THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND SOVIET LITERATURE

THESIS

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The Communist Party's control of Soviet literature gradually evolved from the 1920s and reached its height in the 1940s. The amount of control exerted over Soviet literature reflected the strengthening power of the Communist Party. Sources used in this thesis include speeches, articles, and resolutions of leaders in the Communist Party, novels produced by Soviet authors from the 1920s through the 1940s, and analyses of leading critics of Soviet literature and Soviet history. The thesis is structured around the political and literary developments during the periods of 1917-1924, 1924-1932, 1932-1941, and 1946-1949. The conclusion is that the Communist Party seized control of Soviet literature to disseminate Party policy, minimize dissent, and produce propaganda, not to provide an outlet for creative talent.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In reading the literature of a particular society or culture, one generally glimpses the values, the hopes, and the fears of its people. In contrast, when one reads the Soviet Union's literature from the 1920s throughout the 1940s, one glimpses not the Soviet peoples' values, hopes, and fears, but a new direction in the continuation of Soviet policy stretching back to Lenin and the inception of the Soviet Union. Soviet literature of this period portrays the official and practical application of Communist doctrine in everyday life that gradually evolved and culminated during the Zhdanovshchina.

This thesis will examine how the Communist Party moved from a policy of non-involvement in literary groups' efforts to organize a proletarian culture to the Party's enforcement of a formula for correct Soviet writing as a means of perpetuating Party control over the Soviet people.

Restrictions imposed on Soviet artists and intelligentsia began much earlier, in the 1920s in fact, and gradually increased throughout the Stalinist era. This thesis will discuss the origins of the Communist Party's political control of literature. Central Committee
resolutions, under the direction of Lenin and then Stalin, illustrate the Communist Party’s expanding control over Soviet literary art.

As the Communist Party tightened its control during the years 1924 through 1932, various literary groups clamored to be the voice of official party authority in literary matters. For a time, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers dominated the other writers’ organizations and spoke with unofficial authority in the literary realm. During these years, the Communist Party adopted a method for expressing its doctrine and its role in the progress of the Soviet state. It called the portrayal of the party’s doctrine and role socialist realism, and socialist realism became the formula for Soviet art and literature. Works by Dmitri Furmanov, Fyodor Vasilievich Gladkov, and Aleksandr Fadeev serve as examples of works published under the guidelines of proletarian literature and socialist realism.

In 1932, the Union of Soviet Writers became the sole authorized writers’ organization. It received direct supervision from the Communist Party. From 1932 until 1941, socialist realism dominated published works. At the end of this period, writers vied for the newly established Stalin Prize for fiction. This incentive, created in 1939, rewarded writers who produced works excelling in socialist realism.
From 1941 through 1945, writers in the Soviet Union employed their talents to support their country’s war efforts. Understandably, writers published during these years hoped to boost the morale of readers as they fought for their homeland. The Communist Party relaxed restrictions imposed prior to 1941 as writers diligently created works. The Great Patriotic War furnished the background and subject matter for future Stalin Prize-winning novels during the Zhdanovshchina. Works by Valentine Kataev, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Leonid Leonov, and Yury Krymov serve as examples of works that employed socialist realism and inspired the Soviet people from 1932 to 1945.

The end of World War II not only signaled a return to oppressive dictates from the Party, but it marked Andrey Zhdanov’s victory over Central Committee Secretary Georgy Malenkov. With this victory, Zhdanov rose to be Cultural Commissar and heir-apparent of Stalin. Now Zhdanov began to tighten Communist controls over literature by expelling from the Writers’ Union authors who would not adhere to the Party’s strict requirement of partiinost, or party spirit. Works by Konstantine Simonov, Veniamin Kaverin, Victor Nekrasov, Vera Panova, Ilya Ehrenburg, Vladimir Popov, and Konstantin Fedin serve as examples of Stalin Prize winning novels and the political pressure exerted by the Communist Party. Stalin’s death began the end of Zhdanovshchina and
the restrictive control of literature by the Soviet Communist Party.

For this thesis, sources include the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, and Andrey Zhdanov. It also uses speeches, Central Committee resolutions, novels, and articles of leading literary critics from the period discussed to illustrate the development of the Zhdanovshchina. Examples of Stalin Prize-winning novels of the Zhdanovshchina include works from Konstantine Simonov, Veniamin Kaverin, Victor Nekrasov, Vera Panova, Ilya Ehrenburg, Vladimir Popov, and Konstantin Fedin. Secondary sources consulted include the writings of critics like Marc Slonim, Ernest Simmons, Max Hayward, Gleb Struve, Harold Swayze, Edward Brown, Vera Alexandrova, and Katrina Clark.

Literature written during the Zhdanovshchina provides readers with insight concerning the control and power the Communist Party exercised within the Soviet Union. The works published reflect the specific desires and goals of the Communist Party rather than those of the people who wrote them. As such, those writings provide a major source for analyzing the policies and intentions of the leaders of the Communist Party during the years under examination.
Prior to the armed conflict that erupted in Russia in October 1917, Russian writers fought for political change through their published works. Along with their struggle for revolution, these writers and philosophers grappled with defining the role that literature and its authors would have in achieving communism. Vissarion Belinsky, an early nineteenth century author, wrote that a Russian writer "had a civic duty to help his readers become better citizens."\(^1\) Belinsky's belief encouraged and influenced many nineteenth century followers to examine moral and philosophical issues.

Since Marxism forms the basis of the "Soviet intellectual heritage," Soviet scholars repeatedly searched through the sparse writings on literature of Marx and Engels in an attempt to formalize Marxian literary policy.\(^2\) Primarily Marxist theory places an "insistence upon the organic unity between a theory and its practical consequences in any specific field." Every theory, therefore, serves to guide action of some determinate sort.

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From this statement, the implicit prediction arises that specific outcomes result from specific actions. ³

In an explanation of economic development, Marxian theorists found a connection between action and outcomes. Marx and Engels argue that "political, judicial, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc. development is based on economic development." Marx and Engels explain that literature exists not as a passive outcome or effect, but it interacts "on the basis of economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself." ⁴ Marx and Engels further state that art exists as the result of the division of labor. The two theorists connect the supply and demand side of economics and the dependence of artists on the conditions of the state in order to flourish.⁵

Karl Marx recognized that great art can exist, and has existed, outside the general development of the society from which it springs. He cites the art of the ancient Greeks and the literature of William Shakespeare as examples of


this contradiction in theory. Marxists in post-revolutionary Russia ignored the exceptions and contradictions found within the writings of Marx and Engels. They assumed, and insisted upon, a direct relation between what they termed "base and superstructure." The "permanent, all-determining war between classes" pervaded all "works of the mind and imagination," whether artists possessed awareness of this struggle or not. Every work of art presented itself to the public as an expression, either consciously or unconsciously, of class struggle.

Because Marx and Engels never achieved a systematic clarification of their position between ideological superstructure and the economic basis, no definite role for literature and art emerged from their writings. Scattered and sometimes contradictory ideas left the interpretation of literary theory open to leaders who would later use literature and art for their own purposes. Lenin laid the foundation for Party control of the arts. Later Stalin and Zhdanov would expand Party control and narrow the "Marxian-Leninist" theory of socialist art.

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7Ibid.

On November 13, 1905, Lenin published an article in the Russian newspaper Novaya zhizn (New Life). This article, entitled "Party Organization and Party Literature," established the basis for the Communist Party's eventual control of Soviet Literature. Lenin made a sharp contrast between the bourgeois press, printing works that pursue profit and perpetuate bourgeois careerism and individualism, and the principle that the socialist proletariat must promote the cause of communism and the revolution through its literature. Lenin objected to any literature published under the social democratic party that might remain outside the party organization and even exist as non-party literature. Vyacheslav Polonsky, founder of the Bolshevik journal Press and Revolution, noted that Lenin, in guaranteeing everyone's freedom to write and say anything, asserted the Party's right to expel members who use the party name for the "propagation of anti-party views."

Lenin established a "for-or-against morality" of those wishing to publish in Russia. Those who leave the party and publish their works become enslaved to their publishers, enslaved to their publishers.

9John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 15.


11Ibid., 251.
public, and money. These non-party authors join the ranks of the class enemy. Lenin's arguments "present a logic stating that all virtue and the only valid freedom reside in the proletarian cause." All men find themselves reduced in "moral terms to their class allegiances and their creative product can only be judged in those terms." 12

Lenin made an "absolute" choice within his 1905 article. He took isolated, polar opposites in Marxist theory and selected those that gave him control over the direction of proletarian literature. Lenin selected "future-orientated agitation" over scientific investigation and emphasized the "harsh, one-sided command of interim revolutionary ethics" as opposed to the vision of man as a "versatile, creative, many-sided creature--a vision implicit in the long-range Marxian perspective." 13 In making this choice of "knowledge versus political unity as the principal end of literature," Lenin altered the Marxist interpretation of literature and its function. Nowhere in classical writings concerning art can the concepts of service to an idea and to the masses be found. Lenin changed, rather than interpreted, Marxian theory when he directed the


"orientation of art always toward a better future and toward educating men in their social responsibilities."¹⁴

The new interpretation of Marxian theory allowed Lenin to create an organization that could implement both Marxist ideas and domestic Russian ideas about the role of literature. He called for a dedicated group of revolutionaries to provide guidance through literature for the masses.¹⁵ Literature of the proletariat, or proletarian culture, would meet the needs of education and dissemination of Party doctrine.¹⁶

Lenin also called for the Social Democratic Party of 1905 to lead society in its transformation. He "demanded that each member's activities be imbued" with the concept of partiinost, partisanship or party spirit. From the 1905 article, Stalin and Zhdanov gleaned two other important principles of literature: ideinost, or correct ideological stance and content, and narodnost, or national spirit. These three principles constituted the Soviet cultural trinity.¹⁷ The task of achieving Lenin's explicit and implicit principles required that both the press or mass

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 21-22.

¹⁶Eastman, Artists in Uniform, 244-45.

¹⁷John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 22.
media and literature fulfill a critical mission in educating the people. Proletariat literature must be "ideologically motivated" and serve as a part of a political platform "in favor of everyone who possesses socialist or proletarian consciousness."\(^{18}\)

Lenin found his attention drawn away from implementing his ideas on culture and art by the Civil War and the havoc that followed. In 1917, in response to literary groups that formed to produce proletarian literature, Lenin insisted that writers "can never simply express their own viewpoint." Lenin borrowed from Engels' theory of reflection when he stated that these writers reflect their class and ideological background in their works.\(^{19}\) He also rejected the notion, promoted by some proletarian literary groups, that the literature of the past and of the bourgeoisie should be cast aside for new, proletarian penned works. Lenin insisted that proletarian culture should have a "traditional literature in the style of Chernyshevsky rather than be modernist or experimental." Literature and art must serve as propaganda, help educate and enlighten the masses, and change people's outlook and raise their political awareness. To achieve these goals, authors must write their

\(^{18}\)Ibid., 22-23.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., 28.
literature in a manner that would be easily understood by their readers.20

Although Lenin never formulated an official party doctrine, complete with rules and requirements for proletarian publication, he did address the issue of proletarian literature both in public and in private. On October 4, 1920, Lenin addressed the All-Russian Congress of the Communist Youth. In his speech, Lenin reminded the audience that proletarian culture did not "spring up from nobody knows where." He exhorted future writers to remember that "proletarian culture must appear as a natural development of those stories of knowledge which man worked out under the yoke of capitalist society."21 Lenin assumed that literature would be used to serve the advance of socialism. Great works of art had their "progressive side," but as human society became more aware of its destination, so literature would "reflect more fully the aims striven for by the workers' party."22 Allowing the participation of bourgeois works in proletarian literature enabled Lenin and the Communist Party to carefully select and interpret which prerevolutionary publications served to further the


21Eastman, Artists in Uniform, 242-43.

socialist cause. Lenin's "two streams" approach laid the foundation for Party-controlled literature of the 1930s.23

In January of 1923, Lenin remarked to the German Marxist Clara Zetkin:

Art belongs to the people. . . . It should be understood and loved by the masses. It must unite and elevate their feelings, thoughts, and will. It must stir them to activity and develop the artistic instincts within them.24

These remarks capture perfectly the combination of "utopianism and paternalism" that marked Lenin's approach to art and the masses. Lenin believed the people could not be relied upon to "find their own way and to make their own choices."25

While Lenin worked to develop and establish Party-guided literature outside the framework of Marxist theory, Georgy Valentinorich Plekhanov searched within Marxist writings to determine what should be the standard for literary works and literary criticism. Plekhanov established himself in the early stages of the evolving revolution in prerevolutionary Russia. He earned the title as the Father of Russian Marxism, and many leading literary critics adhered to his systematic approach to Marxian

23John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 27.


25Ibid., 27.
esthetics. Plekhanov viewed art as part of an "economically determined ideological superstructure." He concerned himself with establishing art's social character and intimacy with politics. In accordance with Marxist theory, Plekhanov viewed art as part of an "economically determined ideological superstructure."

Many revolutionary democrats believed they could exhort writers to saturate their works with ideas in order to change society. These political theorists believed that ideas make history, that "man's reason works as a force in the determination of historical events." Plekhanov rejected the notion of external influence on literature. He claimed that art whose ideas aspire to loftiness can only exist as art which is associated with the proletarian cause. The authors who best depict society with truthfulness do so because they have adopted the Marxist viewpoint. A. Voronsky and V. Friche, two leading Soviet literary critics, echoed and endorsed Plekhanov's insistence that art must be produced without moral demands put upon it from outside

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26Rubin, "Plekhanov and Soviet Literary Criticism," 527.

27Ibid., 527.


influences, including political pressure.\textsuperscript{30} If, Plekhanov reasoned, partiinost replaced esthetic evaluation and one assumed that good content produced good form, then "unique non-discursive" manner of artistic expression "becomes lost and political propaganda brochures and art become identical."\textsuperscript{31}

As Marxist theorists and Communist leaders argued over the role of literature in the revolutionary cause, several men actively sought to define literature through organizations and publications. Two main prerevolutionary literary movements in Russia consisted of Realism and Symbolism. Each were predecessors to the literary movements that flourished in the Soviet Union from 1917 until 1932. Maxim Gorky and Ivan Bunin stood out as the most noted followers of Realism. Members of this movement advocated a continuation of the great age of the Russian novel. Works by such authors as Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy served as examples for the Realists. Symbolism, which peaked between 1900 and 1912, traced its origins back to the last decade of the nineteenth century. This movement grew out of the


\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 541.
general modernist movement in European art and literature. Symbolism touched every aspect of Russian literature by raising literature standards to that of civic duty and social significance. Of these two movements, Symbolism played a more active and greater role in the development of literature in Russia.³²

Beginning in 1910, two new movements attacked Symbolism. Aceism and Futurism led to the decline and demise of Symbolism. Aceism developed within Symbolism. Mikhail Kuzmin donated its slogan of "Beautiful Clarity." On the whole Aceism strove toward greater realism and simplicity. It developed its poetic diction by bringing it closer to the accents and intonations of everyday speech. Anna Akhmatova, later attacked by Zhdanov, served as a prime example of the clear diction advocated by the Aceism followers.³³

Futurism, organized outside of Symbolism, began as a reaction against both leading currents of contemporary Russian literature--"against Realism, with its truthful representation of reality, and against Symbolism, with its transformation of reality in the name of a higher one."³⁴


³³Ibid., 4-5.

³⁴Ibid., 14.
David Burlyuk, an early Futurist leader, stated that the object of art lay in "deforming" it so that it became autonomous. Art, according to early Futurists, possessed no object outside of itself. Other Futurists promoted the idea that revolutionary ideas about art must be combined with revolutionary ideas in politics.\(^{35}\)

Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky followed the latter view of art and its function within the Revolution. In 1917, he seized the opportunity to lead the Futurists and place art in the service of the people. Eager to help rid the world of bourgeois institutions and bourgeois mentality, the Futurists allied themselves with the revolution.\(^{36}\)

Once openly in support of the Bolsheviks, Futurists began to secure their bid as leaders in the literary field. In *Iskusstro Kommuny* (Art of the Commune), the official Futurist magazine, the proposition appeared for a Futurist dictatorship in the realm of art, parallel to the dictatorship of the proletariat on the political and economic plane. Anatoly Yasilyevich Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar for Education, encouraged the Futurists in their move to secure supremacy.\(^{37}\) He appointed prominent Futurist leaders to leading posts within the Commissariat of

\(^{35}\)Ibid., 4-14.  
\(^{36}\)Ibid., 19.  
\(^{37}\)Ibid., 19-20.
Education and placed other Futurists in charge of literary, artistic, and theatrical policy.\textsuperscript{38}

With official Communist Party encouragement, the Futurists began to foster a specific proletarian literature and to train budding writers who belonged to the new class of industrial proletariat.\textsuperscript{39} The movement continued to call for the negation of past literary works and pushed for official recognition of works produced by the proletariat. Lunacharsky, like Lenin, sanctioned the "humanistic tradition of the intelligentsia."\textsuperscript{40} He advocated a "reverent attitude toward the artistic heritage of the past," and he enjoined the Futurists to learn from the old masters.\textsuperscript{41} The conflict between the cultural heritage of the past and the attitude to be taken toward it in the new proletarian state signalled the first serious rift between the new regime and the Futurist movement. Early in December 1918, Lunacharsky issued a warning to the Futurists. In an article published in \textit{Art of the Commune}, he told the followers not to presume they had received official, state-sponsored approval as the Party's school of art. He also

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{40}Thais S. Lindstrom, \textit{A Concise History of Russian Literature, 1900 to the Present} (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 96.

\textsuperscript{41}Struve, \textit{Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin}, 29.
pointed out that their "destructive and negative attitude toward art did not reflect the official Party stance and should not be presented as such." 42

Mayakovsky's Futurist movement competed with another literary group claiming to be representatives of the new proletarian culture. Shortly before the October Revolution, a new organization appeared on the literary scene. Its aims included a creation of "a culture proper to the new and rising class." The members of the Proletarian Cultural and Educational Organization, Proletkult for short, concluded that since the bourgeoisie would soon disappear, their culture would disappear also. The new ruling class must fill the cultural void that would soon materialize. The development of a proletarian culture enabled the establishment of proletarian power in politics and in the economic sphere. 43

Alexander Alexandrovich Bogdanov, one of the early theoreticians of Russian Marxism, founded the Proletkult in 1917. 44 Lunacharsky assisted Bogdanov, but not to the

42 Ibid., 29.


44 Struve, Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin, 27.
extent that he had supported the Futurists. Bogdanov and the Proletkult began the task of formulating proletarian art and literature. The basic tenet of the organization echoed Plekhanov by stating that "art exists as a social product, the nature of which reflects the conditions of the social environment in which it arises." Bogdanov differed from Plekhanov by adding that art and literature consist not merely of "reflections of life from the viewpoint of a given class nor merely of expressions of its ideas," but it provides a "means of organizing its collective labor." Bogdanov further outlined his ideas that three independent roads to socialism existed parallel to each other. Political, economic, and cultural paths to socialism existed side by side. Bogdanov believed that the cultural development of the proletariat must evolve free of interference from those organizations concerned with political and economic struggle. He accused the political and economic organizations of being mixed with bourgeois elements. Bogdanov included the state apparatus of control in this statement. Unlike the Futurists, the Proletkult


46 Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 6-7.

called for complete autonomy in its pursuit of a proletarian literature.\textsuperscript{48}

Between 1917 and 1920, the Proletkult displayed great activity. It published the magazine \textit{Proletarskaya Kultura}, (Proletarian Culture), and it convened an all-Russian conference to discuss the issue of proletarian culture. All across Russia literary and artistic studios opened to train workers how to write verse and prose. Bourgeois literary specialists served as instructors for the new proletarian authors.\textsuperscript{49}

For the Proletkult, neutral art in a class society did not and could not exist. All art qualified as a class weapon.\textsuperscript{50} Literature could not simply partake of ideology or form a relationship to it. Literature equaled ideology and constituted class consciousness.\textsuperscript{51} In light of these beliefs, the Proletkult committed itself to the creation of a true proletarian art inspired by the new order. Older writers, members of the Communist Party, encouraged literary novices to combat "bourgeois writings." These learned


\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{50}Eastman, \textit{Artists in Uniform}, 205.

\textsuperscript{51}Mathewson, \textit{The Positive Hero in Russian Literature}, 155.
authors favored content over form.\(^{52}\) As a result of this encouragement, the Proletkult succeeded in recruiting into its sphere of influence writers from among factory workers, soldiers, and sailors, as well as some peasants.\(^{53}\) These budding authors needed instruction and guidance from their sponsors. Creative writing courses appeared throughout the country and well-known literary artists participated in the instruction. These sessions produced little more than "politically inspired ideas and rhetoric poorly conveyed by ideological consistency." The great patriotic spirit waned and witnessed a decline in literary participants from 1920 to 1924.

Despite the Proletkult's decline, it continued to support and insist on autonomy from the Communist Party's control. Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov never advocated literature as an implement in mobilizing and educating the masses. Lenin insisted that literature fit into this category, but he also insisted that literature should serve the people. The peculiar combination of autonomy and service belonged to Bogdanov. The idea of a separate

\(^{52}\)Lindstrom, *A Concise History of Russian Literature*, 97.

proletarian literature with revolutionary tasks persisted in Russia until the 1930s.\textsuperscript{54}

After the Civil War, Lenin turned his attention back to the literary scene and the various organizations it produced. Tired of Bogdanov's opposition, Lenin announced his intention of placing the Proletkult under Party supervision.\textsuperscript{55} In a Central Committee decree of December 1, 1920, Lenin revealed a contempt for the theoreticians of the Proletkult movement. To remain active, the Proletkult passed two resolutions under Lenin's insistence. The first resolution admitted that a "proletarian culture could arise only on the basis of the bourgeois thought and culture which already existed." The second resolution stated that the Proletkult must function as a subordinate body within the People's Commissariat of Education.\textsuperscript{56}

As the Proletkult wrestled with creating new proletarian writers and proletarian literature, a new organization appeared in late 1919. This new group, known as the Kuznitsa (Smiths), formed under the supervision of the Literary Section of the People's Commissariat of

\textsuperscript{54}Brown, \textit{The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature}, 10.

\textsuperscript{55}Struve, \textit{Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin}, 29.

Education. Similar to the Proletkult, the Smiths believed that all art to be a social product, "serving a particular class." The Petrograd branch of the Moscow-based Smiths called themselves Kosmist (Cosmics). Official Cosmics membership centered around the acceptance of Communist ideology as a definition of proletarian writer.58

On the eve of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Smiths established an All-Russian Congress of Proletarian Writers in May of 1920. By October of the same year, the All-Russian Congress of Proletarian Writers became the establishment of the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, (VAPP).59 The introduction of the NEP brought mixed reaction throughout the literary movement. Many members of the Smiths, disillusioned by the postponement of the advance of communism, left the Communist Party.60 Others found encouragement by the reopening or establishment of libraries, museums, universities, public schools, and publishing houses. The members of the VAPP argued over issues such as what constituted proletarian literature.61

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57 Ibid., 10-11.
58 Struve, Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin, 28-29.
59 Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 12-14.
60 Ibid., 12.
61 Amanda Metcalf, "Marginalia: The Founding of the Federation of Soviet Writers," Slavic and East European
In December, 1922, the October movement emerged from the VAPP. Members of this movement represented a new orientation in the literature of the revolution. As realists, they envisioned their literary efforts inspiring and reflecting day-to-day tasks of the proletariat. They rejected and scorned the lyrical and romantic works of the Smiths. This new group embraced the temporary retreat from world literature in order to restore the economic life of the Soviet Union. \(^{62}\)

As the different proletarian groups scrambled to establish proletarian culture and gain Party approval, a group of literary mavericks arose. These young men called themselves Serapion Brothers, after the Hermit Serapion, a character from E. T. A. Hoffman’s tales. On February 1, 1921, the Serapion Brothers met for the first time. Lev Lunc emerged as the unofficial leader of the group. The twelve members’ recorded ages ranged from one over thirty to three still in their teens. Lunc died at the age of twenty-three in 1924. \(^{63}\) The most notable members include Veniamin Kaverin, Valentine Kataev, Boris Pil’niak, Vsevolod Ivanov, and Konstantin Fedin.

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These talented young men created a stir when they announced that they held no political allegiance. The Proletkult, the VAPP, and the Futurists demanded that the Serapions be brought under Party control. The Serapions consciously rejected regimentation. They elected no president, wrote no constitution, and issued no manifestos concerning their ideology. Their meetings permitted no non-members except for Evgeny Zamyatin, Anna Akhmatova, and Osip Mandel'stam. The members lived in a mansion donated by a rich merchant through Maxim Gorky's urging. This "House of Arts" served as a literary center where the members could read their latest works to audiences ranging from young ladies to vagrants looking for warmth.

The proletarian organizations objected to the Serapions' refusal to commit to the Communist Party. Lunc published an explanation of the group's diversity and its ideology. The group possessed no formal ideology. Members encouraged the others to keep their own thoughts on politics and philosophy. All found acceptance. Each writer's work received the same acceptance as the author himself. Lunc stated that, "We demand only one thing: that a work should be organic, real, should live its own life." Lunc proceeded to proclaim that the Serapion Brothers would not tolerate

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64Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 22.
utilitarianism. They would not write propaganda. Art, to them, exuded life; and because it breathes, they concluded that art exists with no meaning or goal. "Art exists because it cannot help existing." 66

Critics of the Serapion Brothers cited the "art for art's sake" theory as the principal separation of the young men and the new society forming around them. The Serapion Brothers saw no purpose for literature in the revolution or in establishing proletarian culture. Marxist critics demanded that the Serapions write within the guidelines of Marxism and the Communist Party. 67

Leon Trotsky and Alexandr Voronsky raised their critical voices in tolerance, if not encouragement, of the Serapion Brothers. Trotsky opened his book Literature and Revolution by stating that the policy of the Communist Party provides help to the various "groups and schools which have come over to the Revolution to grasp the historic meaning of the Revolution." He further proclaimed that the Party must "allow them complete freedom of self-determination in the field of art, after putting before them the categorical standard of being for or against the Revolution." 68


67Ibid., 54-60.

Serapion Brothers never denied the Revolution, nor did critics claim their work to be anti-revolutionary.

In his comments on proletarian literature, Trotsky expresses his belief that, while the proletariat certainly would create its own culture given time, the revolution would need to spread world-wide before a true proletarian culture could fully develop. Trotsky defined, at this stage, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a revolutionary and military system struggling for the new society rather than acting to produce a new culture. He acknowledged that the proletariat, during the time of the dictatorship, would indeed make its mark upon culture. This mark remained far and away from the completely developed "harmonious system of knowledge and art in all material and spiritual fields of work." "Art must make its own way and by its own means." Trotsky defined the Party's role in leading the proletariat but not the historic process of history. He said that the Party led directly in some areas, cooperated in others, and oriented itself only in yet other areas. Art did not fall into the area in which the Party commanded. Trotsky exhorted the Party to protect and help art. He called upon the Party to give confidence to the

69Ibid., 184-85.
70Ibid., 190.
71Ibid., 192.
various groups which sincerely strove to approach the Revolution. The fellow travellers, as Trotsky called writers outside the Party, helped the Revolution as much as the communist-aligned writers' organizations.\textsuperscript{72}

Aleksandr Voronsky, an old Bolshevik member of the Party since 1904, founded and edited the literary magazine, \textit{Krasnaja nov' (Red Virgin Soil)}. As the editor, Voronsky placed primary emphasis on artistic quality rather than upon the ideological purity or class origin of his contributors. Under Voronsky's editorship, \textit{Red Virgin Soil} emerged as a "rallying point for that heterogenous group of intellectuals whom Trotsky dubbed fellow-travellers."\textsuperscript{73} Critics voiced their indignation over Voronsky's preference for the literature of the Serapion Brothers. They maintained that literature served as a weapon in the class struggle. Any concessions to non-proletarian writers amounted to criminal activity. In May 1924, the Communist Party intervened in the conflict between Voronsky and the Proletkult over publication of the Serapion Brothers. The Press Division of the Central Committee and later the Central Committee as a whole agreed with Voronsky's publishing fellow-travellers' work. Voronsky believed that art forms the "cognition of life." Art, like science, supplies people with the

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., 218.

\textsuperscript{73}McLean, "Voronsky and VAPP," 186.
knowledge of life.\textsuperscript{74} He agreed with Trotsky in that he denied any proletarian art existed in the 1920s. In his speech before the Press Division, Voronsky reminded his audience that the Party cooperated with all "revolutionary groups rooted in the soil of October." The Party offered "assistance to any group which accepted the Revolution" and declared willingness to "work on its behalf." He stated that the Party gave "full freedom to artistic self-determination." Voronsky continued to clash with groups like the VAPP over the role of literature\textsuperscript{75} Voronsky hoped that the "narrow clannishness" of the various literary groups could be resolved by the formation of a large and inclusive writers' organization.\textsuperscript{76} This writers' organization was created in 1932, after eight more years of relative freedom for writers. With the death of Lenin in 1924 and the ascendancy of Stalin, literary developments experienced subtle but important changes that began to curtail and to limit the freedom of writers in the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., 188-89. McLean quotes Voronsky from Voronskij, "Iskusstvo Kak poznanie zini i sorremennost'," \textit{Krasnaja nov}, No. 5 (July-August 1923), 349.

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 194-95. McLean quotes Voronsky from Voronskij, "O politike parti v khudozestvennoj literature," \textit{Voprosy Kul'tury pri dikature proletariata} (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), 56.

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 196.
The changes in society that resulted from the Russian Revolution inspired literary authors to reflect the changes within art as well as politics. Various groups struggled to define proletarian literature and to fit their art into the Communist ideal. The Communist Party experienced urgent political and economic threats and kept out of the artistic realm while trying to secure its control. Gradually, the Party became involved on a limited basis as literary groups demanded action from the national leaders. As the Party achieved political and economic stability, it turned its interest to the literary dispute. By the end of 1924, the Communist Party acknowledged independent writers' groups and withheld any direct control of literature.
CHAPTER III

PROLETARIAN LITERATURE

As the Soviet Union moved from political revolution to political stabilization, the struggle to define an official proletarian literature continued. "Out of the confusion and conflicting literary demands during the period of revolution and civil war," definite tendencies on the part of the Communist Party and its officials began to emerge.¹

In 1923, articles concerning the role of literature appeared in *The Bolshevik*, the Communist Party supported newspaper. The articles declared that imaginative literature influenced workers, peasants, and youth. The Party, therefore, had a responsibility to oversee the quality of published works, and must provide ideological guidance for literature.²

Many of the proletarian writers used the revolution and civil war as themes in their works. These authors also created characters that provided role-models to the reading masses, and intended to lead their readers toward becoming


good Soviet citizens. Their products also helped to make a transition from war efforts to economic endeavors.

Dmitri Furmanov, a Party member who served as a political commissar with Red detachments during the civil war, answered the Party's call to provide ideological instruction to Soviet readers. *Chapaev*, Furmanov's first novel, appeared in 1923 and soon became a Soviet classic. Furmanov originally intended this work to be a Party history of Red Army Commander Vassily Chapaev who served and died during the civil war. Furmanov based this fictitious novel on his experiences serving with the real Chapaev. In the novel, Furmanov expresses Soviet ideology on the historical process and Soviet policy in directing raw enthusiasm toward mature, communist service.

The two main characters in *Chapaev* are Commander Chapaev and political commissar Fedor Klychkov. Klychkov's character is the fictitious counterpart of Furmanov. In the novel, the Red regiment battles Cossack forces near Lbishchensk, close to the Ural River. Eventually the Red forces emerge victorious. The main action of *Chapaev*, however, is political rather than military. Klychkov instructs the spontaneous Chapaev in Communist ideology and guides the commander toward mature communist consciousness.³

Klychkov keeps a personal diary throughout the novel. In his first entry of Chapaev, Klychkov notes that the commander is "an ordinary, spare man," whose appearance is fresh and clean. Soon Klychkov recognizes that Chapaev possesses a superior quality that men immediately recognize and respond to. The commissar describes Chapaev as "a proud horse of the steppe who voluntarily obeyed the bridle" and his men "treated him as one apart from and above the rest." As Klychkov engages in further conversation with Chapaev, he notes that Chapaev vows total commitment to the Communist cause, but the commander loathes the "headquarters, with their generals, orders and repressions for disobedience." Chapaev reveals a belief that "headquarters was packed solely with tsarist generals, who betrayed us right and left." He rails against colonels who withhold supplies but issue edicts to Chapaev and his men.

Klychkov, in contrast to Chapaev, reveals a mature Communist consciousness from the beginning of the novel. When Klychkov arrives at the front, he realizes his inexperience will be a handicap. "But," he reasons, "he had

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4Ibid., 73.
5Ibid., 78.
6Ibid., 94-5.
7Ibid., 150.
8Ibid., 171.
come here with a burning desire to make himself useful—not to issue orders, but to work." Immediately Klychkov sets about organizing a plan as he "let himself be guided by his instinct for organization in deciding what to do." Klychkov understands his position in the political machinery of the Party. "He understood that it was not his business to give orders to the political department, but only to help them and see that their instructions were carried out." After ordering a white officer to be shot, Klychkov appears agitated and upset. This emotional condition lasts only for twenty-four hours. Klychkov returns to normal on the following day. Furmanov defends the commissar's apparent callousness by saying that "it would have been abnormal to let such a thing dwell for long on one's mind at the front." Furmanov constantly sets the apparent opposite characters of Chapaev and Klychkov in various situations to reveal the conversion of Chapaev and the staunch, correct Soviet attitude of Klychkov. The commissar notes various admirable qualities held by the spontaneous commander. Klychkov acknowledges that Chapaev "embodies in himself all the irrepressible and spontaneous feelings of rage and

9Ibid., 68.
10Ibid., 69.
11Ibid., 205.
12Ibid., 280-81.
protest that have accumulated in the hearts of peasants."13 Klychkov fears that this spontaneousness may lead Chapaev to commit an act of violence, particularly to his commissar, or cause him to go over to the White side.14 Klychkov decides to "gain a proper influence over" Chapaev and thereby exert control over the commanders negative characteristics.15

Klychkov devises a plan by which to set Chapaev on the "path of conscious struggle--not that of blind, instinctive heroism, however colorful, riotous and splendid that may be."16 Klychkov must establish "spiritual dominion" over Chapaev, an area outside the "sphere of war."17 As soon as he settles on his plan, Klychkov experiences a momentary doubt about his new course of action. He wonders if his efforts would reap any reward. He also questions the wisdom of "breaking in a wild horse of the steppe."18 Klychkov wonders if it "would not be wiser to abandon this beautiful, original and vital character to the will of destiny and leave it untouched."19 He quickly concludes, as a good

13Ibid., 86.
14Ibid.
15Ibid., 87.
16Ibid., 152.
17Ibid.
18Ibid.
19Ibid.
Soviet should, that "the great struggle that was in progress did not admit of such frivolity." \(^{20}\)

Educating Chapaev proves to be no easy task. The commander "had no idea of the doctrine of communism." \(^{21}\) He clings to religious gestures, much to the horror of Klychkov. After several conversations with Klychkov, Chapaev "began to consider creeds, god, the church, priests and so on in quite a new light." \(^{22}\) Chapaev delights in the knowledge his conversations with Klychkov bring. He marvels at the existence of revolutionary war councils and their function in structure. \(^{23}\)

Before Chapaev reaches full Soviet consciousness, he falls in battle against the Cossacks. His death, like his life, inspires his regiment to carry on to victory. \(^{24}\) Klychkov analyzes Chapaev's qualities that make him a hero, and he concludes that the commander possessed the gift of knowing how to govern his men. These troops "were heroic but raw." \(^{25}\) They admired Chapaev's "personal bravery,

\(^{20}\mathrm{Ibid.}\)

\(^{21}\mathrm{Ibid.}, 150.\)

\(^{22}\mathrm{Ibid.}, 174-75.\)

\(^{23}\mathrm{Ibid.}, 172.\)

\(^{24}\mathrm{Ibid.}, 417-23.\)

\(^{25}\mathrm{Ibid.}, 254.\)
gallantry, daring and resolution." Through his analysis, Klychkov downplays the legend that arose around Chapaev and his command. The extraordinary commander's success resulted, to a large degree, from the extraordinary circumstances present during the Civil War. "All sorts of events, great and small, preceded and accompanies the Civil War." These times allowed a Chapaev to emerge. "In any other days there was not and could not be a Chapaev." Klychkov presents persuasive arguments that Chapaev follows the historical process. On the eve of his departure from Chapaev's regiment, Klychkov realizes that he, too, has grown in his consciousness along with Chapaev. "He had acquired moral strength, been steeled by hardships, so simply and unhesitatingly he had come to tackle the solution to all sorts of innumerable problems." 

In 1924, the Communist Party watered down its intentions toward literature. It issued a statement that pronounced that the Party stood uncommitted to what the "guidance in the literary domain should take." Voronsky

26 Ibid., 263.
27 Ibid., 254.
28 Ibid., 254.
29 Ibid., 254.
30 Ibid., 401.
interpreted this statement as the Party's unwillingness to "interfere in the area of literature." ³¹

Marxist critics continued to press for a communist culture "that would reflect the political, social, and economic ideals of the new proletarian regime." They expressed a hope that this new culture would significantly influence the "world communist revolutionary movement," and they pushed for Marxist literature that would play a role in the world movement. ³² The writers during the period from 1924 to 1932 labored under the demand to "reflect the new reality of the class struggle and the expanding proletarian world" and, at the same time, to answer the call to "uncover the absolute and objective truth." The critics expected the proletarian man to be portrayed in literature without compromise, simplification, or idealization. ³³

Fyodor Gladkov published a novel in 1925 that fulfilled the Marxist critics' stringent requirements. Gladkov served during the Revolution and Civil War with Bolshevik units. He joined the Communist Party after establishing his literary career. In 1925 Gladkov joined the VAPP, and in 1928 he became elected to its executive board.

³¹Lindstrom, A Concise History, 142.
³²Simmons, An Outline of Modern Russian Literature, 39.
³³Lindstrom, A Concise History, 143.
Cement, Gladkov's 1925 novel, later became the model for the production novel popular during the Five Year Plan. Gleb Chumalov, the hero of the story, returns from the Civil War to his hometown. The once productive cement factory lies idle, and the townspeople struggle for survival. Gleb takes the situation in hand and puts the factory back in operation. He also stimulates the townspeople's pride in and support of the Communist Party's directives to achieve post-Civil War reconstruction.34

Gladkov used his characters in Cement to expose the class struggle present in Soviet life and to demonstrate the means to conquer class enemies. Gleb encounters many obstacles from various different sources as he struggles to get the cement factory opened and operational. The townspeople present the very first challenge. Gleb must motivate the citizens to rebuild the factory. He addresses this problem in universal terms rather than local ones. Gleb broadens the term "heroism" from the physical combat alluded to in Polia Mekhova's "fire of revolution" to the struggle for industrialization. Gleb remarks that the real challenge must be met with "shoulder to the wheel" so that the "mountain of destruction, muddle, and hunger" can be

shoved back into its place. At a meeting of local Communists, Gleb rallies the members by equating the production of the factory with the future of the Soviet Union. He notes that the cement they produce will play an important role in rebuilding their country. Gleb also states that "we are cement, Comrades, the working class. We've played the fool long enough; now we've got to start real work." When the workers suffer the setback of a comrade's death, Gleb again points out the global goal of the Communist cause. He calls the workers back to their task by announcing that their lives are "a sacrifice to labor" and that through this sacrifice victory has prevailed. He proclaims that "the blood and suffering of the struggle--these are our weapons for winning the whole world."

Finally, as the factory is rededicated amid celebrations of the October Revolution, Gleb sums up the townspeople's efforts by saying that they could "put communism all over Europe in no time" through the heroic actions they displayed in re-establishing the cement factory.

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35 Ibid., 55.
36 Ibid., 149.
37 Ibid., 149.
38 Ibid., 311.
states the workers "are building up socialism and our proletarian culture."  

While working on the factory, Gleb encounters an old enemy. Herman Hermanovich Kleist is a bourgeois engineer employed in the factory before the Civil War. He blames the Revolution and its ardent followers as having "ruined his future and burned up the world like a handful of waste." Kleist turned Gleb over to White soldiers who occupied their town during the Civil War. Gleb, beaten and left for dead, joined the Bolsheviks as soon as he could. Despite his hatred for Kleist, Gleb overcomes his bitter memories and invites Kleist to join in rebuilding the factory. With Gleb's acknowledgement of the old engineer's value to the factory, Gladkov presents the Communist view that not all bourgeois should be seen as enemies. Gleb's trust is rewarded when Kleist expresses his desire to join his efforts to the Communist cause and announces his intention to devote his life to his country. He simply states that "I have no other life except that life with all of you; I have no other task except our struggle to build up a new culture."
Gladkov addresses the problem of Party members who cannot or will not accept the new economic challenge. Through Polia Mekhova, Gladkov demonstrates the need to turn out from the Party members who cannot function in the post-Civil War situation. At a meeting of the Party Cleansing Commission, an anonymous speaker calls for Polia's removal by noting that "the new economic policy" requires forward thinking and not dwelling in the past. Polia is dismissed from the Party because she objects to the direction the Soviet Union's leadership has taken. Badin, Chairman of the Executive of the local Party chapter, tries early on to dissuade Gleb from reopening the factory. This character faces Polia's fate by not accepting the progress of the new economic policy. Like Kleist, Badin embraces the new order and thereby symbolizes the ability of Party members to adjust to new directives.

Serge Ivagin serves as a strong expression of Soviet philosophy and ideology. Serge finds himself turned out of the Party for being an intellectual and a Menshevik, even though he has repudiated his past, given up his possessions, and worked diligently for the Party. Serge meditates on his situation and concludes that "there was only one thing--

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43 Ibid., 97-102.
44 Ibid., 309-08.
45 Ibid., 297.
the Party; and everything to the last drop of his blood must be given to it."46 Serge appeals the Committee's action of expelling him. In spite of what that appeal's outcome may be, Serge decides that he will continue to work for the Communist cause because, whether inside or out, "there was only the Party and he was an insignificant item in this great organism."47

Gleb's relationship to his wife, Dasha, symbolizes the expanding world of the proletariat and the role of women in the new order of society. Dasha embraces her new freedom and her new responsibilities. The new societal expectations free women from the silence of housework and provide them with leadership opportunities. Gleb notices that Dasha has changed from his clinging bride and has become "vigorous, unsubduable, knowing her own mind."48 Nurka, the Chumalov's young daughter, adjusts to the equality that the Soviet Union has provided. When asked whether she would like to leave the children's home and return home with Gleb, Nurka appears surprised. "What home?" she asks, "My bed is over there."49 Proletarian children received equal treatment at the children's home, and their living together provided

46Ibid., 296.
47Ibid.
48Ibid., 28.
49Ibid., 41.
extra opportunities for their mothers to work for the Party. Throughout the novel, Gleb struggles to accept the new dimension to his relationship with Dasha. She finally tells Gleb that their private life will have to be arranged differently, as will everyone's, to fit into the demands of their country.\(^5\) Gleb uses an allegory of a fire destroying a house to his marriage. "If the old home has been destroyed," he says, "it means that the old home wasn't much good."\(^5\) Gleb and Dasha must adjust their personal lives or dissolve their marriage in order to survive and be productive in the proletarian culture. Dasha remarks at the end of the novel that "the old life has perished and will not return." She continues his metaphor of a destroyed house by reminding him that "the time will come when we shall build ourselves new homes."\(^5\) Gladkov's central reconstruction theme centered on the idea that takes place on a personal level as well as an economic one. Gladkov's Cement provided solutions to all levels of dealing with class struggle and presented role models for the new proletariat man and woman.

As leaders of the VAPP, Proletkult, and other proletarian groups clamored for Party-controlled literature, \(^5\)Ibid., 292.  
\(^5\)Ivis., 293.  
\(^5\)Ibid., 308.
Trotsky and Lunacharsky added their support to Voronsky’s argument that proletarian literature could not be created from a government decree.53 Riazanov, founder of the Communist Academy, and Mescheriakov, who was head of the state publishing house, supported Voronsky against his critics.54 As stated before, Voronsky "placed creative writing above ideology" and "vigorously defended an author’s right to objective and unhampered creative expression." These views led many to consider Voronsky the leader of a new group of writers. The Pereval (The Pass), a literary group associated with Voronsky, opposed the narrow definition of proletarian art imposed upon literature by the VAPP, the Proletkult, and Marxist critics.55

On Guard, published by the October group within VAPP, printed articles that opposed Voronsky’s activities and "violently protested any production of the fellow travellers." The authors continually "accused the fellow travellers of distorting the picture and slandering the proletariat." The editors of On Guard accused Voronsky’s policy of publishing, encouraging, and supporting fellow

53Simmons, An Outline of Modern Russian Literature, 40.


55Lindstrom, A Concise History, 142.
travellers as an "element in the bourgeois attempt to use literature against the proletariat."  

By 1925, The October group became known as the On Guard group. They issued a resolution that expressed their Marxist views of literature at the First All-Union Conference of Proletarian Writers in January of 1925. This resolution contained twelve points which defined literature as serving one class or another. For the On Guardists, no "neutrality existed in literature." They declared the last struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeois to be in the "arena" of belles-lettres which included novels. The On Guardist resolution directly attacked "fellow travellers" such as the Serapion Brothers as "slanderers of the revolution." War was declared by the group on such "defilers." Through the resolution, On Guardists called for a seizure of power by the proletariat in the field of art similar to the seizure of power in politics and economics. This group demanded that a proletarian nucleus in literature be formed "by which writers not already in the Communist Party can be guided and influenced by already existing members." Finally, the resolution declared that the VAPP "should become and is becoming just such a nucleus."  

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56 Brown, The Proletarian Episode, 28-29.

57 Ibid., 29.
The membership of the On Guardist group shared youth as a common element with the Serapion Brothers. Most of the members' ages ranged from late teens to early twenties when they began demanding to be the "leading voice in the development of Russian literature." All members belonged to the Communist Party and most had participated in the revolution and civil war. The On Guardists produced the majority of their work after 1925. Their youth, ignorance, and raw enthusiasm for the Communist cause, coupled with their lack of formal education in literary techniques and styles, led them into "gross oversimplifications" of all problems and "crude verbal excesses" in their criticisms of those who disagreed with them. In spite of these shortcomings, the On Guardist group gained a future audience by insisting that the "cultural organization of proletarian literature should reside within the control of the Communist Party." The On Guardists became the first proletarian writers' group to specifically call for Party control of belles-lettres instead of general ideological supervision. The On Guardist group also wanted to "replace the old, established writers" who did not align themselves with the Party with new, younger authors who "belonged to the Party and who championed the Revolutionary Cause." This group's leaders demanded that the new government, embodied by the Communist Party, intervene directly to "guarantee their
hegemony over the old writers and their champion Voronsky.\textsuperscript{58}

Although the Communist Party issued no definitive policy or opinion regarding proletarian literature at this time, many leaders became involved in the controversy. Lenin, who suffered from ill health, stayed out of the conflict until his death in 1924. Lenin's earlier writings became ammunition for both sides of the issue. The Party leaders most prominent in the controversy from 1924 to 1925 included Trotsky, Bukharin, Ivan Maiskii, Lunacharsky, Karl Radek, and the Red Army leader Frunze. No record exists of any opinion by Joseph Stalin.\textsuperscript{59} Trotsky emerged as the most persuasive opponent of the On Guardists. As discussed earlier, he argued that the proletarian state in Russia served as a temporary and transitional stage in the process of achieving final world revolution. Therefore, proletarian culture could not develop before "communism achieved worldwide acceptance." Lunacharsky, Commissar of Public Education, supported Voronsky's belief that political controls of literature proved to be inappropriate. He agreed with Trotsky that exclusive Party control would not be necessary but rejected Trotsky's idea of no possible proletarian culture. Lunacharsky compromised with the On

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 30-33.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 35-36.
Guardists when he stated that "proletarian literature" demanded support as the "chief hope" of the Communist Party "but that the fellow travellers should by no means" find alienation within the Party.\textsuperscript{60}

Nikolai Bukharin held the most important and powerful positions for exerting influence on literature in the Party Politburo at this time. His influence on the Party policy on literature resulted in the Politburo resolution dated July 1, 1925. This resolution maintained the aloof and ambiguous attitude of Party intervention in proletarian literature. As leader of the right wing of the Party, Bukharin maintained that the transition "from a capitalist society to a socialist society would be slow and gradual." He predicted that new socialist institutions would develop "at a snail's pace," unlike Trotsky's vision of a short and bloody transition. Because the transition would take place gradually, Bukharin held that a proletarian culture would have time to develop. He insisted that the proletariat must permit "the existence of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry." The Party, according to Bukharin, should serve to "soften and abate the class struggle" and encourage non-proletarian literature to thrive alongside proletarian products. Methods applicable to "military and political struggle could not be employed in the cultural sphere." Direct coercion

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 36-39. Brown quotes from \textit{Kropotsov}, remarks of Lunacharski.
achieved desirable effects in political and military situations, but literary problems did not fit the mold for resolutions by such means. As a result of his beliefs, Bukharin advised the proletarians to "give up the composition of theses, directives, and manifestos in favor of novels, plays, and poems."  

Bukharin did believe that any group or individual that revealed "counterrevolutionary tendencies" should be forbidden, but a proletarian literature would be created "in the end only if the Party does not squeeze everyone into a single fist, but rather allows competition."  

As a result of Bukharin's influence, a special meeting of the Press Section of the Central Committee met in May of 1924 to discuss the issues raised by the On Guardists. The Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party met simultaneously and addressed literary problems in its resolutions on the press. At the Press Section Meeting, representatives from the State Publishing House, the Communist Academy, and various literary groups presented views on the role of literature. The resolution of the press meeting included a rejection of the On Guardists' demand that the VAPP become the Party's administrative  

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61 Ibid., 39-40. Brown quotes from *Kroposu*, remarks of Bukharin.

center for literary life and a censure for VAPP's publication of On Guard which many held responsible for alienating fellow travellers from the "Party and the Soviet power." The resolution also defined the basic work of the Party on the literary scene as one "oriented on the creation of those workers and peasants who are becoming worker and peasant writers" in the process of the "cultural rise of the broad masses of the Soviet Union." The resolution encouraged the Party to provide material assistance to young writers as well as political leadership.63

The statement concerning the press issued at the Thirteenth Party Congress included belles-lettres, but it specifically stated that "no one group, program, or school would be permitted to speak in the name of the Party." The Party would continue to regulate literary criticism and "interpretation from the Party viewpoint of those literary works which appear on the pages of the Party and Soviet press." The statement at the Thirteenth Party Congress satisfied both sides of the literary conflict. Voronsky's position received vindication for publishing non-Party members' work, and the VAPP and other proletarian groups received both material and moral support.64

63Ibid., 41-42. Brown quotes from K voprosu, "Rezoliutsiia po dokladu Iakovleva."

64Ibid., 42-43. Brown quotes from "O pechati (iz rezolyutsii XIII s "ezda RKP(b) 23-31 maia, 1924)," Reshniia Partii o Pechati (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1941), p. 72.
Competition among the various proletarian writers and fellow travellers intensified rather than lessened after the joint resolutions of the Press Section and Party Congress in 1924. In February of 1925, a special commission of the Central Committee met to consider creating a policy regarding competing literary groups. The special session's conclusions constituted the framework of the Politburo Resolution of July 1, 1925. The official document, titled "On the Policy of the Party in the Field of Belles-Lettres" failed to define clearly the Party's position on literature in any terms other than ambivalence. The political leadership in the Central Committee had yet to reach stability. Bitterly opposed factions were struggling for control following Lenin's death, and no one wanted to risk alienating any "large group of possible supporters, even in the intellectual field."  

The most important ideas in the official statement belonged to Bukharin. The Party acknowledged that proletarian literature to be in transition and that the non-communist authors must peacefully be won over to the proletarian cause. Fellow travellers, as "specialists of technique," should be highly valued and "carefully cultivated" in order to insure "their loyalty to the Party and their eventual acceptance of its ideology." Again, the

65 Ibid., 41-43.
Party rejected the demand that it support any one group or faction. It also rejected any attempt at a controlled literary development. The resolution explicitly stated that the Party remain the only "leader of literature as a whole." The Party promised to provide material assistance to proletarian writers. Many proletarian writers hoped that their apparent defeat would be temporary because the resolution accepted the On Guard tenet that a "class war is in progress in the literary world and that art cannot be neutral between the warring classes."  

Two weeks after the publication of the document "On the Policy of the Party in the Field of Belles-Letters," a group of writers met to discuss the possibility of establishing a new federation of Soviet writers. On July 14, 1925, members from the VAPP, the VSKP (a peasant writers group), and the Constructionists signed a document setting out the aims of the Federation of Soviet Writers (FSP). Education Commissar Lunacharsky also signed the document. The aims of the new group included the creation of a federation that would devote unrelenting efforts to struggle against bourgeois literature. Fellow travellers would have to join or not be published. The membership to the FSP did not require complete loyalty. A significant number of proletarian

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66Ibid., 44.

67Ibid., 45-46.
writers belonged to several groups, including the FSP. By 1927 the VAPP assumed control of the FSP's leadership. Gaining the leadership of FSP added more influence and power to the VAPP. In 1929, the FSP newspaper, Literatur naya gazeta, reflected the philosophy of the VAPP.68

In 1927, Aleksandr Fadeev, Party member and executive of the VAPP, published The Nineteen (also translated as The Rout). Fadeev's novel expressed the philosophy of proletarian writers and critics. While each of the main characters in The Nineteen appear as individuals, they symbolize class struggle, correct Soviet attitudes concerning individual expression, and the conversion of rebellious citizens to the Soviet cause. The plot of the novel centers on a Red guerilla detachment fighting Japanese and Kolchak's White forces in the Far East during the Civil War.69

The leader of the Red guerilla force is Levinson, a Jewish Communist. Through his character, Fadeev demonstrates true Soviet leadership. Despite his inner-fears and indecisions, no one except the regiment's physician guesses Levinson is anything but confident. The


leader appears to the others as "a superior being, an exceptional type of man."70

A young soldier compares himself to Levinson and concludes that the older man "has only one thought--his work. You can't help trusting him, you can't help obeying a man who's always right."71 Levinson carefully cultivates this infallible impression. When faced with difficult decisions, Levinson presents a calm, confident demeanor even when he has no plan of action in mind.72 Fadeev allows the readers to glimpse Levinson's inner turmoil as well as to witness his development into a correct Soviet citizen. Levinson muses over the deceptions of the past which resulted from a bourgeois society. The leader repudiates the lies and disappointments of his past and gains the knowledge that the changes that lie ahead will bring about a better future. He achieves wisdom by accepting the Soviet philosophy of "to see everything as it is in order to change everything. That is, to control everything there is."73

Warmed with his new found wisdom, Levinson arrives at a conclusion that echoes the Communist Party's philosophy and expectations for its members. Levinson notes that he has

70Ibid., 64-5.
71Ibid., 65.
72Ibid., 68.
73Ibid., 207.
become a much stronger person than Metchik, a young man who joins his regiment. Metchik embodies the intelligentsia who cannot truly join the Revolution because they do not immerse themselves in the cause. Levinson revels in triumph when he realizes that he once "wanted a lot," but he "could do a lot and that's where the real difference is." 74 Levinson reveals his true inner strength, the strength he has devoted to the Revolution and Civil War, when he overcomes his personal grief after a devastating Cossack ambush. The leader gives in to weeping for the dead, and then, "he ceased crying; it was necessary to live and a man had to do his duty." 75

One of the most active soldiers under Levinson's command proves to be one willing to sacrifice his life for his regiment. Morozka first appears as a somewhat rebellious member. He often sees to his own needs even when such behavior disrupts the regiment. 76 When he is brought face-to-face with his behavior, Morozka vows that he "would give every drop of blood for any" of his comrades, and he promises not to shame them any further. 77 Morozka's

74 Ibid., 208.

75 Ibid., 293.

76 Ibid., 31.

77 Ibid., 56-60.
character becomes reliable and steady throughout the rest of the novel.

Varya, Morozka's wife, serves as a nurse to the physician. She is the only woman attached to the soldiers and Fadeev represents her as warm and soft-hearted. Her attraction to Metchek, the intellectual, causes tension between the two lovers and Morozka. This triangle symbolizes well-meaning, but misled, people and their eventual return to the Communist cause. Varya begins to realize that Metchik's affections are not sincere, and she concludes that "possibly Metchek did not at all resemble the man for whom she had waited so many nights and days."78 Varya returns to Morozka, and their reunion symbolizes a union between true Soviets and the Communist cause.79

As Levinson represents the noble characteristics of all Soviets, Metchik symbolizes the characteristics the revolutionaries fought to control. Metchik hails from an urban setting and never feels comfortable in the countryside or around country people. Early in the novel Metchik urges the doctor to move the hospital to a town rather than keep it in the safe, wooded area.80 He fails to understand the strategic choices of his regiment and relies on his past

78Ibid., p. 179.
79Ibid., p. 265-66.
80Ibid., 265-66.
experiences as a guide. Unlike Levinson, Metchik fondly recalls his past and does not acknowledge that his bourgeois upbringing is detrimental to the Communist cause. His fear for his own safety consumes Metchik, and he concludes that "I might just as well be dead." Metchik mourns the people he may never see again and surrenders himself to self-pity when he declares "how miserable I am!"

Throughout the novel, Metchik reveals his self-centeredness. Upon learning the second in command never went to high school, Metchik obsequiously tries to convince the soldier that not having an education was good and Baklanov was "a fine, intelligent fellow." The fact that Baklanov "saw no great advantage to his lack of education" totally escapes Metchik. Metchik neglects his horse and fails to comprehend how valuable the animals are to the regiments' efforts. He resents Levinson's reprimand and refuses to acknowledge his responsibility. He uses the universal excuse "it's not my fault." Metchik lacks the maturity that Levinson, Stashinsky the physician, and Frolov show in deciding to euthanize the fatally wounded Frolov.

81Ibid., 255.
82Ibid.
83Ibid., 138.
84Ibid.
85Ibid., 149-50.
These three men understand that the regiment cannot be sacrificed for one person. Metchik rejects the idea and allows his turmoil to fester. Levinson, like Frolov, quietly accepts what must be done. Metchik fails his comrades in battle by getting lost. His fellow soldiers delight in reminding him that they provided ample direction. "I called to you, but you didn't hear, I suppose," accuses one soldier. Metchik finally confesses that he "can't do anything and he doesn't understand anything." Even amidst his confession of ineptitude, Metchik lays the blame on others--"Is it my fault? I approached everyone with an open heart, but I was met only with coarseness and mockery." 

Ultimately, Metchik betrays the whole regiment. He fails to warn his comrades of an impending ambush, electing to run away and save himself. At this moment, Metchik experiences self-disgust. His emotions are not for the men he knows are dying due to his cowardice, but result from knowing that "the ineffaceable, filthy, sickening stain of this act of his gave the lie to all the virtue and high-mindedness which he attributed to himself." Because Metchik cannot free himself from his bourgeois past, he

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86 Ibid., 161-63.
87 Ibid., 251-52.
88 Ibid., 202.
89 Ibid., 287.
fails to possess the quality of justifying all suffering, even death, in terms of the ultimate Soviet goal. In contrast to Metchik, Morozka calls forth his belief in Communism and fulfills his vow made earlier in the novel. Morozka signals the regiment to the approaching Cossacks and gives his life for his comrades.

While the VAPP rose to become the most powerful and influential proletarian writers' group, it by no means enjoyed a unified membership. In 1925, a faction within the VAPP leadership rejected the criticism and censure of the Party expressed in the July first resolution. Another group, led by Averbakh, totally accepted the Party's resolution.

Open disagreement with the Party and the propagation of such views remained possible during 1925 and 1926 because opposition to the Party leadership still existed, even within the Party itself. Internal strife within the VAPP paralleled internal opposition within the Communist Party. Old Bolsheviks Zinoviev and Kamenev developed opposition to the Party leadership, and the literary conflict reflected this political opposition. VAPP leaders Vardin, Rodov, Lelevich, and others protested not only the Party's literary

\footnotesize{90}Ibid., 151.

\footnotesize{91}Ibid., 283.
policy and also questioned political decisions. As a result, leaders within the VAPP joined Zinoviev's movement. Averbakh's group, which remained loyal to the Party line in all matters, received the Central Committee's support and removed the oppositionists from the executive bodies of the VAPP. By February, 1926, members of VAPP who objected to the Resolution on the Central Committee on Literary Policy found themselves relieved of administrative work. Averbakh's group assumed control of the VAPP as a result of the administrative changes. The VAPP also received authority from the Party to publish again its own critical and theoretical journal. The former VAPP organ's title was Na postu (On Guard). The new magazine appeared in March 1926 as Na literaturnom postu (On Literary Guard). The first issue announced that "henceforth the center of our attention will be transferred to the field of literary creation." The VAPP narrowed its focus to literary concerns rather than broader, political issues.92

Since the Party had officially denied the VAPP hegemony in literature, the group's leaders directed their energy toward "winning over" the fellow travellers and "winning" the right to lead the Party in literary matters. In early 1926, the VAPP applied to the Press Section of the Central

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Committee for permission to establish the Federation of Organizations of Soviet Writers. As discussed earlier, this new writers' group would include both proletarian writers and fellow travellers.

Eventually the VAPP dominated the Federation of Soviet Writers despite representatives from various other writers' organizations. The VAPP no longer called for a "Party cell" to which all literary work must be "subordinated." The VAPP operated under the belief that hegemony could only be achieved by proletarian literature's obtaining a commanding position in "ideological content and artistic form." More importantly, proletarian literature must gain "prominent influence on the reading masses." Although fellow travellers joined the FSP, communist members, especially in the VAPP, received them with arrogance and disdain. The VAPP members considered it their responsibility as the "officially designated future hope of Soviet literature" to maintain ideologic purity and to dominate the FSP. By rigging votes on the executive leadership, the VAPP held two-thirds of all leadership positions of the FSP at all times.93

Averbakh and the new leadership of the VAPP promised to concern itself more with literary issues and less with

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93Ibid., 48-50.
political issues. The new direction of the VAPP resulted in response to Bukharin and others' demands that proletarian writers give up producing manifestos. In spite of its well-meaning intentions, articles appearing in On Literary Guard exhibited some of the worst "critical habits of the old On Guard group." The editorial board of On Literary Guard lacked "a complement of fully educated people," and the Communist Party lacked a "tradition of sober, fair, realistic, and liberal criticism of opponents." As a result, the VAPP slipped back into its old behavior of using political labels in its criticisms of literature. VAPP critics constantly labored to expose the "class enemy" in any of their opponents or detractors. They also cited excerpts from Stalin's speeches on the growth of class struggle to justify their criticisms to any opposition to the VAPP. Ironically, in 1936 former leaders of the VAPP of 1926 became the victims of their own tactics of using political terms to define literature.9

By 1928, the Party’s Central Committee adopted a more active role in literature. It noted:

The basic objectives of the Party in the field of literature and the arts can only be achieved by increasing the Party's influence within the organizations of writers and artists and by the strengthening of Marxist criticism.95

94Ibid., 51-53.

95John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 8. The Garrards quote from KPSS o Kulture.
Lunacharsky began attacking the accepted Marxist theory that critics used. He argued that "Plekhanov's Menshevik denial of the efficacy of human consciousness" colored his conception of literature and criticism. Lunacharsky felt troubled that a body of literature existed in the Soviet Union in which its basic "theoretical presuppositions" challenged the right of the Party to direct literature. This body of literature did not belong to the fellow travellers but claimed itself to be the "foundation of Marxist aesthetics." 9

Lunacharsky's arguments followed the logic that socialism "is the objective development of humanity, the proletariat is the objective expression of this development, and the Party is the highest development of consciousness." From this, the Party becomes identical with the "objective development of history." The Party's judgment, in all areas including esthetics, reigns as an "infallible projection of historical truth." Lunacharsky proclaimed that proletarian works of art that are closest to the Party must be closest to the objective truth. If "truthful representation of reality" remains as the criterion of esthetic excellence, then these same works exist as the most "esthetically perfect." More simply stated, the more closely the writer

prosveshchenii i nauke (Moscow, 1963), 181-82.

"adheres to Party line," the more partisan he becomes, the more truthful and esthetically perfect his work will be."

Joseph Stalin seized control of the Communist Party in 1928. With the removal of Trotsky, "Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism" replaced the old internationalism and became the symbol of "trinity of the Communist credo." Stalin announced that the hegemony of literature would be the aim of the writers and critics. He stated that "art must be developed and its social contents made deeper." He also noted that proletarian literature must be understood completely by mass readers, and its circulation needed to be enlarged.

To mark his takeover of the Communist Party, Stalin launched a huge program of forced collectivization and industrialization. The First Five-Year Plan brought radical economic and social changes to the Soviet Union. In the wake of the First Five-Year Plan literature underwent a metamorphosis in its function, meaning, and purpose.

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97 Ibid.
99 John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers Union, 29. The Garrards quote from the 1928 Central Committee decree.
100 Lindstrom, A Concise History of Russian Literature, 141.
The First Five-Year Plan, hailed as the second phase of the revolution, attacked domestic issues as well as economic concerns. It encouraged "partisans of proletarian culture" and resulted in intense attacks against fellow travellers and NEP mentality in art. Soviet patriotism merged old and new theology. The leaders of the revolution joined with the image of heir to the Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{101} The NEP compromise came to an end and the Soviet advance began. A new era of Militant Communism ensued.\textsuperscript{102} Voronsky no longer posed a threat to proletarian literature. The Party expelled him in 1928 and forced him to resign from The Red Virgin Soil.\textsuperscript{103}

The Five-Year Plan outlined specific changes but also carried a mysticism in relating how these changes would come about. The plan implied a belief in the "possibility of constructing Socialism in a single country by means of great heroic efforts." These efforts, in turn, would create a mighty industry which would serve "as the basis of Socialist prosperity." The attainment of this goal required the mobilization of all efforts, including literary ones.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101}Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 155.

\textsuperscript{102}George Reavy and Marc Slonim, eds. and trans., Soviet Literature: An Anthology (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1943), 42-43.

\textsuperscript{103}Lindstrom, A Concise History of Russian Literature, 142.

\textsuperscript{104}Reavy and Slonim, Soviet Literature, 43.
Communist literary critics, eager for the potential hegemony in literature, called for and received inclusion in the Five-Year Plan.\textsuperscript{105} The Communist Party embraced the Old Guard platform of using literature as a class weapon and as an "instrument of socialist construction."\textsuperscript{106} Plekhanov and his theories lost favor until they officially were replaced in the 1930s by those of Lenin.\textsuperscript{107}

In April, 1928, the VAPP received strong, clear support from the Central Committee of the Communist Party as writers met at the All-Union Congress of Proletarian Writers. Averbakh, Gorbatov, Gladkov, Ermilov, Zharov, Zonin, Kirshon, Libedinskii, Luzgin, Polosikhin, Panskii, Raskolnikov, Serafimovich, Surkov, Fadeev, and Chumandrin became the acknowledged leaders of the proletarian movement. The VAPP also reorganized and changed its name from \textit{Vserosiiskaia Assosiatziia Proletarskikh Pisatelei} (All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers--VAPP) to \textit{Rossiiskaia Assosiatziia Proletarskikh Pisatelei} (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers--RAPP).\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105}Slonim, \textit{Soviet Russian Literature}, 156.

\textsuperscript{106}Rubin, "Plekhanov and Soviet Literary Criticism," 535.

\textsuperscript{107}Brown, \textit{The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature}, 59.

\textsuperscript{108}Ibid., 53-54.
From 1928 until 1932, the RAPP controlled the literary scene. Its leaders required its authors to produce "social command," which included "shock brigades" patterned on the factories. These brigades consisted of writers who visited and worked in various industries and then based their literature on their experiences. Modern critics proclaim this period to be the "shoddiest" in Soviet Literature and its products "mechanically constructed" and of little interest.109

Averbakh, speaking on behalf of the RAPP, issued his philosophy of literature. He stressed that the productivity of labor "depends not only on the industrialization of the country," but also "upon raising the educational and cultural level of the masses." He continued by stating that "cultural progress must go hand in hand with construction" or the latter will suffer. Proletarian literature should be an "important agency of the cultural revolution." RAPP fell into the Party's plans and seemed made to order for the purposes of the Central Committee. The organization presented itself as prepared, willing, and disciplined in undertaking social tasks. It professed a philosophy that fit hand in glove with the Party's intentions and claimed its chief virtue lay in its devotion in carrying out the policy of the Central Committee. It provided guidance to

developing, new writers from the working class. The Party could not want for more.  

The resolution adopted by the First Congress of Proletarian Writers in 1928 defined the role of writers and their art in a class society. Art served as a "mighty weapon for the class struggle" and the proletariat "makes no exception of art." Aiding the development of proletarian art and proletarian literature became one of the main tasks of the cultural revolution. RAPP's response to the resolution resulted in an expanded definition of proletarian literature. In its definition, RAPP acknowledged proletarian literature to be "that literature which comprehends the world from the viewpoint of the proletariat" and "influences the reader in accord with the tasks of the working class." Only from the viewpoint of the proletariat's world outlook, which is Marxism, "can social reality be perceived by the artist with maximum objectivity."  

Lunacharsky, People's Commissar of Education, Krinitskii, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and Lazian, Secretary of the Moscow Committee of the Party, attended the 1928 Congress. Each gave a speech that

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110 Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 60-62, 90.

pledged strong support of the proletarian literary movement. Lunacharsky's comments addressed the usefulness of the proletarian writers to the Party. He proclaimed their chief virtue to be their "hundred percent willingness" to carry out the directives of the Party. Krinitskii specifically stressed the important task Soviet art and literature would pay in "remaking people." He noted that "on its side, the Party has aided, is aiding, and will continue to aid the proletarian writers in the ranks of Soviet literature." Krinitskii concludes his speech by expressing overt Party support of the RAPP.112

Averbakh seized control of the RAPP, perhaps aided by his brother-in-law Yagoda who was head of the secret police. In his role as leader of the RAPP, Averbakh acted as dictator to Russian literature.113 The organization dominated the literary scene and supported an agitational literature that would serve the Party's aims.114 The reign of the RAPP proved to be very gloomy. Publishing houses printed great quantities of very poor, quickly written works employing the militant overtones favored by Averbakh.115

112Ibid., 54-55. Brown quotes Krinitskii from "Dnevnik s'ezda VAPPa," Na literaturnom postu, No. 10, May 1928, 76.

113Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 156.


115Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 157-158.
The First Five-Year Plan called for maximum efforts in overcoming the industrial backwardness of the Soviet Union of 1928. Proletarian writers joined in the task. The Party expected these writers to "devote their talents to the humble task of publicizing and propagandizing the Plan." Belles-lettres fell into the category of literature as a "weapon" in the class struggle, and the Party expected this genre to be employed in the Plan.\textsuperscript{116}

In 1930, the RAPP announced that the fundamental task of Russian writers now lay in "the building of a literary Magnitogorsk," a reference to a steel plant built during the First Five-Year Plan. This achievement would consist of a "single work or series of works that would sum up current events" and prove as "effective in generating faith and correct convictions as the metallurgical giant's" production of steel. Communist purists joined forces with members of RAPP to ensure one hundred percent Communist ideology in "every printed word and to organize all creative activity." Authors, forced to produce works of immediacy, that is, of the here and now, toured factories, farms, and power stations. These tours made up the content of their work, enabling their literature to fulfill a "useful function." Shock brigades, made up of writers, promised to write reports detailing such subjects as the output of bricks and

\textsuperscript{116}Brown, \textit{The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature}, 87.
the progress of dairy farms. Competition between authors flourished. Literary magazines seriously discussed "planned literature." Proponents of "blueprints for prose and poetry" claimed that the gap between manual and creative labor could be closed using the prescribed methods. Many authors, whose works received praise as bearers of the "pure Communist spirit," plagiarized from works of early naturalists and "second-rate" populists of the 1870s. Military literature was included, also, when the Literary Union of the Red Army and Navy, LOKAF, began to further military literature.117

In December 1928, the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a formal resolution literature. This resolution makes no distinction between belles-lettres and propaganda brochures.118 The Party issued a directive to publishing houses on their selection of books to be published and their selection of writers and their assigned tasks. Belles-lettres should be employed as a direct instrument of policy. The Party directed publishers to give their attention to writings of a "socially useful character," no matter their form. The 1928 Resolution

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117 Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 156-157.

118 Rubin, "Plekanov and Soviet Literary Criticism," 534. Rubin quotes from "Ob obsluzhivani massorogo chitatelja (postanovlenie Central'nogo Komiteta, 28 dek. 1928)," Reshenija partii o pechaty, Moscow, Politizdat pri CK VKP(b), 119.
departed from the Party's policy of 1925. In 1925, the Party gave no specific favor to any specific group. In 1928, the Party specified that the bulk of publicized books fall to communist writers and the writers' unions would be utilized. They decreed that all published content should play an important role in the mobilization of the workers "around the tasks of industrialization and agricultural collectivization."\(^{119}\)

In 1929, the Party ousted Bukharin and with him left his theories on literature. Lazar Kaganovich, a member of the Politburo and an intimate of Stalin, expressed the Party's belief that literary men "should match achievements of labor by producing works of literature describing and celebrating great industrial tasks."\(^{120}\) In 1931, a new "Leninist" theory of esthetics reintroduced partiinost as its central theme.\(^{121}\) The conception that literature served the cause of mankind linked every literary production together whether the work took form as prose or poetry.

The standard for expressing partiinost required four specific elements. The first element required the Party to be depicted as the "advance wave of the working class"

\(^{119}\)Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 88-89.  


\(^{121}\)Rubin, "Plekhanov and Soviet Literary Criticism," 527.
guiding society in its actions and inspired by the masses. The second element demanded that all heroes must belong to the Party or aspire to belong. The third element called for progressive action to be encouraged by the Party and all social and political questions to be discussed by characters who belong to the Party. The fourth and last element dictated that popular spontaneity alone "cannot suffice" and direction from the Party must be present at all times.\textsuperscript{122}

The new standard replaced Plekhanov's relativism. Subjectivity became objectivity and partiinost became the highest expression of scientific and esthetic truth. Proletarian literature now existed without class limitations. In December of 1929, Stalin delivered a speech that urged theory not only to keep up with practice, but to guide it. In January of 1931, a Central Committee resolution removed the editors of the philosophical journal Under the Banner of Marxism. The Central Committee charged the editors of overvaluing Plekhanov's theories and neglecting Lenin's theories of literature serving concrete tasks.\textsuperscript{123}


On February 13, 1930, Pravda began to publish a "special literary page given over to stories, sketches, essays, and poems on the problems of the day, chiefly construction and collectivism." This special page served as an instrument in the "fight for socialist culture." Pravda called for "more proletarian vigilance" and "more Party leadership." In 1931, Pravda called for a "literary man" to report and portray the "gigantic achievements and all failings of socialist construction." The editors stated that a "fighting literature on contemporary themes" must come forward. This fighting literature would react to the "burning questions of socialist construction" and would "mobilize the masses around the task of carrying out the general line of the Party." Pravda and Izvestiia, another Party supported magazine, promoted work that would support the Five-Year Plan. The editorial boards of both publications organized and assigned groups of writers to carry out definite tasks such as visiting and writing about collective farms, specific socialist republics, and factories.124

On August 15, 1931, the Central Committee issued a resolution entitled "On Publishing Work." This resolution outlined the Party's expectations from published books.

Three expectations pertained to the content and character of the book. First, the content and character should "in every way respond to the demands of socialist reconstruction." Secondly, it should "be militant and deal with political themes of the present day." Lastly, it should "arm the broad masses of the builders of socialism with Marxist-Leninist theory and with technical knowledge." The last expected accomplishment for the book lay in its effect on the general masses. The resolution stated that the book should be the "mightiest means of educating, mobilizing, and organizing the masses for the tasks of economic and cultural building." The resolution broke down the genre of belles-lettres into subgroups by specialization. The State Publishing House for Belles-Lettres would determine what works fell into which categories such as agricultural belles-lettres, industrial belles-lettres, and classical belles-lettres. Imaginative literature, seen as playing a "huge educational role," should reflect "far more deeply and fully the heroism of socialist construction and of the class struggle, the transformation of social relations and growth of new people," namely "the heroes of socialist construction."

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125Ibid., 92. Brown quotes from "Ob izdatel'skoi rabote (postanorleniiia TSK VKP[b], 15 avgusta 1931)," Resheniiia partii o pechati, 144-145.

126Ibid. Brown quotes from "Ob izdatel'skoi rabote (postanorleniiia TSK VKP[15], 15 avgusta 1931)," Resheniiia
administrative directives with material incentives. Authors whose works "have special importance for the present period" would receive higher monetary assistance from the Party.\textsuperscript{127}

In 1931, the role of the RAPP remained in the area of serving the Party's needs. The Central Committee expected the RAPP to "combat hostile ideological and literary tendencies and to develop a sound approach in theory and criticism." The Party also relied on the RAPP to mobilize "proletarian literature in support of the literary policy laid down by the Central Committee." While the RAPP achieved some success in suppressing "political deviation," its leadership developed a "basic disagreement with the simple utilitarian approach of the Central Committee." This disagreement led to "continual disputes over literary theory and method." Once again arguments in the literary field mirrored internal struggles within the Communist Party. A large number of Bolsheviks who had participated in the revolution and civil war opposed Stalin's policies, sometimes openly but mostly secretly. The leadership of the RAPP belonged to the concealed opposition.\textsuperscript{128} Averbakh complained that "ideological depth" rather than "topicality

\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., 93. Brown quotes from "Ob izdatel'skoj rabote (postanorleniia TSK VKP[b], 15 avgusta 1931)," Resheniia partii o pechatii, 148.

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid, 96. Brown quotes from Averbakh, Na putiakh kul'turnoi revoliutsii, 68.
of themes" held a higher position of importance in the new socialist literature. The RAPP continued to favor its own literary approach, and the products of its members conformed "not so much to the literary demand of the Party as to the precepts of the RAPP leadership." 129

By 1931, various literary groups, proletarian or fellow traveller, had either disbanded or been absorbed into the RAPP. The Formal School, established during the NEP to study "literary theory and the creative process," ceased to exist by 1930. Petrograd's Resurrection, a non-conformist group, disappeared from 1928 to 1932 as its members faced charges of "having plotted to resurrect the tsarist regime." 130

Despite the enthusiasm of proletarian writers within and without the RAPP for Stalin's projects, the head of the Communist Party abolished all independent literary groups. A single Union of Soviet Writers replaced all other organizations. The new writers' union resulted from the resolution of the Press Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued on April 23, 1932. 131

The Resolution of 1932 contained three objectives. First, it ended a period in Soviet literary history fraught

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129 Brown, The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 104-105.

130 Terras, A History of Russian Literature, 506.

131 Ibid.
with conflict. Second, the new unity of writers demanded uniformity. Third, the new union answered to a single board of censorship, the Committee on Art. This committee issued uniform awards and penalties and it undertook to provide strict surveillance over literature.¹³²

By incorporating literature into the fabric of the Soviet State, the Resolution of 1932 led to "more thoroughgoing controls over the arts." Three of these controls came directly from the former RAPP philosophy. The first stated that literature must be considered a "social service" and should be "treated according to its usefulness to the cause." The second labeled anything that turned writers "from their educational duties" as "decadent, bourgeois, and formalist." The third required authors "to depict the contemporary Soviet scene and to unite literature with life." To achieve the last objective, authors must engage in a "great deal of first hand study of various facets of life."¹³³ The resolution of 1932 placed proletarian, peasant, and fellow travellers on equal footing. All experienced the same demands, awards, and punishments. Individual publishing houses and journals also gave way to state supported media.¹³⁴

¹³²Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 158.
¹³³Ibid., 159-160.
¹³⁴Terras, A History of Russian Literature, 506.
Between 1924 and 1932, various literary groups sincerely struggled to formulate "correct" theories for art that would reflect the new social changes occurring in the Soviet Union. As the political scene changed, literary theory became modified or remained staunchly loyal to its tenets. The Communist Party of this period experienced a change in leadership after Lenin's death. As Stalin exerted more political control, the arguments among literary leaders intensified. The dissolution of independent literary groups coincided with Stalin's efforts to put down his own opposition and establish his dominance.
CHAPTER IV

REFORM AND SOCIALIST REALISM

As Joseph Stalin solidified his control of the Communist Party, he involved himself more directly in the conflict between competing writers' groups. Stalin issued a statement through the 1928 Central Committee Decree that literary art must serve a social purpose, one that served the masses and furthered the proletarian cause. In 1930, he reported to the Sixteenth Party Congress that "culture built by the dictatorship of the proletariat would be socialist in content and nationalist in form."¹ During the first session of the Seventeenth Party Congress held in early 1932, Stalin persuaded the Congress to pass a resolution to "make the achievement of socialism" part of the official party program. This resolution called for converting the "entire populace into active builders of a classless socialist society."²

As mentioned earlier, the Communist Party issued a directive in 1932 to abolish all autonomous literary organizations and to enforce membership of all Russian

¹John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 29-30.
²Ibid., 30.
writers in a Union of Soviet Writers which fell directly under Party guidance.\(^3\) Maxim Gorky, close friend to Stalin and a nationally recognized literary figure, encouraged the formation of the Writers' Union and provided its earliest leadership. Gorky intended the Union of Soviet Writers to bring freedom to those writers silenced by the RAPP, namely those fellow travellers who had yet to join the Communist cause. Stalin gave his official stamp of approval to the new union and declared the writers to be "engineers of human souls."

In October, 1932, Valery Kirpotin officially addressed the first plenum of the Organizational Committee of the Writers' Union. The noted literary critic cited works by M. Gorky, V. Ivanov, D. Furmanov, Y. L. Libedinsky, A Fadeev, M. Sholokhov, F. Panferov, M. Shaginyan, L. Leonov as exemplary examples of socialist realism in novels. All the works cited appeared before 1932, but all contained elements of socialist realism.\(^5\) Other authors, such as Fyodor Gladkov, revised their works to meet the approval of Soviet critics. The Writers' Union circulated special leaflets that listed these official exemplars among its members. The

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outstanding authors traveled on lecture tours to provide literary instruction to would-be and established writers.⁶

Russian writers produced works in comparative freedom. Socialist realism, an ambiguous literary policy adopted by the Party, served as a guideline for Union members. The Party tolerated criticism so long as it addressed abuses in practice rather than any principles.⁷ Critics changed their direction after 1932. They no longer argued over the correct Marxist theory of esthetics. Now critics asserted that only an author with the "Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist world view could correctly portray life in the Soviet Union and abroad." Therefore, the critics maintained, only literature written from this point of view could be considered as "real art."⁸

The Union of Soviet Writers provided the Party with a powerful political outlet as well as a professional organization. Leaders of the Union received instructions from the Communist Party, sometimes directly from Stalin.⁹ According to Gorky, members of the Union "possessed a faith in the organizing new power of reason." The Party supplied

⁶Ibid., 35.

⁷Clarkson, A History of Russia, 600.


the "power of reason" and encouraged writers to use their "national will to create a new world." A Literary Institute, founded in 1932 with the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers, served to train and indoctrinate young Soviet writers. Gorky provided leadership as writers received instruction in the literary policy of socialist realism.

Communist purists called for the employment of poets and novelists to produce works en masse like factory workers, as did earlier directives. Their works, deemed "useful," would serve to educate the general audience in Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theory. The Literary Institute worked to train these future authors. Membership in the Union embraced former proletarian writers or fellow travellers. Members must be willing to pledge their support to the Party and to submit themselves and their work to the doctrine of socialist realism. All members must be published but in no particular form. Public notices nailed to walls fulfilled the publishing requirement. Tens of thousands of would-be authors, formerly from the udarniki or

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10John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 31.

11Struve, Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin, 238.

12Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 156.

workmen and farmers, flocked to the Union to join the literary ranks. The Union accepted the new members based on their willingness to belong rather than their ability to write. Most of the members of the Union did not hold membership in the Communist Party nor had they participated in proletarian activities, but the Party assumed most of the authors empathized with the efforts of socialist construction. The Party required no further proof of loyalty on the part of the Union members.14

Although the Party did not require much from a writer for membership into the Union, it did insist that the literature produced fulfill a "crudely defined political and social function."15 The Party insisted that superior minds must not create only for themselves or "an elite capable of mutual appreciation." These authors "must direct their talents downward" and by their "literary endeavors instruct the masses, inspire them, uplift the goals and aspirations of the common man." The Party intended the Union to "foster the ordinary so that the masses" could read and understand what the Party expected in the "relationship of the individual to his society." Literature served as a means of

14Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 157-59.
15Hayward, Writers in Russia, 120.
instructing the Soviet citizen in fulfilling socialist goals.\textsuperscript{16}

The Communist Party continued its practice of supporting authors. Union members received special benefits specifically as "part of a calculated strategy to encourage and reward loyalty." The Party adopted the old "tsarist tactic" of offering privileges to the classes of people it needed to "maintain its power and prestige."\textsuperscript{17} The Union of Soviet Writers comprised an organization of the only published writers. These authors "accepted the general policy of the Soviet government, supported Socialist reconstruction, and adhered in their work to the method of socialist realism."\textsuperscript{18} The Resolution of 1932, establishing the Writers' Union, set the official doctrine of the period. With the founding of the Union, the Party claimed that the Soviet State accomplished affirmation from "all the people of the country," including the intelligentsia. The populace accepted the new regime and now rallied around it. The Party branded all those who protested or criticized as trying to "undermine the new order."\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{17}John and Carol Garrard, \textit{Inside The Soviet Writers' Union}, 7.

\textsuperscript{18}Struve, \textit{Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin}, 237.

\textsuperscript{19}Slonim, \textit{Soviet Russian Literature}, 159.
The Kremlin decided to "formulate its own literary doctrine." Gorky, Stalin, and other Communist Party leaders took part in the development of this new method. Once the literary method received official approval from the Central Committee, the responsibility to carry it out fell upon the "various unions of writers, artists, and composers." Andrey Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee, began the push for socialist realism.

Zhdanov, in charge of ensuring ideological correctness in culture, addressed the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. In his opening remarks, Zhdanov announced that the "socialist system has finally and irrevocably triumphed" in the Soviet Union. Stalin had successfully accomplished this goal and had begun leading the country to "socialist reconstruction of the national economy." Zhdanov also remarked that, through the victory of socialism, the intellectual make up of the Soviet people has changed. The "illustrious persons" of the Soviet Union "have come to be the builders of socialism, the workers and

20 Ibid., 160.
21 McLean, "Vovonskij and the RAPP," 185.
22 Werth, Russia: Hopes and Fears, 256.
collective farmers." Zhdanov then linked these political achievements to the reason for the All-Union Congress. The writers were to aid the Party in "a struggle for the final liquidation of capitalist elements." Members of the Union will use the "great and invincible doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, embodied in life" by the "Party and Soviets." Zhdanov concluded his opening speech by reminding the audience that only through the Party was their meeting possible and "such a congress as this" could be possible "by none save us Bolsheviks." Zhdanov used Lenin's words to justify the Party's control of literature. Zhdanov directed the Union to "create works of high mastery and profound ideological and artistic content." Writers must zealously reflect the optimism, enthusiasm, and heroism of the "only progressive and advanced class of people." Soviet literature, "impregnated with enthusiasm and the heroic deeds," drew its strength by "virtue of the fact that it is serving a new cause--the cause of socialist construction." Zhdanov

24 Ibid., 16.
25 Ibid., 17.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 18.
28 Ibid., 24.
29 Ibid., 20.
clearly encouraged writers not to shrink away from the accusation of tendentiousness. He proclaimed that "in the epoch of class struggle, there is not and cannot be a literature which is not class literature, not tendentious, allegedly non-political." ³⁰

Secretary Zhdanov continued to define the new expectations the Party held for Union members. He noted that the "country's chief heroes of literary works are the active builders of a new life." Enthusiasm and heroism saturated Soviet literature. Heroes of the new Soviet literature reflected the "working women and men, collective farmers, engineers, members of the Komsomol, and pioneers." ³¹ Authors must know life in order to depict it truthfully. Life must not be recorded only in scholastic, lifeless, objective reality, but in its revolutionary development. "Truthfulness and historical concreteness" must be combined with the task of "ideological remolding and re-education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism." Zhdanov defined this method in fiction and in literary criticism as "socialist realism." According to Zhdanov and the Party, to be an "engineer of human souls" meant to "stand with both feet firmly on the ground of real life." Writers must break away from romanticism that

³⁰Ibid., 21.

³¹Ibid., 20.
"divested the reader from the contradictions and oppression of life." Soviet writers must employ a romanticism that portrays heroes in a "new, revolutionary romanticism." 32

Zhdanov closed his address to the All-Union Congress by reminding the Union's members how much support they had from the Party and the people in general. He noted that preparations for the congress revealed "the love and attention with which Soviet writers are surrounded by the Party and the workers," and that only in the Soviet Union may "such enhanced importance given to literature and to writers." 33 Zhdanov directed the writers to produce works that "may conform to the victories that socialism has won." He unquestionably tied literature to the Communist Party by exhorting the members to produce works "of high attainment, of high ideological and artistic content." The writers were to be first who "are fighting for a classless socialist society" and remolding "the mentality of the people in the spirit of socialism." 34

Other noted literary leaders addressed the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. These speakers included Maxim Gorky, head of the Literary Institute, Karl Radek, political writer and organizer of the German Communist

32 Ibid., 21.
33 Ibid., 23-4.
34 Ibid., 24.
Party, and A. I. Stetsky, manager of the Culture and Leninist Propaganda Section of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. Each of these men expressed their beliefs and convictions concerning the relationship of the Communist Party and Writers Union. Gorky remarked that the writers should provide guidance to beginning authors. The professional organization should ensure that the fledgling writers received instruction on how to produce "work on material derived both from the past and from the present."  

Gorky's definition of the past does not concern "the way it has already been narrated, but as it is illuminated by the teaching of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin." The "new force in history" which guided and organized work on the farms and in the factories was "the will and reason of the proletariat of the Union of Socialist Republics." Gorky called upon the Congress to provide leadership in training young writers "aimed at a full knowledge of our country's past and present" as provided by the teachings of the Party.

In his speech before the Congress, Karl Radek devoted most of his comments to the issue of international proletarian literature. He rationalized the existence of

35Ibid., 68.
36Ibid., 69.
37Ibid.
38Ibid.
the Writers' Union by citing Lenin's objection to a literature that would limit its scope. He justified an all-inclusive Writers' Union by pointing out that the Proletcult and other such groups stifled the development of the proletarian literature Lenin originally supported. Radek dismissed Trotsky's assertion that a proletarian literature could never happen, accusing Trotsky of failing to understand that world revolution was not a "short lived explosion." Radek concluded that the proletarian literature thriving in the Soviet Union was possible because the proletariat's seventeen years of struggle "have developed tremendous cultural powers in the proletariat." In addition, the Soviet population had begun to "seek in literature a reflection of their aspirations, a reflection of their strivings."

A. I. Stetsky echoed Radek's statements concerning the development of the proletariat. Stetsky pointed out that the Party of Lenin and Stalin had "grown up and become hardened in the struggle of socialism." The working masses, too, according to Stetsky, had "become hardened in this struggle." Writers, therefore, became obligated to

\[^{39}\text{Ibid., 131-32.}\]
\[^{40}\text{Ibid., 132.}\]
\[^{41}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{42}\text{Ibid., 267.}\]
reflect this growth and strength in their works. Stetsky defined the guidelines for depicting the insight of the proletariat as Gorky's and Zhdanov's socialist realism.

At the morning session of the Congress held on August 23, 1934, the Congress adopted a resolution. The Congress officially acknowledged the role the Party had played in organizing the Congress and pledged its continued support of the Party. The document states that "under the leadership of the heroic Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with Comrade Stalin at its head," the writers were able to congregate as a collective body. This collective group, "in its ideas, organization and creative work, had rallied around the Party and the Soviet power into a single union of Soviet writers."

The first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers launched the Stalinist Period of literature by "cementing the Party's hold on literature." The Union's constitution demanded that all its members "accept the program of the Communist Party and strive to participate in socialist construction." The introduction of socialist realism as the official "literary dogma" played a role in Stalin's overall policy to declare

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43 Ibid., 267.
44 Ibid., 264.
the Soviet Union a socialist state. The Union of Soviet Writers served as an agent for "homogenizing" the writers "both ideologically and artistically." It also served to convert its members into an "obedient adjunct of the Central Committee's propaganda apparatus."

As the Congress proceeded, the Party leadership clearly acknowledged that socialist realism "entailed retention of the writer's civic obligation." Socialist realism redefined critical realism and drastically altered the nature of the author's civic obligations. Critical realism required the writer to reflect the defects of their society in the "hope and expectation that this exposure would permit such defects to be discussed and corrected." Socialist realism relieved the writers of the obligation to discuss and expose the defects of their society. This responsibility fell to the Party. The Party would define the defects and decide whether they should be exposed. The Party assigned writers the task of describing only the positive features of their society. To achieve this goal, writers must orient themselves to the people and the Party. Their words must serve as models which would guide the masses to the

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Communist ideal. The language of the books must be easy to understand in order that the message it carried could be accessible to the general public. Prose must be "transparent," so that its meaning would not be obscured.\footnote{Ibid., xxi.}

Socialist realism laid the foundation for the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. This method demands that the writer provide a "truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development."\footnote{Zhdanov and others, \textit{Problems of Soviet Literature}, 21.} The author must see to "the ideological remolding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of Socialism."\footnote{Ibid., 21.}

Zhdanov began to narrow down the definition of socialist realism. From his speeches at the First Congress of Soviet Writers and his later essays, writers gleaned a definition of socialist realism in which Zhdanov added to Lenin's ideas. His first canon addressed the educational function of literature. He declared that the younger generation must be reared to believe in the Communist cause, "fearing no obstacles, ready to master any difficulties."\footnote{Simmons, \textit{Through the Glass of Soviet Literature}, 253. Simmons quotes Zhdanov from "o zhurnalakh 'Zvezda': 'Leningrad,'" p. 4.}
The second canon proclaimed narodnost or national character. "To prove its devotion to the masses," said Zhdanov, "Soviet literature must meet their demands, improve their tastes, and guide their development." According to this second canon, history must be "illuminated in such a way as to disclose its usefulness in solving problems of the present."54

The third canon prescribed the attitude writers must hold toward their cultural heritage. Current Soviet literature owed a debt to past literary figures who served the cause of socialism and provided models for the present. Zhdanov showered praise only upon the Russian authors who contributed to the Soviet literary tradition. The last canon linked together partiinost and ideinost, party spirit and ideological expression.55

Zhdanov neatly tied all four canons with Lenin's literary theory of 1905. "Party organization and Party literature" laid the "foundations on which the development of Soviet literature" rested. "Our literature is not a private enterprise to titillate the various tastes of the literary market," Zhdanov proclaimed. He also asserted that the Soviets felt neither compulsion nor obligation to acknowledge any "tastes or mores" which do not reflect the

54Ibid., 254.

55Ibid.
"morality and qualities of the Soviet people." The Soviet writers work must combine the most "painstaking realism with heroic fantasy." Their work must "detail the present and celebrate the future, thus preempting the unknowable." Zhdanov's directives affected the special lists of exemplar writings being circulated among the Writers' Union membership. Although no new novels appeared in the lists from 1932, those which did not reflect the Party line of 1934 disappeared. Among those dropped included Shaginyan's Hydrocentral and Shurkov's Hatred.

The Soviet government, aided by the political police, imposed socialist realism as the "compulsory artistic method" and forced all writers into membership in the Union of Soviet Writers. These actions allowed the Party to control style, language, and subject matter in literature. The term "truthful representation" received a broader definition by the Party. The Central Committee rejected

56 Ibid., Simmons quotes from "Doklad tov. Zhdanova," p. 11.


"naked, non-adjusted, and unadulterated" truth as "vulgar naturalism." It was, therefore, regarded as unacceptable.  

Two groups of writers emerged within the Union as a result of the Party's control. The first group refused to give up any individual independence. This group kept their talent, creativity, and moral values independent from Party control. The second group, also known as "party hacks," became official writers who "sacrificed talent, principles, and values." They placed these qualities at the service of the Party or never possessed them but relied on "pre-set formulae" or plan of writing. The traditional dispute that flourished between the proletarian writers' groups of the 1920s ceased. Those who had previously voiced objections to Party control of literature and questioned Party leadership, such as Voronsky and Averbackh, disappeared from the literary scene during Stalin's purges.  

Socialist realism continued to serve as the "touchstone" by which official critics judged Russian authors. Although the literary method received no clearly defined formula, the Party expected writers to stress the "creative nature of Soviet man" and to inspire "him to

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61 Terras, Handbook of Russian Literature, 441.
62 Gifford, The Novel in Russia, 176.
realize his fullest potentialities.\textsuperscript{63} In promoting the premise of art as the reflection of reality with realism making up art's essence, critics deliberately avoided the "debate on problems in art." Instead, the critics concentrated on the artistic purpose of art which they identified as Communism.\textsuperscript{64} The Soviet critic M. Serebrianskii defined "artistic truth" as the ability to correctly report everything from a Bolshevik point of view. This Marxist interpretation of socialist realism concluded with the statement that "only the reality of socialism is real" and therefore "everything hostile to socialism is unreal."\textsuperscript{65}

The long novel proved to be best suited to socialist realism. This form provided the "extensive social background and portrayal of character" when demonstrating revolutionary development of reality.\textsuperscript{66} The long novel served to accommodate socialist realism in the "nature of propaganda rather than broad portrayal" of general themes.\textsuperscript{67} Within the formula of socialist realism lay "truthful,

\textsuperscript{63}Clarkson, A History of Russia, 640.

\textsuperscript{64}Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 161.

\textsuperscript{65}Simmons, Through the Glass of Soviet Literature, 13. Simmons quotes Serebrianskii, from Literaturnye ocherki.

\textsuperscript{66}Hayward, Writers in Russia, 162.

historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development." This concept relied on the basic purpose for the literary method. Socialist realism served to direct the readers toward "truthfully represented reality" and to help the readers approach this reality by "transforming their consciousnesses."68

Nikolai Ostrovsky's How the Steel Was Tempered rose from obscurity in 1932 to become a Soviet classic in 1934. When Ostrovsky's novel first appeared in 1932, few critics gave any notice to the work. Ostrovsky's biography, the basis for his novel, was published and critics lauded the novel as a model for socialist realism. The title suggests that the theme of the work revolves around industrialization, but the basis of the content deals with how the political evolution of the main character, Pavel Korchagin, develops from a mischievous, undisciplined youngster into a dedicated, earnest Bolshevik who overcomes physical and emotional obstacles in his commitment to the Communist cause. Korchagin represents the steel that is tempered by the events that shape his Communist dedication.69

How the Steel Was Tempered neatly fit into Zhdanov's required socialist realism. The characters and events of

68Tertz, On Socialist Realism, 26.

the novel served as models for Soviets as ready to master difficulties despite obstacles present, for writers in how to illuminate history as useful in solving problems of the present, and for depicting the party spirit of partiiinost and the ideological expression of ideinost.

Paul Korchagin faces numerous obstacles throughout the novel which exist inherently in his nature and in the external events and situations he finds himself in. At the beginning of his metamorphosis, Korchagin delights in pranks and revels in questioning authority. As a young boy, Korchagin puts tobacco into a priest’s bread dough in revenge for this priest’s cruel treatment when Korchagin questioned the theory of evolution. Ostrovsky presents the bourgeois versus progressive Soviet theories in this conflict. Korchagin leaves school at age twelve but continues his pranks. Soon his mischief leads him into more trouble. He steals a revolver from a German lieutenant. Korchagin endangers his older brother and his family through this escapade but concludes that resistance can be successful.

Korchagin possesses a trait that serves him well in his future. When confronted about his penchant for fighting, Korchagin responds, "I don’t fight for nothing. I always

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70 Ostrovsky, How the Steel Was Tempered, 28-9.

71 Ibid., 57-9.
fight for what's right and fair." Korchagin helps free a Bolshevik sailor he befriends during the Civil War. For his actions, Korchagin receives imprisonment complete with regular beatings. He lies about his charges and secures his release. Shortly thereafter he joins the Red Army's cause for communism.

Throughout his adventures in the Red Army, Korchagin displays a determination to overcome physical infirmities. During a battle at Lvov, Korchagin loses his right eye to shrapnel. His doctors praise his bravery and courage during his recovery. One doctor records in her diary that Korchagin groans in pain only when he loses consciousness. "Where does he get that tremendous endurance?" she wonders. Korchagin's only remark concerning the loss of sight refers to the particular eye. "Pity it wasn't the left eye," he states. "How will I be able to shoot now?"

Korchagin returns to the front to continue his service. Toward the end of his career, Korchagin reflects on his service to the Communist Party. He concludes that he has made mistakes, but in the final analysis, his life has been successful. He contemplates suicide because he physically

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72 Ibid., 55-6.
73 Ibid., 123-41.
74 Ibid., 199.
75 Ibid., 200.
can no longer participate in the struggle. Quickly the mature Korchagin admonishes himself and challenges himself to live on. "Learn how to go on living when life becomes unbearable. Make your life useful."  

Ostrovsky uses the events from the Civil War to demonstrate how courage, perseverance, and dedication can be applied to his readers' current problems. Korchagin addresses a group of young Ukrainians on the anniversary of the October Revolution. The crowd has gathered in a village on the Polish boarder and a group of Polish peasants across the river listen as Korchagin's words bring hope and encouragement to continue in the struggle. The Polish peasants begin to respond to Korchagin and alarmed gendarmes disperse them before a riot ensues.

Korchagin's triumph over physical pain and his determination also guide Ostrovsky's readers to overcoming the obstacles presented in their own lives. Korchagin continues to dedicate his life to the Communist Party and continues to be an active participant despite his blindness. He dictates a novel, based on his life, to serve as inspiration for the future Communists. Upon learning that his book has been accepted by the Cultural Department of the Regional Party Committee, Korchagin pronounces himself as

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76 Ibid., 403-04.

77 Ibid., 337.
"armed with a new weapon" and "returned to the fighting ranks and to life."\(^7\)

Ostrovsky uses Korchagin as an example of *partiinost* and *ideinost* as well as examples of overcoming obstacles and solving problems. Throughout the novel, Korchagin struggles to set his colleagues on the straight party of Communism. Often he battles indifference and resistance. In one instance, Korchagin accuses the Bolsheviks at a railway shop of being worse managers than the former capitalists. Korchagin notes that the Communists defend their own members despite their sometimes inferior and careless work. He calls for all slackards to be expelled from the organization and to be made an example to those with sloppy work habits who would seek refuge in the Party.\(^7\) Korchagin suggests that all workers be held accountable for their actions and not be judged according to their political views alone.\(^8\) Ostrovsky clearly communicates that the lofty ideals of Communism must be reflected in the members' actions in order to be effective.

As noted earlier, Korchagin not only overcomes physical obstacles, he continually directs his energies in the service of the Communist Party. After becoming infirm from

\(^7\)Ibid., 424-25.  
\(^7\)Ibid., 289-90.  
\(^8\)Ibid., 291.
rheumatism, Korchagin refuses disability pay and accepts an assignment from the Organizational Department as Military Commissar to a small, snowbound town. His duties include rallying Kosomol members and setting up a youth league. Korchagin tackles this assignment with enthusiasm securely rooted in his dedication to the Communist Party.\(^6^1\)

Korchagin does not evolve into a character devoid of flaws. He must suppress his quick temper and learn to control his swearing. When he exhibits these flaws later in his maturity, Korchagin does not excuse them or deny them, but he does put them into a nobler context from his youthful pranks. On one occasion, Korchagin strikes a fellow Party member. Korchagin reacts with disgust and fury as Failo recounts his rape of a young, female comrade. Korchagin does not offer excuses for his actions but explains that "the days when I worked more with my hands than with my head are long since gone." He continues to accept his guilt and also expresses his contempt for Failo's actions. Korchagin "cannot understand, shall never believe that a revolutionary, a Communist, can be at the same time a dirty beast and a scoundrel."\(^6^2\)

Even in his personal life, Korchagin manages to keep his focus on the Communist cause. He rejects one girlfriend

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\(^6^1\) Ibid., 317-18.

\(^6^2\) Ibid., 376-78.
because she opts for a comfortable life over the hardships that come in fighting for the Communist cause. When he finally declares himself to another love interest, she regretfully turns him down. He responds by saying, "What I have left is still incomparably more than what I have just lost." The Communist cause remains his priority. Korchagin does take a wife late in his life. He promises to teach her to be "a real human being, a true Bolshevik." Korchagin also vows to free Taya from "all obligations" once she becomes a "true Bolshevik" so that she may pursue her own course in the Communist cause.

Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* neatly exhibited many of the qualities Zhdanov outlined for the members of the Union of Soviet Writers. Its characters served to educate readers about exemplary Soviet characteristics. The text served as a model to writers who sought to be published under socialist realism.

Socialist realistic novels informed the reading public about life in all parts of the Soviet Union and about all trades and professions. The novels projected an image to be attained: "The new man that everyone should strive to be."

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83 Ibid., 259-61.  
84 Ibid., 368.  
85 Ibid., 406.  
86 Ibid.
The novels consistently portrayed "party-ness" and "Soviet patriotism" as the desired goals of all citizens. Authors used different characters, settings, and plots, but all authors shared the same attitude toward the historical process. Not all writers claimed to be Marxists and not all writers wrote from inner Communist convictions. The Party published works based on the author's ability to present the course of events and the development of society in such a way as to lead the reader to the conclusion of a certain, ultimate victory of socialism.

Many literary works appeared between 1932 and 1938 that applied the principles of socialist realism. Three specific novels include Kataev's *Time, Forward!*, Leonov's *Road to the Ocean*, and Krymov's *Tanker Derbent*. Each author employed Zhdanov's definition of socialist realism with varying degrees of success.

Valentine Kataev belonged to the fellow travellers, declining to join the Communist Party at the time his novel *Time, Forward!* became published in 1933. Kataev's characters belong to a concrete brigade in the Magnitogorsk work camp located in the Ural Mountains. The concrete brigade contributes its labor to complete a giant steel plant during the First Five-Year Plan.

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68 Hayward, *Writers in Russia*, 156.
Margulies leads the concrete brigade in besting a Ukrainian crew's record for pouring concrete in twenty-four hours. Only two characters offer any resistance during the procedure, and in the end they receive the condemnation and censure any opposition to progress deserves.89

Kataev constructs the novel's plot around three ideals of narodnost, ideinost, and partiinost. The characters exhibit national character, ideological expression, and party spirit as they strive to reach their goal. Even the title of the novel and its reoccurring theme fit into the three socialist realist themes.

The workers labor passionately to finish their project within twenty-four hours. They realize that industrialization, not merely setting records, will bring socialism and national independence. Narodnost finds its outlet in the crew members' actions and words. Margulies insists that, "This is a construction, not a stunt," and this phrase becomes the recurring theme of the novel.90
Margulies works to assure that the quality of the cement will not be compromised by the hurried process. He protects the national pride of the Soviet Union as well as supports


90Ibid., 8.
the Communist Party by being very precise and very efficient in his work. 91

Other workers dream of achieving the Banner of Labor, a medal honoring workers who support the Communist cause through their exceptional labor. Maysa, foreman of a concrete crew, sees the opportunity of pouring the concrete as "some spectacular deed" that would enhance his nation. 92 Vinkich, a reporter for the local paper, presents arguments for breaking the record that go beyond medals and records. He asks a nationally known writer, Georgy Vasilyevich, "which is the more important: to finish the Five-Year Plan in four years or to save the machinery for an additional four years?" Vinkich concludes that the sooner Soviet industry develops, the sooner they can produce their own machinery and achieve national independence. 93 Vasilyevich agrees with the young reporter and states that "after all, we have machines for socialism, and not socialism for the machine." 94 Gradually Vasilyevich, sent to the camp as part of a writers' shock brigade, learns that the people and

91Ibid., 240-41.
92Ibid., 38.
93Ibid., 122.
94Ibid.
machinery have a rhythm of their own. Their labor comes to life in the pageant of struggle for narodnost.⁹⁵

Through their labor, the workers also express the principle of Communist ideology. Belief in man's infinite possibilities pervades the activity of the crew. Margulies allows his workers to challenge the record because he believes the Soviets to be capable of producing quality concrete at record-breaking speeds.⁹⁶ By beating the record, Margulies' crew justifies the Communist principle of ideinost.⁹⁷ Nalbandov, assistant chief of the construction, guides American visitors around the site of the new steel plant. The visitors listen in amazement at the grand plans the Communist government has for the vast, isolated area. Nalbandov's words exude confidence that the work will be completed, and the changes to the area already accomplished bear testimony to the Soviets' confidence. In juxtaposition, the Americans gravely doubt that such a feat can be accomplished, and their doubt provides a perfect foil for the achievements of the Soviet construction.⁹⁸

Lastly, the workers' glorification of labor communicates the idea that man will bring about changes on

⁹⁵Ibid., 147-48.
⁹⁶Ibid., 164-65.
⁹⁷Ibid., 294-95.
⁹⁸Ibid., 96.
the earth, and those changes will begin in the Soviet Union. By striving to achieve national independence, the workers also support the Communist Party and exhibit their spirit of partiinost. Vasilyevich uses the analogy of soldiers in battle when describing the laborers: "The brigade of concrete workers--gun detail--loading, lifting. The foreman--the artillery sergeant. The operator--the gunner." Thomas Bixby, an American engineer working on the construction, provides credibility to the theme of partiinost. Bixby works hard to earn enough money to open his own business back in the United States. His desire for money has led him anywhere around the globe where he can obtain more money. He gives his allegiance to the dollar and this faith and loyalty suffer betrayal when a financial crash destroys his world. Unlike the Soviets, Bixby mistakenly put stock in money rather than in socialism. The title, Time, Forward! alludes to the onward march of progress, one that the Soviets eagerly participate in. Margulies displays no surprise when Vinkich brings him news that another crew in Chelyaka beats the Magnitogorsk record shortly after his crew sets it. Margulies anticipates that

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98 Ibid., 92.
100 Ibid., 127.
101 Ibid., 326.
others will proceed to increase productive output as progress moves forward.102

In 1932, Leonid Leonov, a former fellow traveller, received an appointment to the organizing committee for the Union of Soviet Writers. *Road to the Ocean* represents Leonov’s first attempt at employing socialist realism. Leonov’s novel fuses characters from the past, present, and future. Alexi Nikitich Kurilov provides the common connection for the three time frames. In the past, Kurilov fought in the Revolution and Civil War as a loyal Bolshevik. In the present (1933-1934), Kurilov holds high office in the Volga-Revizan railway. In the future, Kurilov takes three journeys to a utopian, future society called Ocean. Leonov accompanies his character and they both project their visions of the reality of the future.103

Leonov’s lengthy and meandering work serves to confuse readers more than educate them in any specific Soviet ideology or theory. The present and future sections offer more socialist realist ideals than the past section. Basically, the past section concerns itself with the infiltration of a former White officer, Gleb Protoklitov, into the Communist Party. Kurilov and Ilya Protoklitov, Gleb’s brother who fought with the Bolsheviks, expose Gleb

102Ibid., 345.

This particular theme expresses partiiinost.

In the present, Kurilov seeks happiness and a perfect future for the Soviet Union and the world. His views and opinions serve as examples of narodnost and ideinost. Liza, Kurilov's protege, remarks that Kurilov's attitude makes him "a bridge to the future." She generously offers him a son to complete the bridge in a literal sense. Her devotion to Kurilov and his ideals symbolize all three socialist realist ideals--narodnost, ideinost, and partiiinost.

The first journey Kurilov and Leonov take to Ocean represents ideinost. Ocean, near Shanghai, becomes the new capital of all communist nations. Moscow becomes a nostalgic center of "scientific socialism." The second journey to Ocean adds the theme of partiiinost to ideinost. A struggle between the Old World (capitalism) and the New World (communism) rages. Leonov and Kurilov meet Samuel Bothead, a Negro commander, who relates the fierce battle that the two worlds engage in. Bothead exudes confidence that the New World will triumph. The third and final

\[104\] Ibid., 464-71.
\[105\] Ibid., 453.
\[106\] Ibid., 362.
\[107\] Ibid., 112-13.
\[108\] Ibid., 254-73.
journey reveals a perfect world indebted to the success of the Five-Year Plans. Human nature has improved to the point that all character flaws such as greed and selfishness disappear. Communism has triumphed over the world. This last journey exhibits all three ideals—narodnost, ideinost, and partiinost.

Yuri Krymov, another fellow traveller and non-communist, published The Tanker Derbent in 1938. This novel’s central plot concerns the actions of an oil tanker during a crisis aboard her sister ship, the Uzbekistan. Krymov successfully uses high adventure and the spirit of competition to convey the three socialist realist ideals of narodnost, ideinost, and partiinost. The crew of the tanker Derbent engage in Stakhanovite competitions with other tankers. These competitions receive their name from Alexey Stakhanov, a miner from the Don Basin, who initiated contests, competitions, prizes, and honors during the Five-Year Plans. His contests encouraged Socialist emulation and stimulated increased production output throughout the Soviet Union.

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109 Ibid., p 364.
110 Ibid., 365.
111 Ibid., 371.
The Tanker Derbent echoes Kataev's theme in *Time, Forward!* The Stakhanovites glorify labor and, through competition, express their faith in man's infinite possibilities while they work toward national independence and socialism. Alexander Ivanovich Basov initiates the first Stakhanovite trip after he exposes deviations or "yaws" in the ship's course. These yaws cause wasteful delays which Basov's sense of narodnost cannot tolerate. Basov takes over the Derbent after the captain and a few crew members cut loose the disabled Uzbekistan when it catches fire. Basov refuses to let the sister ship's crew burn to death. After the daring rescue, Basov ponders over the quality of men who fought the fire to rescue the sailors. He concludes that these brave men did not become brave as a result of the crisis. These men had always possessed the noble qualities they displayed during the rescue. Basov also compares himself to Husein, badly burned during the rescue. Basov concludes that Husein truly carries on the Communist spirit. Husein thinks of the engines and the upcoming Stakhanovite contest rather than

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113 Ibid., 143-44.
114 Ibid., 207.
115 Ibid., 220.
dwelling on the tragedy. "Would he do the dead any good by being sad?" Basov exhibits ideinost, too, when he leads the crew in their rescue of the Uzbekistan's crew. Basov's actions reflect partiinost as well. He supports the Communist Party's principles by saving a valuable Soviet resource, its sailors, and by encouraging crews to work toward the Communist Party's goals through the Stakhanovite contests.

Soviet novels extolled the virtues of Soviet life through many various settings and plots. The easiest and most successful outlet for glorification of Russia lay in the praise of Stalin as the "leader and father of the peoples, the Coryphaeus of the sciences, and the Great Teacher." This arrangement of history involved portraying Stalin as the "builder of socialism" and the "great military genius," winner of the revolutionary and civil wars. Novels that centered on the ordinary man depicted an average citizen, within a collectivist society, trying to improve himself. Society ultimately triumphs as the hero as it undergoes stress and change. Human characters who rise as lesser heroes cope and adapt to society's changes.

116 Ibid., 221.
117 Clarkson, A History of Russia, 716.
118 Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature, 287.
In Soviet fiction, characters fell into two categories, good guys and bad guys. The hero, or good guy, may possess some doubts and may make some mistakes, but good must finally prevail. Fiction became the primary means of communicating the State's propaganda. Socialist realistic novels appealed to feelings "via emotional means, thereby making them much more effective than bureaucratic speeches or political exhortations." This faction had nothing to do with the "high road of literary art." The socialist realism formula required novels to echo the official views of the moment. Many later critics labeled this work as "didactic, grey, and routine." The fictional hero became the central element of any published story. The hero enacted a message of fulfillment of the regime's desired values. In Soviet literature, the central character carried the name "positive hero" and symbolized the ideal citizen. The positive hero marched "upward and onward into the Communist tomorrow," while the negative character stumbled blindly behind, "grubbing in the present." Socialist realism "flattened, hammered, and buffed" the positive hero in order that he be useful to the Soviet cause.

Stalin's and the Communist Party's attempts to foster genuine, sincere works by forcing socialist realism and the

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120Terz, On Socialist Realism, 14. Czeslaw Milosz writes the introduction.

121Dunham, In Stalin's Time, 28-30.
doctrine of the positive hero failed. The application of "mechanical controls and doctrinaire pressures" resulted in false conformism.\textsuperscript{122} The Party added the doctrine of bezkonfliktnost or conflictlessness to the ideal of the positive hero. This union removed from Soviet writings "psychological depth and dramatic tensions."\textsuperscript{123} Despite the restrictions of socialist realism, including the doctrines of the positive hero and conflictlessness, writers responded to the call to produce novels and plays "thoroughly imbued with patriotic sentiments."\textsuperscript{124} These writers who followed the proscribed method of socialist realism "produced, in essence, under all its varied forms, the same novel over and over."\textsuperscript{125}

Late in 1939, the Central Committee established the Stalin Prize for outstanding work in the areas of fiction, drama, poetry, and literary criticism. The Stalin Prize provided incentive for writers to achieve the Party's expectations established by socialist realism, important critics, and other reforms of 1932 that had yet to be met.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{122}Hayward, \textit{Writers in Russia}, 121.
\textsuperscript{123}Zekulin, "Socialist Realism," 433.
\textsuperscript{124}Clarkson, \textit{A History of Russia}, 640.
\textsuperscript{125}Gifford, \textit{The Novel in Russia}, 170.
\textsuperscript{126}Richard Hare, \textit{Russian Literature: Puskin to the Present Day} (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1947), 242-43.
Various levels of the prize existed, with the first place conferring a purse of 100,000 rubles.\textsuperscript{127}

During the thirties, particularly in the latter years, the Soviets prepared for war with the Fascist nations. The Party expected literature to contribute assistance in this preparation. In 1941, the first Stalin Prizes went to works of the 1930s that had fulfilled these political criteria. The content of pro-Soviet aims, goals, and expectations received accolades rather than the form the work possessed.\textsuperscript{128}

With the advent of World War II, the Communist Party relaxed its restrictions on the Writers’ Union and its members. The only requirement writers had to meet was the spreading of war propaganda. Novels, plays, short stories, and poetry served as different ways of inspiring patriotic enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{129} Literature became "fighting art" and questions of artistic integrity moved to the background.\textsuperscript{130} The relaxation of political controls on art provided room for creative pursuits. With more artistic freedom than

\textsuperscript{127}Struve, \textit{Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin}, 304.

\textsuperscript{128}Genereux, "The Stalin Prize and Soviet Literature," 465.

\textsuperscript{129}Clarkson, \textit{A History of Russia}, 687.

\textsuperscript{130}Hayward, \textit{Writers in Russia}, 163.
previously allowed, Union members fulfilled their part in the war effort.\textsuperscript{131}

In 1932, Stalin cemented his control of the Communist Party. By dissolving the various proletarian groups and enforcing a literary doctrine developed and controlled by the Central Committee, Stalin effectively silenced his opposition of the late 1920s. Socialist realism remained ambiguous and stringently enforced, allowing the Party to modify its political position as needed. The Soviet Writers' Union served the Party as a vehicle to spread Soviet propaganda as well as educate the general reading audience.

World War II posed the necessity of the Party to relax its control of literature. Writers willingly produced works in the effort to save the Motherland, and the Party allowed unrestricted publishing of all works that inspired patriotism. By 1945, Soviet control of literature had come full circle from the relative freedom of the early 1920s, through the restrictions of the Party and socialist realism, back to the limited artistic freedom of World War II. The artistic freedom of 1945 proved to be short lived and disappeared shortly after World War II ended.

CHAPTER V

THE ZHDANOVSCHINA

The victory of the Fatherland in 1945 ended the modest freedom that writers had gained during World War II. Serious writers who possessed an "independent sense of their rights and responsibilities" disappeared or altered their works. Large numbers of new writers appeared and many already established authors adapted to the return of 1934 conditions. Their efforts to demonstrate loyalty to Stalin went well beyond their predecessors in extremes.¹

By 1946, the Communist Party abandoned the Writers' Union as its vehicle for disseminating Party policy. The Party overtly controlled literature, and the task of monitoring the literary scene fell directly under the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee. Two main duties of this department included "compelling active observance of the ideological in literature" and "exposing through various means what the department considered important deviations."²

On August 14, 1946, the Central Committee issued a resolution condemning two Leningrad journals for publishing

¹John and Carol Garrard, Inside the Soviet Writers' Union, 63.

²Simmons, Through the Glass of Soviet Literature, 15.
two authors considered dangerous to the Soviet cause. The attack on Mikail Zoshchenko and Anna Akhmatova stemmed from a report by Zhdanov. In 1946, Zhdanov held the second most powerful position in the Politburo.³ His attack on Zoshchenko and Akhmatova launched the Party’s campaign to exert complete control of literature. The journal Leningrad ceased its publication by order of the resolution,⁴ and the journal Zvezda’s staff experienced a change in editors. The resolution appointed Comrade A. M. Yegolin "as editor-in-chief of the journal Zvezda", while leaving him at his job "as the second in command to the Head of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party."⁵ The new editor-in-chief received "full responsibility for the ideological policy of the journal and for the quality of the published material."⁶

Through its resolution, the Communist Party specifically addressed the elements of Zoshchenko’s and Akhmatova’s work it found objectionable. The Party noted that the editors of Zveda had knowledge of Zoshchenko’s controversial work, which it labeled as "trivially

³Clarkson, A History of Russia, 714.


⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.
commonplace, empty," and centered on "superficial things."

The Party condemned Zoshchenko as "preaching rotten rubbish,
devoid of ideas, trivially commonplace, and apolitical,
aimed at disorienting our youth and poisoning their minds."7

The resolution concluded that Zoshchenko's work portrayed
the Soviet way of life "in a hideously caricatured form,
slanderously showing them as primitive, uncultured and
stupid, with philistine tastes and ways."8

According to the Central Committee's resolution,
Akhmatova's poetry, "steeped in pessimism and a spirit of
decline,"9 expressed a "stance of bourgeois aristocratic
aestheticism" of "art for art's sake." This idea refused
"to follow in the footsteps of the people" and posed a
threat "to our youth which could not be tolerated in Soviet
literature."10

Besides enumerating the journals' shortcomings, along
with Zoshchenko's and Akhmatova's, the resolution flatly
stated the purpose of Soviet literature. Journals must be
used as "powerful weapons of the Soviet state in the
education of the Soviet people and especially its youth."11

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7Ibid., 41.
8Ibid.
9Ibid., 41-2.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., 43.
Youth must be "guided by what constitutes the whole basis of the Soviet system--its political theory." Therefore, Soviet literature "neither has, nor can have, any other interest besides the interest of its people and its state." Literature must contribute to the State's efforts to bring up its youth in the "right way," which included helping to solve problems, bringing up the "new generation to be alert," believing in the State's work, and being "fearless of any obstacles and ready to overcome them."

Zhdanov, in a speech to the Meeting of Writers and the Party Executive in Leningrad, gave a more detailed account of Zoshchenko's and Akhmatova's failings. He also supplied political reasons for condemning the two writers. Zhdanov began his speech with a direct attack on Zoshchenko and the Zoshchenko's short story "The Adventures of a Monkey." This piece of satire centered around a marmoset liberated by a chance World War II bomb. Zoshchenko used the animal's character to satirize conditions the Soviet people endured. The Central Committee labeled this work as "a trivially commonplace lampoon on the Soviet way of life." Zhdanov accused Zoshchenko of using the story to "put into the

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 41.
monkey's mouth a disgusting anti-Soviet sentence." Zhdanov stated that the author "claims that life in the zoo is better than outside and that it is easier to breathe inside a cage than outside among Soviet people." 16

Both the Central Committee and Zhdanov attacked Zoshchenko's past political background. In the resolution, the Central Committee noted that Zoshchenko's novel Before Sunrise received negative reviews from critics as "loathsome." 17 Zhdanov attacked the 1944 novel as Zoshchenko's attempt to turn "his trivial and despicable soul inside out" in psychological introspection while the rest of the Soviet Union sacrificed "everything to achieve victory over the Germans." 18 Zhdanov traced Zoshchenko's participation in activities of the Serapion Brothers in the 1920s as further indictment against the author. 19

Zhdanov accused Anna Akhmatova as belonging to an "empty reactionary literary bog" 20 known as the Acemists. This pre-revolutionary movement advocated a poetry that would correlate subjects with the metaphysical, while retaining a musical quality. Zhdanov claimed that these

16 Ibid., 48.
17 Ibid., 41.
18 Ibid., 49.
19 Ibid., 49-50.
20 Ibid., 52.
writers "preached the theory of art for art's sake" and that they did not "want to know anything about the people, their needs or interests, nor anything about social conditions." Zhdanov noted that Akhmatova's themes reflected her personal interests such as "erotic love, interwoven with motifs of sadness, sorrow, death, mysticism and doom." Zhdanov accused the writer of having an "insignificant narrow personal life, insignificant emotions and religious eroticism." He labeled Akhmatova as "neither a nun nor a fornicator, but really both them, mixing fornication and prayer." Zhdanov drew upon the words of Lenin, Gorky, and Stalin to justify his accusations against Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. He quotes extensively from Lenin's 1905 article entitled "Party Organization and Party Literature." Zhdanov used quotes that affirmed the belief that "literature cannot be apolitical, cannot represent art for art's sake." He said that "Lenin's most important contribution to the study of literature" resided in the belief that literature must play "an important progressive part in public life." Zhdanov alluded to Gorky's classifications of literature in which

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 53.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 62-3.
Zoshchenko and Akhmatova belonged. He cited Gorky's 1934 address to the Conference of Soviet Writers in which Gorky held up for ridicule writers who "rummaged in the lowest and most petty details of everyday life." Zhdanov firmly placed Zoshchenko into this category. Zhdanov further cited Gorky's description of the decade between 1907 to 1917 as "the most untalented and despicable decade in the history of the Russian intelligentsia" and then placed Akhmatova among these writers to whom Gorky referred. Zhdanov then alluded to Stalin's "engineers of human souls" to define the "great responsibility borne by Soviet writers in the education of the people for the upbringing of Soviet youth and the exclusion of defective literary work." Zhdanov concluded his speech and his attacks on inferior writers by drawing a parallel between quality control of goods produced in industry and the watchful supervision of literature. He noted that the Soviet people expected from Soviet writers "a real ideological armament, spiritual food to help in fulfillment of immense reconstruction plans," and "fulfillment of the plans for the restoration and further development of the economy" of the Soviet Union.

25Ibid., 47.
26Ibid., 51.
27Ibid., 63.
28Ibid., 64.
Andrey Zhdanov's power grew at the expense of Central Committee Secretary Georgy Maksimilianovich Malenkov. Malenkov had become Stalin's powerful deputy while running the Party and government apparatus in Moscow during World War II. Zhdanov sought to oust Malenkov from power by re-establishing the power of "primacy of ideologists." Malenkov's power originated from industry, an area that gained prominence during the war. Zhdanov and Malenkov fiercely argued over the hierarchies in the field of production. Malenkov stressed economic work and a fairly straightforward, functional approach to production. Zhdanov supported party-political work that concerned recruitment, placement, and education of personnel, improved communication, and monitoring of other members in the field of production.

In a 1946 attempt to secure his position as Stalin's main ideological advisor, Malenkov planned an elaborate series of published literary works to commemorate the Soviet victory in World War II. The first work would be a new edition of The Law of Prince Igor. The last installment of the series would consist of works by Zoshchenko and


Akhmatova. Zhdanov seized upon the latter authors' works as proof of Malenkov's "lack of vigilance" and his incompetence to serve as ideological advisor. By attributing ideological and administrative laxity to Malenkov, Zhdanov succeeded in convincing Stalin to remove Malenkov as deputy. Stalin then directed Zhdanov to purge and reorganize the Central Committee apparatus and to restore the purity of ideology. Zhdanov's political ambitions fit neatly into Stalin's own plans for the Communist Party, and Zhdanov's strategy to gain more power enabled Stalin to strengthen his own control over the Party.

In 1988, the Current Digest of the Soviet Press published notes that journalist D. A. Levonevsky took during a meeting with Stalin, Zhdanov, and other fellow Leningrad writers. The meeting took place prior to the release of the August 14, 1946, Central Committee resolution. Levonevsky noted that Zhdanov criticized the state of poetry appearing in Leningrad and Zvezda as "decadence and pessimism scattered throughout" the literature. Zhdanov also remarked that Zoshchenko depicted "Soviet society in a ridiculous way," especially in "The Adventures of a Monkey." The editors of Zvezda and Leningrad, present at the meeting,

31Ibid., 23.
32Hahn, Postwar Politics, 19-20.
agreed with Zhdanov's assessments of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. Stalin interjected his own pronouncements of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova which Zhdanov echoed in his speech before the Meeting of Writers and the Party Executive in Leningrad. Stalin concluded that writers err in thinking they need not concern themselves with politics. He stated that journals and writers have "no right to accommodate themselves to the tastes of people who do not want to recognize our system." 

The author who translated Levonevsky's notes asserts that Stalin inspired "the program campaign against the creative intelligentsia because Stalin thought of "the world of the human spirit as a sphere of administrative control." Stalin also viewed the city of Leningrad as a rival "with the capital as the spiritual center of the nation." Veniamin Kaverin, a Stalin Prize-winning author during the Zhdanovshchina, identified Stalin's reasons for encouraging Zhdanov's attack on Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. Kaverin asserted that immediately after the war, "after the victory that had cost millions of lives, a period of

\[34\]Ibid., 17.  
\[35\]Ibid.  
\[36\]Ibid., 16.  
\[37\]Ibid., 17-18.
undefined hopes began in society." These hopes included those of an "easing up, for well-earned trust, for long-awaited humanness, for a gentleness." Stalin decided to "deliver a blow to these hopes" that resided in the "soul of the people and found expression in Russian literature." Zhdanov received instructions from Stalin to rectify abuses in Party administration, agriculture, literature, and culture along with approval for the campaign against Zoshchenko and Akhmatova. Zhdanovshchina became a label for the years 1946 until Zhdanov's death in 1949. The Zhdanovshchina signaled Zhdanov's triumph over Malenkov and the return of the Party's complete control over literature rather than any improvement in Soviet literature.

Historical novels made up the most popular theme of novels written during the Zhdanovshchina. Most of these works focused on the "Great Fatherland War," or World War II. Other popular themes included the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War. Writers extolled the patriotism of each of the periods, keeping to safe ideological topics. The human conditions of man meant cooperating with his fellow

38Ibid., 18.
39Ibid.
40Hahn, Postwar Politics, 19-20.
41Struve, Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin, 329-30.
42Gifford, The Novel in Russia, 179.
man and attempting to achieve something good for everyone. Man being optimistic provided the "underlying Stalin Prize formula" of the socialist realist novel.43

Between 1946 and 1949, twenty-nine novels received either a first, second, or third class Stalin Prize. The novels discussed in this chapter all belong to this list. (See Appendix) Each represents elements of socialist realism, although not all strictly adhere to its canons.

**Two Captains**, written by Veniamin Kaverin, won the Stalin Prize in 1946. The adventure novel takes place in Ensk, Moscow, and the Arctic. The two captains refer to pre-Revolutionary Captain Tatarinov and to Sanya Grigoriev, a young man who matures into manhood in the course of the novel. During Sanya's childhood, his family suffers greatly under the czarist regime. The government falsely accuses Sanya's father of murder, and Sanya's mother must cope with rearing her children in poverty. Sanya, a bright student, rejects the czarist regime and ardently works toward the ultimate victory of socialism. Captain Tatarinov and his expedition to the Arctic disappear before the Revolution, and the reader learns about this character through his family. Sanya marries Tatarinov's daughter, Katya, and he soon begins a search for the lost Arctic party. Eventually, Sanya discovers the remains of Captain Tatarinov's

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expedition. The dead explorers receive posthumous hero status, thanks to Sanya’s efforts. Sanya Grigoriev portrays the Soviet hero, always optimistic, always courageous, and always striving to contribute to the State’s Communist cause. Intrigue, mystery, and conspiracy move the plot along, making this popular novel an exception to the plodding novels characteristic of the Zhdanovshchina."

Konstantine Simonov’s novel Days and Nights received a Stalin Prize in 1946 as well. The action of the novel takes place during the defensive phase of the Battle of Stalingrad. Simonov served as a war correspondent during this battle, and he draws upon his experiences for the text of the novel. Captain Saburov acts as the positive hero as well as the main character. Anya Klimenko, a nurse in Stalingrad, serves as Saburov’s love interest. Vanin, the Soviet commissar, Protsenko, the self-proclaimed boss of Saburov’s regiment, and Konyukov, an old army veteran who cannot seem to stop reverting to czarist jargon, make up the cast of characters who struggle to survive the siege of Stalingrad. The title of the novel refers to the melding of days and nights as the war rages on. The novel ends as Saburov’s division prepares to engage the Germans in an

"Veniamin Kaverin, Two Captains (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972)."
One of Saburov's men sums up the mood of the division's anticipation as they discuss the offensive strategy. Remizov states that although their objective of taking a building seems insignificant, in reality "that building is an awful lot--it's Russia." Remizov expresses the patriotism of all Soviets when he states that "what's important is to begin, but to feel at the same time that we'll keep going until it's all finished--all." Strong loyalty to the Communist Party and fierce patriotism to the Soviet Union abound in *Days and Nights*, but the characters' personal relationships never develop beyond superficial levels.

Two 1947 Stalin Prize novels also focused on the theme of World War II, but their authors portrayed characters with more depth and situations with more emotion, unlike Simonov's *Days and Nights*. Vera Panova and Victor Nekrasov received national recognition for their work based on their own experiences. During the war, Panova filled a position as an aide to hospital administrators of a hospital train while writing a pamphlet. Her experiences riding that train serve as the basis for her novel *Sputniki*, translated variously as *The Train*, *Fellow Travelers*, or *Traveling*

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46 Ibid., 405.

47 Ibid.
Companions. The action of Sputniki takes place on the hospital train that carries wounded back from the front lines during the war. Panova uses no one main character. She divides her energies equally among them all to weave a story of their histories. Danilov, in charge of organizing the hospital train, refuses any special considerations as a political commissar. His own marriage hollow, Danilov experiences astonishment at Dr. Belov's deep affection for his wife, and Danilov shares Belov's grief at her death. Upon his return, Danilov's wife's quiet struggle with poverty and deprivation move Danilov. He feels love for his wife for the first time. Danilov serves the State well without losing his personal life. Uncle Sasha and Lena Ogorodnikova serve as examples of how Soviet people put aside their own suffering to support the soldiers and the war effort. Uncle Sasha loses his family to the Germans and Lena suffers casual rejection by her husband. Despite the tragic setbacks, Uncle Sasha and Lena rise above their personal pain to help the wounded. 48 Although Sputniki contained socialist realist elements, critics complained that the characters lacked clear definition and that the novel lacked a clear-cut positive hero. 49


49 Struve, Russian Literature Under Lenin and Stalin, 362-63.
In the Trenches of Stalingrad by Victor Nekrasov received a first class Stalin Prize in 1947. Like Panova, Nekrasov uses the theme of World War II. Like Simonov, Nekrasov bases his novel on the defense of the city. Lieutenant Kerzhentsev and his friend Digor serve as the main characters. They reveal the soldiers' view of war that the author experienced in the front lines at Stalingrad. The two friends share their fears and cope with the ever pessimistic Georgy Akemovich. Another character, Captain Ferber, represents two themes in Soviet literature: the contentious soldier and the Jew serving in the Soviet cause. Both Nekrasov and Simonov experienced the horrors of Stalingrad and both depicted realistically the conditions of the siege. Nekrasov departs from Simonov in criticizing the high command. Inflated egos cost many lives and Nekrasov includes this in his book while Simonov glorifies the Red Army and the high command. Despite sharp criticism, In the Trenches of Stalingrad received the Stalin Prize because of vignettes of socialist realism, such as Kerzhentsev's deep emotion for Russia and its cause as he prepares for the upcoming offensive battle.

While socialist realism provided the standard by which Soviet literature would be measured, the theory's creators still failed to define in any clear manner by which

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socialist realism must be applied. Writers and critics disagreed on the theory's definition and its application. In 1947, Aleksandr Fadeyev, author of The Nineteen, wrote an article concerning socialist realism and the critics' response to the literary theory. In 1948, the Current Digest of the Soviet Press published a summary of the discussions and debates among Soviet critics that Fadeyev's article sparked. The author of the article reiterates Zhdanov's assertion that the truthfulness and concreteness of "artistic portrayal must be combined with the task of remaking and re-educating the ideas of the working people in the spirit of socialism." The discussions and debates all conclude that the value of a literary work must be determined in respect to whether it "assists the people to build communism in a shorter period of time." Authors must also present the "destiny of individual heroes as part of the fate of the working people--the real hero of Soviet art." Soviet literature also carried the responsibility of presenting reality in its revolutionary development. According to the participants in the debates, Soviet art "pushes the people forward; it helps the Party and the state to change the world to the Communist ideal." The critics

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52 Ibid., 11.
53 Ibid., 12.
in 1947 expected literature to portray characters in practical activity, moving toward the completion of communism.

One theme during the Zhdanovshchina concerned the decadence of the "rotten West." This theme put communism in its best light by comparing a progressive Soviet Union with the stagnant capitalist countries. Zhdanov encouraged this theme because he knew that soldiers who served in the heart of Western Europe during World War II might have fallen under the influence of capitalism. He did not want soldiers to analyze the inconsistencies of the advances in "inferior" Western culture when compared with the austerity and lack of progress in "superior" Soviet culture. Zhdanov and the Party sought to purge any ideological influence of the West that had existed in nineteenth century Russia.54

Ilya Ehrenburg received a Stalin Prize in 1948 for his novel The Storm which contained an anti-Western theme. Ehrenburg lived life as a very colorful poet, journalist, and prose writer of Soviet Russia. In his Memoirs, Ehrenburg quotes Boris Pasternak in saying "The inability to find and speak truth is a fault which no amount of skill in telling lies can camouflage." Despite his belief in this idea, Ehrenburg's work during the Zhdanovshchina always contained politically correct themes and rhetoric. He

54Clarkson, A History of Russia, 714-15.
attacked the Nazis so fervently that after the war the
Writers' Union requested he tone down his anti-German
writing. The Storm's title refers to the growing tensions
between the USSR and Germany. Set in Paris, Moscow, and the
United States, the general topics of the novel include the
collapse of the French Republic, the resistance under the
guidance of the communists, and the fighting between the Red
Army and the Germans. Serge Vlakov serves as the central
character and the positive hero who gives his life for the
Soviet cause. As a diplomat, Serge travels to Paris, before
World War II, and meets French communists Lancier and his
daughter Mado. Mado, Serge's love interest, works
diligently for communism before and during the war. Lejean,
a French socialist, struggles with furthering communism and
coping with the loss of his son.

Ehrenburg uses The Storm to stress the theme of the
Germans' treatment of Jews. The Alpert family suffers
greatly at Kiev and in Paris. Soviets prided themselves as
defending the nationalities of all its people, and
Ehrenburg's theme contributes to this national pride.
Ehrenburg focuses on showing how his characters strive
toward universal communism. He depicts them engaging in
practical activities, such as engaging in resistance, rather
than psychological introspection, and thereby the author's work remains politically correct.\textsuperscript{55}

Early Joys, No Ordinary Summer, and Steel and Slag serve as three examples of the powerful control the Zhdanovshchina exerted over talented writers in the Soviet Union. Each novel received Stalin Prizes in 1949, the last year of Zhdanov's power. Konstantin Fedin's Early Joys and No Ordinary Summer make up two-thirds of a trilogy that depicts Russian life from 1910 to 1941. The two novels follow Kirill Izvekov and Pyotr Ragozin in their evolution as young revolutionaries. The setting for Early Joys takes place in Saratov on the Volga River. Kirill and Pytor work for Communism, and the two young men find themselves arrested and sent to Siberia for subversive acts against the czarist regime.\textsuperscript{56} In No Ordinary Summary, Kirill and Pytor return to Saratov from Siberia in 1919. Kirill becomes secretary of the local Soviet and embroils himself in the Civil War. Along with the characters' patriotic activities, Fedin exaggerates Stalin's role in the Civil War to fulfill political correctness demanded by the Party and socialist realism.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{56}Konstantin Fedin, Early Joys, translated by G. Fileppovskiy (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973).

\textsuperscript{57}Konstantin Fedin, No Ordinary Summer, translated by Margaret Wettlin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1950).
Vladimir Popov's *Steel and Slag* chronicles a steel foundry's war efforts during the Patriotic War. The author locates the factory in the Donbas, near the Urals. The novel reflects Soviet deprivation under German occupation. Sergei Kraineva serves as the positive hero. He stays in the Donbas to work for the underground resistance.58 His fondest wish lies in being counted among the Communists. Kraineva turns an accusation of being a dreamer into a glorious vision when he says communists "make the world in accordance with their teachings, which many have called a dream."59

During the Zhdanovshchina, the Communist Party solidified the Soviet literati into a revolutionary propaganda machine rather than nurtured an outlet for creative talent. Under Andrey Zhdanov's guidance, the Party tightened its control over writers, critics, and editors and re-established Party censorship of their works. As a result of socialist realism and its standard of measurement, political correctness became synonymous with success in the Soviet literary world.


59Ibid., 542.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The literature published in the Soviet Union during the Zhdanovshchina reflected the gradual political control over written works that had evolved over several decades. The Communist Party exerted total control of the creative arts during the years 1946 to 1949, but the Party had gradually assumed direction of literature over the years from 1905 through World War II. In 1905, a dozen years before the Revolution, Lenin indicated that literature could be used to spread communist theory, and he stated in his writings that political writings held a place in the struggle for world communism.

By 1924, various organizations of writers competed to be the voice of proletarian literature. Stalin, busy with securing his control over the Communist Party, stayed out of the feuding writers' issues. After he secured power, Stalin turned his attention to the debates concerning proletarian literature. Gradually, the Central Committee assumed leadership in literature and used this genre to express communist doctrine.

By 1932, one single writers' organization existed in the Soviet Union, and it was under the direct control of the
Communist Party. Through the Union of Soviet Writers, socialist realism dominated all published works. In 1939, an additional incentive, the Stalin Prize, encouraged writers to comply with Party directives and socialist realism.

During World War II, writers produced works that boosted the Soviet morale. The Communist Party relaxed its control over literature during this time and allowed any work that inspired patriotism to be published. With the Soviet victory of World War II, the Party not only resumed its direction of literature, it tightened its control over creative talent.

Andrey Zhdanov provided the guidelines for the Party's control of literature. As Cultural Commissar and heir-apparent of Stalin, he directed writers, critics, and editors through the literary theory of socialist realism beginning in 1946.

Total Communist control of literature served to direct political development in the Soviet Union. Literature served the Party as a propaganda machine rather than expressing any creative outlet for its citizens. The gradual Party control reflected the growing power the Communist Party and its leaders exercised in order to achieve communist goals.
APPENDIX
### PRIZE-WINNING SOVIET NOVELS

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Authors, Titles, and Translations</th>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A. N. Tolstoi (1883-1945), Peter the First (Petry Pervyi)</td>
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<td>S.N. Sergeev-Tsenskii (1876-1958), Svastopol'skaia strada</td>
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<td>M. A. Sholokhov (1905- ), And Quiet Flows the Don (Tikhii Don)</td>
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<td>N. E. Virta (1906- ), Loneliness (Alone) (Odomohestvo)</td>
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<td>A. S. Novikov-Priboi (1877-1944), Tsushima (Tsusima)</td>
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<td>V. G. Ivan (1876-1954), Jenghiz-Khan (Chingis-Khan)</td>
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<td>B. N. Antonovskii (1885- ), Velikiii Mourai, T.I.</td>
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**Secondary Sources**


