

Generations in Conflict

EDITORS' NOTE: That "fathers and sons" do not always see eye to eye and are in fact often on opposite sides of the fence is one of those facts of life which transcend the boundaries of time and geography. In no contemporary society, however, are the differences between generations so acute and so infused with political overtones as in the Soviet Union. In the two articles below, these differences and conflicts are examined, first, in the sphere of belles-lettres—always a sensitive indicator of social and political trends in Russia—and, next, as they were observed by an American who spent two years at a Soviet university. A forthcoming article will deal with the problems of Soviet education in general.

The Literary Arena

By Michael Rywkin

“We are thankful to Comrade Stalin for our happy youth” were words that stared down from the walls of every Soviet school while “The Leader” was still alive. They were more

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than words. Although adults encountered privations and injustice, the youth were given special attention and preferential treatment. Millions of adults vegetated in Solzhenitsyn-style concentration camps, while youngsters enjoyed the privileges of pioneer camps in the Crimea. And while the youth joined with their families in the struggle to survive on meager incomes in wretchedly crowded housing, they could at least spend their leisure hours in “Palaces of Pioneers,” count on free tuition in

the schools and enjoy other encouragements from the government. Children indoctrinated from the nursery on could seldom shake off the combined influence of schools, youth organizations (Pioneers, Komsomol) and the pleasant feeling of holding a privileged position in their society. The Communist leadership therefore regarded the young people as far more reliable and "controllable" than their elders, especially those among the latter who could remember a different way of life under capitalism.

However, a profound change has taken place since 1956, when under the initial impact of revelations about Stalin, Soviet youth began to have doubts about the values and conceptions they had theretofore accepted blindly. By 1963 the "most reliable" group in Soviet society had evolved into the most unorthodox, the least conformist. This transformation has been due in no small part to the impact of a group of young Soviet writers who have captured the imagination of many youths, greatly weakening the influence of party, Komsomol, and school. The names of these young writers are now well known abroad: poets Yevgeni Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesenski, Naum Korzhavin, Bella Akhmadulina, Yevgeni Vinokurov, Robert Rozhdestvenski, Boris Slutski; writers Victor Aksionov and Yuri Kazakov; and the balladeer Bulat Okudzhava.¹ They have gotten support from a number of middle-aged liberal writers who since 1956 have been increasingly active on the Soviet literary scene (Alexander Yashin, Victor Nekrasov, Yuri Nagibin, Leonid Martynov, Yaroslav Smeliakov, Victor Rozov, Nikolai Zhdanov, Yuri Bondarev and others), and from two older intellectuals, whose outstanding liberal influence on post-1956 events cannot be exaggerated: Ilya Ehrenburg, Konstantin Paustovski and Kornei Chukovski.

The young writers, as well as their liberal elders have not (and could have not) opposed the basic theoretical tenets of the existing system. They have not questioned the justice of Communist ideals nor the basic economic realities of the socialist state. They have accepted the existing ideology, demanding only that Soviet society live up to its promises. From the start what they mainly wanted to depict was the existing gap between theoretical ideals and everyday reality. This provoked the first important politico-literary issue: the right to portray life as it is, without lies or embellishment.

* The author would like to express appreciation to the Russian Research Center of Harvard University for support of his research in 1963-64 (of which this article is one result), and to Priscilla Johnson, Colette Shulman and Peter Reddaway for their help.

¹ Slutski and Korzhavin are older in years, but part of the young generation in all else.

Soviet Reality

Among the painters

*I have often met people of the sort
Who never paint life "en face,"
But always "in profile."*

—S. Mikhalkov ("Three Portraits")

The primary wish of the Soviet writers was to have the right to describe "life as it is." They had long been limited by the socialist-realist command to show only the side of reality which promoted the triumph of the accepted ideology, and they had been compelled to spend much energy and resourcefulness in circumventing that obstacle.

When the events of 1956 opened the floodgates of public debate, "honesty" of description in literature became a dominant demand. Yevgeni Yevtushenko (then little known) wondered "where is straightforwardness in discussion?" and squarely put the blame on the society as a whole:

*. . . We all feel guilty
for the empty poems, the endless quotations,
for the same accustomed endings of speeches.²*

Semion Kirsanov, an older poet, claimed:

*We want boldness
of thought
of sound
of color . . .
finally, open
conversation everywhere
without whispering
"Something may happen."³*

The existing state of affairs, asserted the old poetess Margarita Aliger, deformed Soviet man and made "a villain out of a hero and a scoundrel out of a giant."⁴ A good illustration of the Soviet citizen's feeling of fear was provided by Yuri Nagibin's short story of 1956, "Khazar Ornament."⁵ The author (born 1920) described the typical product of Soviet society, who refused to look at what was going on around him, as he was convinced that the only thing he could accomplish by protest would be getting himself into trouble. Many writers were not less careful than Nagibin's hero—the writers who "never paint life *en face*, but always in

² "Stantsiia zima," *Oktiabr*, No. 11, 1956.

³ "Sem dnei nedeli," *Novyi mir*, No. 9, 1956.

⁴ "Samoe glavnoe," *Oktiabr*, No. 11, 1956.

⁵ Published in *Literaturnaia Moskva*, ed. by M. I. Aliger et al, Vol. II, Moscow, 1956.

profile," as it was aptly put by Sergei Mikhailov, the coauthor of the Soviet national anthem.

In the period since 1956 there have been recurrent pleas concerning the urgent need for truthfulness in literary works. Writing in 1958, Ilya Ehrenburg, for example, quoted Chekhov's notable dictum:

*One can lie in love, in politics, in medicine, one can lie to men and even to God Almighty—there have been such instances—but in art one cannot lie.*⁶

Implicitly comparing the Soviet habit of distorting reality with the freedom of expression in France, Ehrenburg declared that "in the French disposition there is . . . no compulsory enthusiasm and no obsequious whisper."⁷ Ehrenburg is also said to have quoted Alexander Fadeiev as the author of a definition of the origin of distortions in Soviet literature:

*The difference between socialist realism and critical realism is that the first depicts man as he should be, while the second [depicts man] as he is.*⁸

The need to depict life "as it is" had another strong advocate in Konstantin Paustovski, who defended the right of writers to picture "shortcomings" without counterbalancing them by immediate descriptions of real or imaginary "achievements."⁹

The dull, conformist descriptions of life "as it should be" have been derided by both the liberals and the middle-of-the-roaders. Such writing has been called "philistine language" by Paustovski, "Church-Slavonic" by the politically influential poet Alexander Tvardovski, and "ersatz literature" by the more outspoken Ehrenburg. The liberal writers have entertained no illusion that men seeking truth could gain the favor of those in power. Andrei Voznesenski, tracing the phenomenon of official hostility against artistic criticism to the times of the medieval inquisition, wrote:

*You [artists] were immured in walls,
Burned on stakes,
Monks, like ants,
Danced on [your] bones.*

⁶ *Frantsuzskie tetradi. Zametki i perevody*, Moscow, 1958, p. 152.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

⁸ As reported by D. Starikov in "Neobkhodimye utocheniie," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 10, 1958.

⁹ Speech at the Third Writers' Congress, as reported in *Soviet Highlights*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1959.

Yet:

*Art has always been reborn
From execution and torture
And has been sparked anew. . . .*¹⁰

Appeals for truthfulness of description and freshness of thought have permeated much of Yevtushenko's early and later poetry. Straight to the point are his lines:

*One should not lie to children,
One should not keep convincing them of lies.*¹¹

And:

*Comrades,
You have to give words back
Their original meanings.*¹²

In one poem he describes a contemporary of Galileo who knew quite well "that the earth was turning, . . . but [since he] had a family," was forced to lie to protect it.¹³ In another poem Yevtushenko appeals passionately for:

*Freshness
Freshness
We want snow-whiteness
And
Freshness of muscles
Brains
and brush strokes
Freshness of music
And speech.*¹⁴

Alexander Yashin, echoing the same line, demands:

*Let us be truthful
From now on
In everything.
Till the end
In the name of our future
Let us not try to embellish.*¹⁵

Thus, the long accepted idea that a writer must adhere to the prudent rules of socialist realism by picturing Soviet life "in profile" has been clearly challenged. Many writers have gone beyond the demand for freshness and truthfulness. The young short-story writer

¹⁰ *Mozaika*, Vladimir, 1960, p. 60.

¹¹ *Tretii sneg*, Moscow, 1956.

¹² *Shosse entuziastov*, Moscow, 1956, p. 18.

¹³ "Novye stikhi," *Oktiabr*, No. 9, 1959.

¹⁴ *Yabloko*, Moscow, 1960, p. 13.

¹⁵ *Sovest. Liricheskie zapiski*, Moscow, 1961, p. 8.

Yuri Kazakov (born 1927) insists that a writer must be absolutely moral, otherwise one feels "sad" and "ashamed" to read his books.¹⁶ "Who has the right to establish what the writer or artist should see and what he shouldn't?" questions Paustovski's friend, the old country teacher F. Vigdorova, in support of her young literary colleagues.¹⁷

The Problem of Contradictions

***Kingpins of local importance
Rose there to power and slid to oblivion,
Speedily churches were dismantled,
Slowly stalls were built.***

—Y. Akim ("Galich")

As a consequence of the growing concern to picture "life as it is" without "embellishments," problems involving class contradictions and disparities within Soviet society have become a common subject in literature. In one story a middle-class *baryshnia* (young lady) is taken to task by her mother for having a working-class boyfriend:

*I see nothing special in him—a plain worker. What do you have in common with him?*¹⁸

In another story, a factory girl is aware of the low social status of the workingmen and complains about her boyfriend:

*To hell with him! He said he is an engineer, while in reality he is just a truck driver.*¹⁹

A powerful factory official is described as follows:

*The director walked by, leaving a smell of after-shave lotion. He looked straight in front of him, without greeting anyone present. The chauffeurs jumped from their seats and stood at attention.*²⁰

Later, an office worker bitterly addresses the director:

¹⁶ "Molodye o sebe," *Literatura i zhizn*, No. 9, 1962, p. 137.

¹⁷ "Glaza pustye i glaza volshebnye," *Tarusskie stranitsy. Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi sbornik*, ed. K. Paustovski et al., Kaluga, 1961, p. 158.

¹⁸ V. Tevekelian, "Za moskvoi-rekoi," *Moskva*, No. 5, 1959, p. 55.

¹⁹ Gladkov and Otten, "Bumazhnye tsvety," *Tarusskie stranitsy*, p. 171.

²⁰ Nataliia Davidova, *Liubov inzhinera Izotova*, Moscow, 1962, p. 138.

*You are barin (master) and a general. I must tell you this. . . . Couldn't you treat us simple mortals less stiffly?*²¹

Usually less outspoken, the "simple mortals" are shown to be both impressed and afraid of important people:

*"My hands and feet are shaking"—[whispers one of them]. . . . "I can't help it. They're members of the Central Committee . . ."*²²

There is not much respect for the working people on the part of the bosses:

*In the garage girls worked at greasing and lubrication. Shapeless, in clumsy worn-out overalls, with oily hair and stained faces, they all looked alike, seemed to be of the same age. It was not necessary to remember their names. They would all respond to the call: "Girlie, hey you, come here."*²³

A young lady of some station also speaks of the workers with disdain:

*I've never met such people, real workers. I know the workers who come to repair door locks or to paint rooms. They're all terrible drunkards and cheats.*²⁴

Such social contradictions in Soviet life are increasingly stressed by writers of all possible shades of opinion, conservatives included. However, their existence is still not admitted by the party, being contrary to the basic Communist conception of *beskonfliktnost* ("conflictlessness") in Soviet life.

Yevgeni Yevtushenko has been one of the foremost opponents of this official fiction. As early as 1956 he attacked it when he counterposed

. . . a snub-nosed, short fellow covered with dust; he was hungry, he was young and bare-foot. . . .

to the

*. . . solid citizen . . . with a briefcase—a symbol of business who . . . sat in a car as if in a Presidium.*²⁵

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 325-26.

²² Vsevolod Kochetov, *Sekretar obkoma*, Moscow, 1962, p. 427.

²³ Kochetov, *Bratia Yershovy*, Moscow, 1960, p. 275.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

²⁵ "Stantsiia zima," *loc. cit.*

The new focus on social contradictions in Soviet life has reflected the traditional preference of Russian writers for the poor and meek as against the strong and mighty. There has been a re-emphasis on the old Russian literary preoccupation with the average man, his life and feelings, a tradition epitomized by Gogol's famous "Overcoat." This approach is most often noted in the works of the younger Soviet writers.

The Return to Gogol's "Overcoat"

***When they kick us,
They kick the dome of heaven.
Under your boots
The universe is screaming!***

—A. Voznesenski ("Negroes are singing")

In line with the "common man" tradition, Yevtushenko's heroes are not *stakhanovites*, commissars or directors, but people "shaken in crowded trolleys," students unloading melons at the Moscow freight station, women standing in line for food, hard-working railroadmen from the poet's native Winter Junction. This trend is even more pronounced in the writings of Yuri Kazakov, whose leading characters are exclusively simple people leading modest, uneventful lives. They are not concerned with "great ideas" or universal happiness or world problems, but are just trying to live the best they can, maintaining their human dignity against difficult odds. Kazakov's heroes are neither positive nor negative. His rejected lovers, deceived country girls, rugged individualists, and quintessentially Russian peasants are deeply modest and human.

On the other hand, conservative writers like Kochetov are preoccupied with portraying the "best people," those with a vested interest in the existing society: *udarniks*, party workers, directors. Such writers shudder at the thought of dealing with "simple people . . . who ride trolley-busses, stand in lines before bath houses and wash floors."²⁶

The issue of whether to concentrate on the depiction of important and heroic deeds, or simple people and their everyday struggle for existence, is clearly being resolved in favor of the latter. Even Kochetov admits that "important people" are now out of favor in literature. Other writers stress that "heroics" are also passé:

²⁶ Kochetov, *Sekretar obkoma*, p. 9.

*Nobody wears medals anymore.
Ribbons are worn only by eccentrics,
And they will, probably, soon drop the habit,
Thus sparing their jackets.*²⁷

The spread of such feeling was openly acknowledged by Sergei Mikhalkov at a 1961 party forum.²⁸ The popular guitar-playing folk-singer and writer, Bulat Okudzhava, has carried the theme even farther. His description of the adventures of a Soviet draftee during World War II—a youth who was not the least interested in heroism and was mainly concerned with just staying alive²⁹—brought about a tempest of outcries from the conformist writers.

The tendency towards disillusionment with "heroics" is directly connected with a reshuffling of values and the spread of so-called "nihilist" attitudes among Russia's young writers and among Soviet youth in general.

The New Nihilism

***One must think, and not smile,
Read difficult books.
One must verify—get bumps,
Not worship opinions too much.***

—B. Slutski (Pages from *Tarussa*)

The collapse of the awe-inspiring yet familiarly paternal image of Joseph Stalin, the subsequent unveiling of the reality of Soviet everyday life by the proponents of the "life as it is" approach, and finally, the shift of literary emphasis toward simple people in their daily struggle, helped to create an atmosphere of doubt and disbelief. Under its impact Soviet youth's acceptance of propaganda-instilled values was soon shattered. Since Stalin was no longer sacred, there was no reason why one should believe anybody else. Since the quasi-religious heroics of "building socialism" were no longer considered an adequate excuse for the drabness of everyday life, how could one maintain the old idealistic belief in the perfection of the Soviet road towards the Communist future? Under Stalin everything seemed much simpler:

*The important things were decided without me
I knew I would get some answers
To all the "who," "what" and "why."*

²⁷ Boris Slutski, "Za noshenie ordenov," *Tarusskie Stranitsy*, p. 211.

²⁸ "Novye zadachi—novye trebovaniia," in *XXII sezd KPSS i voprosy ideologicheskoi raboty*, Moscow, 1962, p. 217.

²⁹ "Bud zdorov shkoliar," *Tarusskie stranitsy*, op. cit.

But in the new situation . . .

*It suddenly appears necessary
To answer everything by yourself.³⁰*

The message of these lines is reminiscent of Turgenev's Bazarov and his revolt against the accepted Russian values of the 1860's in *Fathers and Sons* (1862). Yevtushenko's appeal to his readers to do their own thinking instead of accepting "ready-made" answers reflects a similar disillusionment with contemporary values that spread quickly among the Russian youth from 1956 on.

The right to doubt has been defended by some very popular prose writers, as well as by Yevtushenko,³¹ in the successful monthly youth journal, *Yunost*. One such writer is Victor Rozov, a man in his forties known for his several movie scenarios (including the famous "Cranes are Flying"), who wrote a play for *Yunost* entitled *ABVGD* (ABCDE).³² The hero of the play, a young Soviet high school graduate, shows no respect for the established authorities or what he calls their "relative" values. He is tired of all the "basic truths" instilled in him from childhood. Instead of devoting his thoughts to the building of communism, he sometimes feels the desire to "blow up the whole world to hell . . . and to start from the beginning." (This sentence was attributed by some Soviet critics to the "unhealthy influence" of Salinger's Holden Colfield.)³³ Despite his obvious lack of belief in the goals of his society, the young nihilist shows courage in difficulty, tenacity in work, a capacity for love, and above all a more genuine purity of soul than many "believers," who often turn out to be mere conformists willing "to obey orders" and "do whatever they are told."

The writers propounding such themes—as well as their youthful followers—have been branded "nihilists," "skeptics," "cynics," "blackeners," "anarchists," "stiliagi." They have been attacked and criticized by scores of political, literary and politico-literary officials, including the party theoretician Suslov ("one cannot allow skepticism and grumbling"), and Khrushchev himself.³⁴ The party has been mainly concerned about

³⁰ Yevtushenko, "Stantsiia zima," *loc. cit.*

³¹ E.g., his "Nihilist," *Yunost*, No. 12, 1960.

³² *Yunost*, No. 9, 1961.

³³ See, e.g., Georgii Radov, "Pravdokha i modern," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Nov. 16, 1961.

³⁴ See Suslov in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 19, 1960; see also N. M. Gribachev, speech at the 22nd Party Congress, *ibid.*, Oct. 28, 1961; and "Krushenie nihilista," *Komsomolskaia pravda*, July 25, 1962.



Поэт Саморекламов

Рисунок К. НЕВЛЕРА

CARICATURE OF A YOUNG POET

Caption below: Poet Samoreklamov (Self-Advertiser) Stickers read: "I myself," "I about myself," "Myself Abroad."

—From *Krokodil* (Moscow), Feb. 20, 1963.

. . . the penetration into the ranks of youth of the decaying bourgeois morality which manifests itself in the works of the young writers.³⁵

Such "bourgeois morality," it is feared, has poisoned young minds and deeply affected the attitudes of Soviet youth. As a "conservative" writer put it:

The secret virus has so stricken youth that the latter protests against everything, disagrees with the reality of the 1960's, is trivially ironic concerning the "vulgarly materialistic actions of the party," scoffs at the "boring standardization" of our newspapers and at the fictitious indifference of our way of life.³⁶

One of the most gifted among the young Russian poets, Andrei Voznesenski, has explained the current groping of Soviet youth as follows:

³⁵ *Pravda*, Nov. 20, 1961.

³⁶ Leonid Sobolev, "O glavnom," *Literatura i zhizn*, Dec. 24, 1961.

*The Russian people have always felt a deep need for spiritual life. At one time it was filled by religion. Then, in a more specific manner, by the cult of personality. Is it bad that it is [now] being filled by poetry?*³⁷

Unfortunately, the point of view of the young writers is not shared by Nikita Khrushchev, who has made his position clear:

*The person who tries, under the banner of the struggle against the cult of personality, to take a stand against the established foundations, against authority. . . , that person willingly or unwillingly moves away from Marxist-Leninist positions and assumes a bourgeois position. . . . We are for authorities. The working class, the people building communism must have respected authorities [and] leaders.*³⁸

The loss of confidence on the part of the youth is closely connected with a growing lack of understanding between different generations of Soviet society.

Fathers vs. Sons

**Professor,
I will rob and defame you,
Your wife, I might leave you—
I leave you your wife, but bear in mind
I will take away your son from you.**

—Yevtushenko ("Professor, I don't like you . . .")

Conflicts between generations are a natural and recurrent condition of history. Due to specific circumstances, however, the clash between certain generations of a given society is greater than between others. This occurs when one generation has gone through an especially difficult period or is subjected to extreme pressures which shape its mentality in an unusual way. The succeeding generation, not experiencing similar pressures, cannot possibly understand the problems that have conditioned its elders. Age difference itself plays an important role, since younger people are generally more idealistic, more apt to take action and more proud to react against injustice than their seniors.

In the case of contemporary Soviet society, one can distinguish four generations, each formed under different conditions and molded

into a group with specific attitudes toward life. The first group, people over 65, are the last survivors of the revolutionary era. They took part in (or at least saw) the revolution and the civil war, lived through war communism, the NEP, collectivization, the first Five-Year Plans, the purges and World War II. They were conditioned to conform during the Stalinist terror. Most of them show no desire for a change, for liberalization of the Soviet way of life. They are resigned to the existing order of things. Nevertheless, some still remember the early revolutionary enthusiasm or even their pre-1917 youth, and sympathize with the aspirations of the younger generation. People like Paustovski or Ehrenburg or Chukovski, whose years are measured and who have seen much harder times, are no longer so afraid of the authorities and are now willing to take risks.

The most conservative generation is the group in their mid-forties to mid-sixties. Both the old Russia and revolutionary Russia are alien to them. They are the most typical products of Stalinist conformity—the opportunistic bureaucrats *par excellence*. Poorly-educated products of the speedy schooling that prevailed in the 1920's and early 1930's, their only background is Stalin's Russia, and their sons' aspirations for change are alien to them. It is these people who occupy the large majority of managerial and party positions in the Soviet structure. Radical changes can hardly be expected in the USSR until this group passes from the Soviet scene.

A third group is composed of people in their mid-thirties and mid-forties. Not a very large one, it includes all those who reached adulthood during World War II, who suffered most in defending Russia against the Hitlerite menace, but who were too young to witness the purges of the 1930's. Divided among the old and the young in spirit, these people play no role of their own in the conflict between generations but, depending on inclinations, join either the youth or the "fathers."

The final generation, for the purposes of this discussion, embraces adults up to age thirty-five—those who were too young to take part in World War II and also too young to suffer any lasting influence from Stalinist oppression. The Revolution, the Civil War, the first Five-Year plans, are for them symbols of the distant past. At the heart of the conflict between generations is a revolt of a large segment of this "fourth generation" against the conformist majority of the Stalin-molded middle-aged bureaucrats. As the writer Aksionov put it:

What is peculiar to Soviet youth is that it re-

³⁷ Interview in *Polityka* (Warsaw), March 2, 1963.

³⁸ Speech in *Pravda*, April 26, 1963.

jects the traditions and the way of life of the period of the cult of the individual. It rejects it as a whole, and in every detail, and this worries some members of the other [middle-aged] generation.³⁹

Articulated by the young writers, the revolt against conformity has focussed in the first instance on cultural reform:

*In literature, art, stage and screen, the youth sees signs of innovation (i.e., of progress) primarily in a decisive change from the forms of artistic expression which have developed within the framework of socialist realism.*⁴⁰

In the arts, socialist realism has epitomized the ideological rigidity which the liberals despise: in the words of Yevtushenko, socialist-realist art is "cart-like and doomed in the age of rockets," while for Voznesenski its proponents look like "toothless grandmothers."

Yet the "conflict between generations" obviously goes beyond the issue of artistic expression: "modern" Soviet youth has increasingly shown its interest in a more individualistic way of life, in Western civilization, in fresh new theories. According to the complaint of one of the older conservatives, a portion of the youth also

*. . . in effect opposes itself to what in its view is the boring reality of our country's [preoccupation with] corn and metallurgy. They, these young people, consider themselves courageous. And where is that courage? In the fact that they proclaim the American-European concept of "individual freedom"?*⁴¹

Not all of the younger generation, certainly, have joined actively in the liberals' cause. There is in fact a vocal conservative element among the young people eager to gain a comfortable place in the society by smoothly and uncritically adjusting to existing conditions. While for the young liberals old Communist slogans taste of mothballs, the young conservatives see them as passwords to a successful personal career along a well-established path.

Most of the younger people are, however, neither conservative nor liberal. They tend to shun political discussion, which they view as not only superfluous and boring but also foolish to the extent that it is still potentially dangerous.

³⁹ *Polityka*, March 2, 1963.

⁴⁰ *XXII sezd KPSS i voprosy . . .*, p. 101.

⁴¹ Anatoli Sofronov, "Sviaz vremen," *Literatura i zhizn*, May 13, 1962.

They are inclined to regard talks about communism or socialism as sort of abstract religious sermons unconnected with any real life situation. "You never think about communism because for you and Ina it is like a prayer: 'Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,'" remarks an older man to a member of the "fourth generation."⁴² Yet if the younger generation is often politically indifferent, it has exhibited a restlessness, a tendency to break out of the established molds, that both reflects and feeds upon the themes expounded by the young liberal writers. In this sense large numbers of the young are in affinity with the liberals and are implicitly involved in the "conflict between generations."

The regime and its supporters have reacted with vehemence on the issue of this conflict. A few years back the reaction was one of anger:

*. . . nobody will succeed in tearing down the link between the generations. Nobody will succeed in throwing out everything we have accomplished while covering such actions with references to the tragic facts and circumstances created by the cult of Stalin's personality.*⁴³

Since March 1963, however, the predominant emphasis of the official line has been to deny flatly that any serious conflict exists. The Party Secretary for Propaganda, Ilichev, took the lead in debunking

*. . . stories about "the revolt" of . . . the youth against their "fathers," who had allegedly "tarnished themselves" during the era of the cult of personality. . . .*⁴⁴

Almost simultaneously Khrushchev himself took pains to assert publicly that "the youth follow the party" and that the majority of young people are not listening to the liberal writers.⁴⁵ Since then, refuting the existence of a conflict between fathers and sons has become a common pastime among the conservatives. An interesting sample is a poem by the young conservative Vladimir Firtsov, reassuring the "fathers" that the worthwhile "boys," at least, are immune to the disease of liberalism:

*I spat at the crooked smiles
of the thirty-year-old "boys."
I stood without waiting a minute
Under the holy banner of the fathers.*⁴⁶

⁴² Nikolai Pogodin, "Yantarnoe ozherele," *Yunost*, No. 1, 1960, p. 35.

⁴³ Sobolev, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ *Literaturnaiia gazeta*, March 9, 1963.

⁴⁵ *Izvestia*, March 10, 1963.

⁴⁶ "Kliatva vernosti," *Pravda*, March 24, 1963.

Yet even while denying the existence of conflict, the regime and the conservatives continue to reveal their apprehension over some of the new attitudes prevalent among youth—not the least of which is the widespread interest in everything Western.

The Young Westerners

He wore narrow trousers,

Read Hemingway.

“Your tastes are non-Russian, lad”

The father, gloomily, was reprimanding.

—Ye. Yevtushenko (“Nihilist”)

The interest in everything Western is widespread among the young Soviet generation. Much of this concentration is on the most superficial aspects of Western culture: American or European clothing, modern dances, foreign movies, jazz, some English expressions. The young people of a more serious bent read contemporary foreign literature (what is available) and are interested in modern art. Quite a few find it fashionable to become “impressed” by half-digested non-Communist philosophies (of non-political character—existentialism, for example). Finally, some become genuinely influenced by Western values and by Europe as such, as they grow more and more aware of the class disparities existing within Soviet society and of the contradictions inherent in Soviet life. Since the society to which they belong is highly resistive to the changes they feel are necessary, the youthful Westerners enter into a direct conflict with that society, accusing their middle-aged parents of being afraid of anything fresh or new.

The poems of Yevtushenko and Voznesenski bear the strong impact of Westernism. Yevtushenko depicts members of a Soviet delegation in Paris, who, “forgetting about *bditelnost* [vigilance],” gaze at Parisian girls⁴⁷; his famous “nihilist” wears Western-style narrow-bottom slacks and reads Hemingway, while Voznesenski speaks about Polish “abstract chef-d’oeuvres.”⁴⁸

The most prominent Westerner is, however, the young playwright Vasili Aksionov, whose works depict the growing Western influence over the way of life and the minds of Soviet youth. In his *Ticket to the Stars*,⁴⁹ his youthful heroes listen to German jazz, read Polish jour-

nals (the closest thing to the Western press one can get in the USSR), books by Hemingway, Böll, Jonesco. They give each other anglicized names, dress in jeans, play poker and ping-pong, dance “rock and roll” and even “the Charleston.” For them a car is a Pontiac, a Ford, a Mercedes, never a ZIL; a pretty girl—Brigitte Bardot, mademoiselle, miss. They do not care about going east to the virgin lands. On the contrary, they go as far west as they can—to the Estonian shores of the Baltic sea. These young men and women are Westerners, feel European and are as free from the influence of Communist propaganda as any one born and raised in the Soviet Union could be. Their attitude toward the old Stalinist way of life is symbolized by one youth’s act of demolishing an old wall in an Estonian fishing kolkhoz, thinking the while:

*I am hitting with a crowbar the old wall that
nobody needs*

I am hitting the old wall with a crowbar

I am hitting the old wall

I am hitting.

The old wall, like the more visible wall in Berlin, has fenced in the Soviet youth, has artificially isolated it from Western culture, from the modern way of life. To some young people, crushing this wall is as important as any of the aims of the destalinization process. In his new play, *Oranges from Morocco*, Aksionov purposely shows that this spirit is strong not only among the better-educated youth of Moscow and European Russia, but also among the youth of the remote eastern parts of the USSR, Siberia and the Pacific coast.⁵⁰

The influence of the West on Soviet youth has caused a great deal of concern to the party and has been a key issue in the harangue over “fathers” and “sons.” In the months preceding the regime’s latest line of denial of a “conflict of generations,” a full-scale politico-poetic polemic was waged in the Soviet press in which the conservatives deplored youth’s interest in things foreign while the liberals protested youth’s right to be different from their fathers. In one poem Yevtushenko implored young people (“the boys”):

Be steadfast

Get into disputes

*Hold your own.*⁵¹

In reply, the ultra-conservative Gribachev

⁴⁷ *Vzmakh ruki*, Moscow, 1962, p. 13.

⁴⁸ Voznesenski, “Polskoe,” *Treugolnaia grusha liricheskikh otstuplenii iz poemy*, Moscow, 1962, p. 79.

⁴⁹ *Yunost*, Nos. 6 and 7, 1961.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 1, 1963.

⁵¹ “Davaite malchiki,” *Novyi mir*, No. 7, 1962.

cautioned "the boys" who "look at Russia in a slightly foreign manner" to think twice before committing such sacrilege:

*To whom have you given your hearts?
The foot slides, the tongue is free to blabber
But there is that terrible borderline moment,
When one step*

*and you are without kith or kin
And no longer under the Red Banner.*

*No, boys,
We did not raise you for it. . . .⁵²*

Gribachev's position was disputed by the poet Robert Rozhdestvenski. In his "Fellows with Raised Collars," he defended the right of young writers to speak "for the boys," at the same time advising "the boys" to be patient and wait for a more appropriate time to press their demands, meanwhile withstanding "present rains."⁵³ In angry response, Khrushchev himself took up the attack against the young writers for considering themselves "mentors of the youth" and advised Rozhdestvenski personally to learn from Gribachev.⁵⁴

The "50-50" Approach

Everybody goes East, but we go West.

—V. Aksionov (*Ticket to the Stars*)

Perhaps the greatest transgression of official Soviet prescriptions has been committed by those people who have dared to adopt the so-called 50-50 approach where foreign contacts are concerned. This approach is based on two principles. The first, established by Yevtushenko during his travels abroad, calls for balancing criticism of things foreign with an honest criticism of deficiencies in Soviet society. The second, stressed by Victor Nekrasov, consists of balancing criticism of Western ways with recognition of Western achievements. In line with the first principle, Yevtushenko consistently balanced (often on the same page) his

⁵² "Net malchiki," *Pravda*, Jan. 27, 1963.

⁵³ "Parni s podniatymi vorotnikami," *Yunost*, No. 3, 1963.

⁵⁴ *Izvestia*, March 10, 1963.

pro-Castro poetry with attacks on the survival of Stalinist practices in Russia. He used the same technique during his press interviews in the West.⁵⁵

On his part, Victor Nekrasov, in his travel notes from Italy and the United States, was careful to give a 50-50 picture of good and bad impressions. While from an American's point of view his picture still seems slanted, it is, nevertheless, the most honest Soviet report on the United States since Ilf's and Petrov's *Little Golden America* of the 1930's.

The 50-50 approach is the biggest step forward taken by the new Soviet Westerners in their effort to establish really meaningful cultural ties with the West. Since the beginning of 1963, the proponents of such balanced views have been under strong attack as advocates of "peaceful coexistence in the field of ideology," deemed to be especially damaging to the minds of youth.⁵⁶ As expressed by the mildly conservative old poet Tikhonov:

Our adversaries are willingly taking a course toward rapprochement, they have nothing against ideological coexistence. They know well that it will give them the opportunity to exercise influence over minds and tastes, especially in our young generation.⁵⁷

The struggle for the minds of the Soviet "fourth generation" is far from over. Moreover, this age group probably has another twenty years to wait before it comes into positions of real power and influence.⁵⁸ During the interim many of its members will be corrupted, many will adjust to whatever conditions exist, and many will forget their youthful impetus. Yet there is room for hope that the seeds of this generation's protest against conformity will bear the fruit of a genuine liberalization of Soviet attitudes when today's sons become tomorrow's fathers.

⁵⁵ See Ivan Anisimov in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 30, 1963, describing Yevtushenko's behavior at such interviews.

⁵⁶ See *Pravda*, March 1, 12 and 17, 1963.

⁵⁷ Speech at the Writers' Union Plenum, *Pravda*, March 27, 1963.

⁵⁸ This also appears to be Ehrenburg's opinion, since he makes clear that he does not expect the flourishing of Soviet literature before the 1980's.

Among Students in Moscow: *An Outsider's Report*

By Darrell P. Hammer

A good deal can be learned about the mood of Soviet university students, and about the regime's attitude toward them, from the Soviet press. Much of what is known, for example, about "nihilist" and "anarchist" groups of ultra-revolutionaries comes from such unlikely sources as *Komsomolskaia pravda* (organ of the Komsomol, or Young Communist League). Yet the Soviet press has to be used with care since its function is not to communicate information but to communicate policy. What the press tells us about student behavior will show what the regime is concerned with at a particular moment; it may not tell us what the students are really up to.

One of the most powerful tools for analysis of the Soviet press is the *odnako* principle. *Odnako* (Russian for "however") is the key word which often signals the essential message of a party pronouncement; the alert reader knows that "*odnako*" marks the end of praise and the beginning of criticism. The word might even be translated, "And now let us get to the point." Up until then the mood is one of high optimism: in general things are going quite well (the pre-*odnako* description of a given state of affairs); but the post-*odnako* criticisms then become specific. The idea is that whatever is wrong is untypical, and a

deviation from the norm. "*Odnako*" thus is a semantic device which describes all failures and shortcomings as if they were isolated exceptions.

With this tool in hand, one can learn something about the regime's views on the younger generation by studying L. F. Ilichev's speech to the Central Committee plenum of June 1963. Ilichev dealt at length with problems of youth, education, and ideology. It was a remarkable speech, because Ilichev discussed quite frankly the differences between generations, and he confessed that the aura of "revolutionary romance" with which the party has tried to clothe the past was somehow lacking in the present. It is obviously harder to generate enthusiasm now than it was in the heroic age of the revolution, the civil war, and the first Five-Year Plan. But Ilichev insisted that the younger generation was still filled with enthusiasm for the work of "building communism":

There is no basis for sighing that, somehow, the "wrong generation has grown up." Our youth has been and remains an active and brilliant part of socialist society, devoted to the great ideals of communism. (Prolonged applause.)

Then follows the signal:

Life, however, gives birth not only to men who honorably carry out their duties. From time to time it casts up young people who, by their rotten attitude toward life, their fear of labor,

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