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Et Resurrexerunt:
How Writers Rise from the Dead

By Hugh McLean

OF ALL THE SAVAGE and terrible features of Stalin's rule, one of the most nightmarish was the institution that George Orwell aptly labeled the "memory hole"—the practice of officially obliterating human beings and their works not only from life, but from recorded history, the collective memory of society. To undertake to erase people's names from history, to decree, as it were, that they never existed at all—such a proceeding seems to take us out of the world of human reality altogether, into a realm of the fantastic and supernatural. It is as if an old dictator, not content with defaming, banishing, or executing, finally arrogated to himself divine powers. Like Milton's Almighty, he sought to strip those who offended him of their very identity and historical reality:

> **. . . of their names in Heavenly records now**
> **Be no memorial, blotted and rased**
> **By their rebellion from the Books of Life.**

Sociologically inclined students of Soviet life in Stalin's day often assumed, as Orwell appears to have done, that the "memory hole" was a necessary and inevitable attribute of totalitarian society as such, one of its *specifica,* so to speak. But in the light of the decade of history that has passed since Stalin's death, it now seems clear that this is not entirely true, that in some measure at least, the "memory hole" was a personal product of that tortuous and paranoid personality whose "cult" has now been repudiated. It was Stalin's own work, his own dreams of vengeance imposed upon a whole society.

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But while nations may temporarily be caught up in the private pathology of their leaders, they do seem to possess a kind of latent balancing mechanism, however delayed in its operation, which eventually asserts itself and brings about a turn back toward "health," a reversion to something approaching common sense and normality. Although of course it has other, more immediate political causes, perhaps Khrushchev's destalinization campaign may be regarded as something of this sort, an indication of the recovery of Soviet society—perhaps only partial—from Stalin's mental illness. To be sure, sanity is always a difficult thing to define, and it has been correspondingly hard for the Russians to mark off clearly the boundary between the (diseased) "cult of personality," which is rejected, and the (presumably healthy) Communist system itself. Even Khruschchev has wavered on this point. But in any case it may be useful to view Khrushchevism as Stalinism "sanitized," *i.e.,* restored to sanity.

One of the most notable indications of this return to normality has been the "rehabilitation," often posthumous, of many of Stalin's victims. Not only have the gates of the labor camps been flung open and many long immured wretches allowed to emerge into the "land where man so freely breathes," but a great many of those who perished have been posthumously cleansed of blemish and restored to moral citizenship. Most of the vast number of administrative sentences meted out by the secret police in Stalin's day have been officially annulled, declared "inconsonant with socialist legality." Furthermore, the "memory hole" itself seems to have been virtually abolished. It is now possible to mention in print—though not necessarily to mention *favorably*—almost any name at all, no matter how fearful the curse

it once bore—even some, like Bukharin, who have by no means been "rehabilitated." [1]

This "operation resurrection" has been particularly spectacular in the sphere of literature. Large numbers of writers, critics, and scholars removed from the scene in Stalin's time have been restored to literary life; the ban has been lifted from the work of many others who did not themselves suffer actual persecution. Scores of pallid ghosts have come trooping back out of the memory hole to take up their former places in Russian literary history. Collectively, their rehabilitations undoubtedly constitute, in artistic and intellectual importance, a more significant cultural "thaw" than most of the original "thaw" literature produced by living writers. Whether their revival can stimulate a real renaissance of living literature remains to be seen, but in any case it is a phenomenon of enormous significance.

The Least Lost

The theory and practice of Khrushchevist resurrection can best be understood in terms of the various categories of Stalinist oblivion to which it is counterposed. For under Stalin oblivion was not imposed equally and indiscriminately upon all offenders, but assigned in varying degrees to different classes of undesirables. The Stalinist memory hole led to three different "circles" in historical limbo, with certain minor gradations marked out within each circle. Of course, these circles were inhabited by a great variety of intellectuals of all sorts, but here only their literary population is considered.

In the first or outer circle sat the Abjured, a rather large group of writers from various periods whose works and ideals were considered sufficiently alien and immoral to be injurious to the tender minds of Soviet youth and disruptive to the tranquility of Soviet society. These unfortunates were branded with such derogatory labels as "reactionary," "anti-popular," "decadent," "mystical," "obscurantist," and the like. They included a variety of types: among them people who in prerevolutionary times had expressed anti-revolutionary or specifically anti-Bolshevik convictions; people in whose system of beliefs religion played too vital and central a role; people who seemed "Bohemian" or advocated anything resembling "art for art's sake," and so forth. Such people and their works were tabooed—not exactly forbidden, but not recommended and not disseminated. Their names were not totally erased from history; it was permissible to mention them provided one included the necessary disclaimers. But they had to be decisively abjured.

This first circle had a large historical sweep, reaching far back into the 19th century to include such figures as Dostoevsky, Grigoriev, Leskov, and Leontiev, whose works, if published at all in the Stalinist period, came out only in carefully "selected" editions with safely orthodox introductions designed to warn the faithful against any errors they might unwittingly absorb. The range of abjuration for the early 20th century became broader still, taking in practically the whole Decadent and Symbolist generations, in other words, almost the whole of Russian literature between 1895 and 1917, with the exception of the "realist" school. Among the Symbolists Briusov and Blok were also excepted—Briusov because he had the wisdom to become a Communist after 1917, and Blok because he was too "big" to be wasted and more could be forgiven him. And in his own odd way, he had welcomed the Revolution.

Besides these repudiated figures from the past, the Abjured also included a few alien bodies who lived on into the Soviet period but never became in any sense "Soviet," never accommodated themselves to Soviet demands on literature. They went their own way, at the most occasionally writing something "correct" in order to appease the authorities, but essentially remaining themselves. Boris Pasternak was one of them, also Anna Akhmatova, Mikhail Zoshchenko, and some older figures like Fedor Sologub and Andrei Belyi. Although they all lived and worked in the Soviet period, it is hard to think of them as "Soviet" writers (Zoshchenko is perhaps an exception). Despite their non-conformism, these abjured writers of the Soviet period, unlike some of their colleagues, were never subjected to police persecution. They were condemned to silence for long periods and frequently were attacked verbally in the strongest terms, but they remained "extant"; and their names never became so taboo that they could not be mentioned in print.

[1] So far there has been no public repudiation of the great show trials of the 1930's or their verdicts; and the names of Stalin's "big" antagonists within the party, like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, to say nothing of Trotsky, are still heavily tabooed, to be handled as gingerly as hot coals. But it *is* permitted to mention them: *e.g.*, Bukharin's name is mentioned in the Academy's three-volume *History of Russian Soviet Literature (Istoriia russkoi sovetskoi literatury,* Moscow, 1958, Vol. I, p. 526). The taboo is still potent, however; though mentioned in the text, Bukharin is not listed in the otherwise thorough index! The Soviet encyclopedias, always good indicators of political Hooper ratings, still have no entries for any of these individuals. As before, "Trotskyism" is listed, but not Trotsky *per se;* the article on "Trotskyism" in the new edition of the *Malaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (1960), however, differs from previous Stalinist versions in that it treats Trotsky purely as an intra-party enemy; the old charges of his alleged ties with foreign intelligence services are not mentioned, nor is the epithet "enemy of the people" employed.

In literary histories and criticism written during the Stalinist period the general rule for dealing with the Abjured was: don't, unless you have to; and if you do, be sure to disavow any connection between them and the great tradition of Russian literature. The usual procedure was to mention them in passing, with some pejorative comment implying that such poor and mistaken figures had inevitably been pushed aside by the progressive march of history. A few of the "biggest" writers among the Abjured might occasionally be credited with some positive, "progressive" contributions, despite the negative balance of most of their work—for instance, Dostoevsky received a few good marks for *Poor Folk* and *Notes from the House of the Dead.* But in general the Abjured were deemed unacceptable to Soviet man, fundamentally alien in mentality and attitudes.

The Rebels

The second circle of the Stalinist limbo belonged to the Accursed. To be relegated to this degree of outer darkness one must not only, like the Abjured, have professed an alien ideology, but must have actively tried to propagate it in the USSR. There had to be some fairly open act of defiance, a refusal to bend the knee to the Communist idols. One had to be not only a heretic but a rebel. For such crimes offenders were marked with the Curse, which carried with it a variety of unpleasant experiences in this world, often including elimination from it, and total erasure from the pages of history as well. One became an "unperson" who had never existed.

Among the Accursed were such people as Boris Pilniak, Isaac Babel, Yevgenii Zamiatin, and Yuri Olesha, all of them once leading lights in Soviet literature. Pilniak had been one of the most prominent novelists of the 1920's, the leader of a whole school of "ornamental prose." But he had been guilty of a heretical interpretation of the Revolution as a revolt against civilization, a wild, "elemental" mass upheaval which had at least temporarily restored Russia to the peasant primitivism of pre-Petrine times. Though more or less tolerated, with scoldings, in the 1920's, such a heresy became unspeakable in Stalin's day. Furthermore, Pilniak had made the dangerously freak admission that he was "far less interested in the fate of the Russian Communist Party than in the fate of Russia. To me the Russian Communist Party is only a link in the history of Russia." [2] And Pilniak may have been condemned for other, more "personal" sins: in 1927 he wrote a story which could be interpreted as meaning that the death on the operating table of the great revolutionary general Mikhail Frunze had been a kind of medical murder inspired by Stalin. In any case, Pilniak had a hard time of it from the late 1920's on, and about 1937 was finally arrested and "obliterated."

The case of Isaac Babel is both similar and different. He too had some tendency toward the "elemental" heresy in his view of the Revolution; he certainly had a highly independent view of everything, an inquisitive and fearless mind, and an artistic talent far greater than Pilniak's. He was also slier, more "hidden," more ambiguous; it would be hard to deduce an ideology from Babel's work, and he certainly never made such obviously self-incriminating statements as Pilniak's. But it is equally hard to imagine a Stalinized Babel dutifully turning out routine propaganda novels. He lived abroad a good deal, and during the 1930's wrote less and less. Eventually he "disappeared." Perhaps "private" reasons also contributed to his fate: Ehrenburg mentions the fact that he was a friend of Yezhov's wife, which may have been less than advantageous. [3]

Another victim of the Curse was Yevgenii Zamiatin. Author of the famous "counterrevolutionary" novel, *We* (never published in the USSR), he had made "un-Soviet" statements even more forthright than Pilniak's. Although he had been a Bolshevik before the Revolution, he resigned from the party as soon as it seized power, for he believed that "real literature can exist only where it is produced by madmen, hermits, heretics, dreamers, rebels, and skeptics, and not by painstaking and well-intentioned officials." [4] Even in the early 1920's, which seem so tolerant by Stalinist standards, Zamiatin discerned a fateful tendency toward rigid dogmatism in intellectual life and prophesied its baneful effects:

I am afraid we will have no real literature until we cure ourselves of this strange new Catholicism which is no less afraid than the old one of the slightest heretical word. And if this illness is incurable. I am afraid that the only future of Russian literature is its past.[5]

Though he issued no more statements as challenging as this, Zamiatin managed to maintain throughout the 1920's his independence and dignity. But during the RAPP period journalistic attacks on him became more menacing and he found it impossible to publish. He finally petitioned Stalin to be allowed to emigrate; ap-

[2] Quoted from *Istoriia russkoi sovetskoi literatury,* Vol. I, p. 57; originally in *Pisateli ob iskusstve i o sebe,* Moscow-Leningrad, 1924.

[3] I. Ehrenburg, "Liudi, gody, zhizn," *Novyi mir,* No. 5 (May 1962), p. 152.

[4] Yevgenii Zamiatin, "Ya boius," *Dom iskusstv,* No. 1, 1921; quoted from Zamiatin, *Litsa,* New York, 1955, p. 189.

[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 189-90.

parently Gorky interceded with the Boss, and the permission was granted. Thus Zamiatin's fate was uniquely fortunate by comparison with those of the Accursed who lived on into the years of terror. But as a writer he was nevertheless consigned entirely to oblivion.

Yuri Olesha was another interesting and promising Soviet novelist of the 1920's whose literary career was cut short by Stalinist persecution and who eventually joined the ranks of the Accursed. His heresy, though he hedged it with ambiguity and self-deprecation, was a grave one. He raised the basic question of individual freedom: whether the human personality could find adequate fulfillment in striving for the collective goals of communism, or whether, on the contrary, the Communist system constricted and "mechanized" it, stifling the feelings which once "constituted the soul of man"—"compassion, tenderness, pride, zeal, and love." Posing as an unreconstructed old-style intellectual, Olesha debated this and other difficult questions for several years, ostensibly putting the blame on himself for being out of step with the age. One of his last articles is entitled "The Necessity of Rebuilding Myself Is Clear to Me."[6] But the issues he raised were too grave and his expression of them too poignant to be tolerated very long in the Stalinist era. For some reason his fate was milder than Pilniak's or Babel's: around 1938 he was duly arrested and erased from history, but he survived his years in the camps and returned to writing after the war. According to reports, however, he had become a hopeless alcoholic. In any case, he produced nothing of significance except some fragmentary, though interesting, notebooks. He died in 1960.

The Fallen Faithful

Finally, the innermost circle of the Stalinist limbo was occupied by the Damned. The Damned were neither alien in their ideology nor, with rare exceptions, defiantly individualistic or heretical in their attitudes. On the contrary, they were numbered among the true believers, marching in the front ranks of the army of progress; they belonged to the elite of elites. They were Communists. But after all, Communists were the original "purgees," and many of them, despite superhuman efforts to obey the all-wise Party, nevertheless fell by the wayside and were swept into the memory hole.

Although all were party members and alike in their basic Communist ideology, the literary Damned were a rather heterogeneous lot. Among them were Aleksandr Voronsky and Viacheslav Polonsky, "liberal" editors and critics of the 1920's who advocated an editorial policy of relative ideological tolerance and collaboration with "fellow travelers." They were naturally swept aside during the screw-tightening RAPP period. Polonsky was deprived of his editorship and made to recant his errors; he died a natural death in 1932. Voronsky was also expelled from his magazine and from the party; he recanted, spent some years as a free-lance writer, and was finally "erased" in 1937. He died in a camp in 1943. A third "liberal" Communist was the critic Abram Lezhnev, who tried to make of Marxist criticism something other than a measuring stick for gauging a writer's distance from the party line. He fought the RAPP-ites on literary policy, insisting that sincerity and artistic quality were more important than ideological correctness. He too disappeared in the purges.

Curiously enough, the most rabid enemies of these "liberal" Communists also found their way into the circle of the Damned—the original RAPP-ites, the militant advocates of proletarian "hegemony" in literature. (After a split in 1925 they were known as the "left" RAPP or "RAPP opposition.") Among them were two literary critics of some note, G. Lelevich and Georgii Gorbachov. They advocated an even more militantly "proletarian" literary policy than the RAPP leadership. They and their associates were purged in the early 1930's, probably not so much for their literary views as for their association with the Left Opposition in the party. They were among the earliest candidates for the memory hole: the "L" volume of the *Literary Encyclopedia,* published as early as 1932, does not mention Lelevich.

By a further irony, several of the "orthodox" RAPP-ites, who triumphed over the "Left" in 1925 and from 1928 to 1932 were permitted to ride herd over the whole territory of Soviet literature, were cut down in their turn after 1932 and eventually arrested and packed off to the Circle of the Damned. One of them was the mighty Leopold Averbakh himself, chieftain of RAPP and at one time virtual dictator of Soviet literature. Another was the RAPP secretary, Vladimir Kirshon, also a dramatist of some talent. Both of them vanished in the mid-1930's. Their crime was hardly ideological: it was rather that they had once constituted an independent center of power, somewhat outside the party hierarchy, and had made some attempt to defy the Central Committee's liquidation of RAPP in 1932. Most of the other orthodox RAPP-ites, like Fadeev, Panferov, Yermilov, and others, managed somehow to appease the monster and survive unscathed. (Yermilov is busy to this day with literary head-hunting in the true RAPP spirit: his latest victim is Ilya Ehrenburg.[7])

[6] Y. Olesha, "Neobkhodimost perestroiki mne yasna," *Tridtsat dnei,* No. 3, 1932, pp. 63-64.

[7] *Cf. Izvestia,* Jan. 30, 1963.

Thus leaders of three of the major Communist literary factions all joined one another in the circle of the Damned. Besides these more or less categorizable groups, the Damned also included some individuals caught in the net primarily through bad luck. Such a person was Mikhail Koltsov, a talented writer and journalist, one of the editors of *Pravda,* known as a loyal Stalinist. Nevertheless, after his return from Spain, where he had been a correspondent, Koltsov was arrested and "erased."

Besides these critics, journalists, and literary politicians, there were also a few creative writers among the Damned. Among them were Artem Vesely, who, despite his party membership, had "Pilniakian," elementalist leanings in his view of the Revolution; Ivan Kataev (no relation of Valentin), a disciple of Voronsky who made the mistake of expressing pity for the liquidated kulaks; and Aleksandr Tarasov-Rodionov, who had begun his literary career with a novel (*Chocolate*) dealing with the moral dilemmas of a Cheka agent. The great theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold should probably be included here. His revolutionary theater was out of harmony with the new conservatism of the late 1930's; like so many others, he was first humiliated and then "erased."

The Post-Stalin Setting

One of the curious contradictions of Stalinism was its utter inability to face the consequences of its own acts. It was perfectly obvious that with such a large number of its writers and critics officially reduced to non-being, the history of Soviet literature had come to an end, or more correctly, the history limped on, but it was impossible to write about it. No matter how sycophantically willing the scholar, it seemed impossible—and also dangerous—to undertake a job of falsification and distortion of such magnitude as to write, during Stalin's lifetime, an official history of Soviet literature. It is a striking fact that not a single solid synthetic work on the subject appeared in Russia between the last edition of Gorbachov's *Contemporary Russian Literature*[8] (1931) and the first post-Stalin attempt at "sketches" (sketchy they were, to be sure) for a history of Soviet Russian literature.[9] The only work that could be remotely considered an exception was the endlessly reprinted official textbook of Soviet literature for school use by Professor L. Timofeev.[10] But Timofeev's book made no pretense at being a history or even presenting its material historically; it simply filled up its space with two gigantic chapters on the great patron saints of Soviet literature, Gorky and Mayakovsky, and shorter chapters on some lesser—but officially certified—literary luminaries like A. N. Tolstoy, Fadeev, and Sholokhov.

With Stalin's death the process of restoration of history could begin, and with it the resurrection of the nameless. The "Sketches" mentioned above were the first signs of "thaw" in the historiography of Soviet literature. Though still wholly Stalinist in doctrine, their very existence was a sign of change: at least they essayed a historical view of the literary past. But no resurrections were as yet attempted, and none of the Accursed or the Damned could be mentioned at all.

It was, of course, the celebrated 20th Party Congress of 1956 and the even more celebrated "secret speech" by Khrushchev which really gave impetus to the process of resurrection. This speech knocked out some of the main weight-bearing pillars from under the old Stalinist structure: without specifying clearly just what the limits of official "revision" would be, it raised the question whether there need be any limits at all. As Dostoevsky said, if there is no God, then all is permitted; if you can criticize Stalin, you can criticize anything. Dogma became mere hypothesis. Thus the whole rigid structure was loosened up, and there was no way of knowing just where it would sag further. How far would Khrushchev and his cohorts push matters, or allow them to be pushed?

Insofar as literature is concerned, the answer to this question has emerged piecemeal. Since 1956 the Soviet literary world has been pretty clearly divided into two camps, the liberals and the conservatives. Until very recently, the regime has played the role of referee between them, though a referee often lamentably biased; it believed that both factions served useful purposes so long as they were kept under control. It needed the liberals to liven things up, to keep literature from becoming as dull as it had been in the Zhdanov era. But at the same time it regarded these liberals with great suspicion. They seemed constantly to forget the fundamental and unforgettable truth that the function of literature is to engineer Soviet souls according to party specifications, to preach the party's sermon and then preach it again. The regime therefore relied on the conservatives, with whom its spiritual affinity was much greater, to serve as watchdogs, safeguarding the basic tenets of the system, sniffing out heresy and by their snarls and growls keeping fear alive in the hearts of even the stoutest liberals.

[8] Georgii Gorbachov, *Sovremennaia russkaia literatura,* Leningrad, 1931.

[9] *Ocherki istorii russkoi sovetskoi literatury,* Vol. I, 1954.

[10] Leonid Timofeev, *Sovremennaia literatura,* Moscow, 1946; later editions have the title *Russkaia sovetskaia literatura.*

But even this ostensible "neutrality" on the part of the regime has now come to an abrupt end. In the last months a strong tightening-up campaign has been underway, culminating in Khrushchev's "literary" speech of March 8, in which he placed the regime solidly and ominously in the conservative camp. He made it clear that the limits of tolerated liberalism would now be defined much more narrowly and that the regime would exert much more direct pressure to compel creative artists to adhere to the principles of "socialist realism," "party-mindedness," and "people-mindedness." More imperatively and menacingly than before, he reiterated his basically "Stalinist" conviction that literature and art must remain at all times servants of the party. Into the bargain he displayed once again his militant phillistinism in matters of form: experimental art is still "formalism," and has no place amongst the glories of Soviet culture.

Khrushchev has thus shed a considerable part of the rather thin veneer of intellectual liberalism he had hitherto affected. From today's vantage point it would appear that about the only genuine aspect of this attitude was his motive to repudiate some of Stalin's most flagrant excesses. It was the regime that spearheaded the condemnation of Stalin's abuse of the police power—hence its authorization, for example, of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Probably out of the same motive, the regime has proven permissive—within limits—in the matter of literary rehabilitations.

At the present time the "liberals" have virtually disappeared as an effective, *organized* force. Up to now, however, they have been the chief agents of resurrection, and if the regime does not decide to reinstitute the "memory hole" as an instrument of public policy, their influence will continue to be felt—if only in retrospect. For the revived literary ghosts have, of course, represented valuable allies to the liberals, demonstrating that Soviet literature once offered other alternatives than the official stereotypes—often alternatives of great artistic power and vitality.

The liberals have felt that the works of these ghosts, if once again propagated, would be an enormously broadening and enriching influence on Soviet literary life. Furthermore, many of the liberals have been bound to these ghosts by ties of literary admiration and often personal acquaintance and affection as well. Thus the work of resurrection frequently has been a labor of love, the bringing back to life of an admired colleague.

On the other hand, even the conservatives have been obliged to take some part in the process of resurrection. The most ambitious history of Soviet literature to date, the massive three-volume work produced by the Gorky Institute of World Literature,[11] is clearly "conservative" in spirit and dwells as little as possible on the evils of the "cult of personality." It may be "bad" history—biased, tendentious, patronizing, dull, and even dishonest; but at least it is history. Practically all the erased names have been inked in again; the nameless ghosts can be identified.

Resurrection from the Outer Circle

In general, the manner, speed, and, so to speak, quality of resurrection in the Khrushchev era have depended on the circle of limbo in which the given ghost sat under Stalin.

The Abjured have on the whole fared rather well, although not uniformly. By and large, the earlier and "bigger" the writer, the better he has been treated. Practically all the 19th-century writers, especially if they could be labeled "realists," have been claimed once again as part of the national heritage. To show the contrast with Stalinist times: in 1948 A. S. Dolinin, a distinguished Dostoevsky scholar, had been compelled to abjure Dostoevsky publicly and to promise that henceforth he would study only approved revolutionary democrats like Dobroliubov;[12] but in 1956 Dolinin was selected as one of the editors of a ten-volume edition of Dostoevsky, the first "complete" edition (excluding only the *Diary of a Writer*) to be published since the late 1920s.[13] Similarly, an eleven-volume edition of Leskov was put out in 1956-58—also not quite complete, but containing several works never reprinted since the Revolution.[14] A volume of Apollon Grigoriev's poetry was also published.[15]

Among the Symbolists, the resuscitation process worked more unevenly. Briusov and Blok had always been permitted, with "risky" spots kept to a minimum; now much more extensive editions of both have become possible.[16] Innokentii Annensky has been reprinted.[17]

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[11] *Istoriia russkoi sovetskoi literatury*, Vols. I-III, Moscow, 1958-61.

[12] *Cf.* Gleb Struve, "The Soviets Purge Literary Scholarship," *The New Leader*, April 2, 1949.

[13] F. M. Dostoevskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 10 Vols., Moscow, 1956-58.

[14] N. S. Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 11 Vols., Moscow, 1956-58.

[15] Apollon Grigoriev, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, Leningrad, 1959.

[16] Valerii Briusov, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, Moscow, 1955, and others; Aleksandr Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v vosmi tomakh*, Moscow, 1960.

[17] Innokentii Annenskii, *Stikhotvoreniia i tragedii*, Leningrad, 1959.

On the other hand, many of the Symbolist generation are still abjured. Balmont, Merezhkovsky, Gippius, and Viacheslav Ivanov are perhaps rejected on the ground that they emigrated, yet Sologub and Belyi too are still under the ban.[18] By contrast, Bunin and Kuprin, being "realists," have now practically been acknowledged as Soviet writers.[19] Apparently there is something about "decadence" that is particularly hard for the Communist authorities to swallow. The problem can hardly be a matter of the ideological dangers the Decadents represent: surely no one could fear that Ivanov's mystical anarchism or Belyi's anthroposophy would find many converts among present-day Soviet youth. Perhaps it is the sheer self-sufficiency of decadent literature that is so irritating: it shows that art need serve no interests but its own. In any event, the rehabilitation of the Symbolists proceeds slowly.

Rescuing the Rebels

The Accursed have also fared rather unevenly. No clear official directive has ever been issued stating what is allowed and what is not; the process works rather through a series of test cases. It is as if each ghost needed some influential living sponsor to promote his or her interests. Undoubtedly the greatest and most successful of the resurrectionists is Ilya Ehrenburg. Whatever his sins of the past (especially his behavior during the anti-Semitic purges of the late 1940's), he has been enormously energetic in promoting a series of literary revivals. His own memoirs, though far from wholly frank or honest on many points, must be a great eye-opener to the young Soviet reader: there is not only the attractive picture he paints of life in the Paris Boheme and his undisguised enthusiasm for many "forbidden" modern European artists and poets, but also his evocation of the Russian literary past and his friendly appraisal of all sorts of taboo-ridden figures from Balmont to Babel.[20]

Ehrenburg was clearly the major promoter of the revival of Babel, who was a close personal friend and who figures prominently in the memoirs. Ehrenburg wrote a warm, but cautious introduction for the edition of Babel's selected works published in 1957, only allowing himself a few terse sentences on Babel's demise: "In 1939 on the basis of a false denunciation I. E. Babel was arrested. Unfortunately, the effort to discover the manuscript of his unpublished works has not been successful. Babel died in 1941 at the age of forty-seven." Ehrenburg also remarked on the strange fact that the "young generation, which has never even heard the name of this great writer, can become acquainted with the books which struck us thirty years ago."[21] Another "forbidden" friend whose revival Ehrenburg has sponsored—apparently against conservative resistance—is the poetess Marina Tsvetaeva.[22]

Speaking of sponsors, one of the curiosities of recent Soviet literary life has been the apparent championship of Anna Akhmatova (one of the Abjured rather than Accursed, according to my classification) by the ultra-Stalinist party hack and literary *Gauleiter* Aleksei Surkov, member of the Central Committee and frequent hurler of party thunderbolts. For some obscure reason, perhaps simply a private weakness for her poetry, Surkov has apparently chosen to "protect" her. A 1958 edition of Akhmatova's poetry—a truncated collection, to be sure, but the first to appear since 1940—was edited by Surkov;[23] and the recently published first volume of the *Short Literary Encyclopedia,* of which Surkov is chief editor, has an extraordinary article on Akhmatova, virtually presenting her as the ideal of everything a Soviet poet should be (the 1946 attacks on her by Zhdanov and the Central Committee are not even mentioned).[24]

Zoshchenko, a victim with Akhmatova of Zhdanov's wrath, has also been rehabilitated—but quietly, and apparently without official protection. Since his

[18] However, Sologub's famous novel, *Melkii bes* (The Petty Demon) was reprinted in, of all places, the Siberian town of Kemerovo in 1958.

[19] Ivan Bunin, *Sobranie sochinenii,* 5 Vols., Moscow, 1956; *Stikhotvoreniia,* Leningrad, 1961; and others. Aleksandr Kuprin, *Sobranie sochinenii,* 6 Vols., Moscow, 1957-58.

[20] Alas, Ehrenburg has now overstepped the limits of Khrushchev's tolerance; since the latter's March 8 speech his influence is sure to be negligible, at least in wangling any more concessions from the regime.

[21] I. Ehrenburg, "I. E. Babel," in I. Babel, *Izbrannoe,* Moscow, 1957, pp. 9, 5.

[22] Ehrenburg published an essay on Tsvetaeva in the famous "thaw" edition of *Literaturnaia Moskva* (Vol. II, Moscow, 1956), which also included some of her unpublished verse. This essay was supposed to serve as the introduction to a volume of her poetry already announced for publication in 1957. But in the conservative reaction of 1957 against the "thaw," Ehrenburg's essay was a principal target for attack, and the promised volume of Tsvetaeva's verse did not appear for several years. It finally came out in 1961, but Ehrenburg's essay was missing. Just what happened in the interim is of course a matter of conjecture. In any case, Tsvetaeva, along with Pasternak, has now become one of the idols of the young Russian esthetes whose influence Khrushchev so greatly deplores.

[23] Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia, 1909-1957* Moscow, 1958, ed. A. A. Surkov.

[24] *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia,* Vol. I, Moscow, 1962.

works earlier enjoyed a mass popularity equalled by hardly any other Soviet writer, it is possible the publishing houses simply sought to reprint them for profit, sounding out the reaction in official quarters in advance. In any case, several editions of his selected works have appeared since 1956, but without introduction or apologies.[25]

Olesha too was "brought back" in the first flush of enthusiasm after the 20th Party Congress. Following his release from prison, apparently at the end of World War II, he had published a few insignificant pieces,[26] but had not really rejoined Soviet literature: for a decade none of his major works was reprinted, nor was his name mentioned in articles on Soviet literature. But in 1956 a fairly complete collection of his works was at last brought out,[27] with a long introduction exhorting Olesha to break his silence and to produce a major work reflecting his lifelong experience as a Soviet writer. The introduction gives not a word of explanation for his silence, implying that it was self-imposed; but the dates appended to individual works tell their own story in showing a complete blank for the years 1937 to 1949.

On the other hand, certain of the Accursed, either lacking influential sponsors or because of some inherent quality in their work, still wait vainly for full restoration. This applies to both Pilniak and Zamiatin. There seems to be no move to reprint either of them; and although their names can now be mentioned in the large *History of Soviet Literature,* they are disclaimed in the strongest terms.

Resurrected Communists

Less attention has been paid outside of Russia to the rehabilitation of the Damned, probably because there were few major writers among them. Here, too, although some patterns can be discerned, a certain element of accident seems to enter into the rehabilitation process—perhaps again a matter of sponsorship and promotion.

In some cases the resurrections have been quite spectacular, with a considerable amount of official fanfare. Mikhail Koltsov, for example, has now been restored to full glory in the Soviet Pantheon. A three-volume edition of his *Selected Works* has already appeared, and even a book-length monograph about him, recommending him as a model hero for Soviet youth to imitate. Statements about his arrest and imprisonment are extremely brief and vague (as indeed they are about all the returnees from limbo). There is no account of the charges brought against him, nor of his trial (if there was one) or sentence, nor of his years in prisons and camps. At the end of the 233-page monograph there are two tersely uneasy sentences: "Slandered by his enemies, Koltsov was arrested on December 12, 1938. In 1942 Koltsov was no more."[28] Koltsov's fellow journalist, the professional Stalin-flatterer David Zaslavsky, is equally elusive in his introduction to the new edition of Koltsov: "Soon after his return from Spain Koltsov's literary and political career was tragically broken off. In 1938 he became the victim of hostile slander. In 1954 he was posthumously rehabilitated."[29]

Of the Damned writers, Artem Vesely, Ivan Kataev, and Vladimir Kirshon have been fully rehabilitated. New editions of their works have been published,[30] and articles written about them in which they are treated as venerable figures in Soviet literature. Characteristically, an article on Vesely begins: "By no means every contemporary young reader knows the name of Artem Vesely; but in the middle of the 1920s and 1930s this writer was one of the most popular in our literature." As usual, no explanation whatever is offered for the surprising ignorance on the part of "every contemporary young reader." The author merely proceeds to give a survey of Vesely's life and works, among other things trying to absolve him of one of his chief sins, sharing the Pilniakian "elemental" heresy in his view of the Revolution. About Vesely's ultimate fate he is as vague as possible: "It was not granted to Artem Vesely to realize his dreams and plans; his life, full of creative fire and labor, was broken off early."[31]

That was apparently as far as one could go in 1957. By 1962 a new formula had appeared, approved for use in the new *Short Literary Encyclopedia:* "In 1937 Vesely was illegally repressed [sic: *nezakonno repressirovan*]; posthumously rehabilitated." The same phrase ("illegally repressed") is used for Babel.

Some of the Damned have not been treated so kindly. Voronsky, for example, is now fully mentionable and rates an entry in various encyclopedias and histories of

[25] Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Izbrannye rasskazy i povesti, 1923-1956,* Leningrad, 1956; *Rasskazy, feletony, povesti,* Moscow, 1958; *Rasskazy i povesti,* Leningrad, 1960; *Rasskazy, feletony, komedii, neizdannye proizvedeniia,* Moscow-Leningrad, 1962.

[26] *E.g.,* "Zerkal tse," *Ogoniok,* No. 1, 1946, p. 9.

[27] Iu. Olesha, *Izbrannye sochineniia,* Moscow, 1956.

[28] G. Skorokhodov, *Mikhail Koltsov; kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk,* Moscow, 1959, p. 233.

[29] D. Zaslavskii, "Mikhail Koltsov," in Mikhail Koltsov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia,* 3 Vols., Moscow, 1957.

[30] Artem Vesely, *Izbrannye sochineniia,* Moscow, 1958; Vladimir Kirshon, *Izbrannoe,* Moscow, 1958; Ivan Kataev, *Izbrannoe,* Moscow, 1958.

[31] M. Charny, "Artem Vesely," *Oktiabr,* No. 9, 1957, pp. 188, 202.

literature; but so far he has not been reprinted. The *Short Literary Encyclopedia* rather condescendingly recommends his critical articles on individual writers, but still indignantly scorns his theoretical treatises on the epistemology of art and of course disapproves of his tolerance of the "fellow travelers." Polonsky, whose similarity to Voronsky is notable in many respects, has fared far worse: he has apparently been left to languish in limbo. Yet he was not "repressed," as the official term puts it—he died naturally. Perhaps the silence on him is simply explained by the fact that he was not as big a figure and no one has bothered to dig him up.

The old ultra-Left of the 1920's and early 1930's has not been treated even as well as the "liberals." To the writer's knowledge there have been no notable rehabilitations from this group, although in most cases their names can again be mentioned. Even such references have their limitations: of the old RAPP Left, Lelevich and Gorbachov, though quite prominent figures in their time, belong to that strangest of all classes in the Soviet limbo—they are mentionable but not listable in indexes! At least this is the case in the three-volume *History of Soviet Literature.* Oddly enough, the same is true of Averbakh, in 1928-32 the Stalin of Soviet literature: one looks in vain for his name in the index, though it does appear in the text.[32]

The Limits of Liberation

Thus the practice of literary resurrection in post-Stalin Russia, like so many other aspects of destalinization, is full of contradictions and ambiguities, which doubtless stem from the basic ambiguity in the position of the present regime and of Khrushchev himself. After all, it is not as if there had been a genuine change of regime. The same party is in power, pursuing largely the same policies; moreover, the people who run that party were all of them close henchmen of Stalin and therefore accessories to the crimes they now denounce, including "repressions" of writers. How much, then, has been repudiated?

It would seem that the Khrushchev regime wants to rectify, insofar as it can, some of the more extreme and arbitrary acts of Stalin's tyranny, to create a calmer and less terror-ridden atmosphere. But it has no intention of allowing the reexamination to be carried too far, to open up to public discussion any profound questions which Stalin had settled to their satisfaction. In particular it is unwilling to reopen the intra-party controversies of the past. Destalinization must not lead to Trotskyization or Bukharinization or Menshevization.

This applies first of all, of course, in the sphere of politics. In literature the regime is quite willing to permit the resurrection of writers unjustly persecuted by Stalin—provided their ideology is not too deviant. The range of tolerance of varied points of view is certainly much greater than it was, but it is still not very large. Rehabilitation has a long way to go before "every contemporary young reader" can really see what Soviet literature was like thirty and forty years ago. The ghosts may walk again, but they are not allowed to disturb the basic *status quo,* the party line in literature, which insists on confining creative talent to the expression of *partiinost* and socialist realism.[33]

It is, of course, hard to make predictions about the future. It seems possible that a few additional ghosts may be rescued from limbo: Belyi, Gumilev, and Mandelstam would be popular candidates. On the other hand, the conservative resistance to further contamination of the atmosphere is also very great, and there may even be some retrogressive movement; it is perhaps significant that there have been no further reprints of the 1956-57 editions of Babel and Olesha, although the demand for them must be enormous.

By and large, the situation seems to have become fairly stabilized during the past five years,[34] and the degrees of resurrection pretty solidly fixed as outlined here: resurrection with full honors, republication of works and issuance of laudatory monographs; resurrection with "selected" republication and on-the-whole laudatory comment; restoration of the right to be listed in encyclopedias and credited with some positive contributions, but without republication of works and with a good deal of negative comment in histories; restoration of the right to be mentioned in histories but with wholly pejorative comment; and finally, restoration of the right to be mentioned in passing but not listed in indexes. The final degree of obliteration, however—total and complete oblivion—seems to exist no longer.

[32] Averbakh is mentioned in Vol. II, p. 518; Lelevich in Vol. I, pp, 514, 517; Gorbachov I have not found, but I suspect he is there somewhere.

[33] On this subject see D. Burg, "The "Cold War" on the Literary Front—Part I: The Writers' Underground", Problems of Communism, No. 4 (July August) 1962, pp. 1-13.

[34] An indication is the fact that in the Academy's *History of Russian Soviet Literature* there is no noticeable difference in "line" between the first volume, published in 1958, and the third, which came out in 1961.