and propagators of gloomy 'thaw' moods and revisionist hesitations, and who began to sink into the mud of bourgeois pseudo-democracy and to make concessions to philistine bourgeois tastes." Although a few critical voices were raised against the novel, including a protest by A. Dementyev, a new deputy editor of Novy Mir, the novel was widely praised by conservative die-hards and was among the 26 works nominated in January for the 1959 Lenin Prize for Literature. In view of the mild sensation caused by Kochetov

in April 1958 when he attacked the presidium of the Lenin Price Committee for its "incorrect attitude" in withholding prizes in literature from deserving candidates in 1957, the nomination of his novel appeared to foreshadow a resounding defeat of his literary opponents.

Although the tenor of the official reception to Kochetov's novel left little doubt that the conservative die-hards were pressing for an uncompromising victory, there were other signs that a bitter struggle was being waged behind the scenes. While visiting England in early June 1958, Panferov, editor of October, expressed optimism about the fight that "writers" were waging against literary "officials," whom he contemptuously labeled the "internal enemy," and he predicted the removal of Surkov from his commanding position in the literary hierarchy.

At the same time, there were persistent reports that Sholokhov, one of the most eminent Soviet writers, was resisting pressure to revise the ending of the long-awaited second volume of his celebrated novel Virgin Soil Upturned, in which the hero, a party official, falls into disgrace and is purged. Moreover, the explanation given by Sholokhov during his visit to England in April 1959 for the long delay in convening the Third Writers' Congress also indicated that controversy within the literary world had not abated. According to him, the report prepared by the literary hierarchy for submission to the congress was rejected because it failed to "embrace all sides of the creative work of all writers." In short, the orthodox spokesmen, although enjoying distinct advantages, had failed to rout their literary adversaries.

The Pasternak affair, which had been carefully kept under cover by literary authorities until it erupted into prominence as a result of the Nobel Prize announcement in October 1958, had an unsettling effect on the Soviet literary scene. Despite official efforts to whip up hysteria against Pasternak, many of the leading Soviet writers avoided participation in the ugly public spectacle, and some privately expressed displeasure over official handling of the affair. A meeting of writers and intellectuals on 26 October reportedly broke up in disorder over Surkov's dictatorial treatment of Pasternak's manuscript. The Moscow meeting on the following day which "unanimously" condemned and expelled Pasternak from the Writers' Union was, according to Pravda, the scene of a "heated discussion."

The speed with which the vituperative public campaign against Pasternak was brought to a close appeared to reflect official anxiety over its disturbing consequences. The reversion to the denunciatory practices of the past had clearly aroused resentment among writers and activated interest in Pasternak's work among young Soviet intellectuals. By dramatizing the fate of the hapless writer against the official bureaucracy, the affair upset the atmosphere of harmony which the regime was anxiously attempting to create.

Official exasperation over the climate of opinion in the literary world was expressed at the First RSFSR Writers' Congress, which convened in early December after an unexplained delay of two months. Sobolev, chairman of the RSFSR Writers' Union, delivered a scathing indictment of the "theory of distance," under which authors had escaped into the distant past instead of writing on contemporary themes. He complained that the damage done to Soviet youth by "revisionist heart-searching" was still undone, and he laid the blame directly on the more prominent authors whose "authority" had set a "bad example" for the younger writers. Significantly, the only outstanding writer to address the congress was Fedin, who had come under criticism earlier. Sobolev excoriated the impudence of some writers who, in their disputes with literary authorities, claimed that they were expressing the "wisdom of the masses" which they claimed did not always coincide with official prescriptions of what should or should not be included in artistic works.

Although the congress denounced the literary revisionists--evasion of "burning contemporary problems" was branded a "variety of revisionism"--and resolved that "work with young writers is a primary task of all literary organizations," it revealed a singular lack of ideas on how to solve the impasse reached in official efforts to impose conformity and elicit cooperation. The commonplace appeals to the traditions and achievements of Soviet literature were accompanied by calls to avoid "excessive liberalism" in the admission of newcomers into the literary organizations and in evaluation of their work. Against the background of the continued silence of the prominent Soviet men-of-letters and the repeated criticism of misguided youth at the congress, however, it was evident that the spirit of recalcitrance toward official dictates, though more subdued than in 1956-1957, was still alive.

Search for a New Accommodation. With the official program stalled by a virtual sit-down strike by many prominent writers and aggravated by monkey wrenches hurled by various literary practitioners, the Soviet leadership had to realize that the machinery and direction of "comradely persuasion" were badly in need of repair. Khrushchev's appeal to link literature closer to life and the series of "organizational measures" adopted by the regime, though dampening the turbulence on the literary front, had once again given rise to a "murky" stream of literary works lacking in artistic quality. In the compelling atmosphere of orthodoxy, the literary masterpieces demanded by the regime remained stillborn while their prospective creators spent their energies in endless fratricidal bickering. Given the stubborn mood of the literary community, particularly its most articulate spokesmen, the regime must have seen that cooperation would not be granted freely, but would have to be bought by concessions.

There were indications early in 1959 that the regime, anxious to stimulate creative activity as well as extricate itself from an uncompromising position of aggressive orthodoxy, was attempting to find a middle ground. The decision in February to drop Kochetov's controversial novel The Brothers Yershov from the semifinal selection of Lenin Prize nominees and the granting of the award in April to Pogodin's Lenin Trilogy were moves in this direction. The fact that Pogodin had flirted with heresy in his play Petrarch's Sonnet, which had appeared in the much-denounced Literaturnaya Moskva II and which had been singled out for sharp criticism in Kochetov's novel, was apparently outweighed by the need to secure support from recalcitrant writers, even at the expense of alienating the conservative die-hards. The choice of Pogodin's work over Kochetov's was particularly noteworthy in view of the mild sensation caused by Kochetov's attack in April 1958 on the Lenin Prize Committee for its "incorrect attitude" in withholding prizes for literature in 1957.

A series of shake-ups in the management of Literary Gazette, beginning in February and continuing through May, also appeared to spell a shift toward moderation in official policy. The editorial board of the newspaper was radically overhauled by the appointment of five new editors and the removal of three incumbents, including the editor in chief, Kochetov, and his deputy, Valery Druzin. Whatever the motivation behind these changes, the removal of two men notorious

for their militant dogmatism was bound to have an ameliorative effect on the affairs of the literary profession. Although Kochetov previously had a record of ill health and ostensibly was removed for this reason "at his own request," his ouster had the effect of dissociating the regime from a highly embarrassing and unbearably contentious figure.

Coincident with these developments, there was a trend toward greater frankness of expression in literary publications during the period after the 21st party congress, even though nothing said or done there appeared to foreshadow such a development. The fact that Khrushchev's current literary favorite, Tvardovsky, spoke for the literary profession at the congress instead of Surkov--a possible indication of the latter's disfavor as a result of his handling of the Pasternak affair--was more noteworthy than the conventional contents of his speech.

In striking contrast to his perfunctory performance at the congress, Tvardovsky published a satirical poem, "Morning Moscow," in the March issue of his journal, Novy Mir, ridiculing the literary censorship. Furthermore, in May he printed the highly heretical essay by Ehrenburg, On Rereading Chekhov. A sequel to his allegorical description of the stifling effects of party control of the arts, The Lessons of Stendhal, Ehrenburg's article resurrected all the heretical ideas expressed in his earlier work.

While veteran writers resumed their attacks on official standards, official spokesmen exhibited an unusual air of detachment and restraint during the period following the party congress. At a party meeting of Moscow writers in late February addressed by the head of the cultural department of the party central committee, Dmitry Polikarpov, the participants harped on traditional themes and studiously abstained from controversial questions.

A similar mood was reflected in an editorial on literature in the issue of Kommunist which appeared in late April--the first editorial on this subject carried in the party organ since the publication of Khrushchev's speeches on literature in August 1957. Without retreating from orthodox positions, the editorial concentrated on the theme of unity in the literary world, appealing for an end to both the "backsliding into factionalism" which dissipated creative energies

and the "backsliding into dogmatism" which disoriented creative writers. The call for unity was distinguished by a renewed effort to define socialist realism as an artistic method offering vast opportunities for the expression of creative individuality. By sending their more contentious figures out to pasture and by avoiding disputatious issues, the regime spokesmen evidently hoped to accomplish what their pressure tactics had thus far failed to achieve.

At the Third Writers' Congress, which finally convened in mid-May, the official posture of moderation and reasonableness received Khrushchev's sanction. In his extemporaneous address to the gathering, by far the most outstanding event on the agenda, Khrushchev stated that the "angel of reconciliation" was in the air and that a "healing of wounds" was underway. Maintaining that the opponents of orthodoxy had been "ideologically" routed, he advised against the practice of emphasizing past "mistakes," of hitting a man when he was down, and appealed for more tactfulness in approaching "people who had the misfortune to let themselves get entangled with the devil."

While extending sympathy for the "varnishers" who had portrayed life from "Communist positions" and leveling criticism at the "nonvarnishers" who had concentrated on "negative" phenomena, Khrushchev refrained from offering any cut-and-dried formula for avoiding errors. The solution of such matters, he declared, was up to the writers themselves to decide in a "comradely way," and it was not a task for the regime. From the tenor of Khrushchev's remarks and the comparatively moderate statements of regime spokesmen at the congress, it appeared that the regime, content with the adequacy of its controls, was intent on assuming a less obtrusive role in literary affairs, playing the situation by ear and intervening directly only when events threatened to get out of hand.

The official posture of moderation was reinforced at the congress by the removal of Surkov as first secretary of the Writers' Union. As head of the literary bureaucracy he had incurred the enmity of many writers, particularly those of liberal outlook, and his removal was welcomed as a conciliatory gesture by the regime. The selection of Fedin, the eminent and generally respected head of the Moscow writers, as Surkov's successor was clearly a bid for greater harmony on

the literary front. Although Fedin's orthodoxy was unassailable, his leadership of the obstreperous Moscow writers had been distinguished by moderation and flexibility, tempered by sympathy for the errant writers under his charge. In light of the conciliatory tone of Khrushchev's remarks at the congress, the change of leadership in the literary bureaucracy was designed to remove a major source of discontent and to promote cooperation by the recalcitrant elements in the literary community.

During the congress proceedings, which were relatively free of acrimonious debate, a number of eminent writers previously guilty of heretical conduct capitalized on the more liberal official atmosphere by advancing criticisms of existing standards in language reminiscent of the "thaw" period. Apparently anticipating the change in official attitude as well as the rebuff to the literary bureaucracy, the veteran writers reasserted views which had come under heavy official censure. In line with the policy of restraint, the official reaction to these utterances was surprisingly mild, suggesting that the regime was more anxious to preserve the facade of harmony than to encourage disruptive debate.

The poet Semen Kirsanov, who had played a prominent role in the "feat of silence" by nonconformist Moscow writers in 1957, led the attack against the status quo. In perhaps the most impassioned speech at the congress, Kirsanov protested against the retarding influence on literature exercised by literary critics and the official press. He denounced the former for discouraging originality in literature and the latter for its "systematic propaganda for bad and especially mediocre works." He also criticized Kochetov's novel The Brothers Yershov, charging that the latter's description of the conflict between intellectuals and workers was a grotesque caricature of reality. In striking contrast to the sharp rebuff directed at earlier criticism of Kochetov's novel, the reaction to Kirsanov's attack was remarkably temperate.

Tvardovsky, whose speech was referred to approvingly by Khrushchev, also chose to criticize the literary milieu, though in a vein more temperate than that of Kirsanov. Tvardovsky pointed to the futility of attempting to achieve good literature through reliance on "imperfect and at times harmful...'organizational measures'" and emphasized the need to develop a "new and different set of standards" superior to

the artistic criteria that had sufficed in the past. He expressed disdain for those who were "readily prepared to be answerable for 'literature as a whole,' to guide it, manage it, and direct it"--an obvious reference to bureaucratic interference in the arts--and appealed to each writer to assume more personal responsibility. Above all, he advised authors, "Write as your conscience dictates, as your knowledge of the sector of life you have chosen permits you to write, and do not be afraid in advance of editors and critics."

The criticisms voiced by Kirsanov and Tvardovsky were echoed by the veteran writer Konstantin Paustovsky, who had been removed from the editorial board of Literary Gazette in late 1956 and subjected to party censure for his vigorous defense of Dudintsev. Writing in Literary Gazette on 20 May while the congress was still in session, Paustovsky criticized a wide range of literary conventions, particularly the servility of writers and their avoidance of themes of hardship and suffering in works of art. He denied that devotion to country was the monopoly of any single group of creative artists and chided those who called their literary colleagues enemies because they had expressed "unpleasant truths" in literary works. "Perhaps we shout so often and so loudly about truth in literature," he audaciously asserted, "just because there is lack of it." Paustovsky's condemnation of "petty tutelage"--generally understood to mean party control--and his appeal for unhampered creativity were symptomatic of the unregenerate mood of defiance to official prescription that continued to permeate the literary community.

In contrast to the sharp censure that was uniformly heaped on such outbursts of nonconformity in the past, the reactions of official spokesmen at the congress were devoid of abusive polemics. In fact, Boris Ryurikov, deputy chief of the cultural department of the party central committee, went out of his way to express approval of the decision to publish Paustovsky's article in Literary Gazette, even though, in Ryurikov's opinion, it contained "partly disputable" formulations. Also in keeping with the new attitude of restraint, Sergey Smirnov, who had replaced Kochetov as editor of Literary Gazette, cautioned against the use of denunciatory attacks on deviant authors and called instead for a "truly kind,... respectful, attentive attitude toward those being criticized" --qualities which he declared were lacking in the old leadership of the Writers' Union and Literary Gazette.

The disinclination to engage in abusive debate and the unusual measure of restraint manifested by official spokesmen at the Writers' Congress appeared to formalize the beginning of another phase in the development of relationships between regime and writers in the USSR. By seeking to strike a better balance between pressure and restraint, the regime evidently hoped to get better results from its policy of "comradely persuasion" and to facilitate the creation of an atmosphere more conducive to the development of good literature tailored to official purposes. While ready to curb excesses in belles-lettres deemed likely to create "unwholesome" public attitudes, the regime appeared willing to grant writers somewhat freer rein in expressing their convictions in professional circles. As another departure from the paranoiac dogmatism of the Stalin era and the conformist pressures of the recent past, the new official attitude of reasonableness constituted an effort to find a more durable accommodation between regime and writers.

The very act of official accommodation, however, is likely to be interpreted by writers as a sign of relaxation, creating better opportunities for original artistic expression. Although now aware of the pitfalls of open heresy, writers who have been restive in the past will seek to test the new literary leadership in order to determine the limits of artistic discussion and creative activity. Editors and censors, disarmed by the demands for moderation, may be less anxious to condemn categorically works of literary merit and ambiguous ideological content. In short, the element of dissent from distortions of truth and official interference in the arts, an element which has persisted in the Soviet literary community throughout the post-Stalin period, is likely to be strengthened by developments at the Third Writers' Congress.