

COMMUNISM VERSUS STALINISM No. 2

# Russian Intellectuals In Revolt

An assessment of the dissident movement 1953 - 72

– Oliver MacDonald

'The heirs of Stalin' – Y. Yevtushenko

Debate on strategy – A. Mikhailov & A. Strikh

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

12 p.

## INTRODUCTION

This is the second number of a series of pamphlets attempting to provide information, analysis and polemic concerning Eastern Europe. The series, "Communism versus Stalinism", is produced by members of the International Marxist Group, the British Section of the Fourth International, in the hope that the pamphlets will be of use in assisting socialist militants in Britain to make sense of developments in Eastern Europe today.

The traditional picture of East European societies as oceans of grey immobility and silence can no longer be taken seriously. In almost every single one of these countries, recent years have witnessed the emergence of revolutionary anti-Stalinist currents, intellectual dissent and working class revolt, while the bureaucratic regimes have been faced with economic and social difficulties not amenable to the nostrums of economic reform so fashionable amongst Stalinist strategists in the late 1960s. We hope to bring some of these new strands of East European reality to the attention of socialists in Britain via this series of pamphlets.

Our first number consisted of one of the most important documents from the revolutionary left in Eastern Europe, Pyotr Grigorenko's Open Letter to the 1969 Conference of Communist Party leaders in Budapest, along with a lengthy critical introduction by Joe Greenwood.

This present number concentrates on the movement of dissident intellectuals in the Soviet Union. The first article, by Oliver MacDonald, outlines the history of the movement since 1953, analyses the main currents within it, and attempts to draw a political balance-sheet of its activities. It attempts to combat both the uncritical support given by some sections of the British left to figures like Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, and the ultra-left sectarian errors of those who tend to write the whole movement off as a clamour by sections of the elite for the privileges of the bourgeois intelligentsia in the West. This issue also contains two important documents, characteristic of two phases of the movement of intellectual dissent: first, Yevtushenko's poem, "Heirs of Stalin", which marked the high-tide of officially tolerated literary opposition in the early 1960s; and the second, a debate on political strategy published in Khronika Tekushshykh Sobytiy (Chronicle of Current Events, the principle Samizdat publication of the intellectual opposition) in 1971. This debate, between otherwise unknown dissidents, published at a time when the movement was already in decline, provides a vivid illustration of the dilemmas facing the dissident intelligentsia and of the conflicting conceptions of how to overcome them in the present period.

In addition to this series, we would like to recommend the journal "Critique" to those interested in the debates among Marxists on Eastern European society today. Copies of the journal can be obtained from Red Books, 97, Caledonian Rd., London N1.

In conclusion, we would welcome any comments on our pamphlets, suggestions or material for future pamphlets. We can also supply extra copies of the pamphlets, and a range of revolutionary Marxist literature in English and in various East European languages about Eastern Europe today. Finally, members of the editorial board of "Communism versus Stalinism" will be very willing to speak on Eastern Europe putting forward the views of the International Marxist Group and to debate with other tendencies in the working class movement. To contact us on any of these points, write to: Oliver MacDonald, c/o the International Marxist Group, 97, Caledonian Road, London N1.

The expulsion of Solzhenitsyn and the publication of Gulag Archipelago have brought the activities of dissident Soviet intellectuals to the forefront of popular attention throughout Western Europe. And yet by 1973 the movement for democratic liberties which flourished among the intelligentsia in the late 1960s had already been decimated, mainly because the leading activists were either imprisoned or exiled to the West. The waves of petitions, demonstrations, appeals and underground publications had, at least temporarily, receded, leaving behind a handful of personalities who continued to issue statements to foreign correspondents in an atmosphere of deepening isolation.

From an historical point of view, few questions in world politics are of more pivotal importance than the path which will be taken by the anti-bureaucratic forces in the USSR. What is at stake is not simply the Soviet state's enormous role in every major arena of international affairs, but more especially the traditions of a workers' movement throughout the world which is dominated in large part by Communist Parties steeped with loyalty to the Soviet Party leadership. It is not surprising then that the first stirrings of opposition to the bureaucratic dictatorship since the destruction of the Old Bolsheviks by Stalin in the 1930's should be followed with passionate interest in the West by the bourgeoisie and the revolutionary Marxists alike.

Opposition to the bureaucratic regime in recent years has by no means been confined to the Russian intelligentsia. There has been a continuous struggle by various religious sects, by Zionist currents and by the national minorities within the Soviet Union against various aspects of government policy, as well as resistance, sometimes of an explosive kind, from the working class. And within the Russian intelligentsia itself a whole spectrum of political currents has appeared, including Russian Chauvinists, believers in Slevic racism, and even semi-fascist tendencies, in addition to the majority of the intelligentsia which in one way or another gives its support to the social conquests of the October Revolution. But the importance of the movement for civil rights and democratisation lies in the fact that within its ranks could be found efforts to provide a global alternative to the bureaucratic regime. It is this fact which calls attention to the course of this intellectual opposition, the nature of the currents within it and to the role of the movement in the development of the struggle against the bureaucratic dictatorship.

#### THE BACKGROUND TO THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

The first expressions of the intelligentsia's opposition followed in the wake of the regime's tentative move towards liberalisation after Stalin's death in 1953. In 1956, following the 20th Party Congress and the invasion of Hungary, there was considerable ferment in the universities of Moscow, Leningrad and other cities. Very radical currents developed amongst the students, challenging both the structure of the official youth organisation and the whole nature of the regime. Savage police repression crushed this movement, and since that time mass student revolt has not been seen within the Soviet Union, though small radical student currents have sprung up at various times, most notably in Leningrad in the early 1960s.

After 1956 it was the writers who led the way, seeking to break free from the censorship of literary works and to be able to publish material on subjects hitherto taboo including books on Stalinism, the purges and the labour camps. Khrushchev not only tolerated but even encouraged such pressure, wishing to undermine his hard-line rivals in the leadership and to establish a new base of popular support for

his government among the intelligentsia. The 1962 publication, on Khrushchev's authority, of Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich and of Yevtushenko's "Heirs of Stalin" marked the high-point of official encouragement of the literary opposition.

But by the early 1960s the intelligentsia was beginning to extend the scope of its demands from purely literary issues towards political criticism. Following the public denunciation of the Stalin cult at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party in 1961, the intellectuals began to demand thoroughgoing implementation of the government's promises about destalinisation. In spite of the fact that the writers remained totally without a common political platform or organisation, the government began to feel threatened and started to reverse its policy of political liberalisation. In 1963, citing increased "labour indiscipline" the party leadership began to partially rehabilitate Stalin. The trial of the Leningrad poet Brodsky in 1964, the replacement of Khrushchev by Brezhnev the same year, and the arrests and secret trials of dozens of intellectuals in the Ukraine in 1965 were landmarks along the road to an event which inaugurated a second wave of intellectual dissent in the late 1960s. That event was the trial of the writers Sinyavsky and Daniel in the spring of 1966.

#### THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

The imprisonment of these two writers made it impossible for the intellectuals to continue in the old way of sporadic, individual initiatives. They had either to retreat back into passivity, or to organise a more effective opposition to the regime. The dissidents were galvanised into a more vigorous counter-attack. Writers and scientists moved beyond pressing their own professional demands and calling vaguely for destalinisation. They began to organise in defence of victims of repression, and to demand the full implementation of the democratic rights laid down in the 1936 Constitution. Underground literature (samizdat) began to flourish, petitions and open letters were organised, denouncing the regime's attempts to rehabilitate Stalin and its return to some of the methods characteristic of the Stalin era.

In 1968, following the trial of four dissidents who had published an account of the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial, the dissident movement achieved its highest stage of development. No fewer than 700 people signed open public statements denouncing the trial - an action which involved considerable personal risk -- and subsequently, in April of that year a new focus for the movement appeared in the form of "The Chronicle of Current Events". This journal, which was to appear at fairly regular two monthly intervals for four years, drawing together a mass of information on the activities of the repressive forces, and on developments within the opposition, provided a forum for debate between various political currents within what had become known as the "Democratic Movement". 1968 also saw a number of actions in solidarity with Czechoslovakia, including a demonstration against the invasion by a handful of dissidents in Red Square.

The opposition had chosen 'legality' as the terrain of their struggle: their aim was the restoration of civil rights and in particular the democratic freedoms of speech, assembly and association. Their methods were those of open, public initiatives, combined with the production of clandestine literature. For a period these methods allowed the oppositional forces to move outside the milieu of tiny, isolated circles to which they had been confined and to grow considerably both in size and influence.

But by the end of 1972 the democratic movement had been largely destroyed as an organised force; thanks both to repression and to the internal crisis of perspective within the opposition. By raising the stakes through victimization, the bureaucracy had forced the intellectuals to confront ideological and political problems to which they could give no common answer.

#### MAIN CURRENTS WITHIN THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

Limitations of information make it impossible to describe in an exact way the processes of differentiation within the democratic movement. We are forced to rely on the undoubtedly partial picture which emerges from the documents that have arrived in the West. Nevertheless, from these we can see at least three fairly distinct currents represented in the writings of Sakharov, Roy Medvedev and Pyotr Grigorenko. As the movement came under increasing pressure from the regime, it was forced to define its aims more precisely and seek allies both within the USSR and internationally. The writings of these three leaders illustrate quite clearly some of the main courses taken by the forces of the democratic movement.

Certain sections of the opposition, most notably Andrei Sakharov, are clearly overawed by the power of U.S. imperialism and by the pressures on the bureaucracy to reach an accommodation with it. Cut off from mass support inside the country they searched for international allies, and increasingly looked towards those imperialist circles that wish to extract the maximum political concessions from the bureaucracy as the price for "economic cooperation". They are prepared for a total capitulation to imperialism, in Vietnam, the Middle East, Chile, etc. since they see the further strengthening of imperialism as the key to democratisation within the Soviet Union. Even within their own terms, however, they are hopelessly mistaken. For the imperialist bourgeoisie, the struggle against the colonial revolution is directed against the revolutionary working masses; a thoroughgoing restoration of socialist democracy in the Soviet Union, far from strengthening imperialism, would be an important step towards its overthrow. This hopelessness of Sakharov's position is clearly seen by Roy Medvedev, in, for example, his article, "Problems of Democratisation and Detente" (New Left Review, 83):

"In the final analysis, Nixon, Pompidou and Heath are defending the interests of the ruling classes of their own countries, and it should by no means be assumed that capitalist circles in the USA, Britain, France or Western Germany are particularly interested in a rapid development of socialist democracy in the USSR or in accelerating the pace of economic, social and cultural progress in our country."

Roy Medvedev has undertaken what is probably the most detailed research of the Stalin period and his book, Let History Judge, is the most authoritative document of its kind to have been produced in the Soviet Union. Drawing on a wide range of sources, he goes far beyond Khrushchev's secret speech in exposing the character of the regime under Stalin. However, he never completely breaks with Khrushchev's conception of the personality cult, and analyses Stalin's dictatorial power as the cause of the flowering of bureaucratic practices, rather than as the pinnacle of power of a privileged bureaucratic caste. In common with numerous other writers, Medvedev equates Stalinism with a particular regime of bureaucratic arbitrariness and terror that died with Stalin. Unlike the Khrushchevites of the 1950s, however, he is no longer concerned with the strengthening of the ruling faction of

the bureaucracy, but with the struggle against what he sees as a neo-Stalinist faction that has seized control. His perspectives, then, are those of a factional struggle within the "world communist movement" and he sees as his natural allies in this the "democratic socialist" currents within the Western communist and socialist parties. The similarities with the radical wing of the Dubcek reform movement are obvious.

Clearly much of the work of Medvedev will be invaluable in the formation of a revolutionary opposition to the bureaucracy. The major political concepts of this opposition, however, will not be drawn from Medvedev, who, in his defence of gradual reform 'from above' as against revolution 'from below', and his totally uncritical acceptance of peaceful co-existence, situates himself within the ideological orbit of the Soviet bureaucracy itself.

What emerges in Medvedev's definition of Stalinism is something that characterises the great bulk of the Soviet oppositionists: a failure to understand Stalinism in its historical rise and its present-day role as a counter-revolutionary force within the international workers' movement. The causes of this failure obviously lie in the expulsion or liquidation by Stalin of the Bolshevik cadres within the Comintern. The consequence is that despite a partial, empirical break with Stalinism, virtually all the oppositional currents which attempt to maintain their links with the traditions of the October Revolution remain marked in one way or another with the legacy of Stalinism.

Of all the known left-wing currents within the Soviet opposition, the clearest and most resolute was the group around Alexei Kosterin and Pyotr Grigorenko (the latter has recently been released from a psychiatric prison where he had been held since 1969 because of his oppositional activity). They understood what had been grasped only by the Left Opposition before them, namely, the need for maximum political and organisational independence from the ruling bureaucracy. In this sense they represent a point of contact with the Bolshevik-Leninists of the 1930s.

With their bold actions in support of the national rights of the Crimean Tartars they attacked the most jealously guarded conquest of the bureaucracy -- its exclusive right to organise mass activity and to speak with and for the masses. At a meeting of Tartars in 1969, Grigorenko criticised the leaders for their timorousness and urged them to begin organising to demand their constitutional rights that had been crushed by Stalin during World War II. The funeral of Kosterin in November 1968 became a rally of leaders of oppressed nationalities and other oppositional forces. Many of the funeral speeches show a firm commitment to Marxism and an understanding that a regime of workers' democracy will only be achieved through mass struggles against the fortresses of the bureaucracy.

The Grigorenko group has played an extremely valuable role in the maturing of a revolutionary opposition in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Their actions flowed from a clear characterisation of the bureaucracy as a privileged caste that, through its control over the party and state apparatus, blocks any thoroughgoing democratisation. The writings of Kosterin and Grigorenko provide the beginnings of a way forward for the opposition forces in the 1970s and their activities before being crushed in 1969 can teach future generations of oppositionists important lessons on the organisational tasks in the struggle for workers' democracy.

## POLITICAL BALANCE SHEET

By and large, the Western Communist Parties, now largely led by shame-faced supporters of Stalinism, have attempted to escape the charge of complicity in the repression of dissident intellectuals. The formula which they have tried to develop has been that of deploring the use of "administrative methods for dealing with political problems". In fact, they hope that such watery phrases can absolve them from the task of defending all victims of bureaucratic repression, clearly explaining the reality of dictatorial rule in the USSR, and advancing a programme for combating the bureaucracy. In plain language their phrases admit that people who oppose the absence of workers' democracy in the USSR are a problem, but consider that they should be dealt with by less arbitrary methods of repression. Thus, they prefer to leave the task of analysing the situation in the USSR and defending oppositionists to the bourgeois press. And also to revolutionary Marxists.

Any adequate assessment of the movement for democratic demands must tackle at least three basic issues. first, the role of the struggle for democratic liberties within the anti-bureaucratic struggle in the USSR; secondly, the position of the intelligentsia within the countries of Eastern Europe; and thirdly, the stage of the struggle for proletarian democracy within Eastern Europe today.

It is a curious and even puzzling fact that in a country where capitalist relations were overthrown 50 years ago, a struggle is taking place for demands which were won in the epoch of the rise of the bourgeoisie in Western Europe. It is even more difficult for socialists in a bourgeois democratic country to accept the legitimacy of demands like that of freedom of speech in the USSR, when their bourgeoisie itself is evidently championing the struggle for such demands in Eastern Europe. For those who look at history in a formalistic way, it might appear that to recognise the legitimacy of the struggle for free speech in the Soviet Union is to concede that that society is historically more backward, more 'barbarous' than bourgeois society in the West. In reality, however, the undemocratic political form of the Soviet state is in sharp conflict with the fundamental social relations of that country, the social relations of planned production and distribution of goods, in contrast to the anarchic production of commodities for private profit which characterises capitalist society. The autocratic political order in the USSR derives not from these fundamental social relations, but from the need of the layer of privileged bureaucrats which won a dominant social position in the 1920s to maintain their political hold within the workers' state. Only through monopolising control of all aspects of the social life and suppressing any independent initiative on the part of the masses, can this bureaucracy maintain its parasitic and privileged position. With the emergence of independent political groups and parties, free debate and open political struggle, the social position of this bureaucratic layer would rapidly be undermined precisely because it would be exposed as being in glaring conflict with the fundamental needs and aspirations of the masses in such a workers' state. Such was the experience in Czechoslovakia in 1968 when the liberalisation of the press and the granting of freedoms of assembly and association led to a rapidly rising flood-tide of mass mobilisation against the bureaucracy. Demands of these kinds, together with demands for the autonomy of mass organisations such as the trade unions and for the right to a plurality of soviet parties are absolutely fundamental to the restoration of socialist norms in the USSR.

Any struggle for these demands by any section of the population should be encouraged and supported by revolutionary marxists. The fact that such demands have already been granted for decades in some capitalist countries in the West inevitably acts as a pressure on sectors of

Soviet society, not least the intelligentsia, to look to the foreign bourgeoisie for assistance. But this fact, far from leading revolutionary marxists to shy away from the struggle for such demands, makes it doubly important for them to be the most consistent and vigorous protagonists of such movements. The movement for democratic rights in the Soviet Union therefore deserves unconditional support from socialists in the West.

However, a programme for overthrowing the bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR and instituting workers' democracy, cannot be limited to the demand for freedom of the press, assembly and association. Of great importance, also, are the struggles by the national minorities against national oppression, and it is the duty of revolutionaries to fight for the right of secession by all the national minorities in the USSR. In this respect, the activities of Grigorenko and Kosterin in defence of the rights of the Tartars and Volga Germans assume an enormous significance for the future development of the opposition to the Soviet bureaucracy. They broke from the narrow sectional demands of writers and scientists and attempted to make the absolutely vital link between the Russian intelligentsia and the oppressed nationalities which have suffered decades of great Russian Chauvinism and which are one of the most explosive centres of revolt against the regime.

Thirdly, the fight for the re-establishment of the truth concerning the history of the USSR, the Communist Party and the Communist International, is very far from being a pedantic quibble between intellectuals. It is by no means a foible on the part of the regime to take great pains to suppress its own past. For the struggle for a scientific account of the history of the USSR is nothing else than a struggle to reclaim a socialist and Leninist perspective for the Soviet masses, and indeed for the international working class movement. It is a fight against what Trotsky once called Stalinism's greatest crime -- its denigration of the whole idea of socialism in the eyes of the working class. In this struggle, the activity of the dissidents of the last decade have played a considerable role. The publication of Roy Medvedev's Let History Judge and of the memoirs of various Old Bolsheviks, together with the enormous quantity of unearthing of Stalin's crimes during the last decade in Samizdat is a permanent gain for future generations of oppositionists, helping them to regain the traditions of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and of the Left Opposition in the 1920s.

Of course, these goals of the intellectual opposition -- civil liberties, the right of national self-determination and the unearthing of Soviet history -- are only aspects of a complete programme for the struggle against the bureaucracy. Certain crucial questions for the development of a political opposition were almost entirely absent from the movement. In the economic field, for example, it is necessary to struggle against the gross inequalities of income and living standards between the bureaucracy and the working masses; the right to strike, to complete autonomy for the trade unions, to control of production being placed in the hands of democratically elected workers' committees; and in fact the struggle for a complete overhaul of the planned economy in the interests of producers and consumers -- all these questions, of burning importance for the mass of the working class, were scarcely mentioned by the democratic movement. Another crucial social problem, the continued inequality between the sexes in society, the efforts of the bureaucracy to maintain the bourgeois family as a sphere of private labour and ideological control, this has not been taken up at all by the dissident movement in the USSR.



Secondly, the intellectual opposition has so far failed to develop any clearly expressed idea of the type of political power that should replace the bureaucratic dictatorship, and yet the civil liberties they fought for can be definitively won only through smashing the bureaucracy's institutional centres and transferring power into the hands of democratic workers' councils. It will be through the mobilisation of the masses in such forms of organisation that socialist democracy will be achieved in the USSR. Such institutions, within which the masses must have the right to form their own political parties and groups, will be the linchpins of the political revolution.

Thirdly, the socialist opposition in the USSR will establish its links with its potential international allies in the working class movement through struggling against the reactionary foreign policy of the bureaucracy, and through fighting for the principles of proletarian internationalism. The actions in solidarity with the Czechoslovak people in 1968 were an enormously significant step in that direction, but the Samizdat literature indicates as yet only the most vague conceptions about the main features of the international class struggle, and the role of the Soviet bureaucracy in world affairs.

The absence of these and other programmatic ideas from the activity of the opposition gave the whole movement a partial and one-sided character and helped to paralyse it in the face of the regime's counter-offensive in the early 1970s. But this should in no way minimise the importance of the political objectives which formed the basis of the movement, for these will continue to play a crucial role in the future development of a socialist opposition.

In spite of these achievements, the argument has been advanced that the fundamental dynamic of the Russian intelligentsia is towards the right, and a picture is painted of the democratic movement as one which increasingly brought to the fore the basic divergences of interest between the intellectuals and the working masses in the Soviet Union. The example of the rightward evolution of both Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn can be cited, as can frequent references in the Samizdat to the 'dark masses'. The "Chronicle of Current Events" even has statements expressing contempt and loathing for the Soviet working class, and remarks by intellectuals regarding the masses as their main enemy. In addition, it has been pointed out that layers within the regime itself, not excluding the KGB, express some sympathy with certain of the sentiments in the samizdat literature. But in order to get beyond impressions and anecdotes, we must ask what the underlying social interests of the different sections of the intelligentsia are, and appraise the role of the dissident opposition in that light.

It would be a great mistake to identify the social position of the intelligentsia with that of the bureaucracy itself. The natural scientists and mathematicians, the writers and artists, and the economists and sociologists, play a very different social role from that of the party and state functionaries who make up the bureaucracy in a proper sense. Marxists do not regard the intelligentsia as a parasitic group or as a section of the population with interests which conflict in any fundamental way with the interests of the working class. With or without the bureaucratic dictatorship, a division of labour would still remain in the Soviet Union between such a scientific intelligentsia and the working class, until there had been a development of the productive forces such as is inconceivable without successful socialist revolutions in the West.

It is, of course, true that one of the main tasks of the bureaucracy has been to drive a wedge between the intelligentsia and the masses by providing the former with all kinds of privileges of both a material and ideological kind, using an array of weapons to ensure that no link up can be made with the discontents of the working masses. These tactics left their mark on the democratic movement which ultimately remained effectively isolated within the ranks of this intelligentsia. Also, some sections of the intelligentsia such as the economists and sociologists are employed in working out means for developing new forms of bureaucratic social management and are thereby playing the role of auxiliaries for the bureaucracy. The democratic movement itself was very largely confined to scientists and writers, gaining little apparent support from other sections of the intellectuals.

But, while it is inevitable that the intelligentsia will not act as a unified and homogeneous force, the whole experience of the anti-bureaucratic struggle in Eastern Europe teaches us that sizable sections of this intelligentsia will be won to the struggle for proletarian democracy within the USSR. More than that, the winning of allies within the intelligentsia is absolutely indispensable for the development of a revolutionary workers' movement in the Soviet Union and other East European countries, for without being able to challenge the bureaucracy in the ideological field it will be impossible to mount an effective political assault on the bastions of the regime. Such an ideological challenge requires the participation of socially conscious intellectuals in Russia as elsewhere.

It is clear from the experience of Czechoslovakia that the internal contradictions of the bureaucracy itself lead certain sections of that bureaucracy to turn towards schemes for some measure of political liberalisation in order to find a way out of their economic impasse. This was indeed one of the factors which stimulated the emergence of the movement of dissident intellectuals in the USSR in the 1960s. Such contradictions should, of course, be utilised by the revolutionary currents within the opposition, but the point which needs to be particularly stressed here is the fact that it would be wrong to characterise the movement of intellectual dissent of the late 1960s in Russia as simply reflecting these internal contradictions of the bureaucracy itself. While a number of the currents within this movement undoubtedly has ideological sympathies with the 'reformers' within the bureaucracy itself (Roy Medvedev is an example here) the actions of the movement were of a qualitatively different nature than anything that could be described as a movement of internal pressure on the bureaucracy.

It remains for us to assess the role which the democratic movement played in the particular political conjuncture of the USSR. By and large, the forces that made up the democratic movement had a clear grasp, neither of the enemy they were fighting, nor of the international context in which that enemy was operating, nor of the necessary means for achieving victory. The current which came closest to grasping these three things was the grouping around Grigorenko, which has put forward a very precise analysis of the bureaucracy, and some essential elements of a programme of political revolution. But this is far less true of the bulk of the oppositionists, and nothing has come out of the Soviet Union as advanced as the analysis of the Polish Marxists Kuron and Modzelewski, nor has the opposition achieved the level of organisation which exists to this day in the Czech underground. But criticism of the most advanced currents in the Soviet opposition, if it cannot reach beyond the level of comparisons with the programmatic positions and political methods of the Left

Opposition, though true, are beside the point. For they do not answer the question: where next? One of the dissidents, Andrei Amalrik put the matter clearly when he said: "You must keep in mind that this is the first opposition of any kind, outside the inner circle of the party, since Stalin triumphed over Trotsky".

The ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s has left a permanent mark on the political scene of the USSR and its achievements will be handed on to future generations of oppositionists, who will also be able to learn from the weaknesses and mistakes. One of the paradoxes of the development of the workers' movement is the fact that in Russia, the country where capitalism was first overthrown, socialists today must turn to the West in order to rediscover their own traditions of revolutionary Marxism. Despite the enormous efforts of the police machines, it is increasingly difficult for the bureaucratic regimes in Eastern Europe to insulate these societies from the influence of the new revolutionary vanguard in the capitalist world. The Soviet opposition remains at present very dimly aware, both of its own revolutionary past and of the ideas of the revolutionary movement in the West. For that reason we see the rightward evolution of dissidents like Sakharov and others. It will benefit nobody to avoid the sharpest polemics with the ideas that Sakharov has been floating in recent months. But an indispensable pre-condition for any effective encouragement of revolutionary marxist currents within the USSR is the vigorous defence of all the fighters for democratic liberties who are subject to repression at the hands of Stalinist bureaucracy.

-OLIVER MacDONALD  
October, 1974

THE HEIRS OF STALIN

by Yevgeniy Yevtushenko

Silent the marble. Silent the glass scintillates.  
Silent stand the sentries in the breeze like bronzes poured.  
And the coffin smolders slightly.

Through its chinks breath percolates,  
as they carry him through the mausoleum doors.  
Slowly floats the coffin, grazing bayonets with its edges.  
He was silent too - menacingly silent indeed.  
Then grimly his embalmed fist clenches,  
through the chinks peers a man pretending to be dead.  
He wanted to remember by whom he was carried out:  
those juvenile recruits from Kursk and Ryazan,  
so that, somehow later, gathering strength to sally out,  
he'd rise up from the earth and get that brainless band.  
He had conceived a plan. But to rest was having a nap.  
And I turn to our Government with a request:  
to double, treble the guards over that gravestone slab,  
so that Stalin should not rise, and with Stalin - the past.  
I don't mean that past, noble and treasured,  
of TurkSib, and Magnitogorsk, and the flag over Berlin invested.  
Now I have in mind the past that is measured  
by the people's good neglected the innocent  
slandered and arrested.

In honesty we sowed,  
in honesty metal smelted,  
and honestly marched in soldierly formation.  
But he feared us. Believing the mighty  
that the means

should be worthy of that mighty consummation.

He was farsighted. In the laws of struggle well-instructed,  
and many heirs he left in this world's precincts.  
It seems to me to that coffin a telephone's connected:  
To Enver Hoxha Stalin transmits his latest edicts.  
To where else is that direct line linked up?  
No - Stalin didn't surrender. Death's to him a rectifiable mistake.  
Out of the mausoleum we resolutely took him.  
But Stalin out of Stalin's heirs how do we take?  
In their retirement some heirs prune roses,  
but in secret think retirement's a temporary phase,  
From platforms at Stalin, others even hurl curses,  
But at nighttime pine for the good old days.  
The heirs of Stalin, not for nothing, apparently  
have heart attacks now. Being onetime pillars of society,  
they don't like the times when prison camps are empty  
and halls are overfull of people

listening to poetry.

My people

have commanded me -

no complacency.

I can't be calm -

though some repeat "Calm down"

ad nauseum.

As long as Stalin's heirs on this earth exist,  
it will seem to me

that Stalin is still in the mausoleum.

THOUGHTS ON THE LIBERAL CAMPAIGN OF 1968  
by A. Mikhailov (pseudonym)

\*In view of the importance of the questions raised by the author of this article, the Chronicle gives a detailed resume of it. Let the reader compare Mikhailov's stand-points with his own ideas.

Since the beginning of the nineteen-fifties the country has been in a state of crisis. This crisis consists of a conflict between the forces of production and the relations of production. The administrative-bureaucratic system by which the economy is governed excludes scientific methods of management. The crisis gave rise to a liberal trend, which matured beneath the surface among the intelligentsia during the Khrushchev period. In 1968 the liberal opposition came out into the open for the first time and was swiftly crushed. Reaction set in on the part of the government and continues to this day.

The opposition bore no fruit. It caused no positive shifts in public consciousness, leaving after its destruction disillusion and apathy. Sensible people were put off by it. But the majority of people were actually turned against it. The opposition not only failed to attract new supporters of liberalism, but to a certain extent compromised the very idea of opposition. The failure of the opposition lay in its incorrect orientation, in its lack of understanding of the real situation. A social conflict, objective in content, underwent a transformation in the consciousness of the oppositionists, turning for them into a subjective moral conflict between individuals and the state. This confusion of consciousness gave the movement a romantic character and made it ineffectual. These liberal-romantics acted according to their emotions and moral instincts, they wanted to save only their souls and to purge their consciences -- and therefore they sacrificed themselves. They did not wish, nor were they able, to think of the whole of society, they were not concerned with the practical results of their actions, which had become an end in themselves. This was protest for the sake of protest - without a positive programme, without constructive ideas, without a social foundation.

Inasmuch as the liberals spoke out openly (letters and petitions over their own signatures, demonstrations) they were attempting to look to the law for support, which is patently pointless in our state. They appealed to the authorities, who put them in prison -- ignoring all laws, as is their wont. The movement's formal, constitutional-legalistic tenor gave rise to contradictions within it: people who speak out in the name of truth, striving towards absolute honesty, cannot criticise the essence of the regime (as a system), but are forced to limit themselves to criticism of its individual manifestations, its frequent injustices. The opposition's only general demand is a purely legalistic one: freedom of speech. "Don't imprison people for their beliefs, print everything - or at any rate more" - this, in effect, is the protesters' motto. It is no coincidence that open protests began after the trials of a few free-thinking intellectuals. Meanwhile the broad sections of the population, oppressed by need and social imperfections, do not see the liberals as the defenders of their interests; the liberals are ready to suffer for Sinyavsky and Daniel (and others like them), but they ignore the man in the street with his needs and sufferings. The demand for freedom of speech directly expresses only the class interests of the creative intelligentsia. The liberals' alienation from the people is only partially unintended - to a considerable

extent it conforms with the purpose of the liberals themselves. The opposition is a closed circle. Moralising, legalistic name-calling and bombastic phrases are the preserve of a narrow circle of people. Such are the active liberals. The passive section of the liberal intelligentsia, however, is rushing about in all directions. Nihilism. Individualism. Aristocratic aestheticism. "Pure moral philosophy". Religion. There is discord and degradation. The spiritual games of the passive intellectuals are useless. The activities of the active ones are harmful. They are worthy of personal respect, but their actions are by their nature objectively (unintentionally) provocative. Activities aimed at getting oneself arrested (e.g. the demonstration of August 25 1968) are hysterical lunacy, which, by spreading, only causes more and more casualties. Collective letters of protest and petitions (often addressed to broad public opinion, of which our government takes no notice) also play a provocative part. Without any effort on its part the KGB acquires prepared lists of liberals. At present the government allows some of the active oppositionists to remain at liberty only because their activities are useful to it - they enable it to monitor discontent.

The reality is that we are approaching a national and world-wide disaster. All mankind is threatened with extinction. The situation must be radically altered. The regime in its present form will not survive for long. Our task is not to administer the 'coup de grace' (revolutionary and violent methods are unacceptable) but to prepare a worthy replacement for it. This is the task of the thinking section of society, the intelligentsia. This requires a scientific approach to social problems (which is rejected almost on principle by the liberal-romantics, who cultivate incompetence in questions of theory). We must work out an effective political position which will offer a way out of the blind alley; we must work out a concept explaining modern society and its workings. The concept must be based on democratic socialism (the transplantation here of the attributes of bourgeois democracy is unrealistic and would not solve our problems). At the moment no entirely satisfactory concept of this sort exists anywhere. We must take our cue from "macro-sociology" (of the Marxist variety). Such works as, for instance, Burnham's The Managerial Revolution and Djilas's New Class are valuable. Academician Sakharov's approach to social phenomena is promising (but the form of his essay - the romantic form of appealing to the leadership - makes impartial scientific analysis impossible).

The opposition of 1968 made no attempt to create a realistic and at the same time attractive social ideal. Our programme must be both scientific and popular. The intelligentsia must find a common language with the masses and express their interests and demands.

The progressive movement must declare itself to be a united whole. This requires a common ideological platform; not an organisation (any attempt to create it would at present be madness), but rather ten or twelve programmatic points, a symbol of faith. All the efforts of thinking people must be directed towards the drawing-up of this programme. Samizdat, both anonymous and pseudonymous, must become the instrument for working out new ideas (we must put a stop to demonstrations and other acts liable to result in arrests). In this way the progressive social movement can become a serious force.

A REPLY TO A. MIKHAILOV  
by A. Strikh

The idea that the "lunatics" are the opponents of a scientific approach to the life of society is pure fantasy. The "liberal-romantics" (they could be given a more neutral name, e.g. public protesters) are not in the least isolated from social problems: if they do not attempt to solve them, it is solely because they do not regard themselves as sociologists (though some of them may possibly deal with sociology in their creative work). They are acquainted with Marxism. But 'modern' "macro-sociology" is not regarded by everybody as sociology "of the Marx variety". Sociological thought did not stand still after Marx. Moreover the conclusions of Burnham and Djilas, although they contain a certain truth, do not provide the key to the solution of many of our problems. It has been established that economics does not determine the entire social process. Among the contradictions in our society the economic contradiction is of course one of the most important, but that does not mean that it is primary, or that its doctrine of "basic" and "superstructure" provides the correct approach to this contradiction. Our "superstructure" appeared before the "basis" and was its absolute determinant. In our country economics is derived from the subordinated to politics, rather than vice-versa.

The motives and actions of individuals, social groups and the masses are by no means always due to economic causes (the field of social psychology is not covered by Marxist theory). A. Mikhailov suggests "finding a common language with the broad masses" - but are the "broad masses" disposed to respond to the voice of the "progressive movement"? This is by no means clear.

This is just as debatable as the assertion that "the regime in its present form cannot survive for long"; that a ten- or twelve-point programme could unite the entire "thinking section of society"; and that it would thus be possible "to make radical changes in the situation". It is also doubtful whether a universal conceptual panacea could be worked out on the basis of 'samizdat', anonymous or pseudonymous. Even where there is unlimited scope for sociological research, where the funds necessary for it are provided, where there is easy access to information and the free exchange of opinions - even there the way out of many modern blind alleys has not yet been found. But even assuming that we succeed in working out a sociological model ideal for our circumstances, how are we to realise it? Put it to the government? But that, in A. Mikhailov's view, is "romanticism". Await the automatic collapse of the regime? But how long must this inactive waiting last? Put it to the masses? How? That would require (as A. Mikhailov remarks) not only propaganda but also agitation - direct influence on the consciousness of the masses; in any case, agitation cannot even begin without an underground organisation. Meanwhile A. Mikhailov regards even the attempt to create such an organisation as madness. And rightly so. That would really be an objectively provocative act, since besides themselves the agitators would bring disaster to many other people.

A. Mikhailov is right when he says that we need intensive thinking and searching, and that this is the task of the intelligentsia. But ideological searching is a many-sided and complex cultural process, which could not be confined within the channel of economic materialism or within any limits, whatever they might be. It would be natural for A. Mikhailov to try to define ("prompt") the principal direction of this search, but his attacks on "pure spirituality"; "spiritual games", are beneath all criticism.

A. Mikhailov's reproaches to those who have spoken out in open protest - and who are still doing so - will also not bear examination. In a society where the majority is intrinsically convinced that the state is not merely able, but has the right to do whatever it likes with people, and that people have no rights at all - it is in this society that we have been given our first lesson in the consciousness of civil rights. The question of rights is not an academic question in a society where they do not exist. What we cannot do without, what is needed before anything else, is at least a minimal level of democratic freedoms. The first of these is freedom of speech. That means freedom of thought. What social activity or "constructive solutions" are possible without it? Those who first demonstrated that freedom, who started introducing it "without asking permission", knew what they were doing. They had no recipes for the salvation of mankind - they were trying to protect people. They protested against individual acts of tyranny and violence where tyranny was most apparent (trials), where violence was most blatant (Czechoslovakia). They said, and are still saying, what they thought they had to, and this is an honest attitude. Sacrificing oneself does not mean inducing others to commit rash acts. At the moment the only ones who are actually being put in prison are those who were conscious of what they were facing. The government has been given a list of liberals, moans A. Mikhailov, but it is only where liberalism does not manifest itself in any way that it will not have such a list.

A. Mikhailov is also mistaken in supposing that open protest is of absolutely no practical benefit. It is not true that the government never in any way takes the slightest notice of public opinion - in particular of foreign public opinion. It is sufficient to recall the case of J. Medvedev (see Chronicle No.14) or the last trial of the "hi-jackers" in Leningrad. But what's true is true: as regards practical results, the situation is bad. But A. Mikhailov's ideas contain absolutely nothing practical. His position objectively leads to total inactivity. Everyone who is unable to work out a "popular and scientific" programme will sit doing nothing and await the magic "concept" like some sort of revelation, meanwhile averting their eyes from specific evil.

It is worth lending an ear to Albert Einstein's practical recommendations:

"Reactionary politicians have sown suspicion of intellectual activity by intimidating the public by means of external danger .. What must the intelligentsia do when confronted with this evil? To tell the truth I see only one way - the revolutionary way of disobedience in the spirit of Gandhi ... if a sufficient number take that perilous way, it will lead to success. If not, then the intelligentsia of that country deserves nothing better than slavery".

Einstein further said:

"One man alone is able only to serve as an example for others and to uphold with courage the moral principle..."



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