

INTERNAL DISTRIBUTION ONLY

17 September 1963

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE LITERARY STRUGGLE?

Appendix:

Lecture by Professor Peter Benno at
the International Symposium on Soviet
Literature in the Sixties on September
5, 1963 in Bad Wiessee.

Introduction

In the paper below Professor Peter Benno, an American expert on Soviet literature, expounds his highly intriguing view of what happened during the past two years in the Soviet artistic world. At present his account is unique in that it relies on a scarcity of documentation and a wealth of "inside knowledge". While this fact does not necessarily mean that it is inaccurate in any particular detail, it does mean that all of the undocumented and unconfirmed statements and implications in it should be approached with a healthy degree of scepticism, and should be checked, wherever possible, against the harder information also available in the West.

The Positions of Kozlov and Suslov

The key statement made by Professor Benno, on the authority of his own sources, is that Kozlov and Suslov were the "principal negative spokesmen" within the Presidium on the issue of whether "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" should be published. Certainly this allegation tallies with the popular Western image of Suslov, but not enough is known in the West for Kozlov's views on literature to be identified with any degree of certainty. More important, however, is the fact that Professor Benno himself reports that, after their second reading of "One Day" both Suslov and Kozlov approved of publication "silently".

In other words the "objections" of these two central figures in the Presidium were withdrawn after one lecture from Khrushchev. Hence the probability would seem to be that they must have known that the majority in the Presidium would side with Khrushchev, since otherwise their "objections" need not have collapsed so quickly. Another possibility, perhaps a probability in view of the strong vested interest that both of them seem likely to have in destalinization, is that neither of them

were strongly opposed to "One Day" in the first place. The key ascertainable fact about Suslov's career is that in 1957 when Khrushchev was in a minority in the Presidium, Suslov voted with the Party leader against the anti-Party group. It is worth recalling Suslov's speech to the 22nd Congress:

"In the first years after the 20th Congress the Party met with bitter opposition from the anti-Party group of Molotov, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Voroshilov, Bulganin and others, who tried to push the Party from the Leninist path and return it to the times of the cult of the individual. As is known this contemptible group of factionalists, detached from the people, stubbornly opposed the implementation of such vitally important measures, warmly approved by all the people, as development of the virgin lands, reorganization of the management of industry, development of inner-Party democracy, restoration of legality and others. Many persons in this group were directly guilty of mass repressions against honest Communists in the period of the cult of the individual..."

In other words, Suslov was calling, almost openly, for the trial of the anti-party group. On the overt record, at least, one can not see clearly why he would oppose "One Day..." with much vigor.

Secondly there is the less important question of Kozlov. Despite Kozlov's greater prominence at the time as unofficial Second Secretary of the CC, his position, even if it could be determined with precision, has now become less vital due to his second serious illness, which bids fair to remove him from the contemporary scene as a crucial factor in the Presidium. The major fact about Kozlov's career is that he owes it largely to his close connections with Khrushchev, through whom he obtained the post of First Secretary in Leningrad in 1953. Under Khrushchev, Kozlov became a candidate member of the Presidium in February 1957, and his services to his chief were such as to warrant promotion to full membership of the Presidium when the anti-Party group was liquidated. Two years later (in 1959) Khrushchev personally told Mr. Harriman that Kozlov had been selected as his successor. Would Khrushchev have passed on such information to a distinguished representative of what was then still the main enemy of the USSR had Kozlov been opposed to him on literary matters, which in the USSR are largely a reflection of politics? It seems improbable.

In fact, a student of politics might ask, in how many countries, authoritarian, totalitarian or democratic, does the second in command oppose the leader? Does Pompidou oppose de Gaulle? Or Liu Shao-chi Mao Tse-tung? Or Butler Macmillan? Or Shehu Hoxha?

On the whole it seems more prudent to expect that second secretaries are chosen by Khrushchev because they are loyal and able executives of his policies. Kozlov's report to the 22nd Congress, like Suslov's, comes to mind:

"...Molotov and the others wanted a return to the days, so painful for our party and country, when the reprehensible methods and actions spawned by the cult of the individual held sway and when no one was safe from arbitrary and repressive acts..."

And so on for ten blazing paragraphs, including a demand that Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov should be "called to strict account" for their criminal acts.

Certainly none of this proves that Kozlov does not oppose "Ivan Denisovich". But it raises the question as to why he should have done, and as to how resolute he was in his opposition. If one rereading and the lecture from his boss were enough to change his mind, he sounds an improbably pusillanimous type to have acquired such high stature.

The Autumn of 1962.

Another segment of Professor Benno's report deals with the autumn of 1962, when everyone will agree that Khrushchev was in a state of temporary descendency as a result of his defeat in the Cuban missiles question. The Professor says:

"...Khrushchev was in a certain amount of trouble. Kozlov, although not being in any way an enemy, out to remove Khrushchev, certainly acquired, for a time at least, a right to bridle his master's outbursts of enthusiasm somewhat..."

But did he? The only real evidence of the Kozlov-Khrushchev relationship available here comes from the incident of the Mayday slogan on Yugoslavia, which was published in an inoffensive, status quo form while Kozlov was in charge in Moscow, only to be reversed and made much more offensive (to the Chinese) as a result, presumably, of the intervention of Khrushchev from his Black Sea resort.

Admittedly this incident applies to a period some five months later than November 1962, but it scarcely bears out the picture of a Kozlov able to "bridle his master's outbursts".

As for the "few rather informed individuals" who were saying to Professor Benno that "no provision was made" at the November Plenum for political and ideological control after the split of the CPSU into industrial and agricultural sections, they themselves were simply misinformed. If they had read Khrushchev's speech at the Plenum, they would have seen that the First Secretary specifically dealt with this point - as was indeed to be expected..It is over-optimistic to imagine that the man who for ten years has led a Party devoted to political and ideological control in every sphere of Soviet life would somehow forget, or omit, to provide for its continuance after his far-reaching organization. What Khrushchev said was that Party

organizations would henceforth concentrate their chief attention on production and "subordinate all other kinds of work - organizational, ideological and cultural-upbringing work - to the accomplishment of the basic task" (Pravda, November 20th, 1962). It is a far cry from subordinating ideology to economics to "making no provision for it."

The "Working Class Revolts" of 1962

Professor Benno reports that, after the price rises of June 1962, "there had been a very considerable number of working-class revolts, not all of which we know about. We know about such things as Kemerovo and Novocherkassk. We don't know about such things as Murom and so forth..."

This passage needs examination with a little more detail. Firstly, if there were revolts which we don't know about, it seems the better part of valour to exclude them from our calculations. But the Kemerovo and Novocherkassk riots probably, not certainly, did take place, and the fact that we may know of two such instances, in a nation of 220,000,000 people, as a result of the massive price rises of 25-35 percent in the summer, not only should be put in proportion, but also deserves to be recalled for its contemporary significance.

Bread, grain, flour, maccaroni and groats are all in such short supply in Moscow at present that the first two items are being rationed while the last three have disappeared from the shops completely (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17 September 1963). Inevitably there will be pressure on the black and grey market prices, and since these foods are even more fundamental than the meat, butter and milk products affected last summer, it would be reasonable to expect that at least some outbreaks of workers' discontent may be experienced in 1963 as well. The possibility that state store prices for bread will also be affected clearly exists, if the economic pattern of shortage and inflationary response seen last year is followed again, but any such move would be greatly inhibited by the visionary promise of free bread under "communism" which was so rashly made in the Party Program. From the point of view of Khrushchev's image, he would no doubt prefer to deplete his foreign currency reserves by the current massive purchases of Canadian wheat rather than be forced to lift another basic food price, and give yet another inflationary twist to the spiral.

But to return to Professor Benno, there is no evidence which would allow Murom to be put in the same class as Novocherkassk and Kemerovo. Murom was a straightforward attack on a militia station carried out by six men, of whom three were subsequently sentenced to death (see Background Information, 16 August 1963). It is not known what was the cause of the "outbreak" but it may just as well have been an error of justice, or the attempt of a group of criminals to free an arrested gang-leader, as anything to do with price rises and "working-class revolts."

The Serebryakova-Kozlov "Plot"

One of the most unconvincing passages in Professor Benno's report is his attempt to link Serebryakova with Kozlov. All that this lady is actually known to have done is to attack Ehrenburg for being a favorite of Stalin (which is true), to have accused him of destroying the other members of the Jewish anti-fascist committee, an allegation easily made but entirely unproven (the NKVD was quite capable of destroying them on its own, with or without Ehrenburg), and finally to have said that she learnt this from Poskrebyshev in a sanatorium.

From this Benno concludes that she was criticizing Khrushchev, despite the fact that Khrushchev himself was loudly criticizing Ehrenburg at the time, and the Professor adds that she could "only" have done so with the connivance of Kozlov. A splendid example of the most classical form of non-sequitur. Incidentally it is hard to see what Kozlov stood to gain from these "revelations". The sympathies of Jewish intellectuals? It seems improbable. The revelation that Poskrebyshev has not been liquidated although he should have been for his record under Stalin? But Benno seems to believe that Kozlov heads the "reactionary Stalinist establishment" (this theory is expounded most clearly in the middle of p. 8 below), and if so would he really want Poskrebyshev liquidated?

Conclusion

The outline of the literary struggle given below can scarcely be faulted, even if much documentation is conspicuously lacking (for example was Chakovsky really an NKVD agent?)

But the projection of literature into Presidium politics is most unconvincing until some much more solid evidence is forthcoming. Analytically it seems more logical to blame the many neo-Zhdanovite actions of Khrushchev's Presidium in the field of literature on Khrushchev himself, and on the men he has gradually selected to pack the Presidium over the past ten years, than to suppose that the trouble stemmed from a Suslov-Kozlov axis in disagreement with the First Secretary. From the point of view of Western propaganda as well, the former picture seems likely to be far more rewarding.

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THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE SO-CALLED LIBERAL AND
CONSERVATIVE FORCES IN MOSCOW DURING 1962-1963

Professor Peter Benno at the
International Symposium on Soviet Literature
in the Sixties on September 5, 1963 in Bad Wiessee.

What happened last fall between the time the publication of Solzhenitsyn's story was authorized and the time, I think, it was October 21, that Yevtushenko's Nasledniki Stalina appeared in Pravda? To understand this fully, I think we have to go back to two things. First of all, after the brief thaw and re-freeze of 1956-1957, the liberals, and again I am using this term in a very vague and loose sense, in fact regained most of the ground they had lost in 1957. This is true not only of literature but of the cinema, music, scholarship, anything you want in Soviet cultural life. Things that were rather roundly condemned and seemed to put an end to in 1957, by 1962 had again become current. What occurred was a slow erosion of the harsh positions established in 1957, small gains every year or every six months which, by 1962, added up to a rather considerable - at least, considerable in the Soviet context - reconquest of what had been possible in 1956 and early 1957.

On top of this, at the end of 1961, Khrushchev embarked, for reasons of economic policy, on the modernization of the Party cadres. This arouses opposition within the Presidium and within the Party at large. To overcome this opposition he attacks Stalin and thereby indirectly attacks the people who are opposing him. Well, he tried this at the XXII nd Party Congress, made a very melodramatic and impetuous gesture, and I think that impetuosity is certainly part of his political style, of removing the body from the mausoleum. This aroused great hopes among the liberal intelligentsia, who wanted a liberalization; I repeat not just of culture, but of the whole of Soviet life. These hopes, however, were immediately dashed after the XXIst Ind Party Congress. At the ideological conference presided over by Ilyichev in November 1961, it was made amply apparent that this time there was going to be none of the nonsense that had followed the XXth Congress in 1957. The only gain that the liberals made on the front of purging Stalinist personnel in the cultural world was to expel Yakob Elzberg from the Writers' Union. Elzberg was a very minor figure, really, in the Stalinist literary establishment, and it was for this reason that he, rather than someone much more prominent, such as Lesyuchevsky or Sofronov, was sacrificed.

So, as of the spring of 1962, there was a great feeling of frustration in the liberal reformist intelligentsia, that this time nothing would happen. And this feeling of frustration, I think, explains a good deal of the virulence of what happened in the fall of 1962. Then, for his own political reasons, which we needn't go into any further, he himself, Nikita Sergeyevich, in the summer of 1962, at the same time that he set up the disposition of military forces that led to the Cuban fiasco, that is, fiasco from the Soviet point of view, of October,

NOT TO BE MICROFICED

decided to embark on another campaign of de-Stalinization, no doubt to achieve what he had failed to achieve at the XXIIInd Party Congress. And it is for this reason that the story One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich was published, and we should not forget that the publication of that story was essentially a political decision. It was not published simply because Tvardovsky thought it was a good story and ought to get out. It was published because Nikita Sergeyevich had expressly authorized its publication.

Well, what can we piece together about how it happened to get published? It would seem that, as a result of the disappointment provoked by the small results in the way of purging ex-Stalinist personnel after the XXIIInd Party Congress, a group of liberal writers in the Moscow Writers' Union decided to promote this particular story. Now, they had a choice of other stories. There are quite a few of these things in the Soviet Union. Before October of last year they did not circulate widely. A story such as this would be shown only to a very few intimate friends. This particular story was most probably chosen because his hero was a peasant, a simple man of the people. This would appeal not only to Nikita Sergeyevich but to an individual through whom the story had to be got first, namely Tvardovsky, and I think - well, I know - one can maintain, that Tvardovsky would react negatively to a story about camp life, the hero of which was a member of the intelligentsia. In fact he has done so. There is this popular-peasantist element in Tvardovsky, as in Khrushchev. This would seem to be the reason why this particular story was chosen. The story was promoted with Tvardovsky, who espoused the cause of its publication, who then took it to Adzhubey, who, for his reasons, which we needn't go into - they're fairly opportunistic - also bought the idea of publishing this. It was then transmitted to Khrushchev's secretary, who read bits of the thing to the old man when he had a free moment, and then one day the old man caught fire, and asked to hear the whole thing to the end. He caught fire - why? Not out of humanitarian reasons, but because this seemed to him like an ideal vehicle for unmasking Stalinism as a system and for attacking those individuals in the 'apparat' whom he wanted to get rid of. He then had the story multiplied in a number of copies, distributed to the members of the Presidium. After they had read it a first time they came back. It would seem that the principle negative spokesmen were Kozlov and Suslov with a number of objections. Nikita Sergeyevich said - 'this, of course, is a rumor, but it's a rumor fairly close to the horse's mouth - made one of his scenes, saying that there's a Stalinist in each of you, there's even some of a Stalinist in me. We must root this thing out,' and so forth. They were sent back to read it again, and at a second meeting they approved the publication of the thing silently. That is, no one opposed him, he was reported, rather reliably, to have said, 'Sto no kampaniya, a politika.' In other words, and this word got around Moscow, the fact that it was believed - this is important, as whether or not Nikita Sergeyevich actually said it - this word got around Moscow. Indeed, while the battle for the decision to publish the story was being made, it's fair to say that, oh, a good half of the upper echelons of literary and political Moscow had read the thing in manuscript. It was quite widely known in September

and October, although it had not been known, except to a tiny handful of people, before that.

So, given the contents of the story, the fact that it unmasked Stalinism as a system and the various stutterings of Nikita Sergeyevich - whether true or not - that filtered down to the intelligentsia, this was taken as a green light to go ahead and get all those people such as Lesyuchevsky and company, some of whose activities I mentioned in the part of the report that is written out. At the same time, and for similar reasons, Nikita Sergeyevich bought Yevtushenko's Nasledniki Stalina, which is obviously on the same theme. The trouble is no longer Stalin himself, it's all little Stalins sitting around in intermediate positions of power in Soviet society. Nasledniki Stalina had been written shortly after the XXIIInd Party Congress. It circulated quite widely in the Soviet Union for almost a year before its publication. I even believe that Yevtushenko read it on a number of occasions at some diplomatic, or other, reception. He passed in an envelope to Khrushchev a letter saying "Well, you've made the XXth Party Congress, XXIIInd Party Congress, you've destalinized, why is it, then, that my poem, Nesledniki Stalina, cannot be printed? Why is it, then, that Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony, to the verses of Babiy Yar, Yumor,...there were five things, I think Strakhi was one of the poems of Yevtushenko for which the symphony had been written - why is it that this symphony cannot be played?" This also was in September-October, and Nikita Sergeyevich decided to authorize both the symphony and the publication of the story as a part of this new anti-Stalinist campaign. Well, the word go out in mid-October that the story had been authorized and the verses were published, if I'm not mistaken, on the 21st October.

Well, all this created, coming after the deep frustration of the winter and spring of 1961-1962, an immense wave of hopeful enthusiasm that at last the great day had dawned and real freedom, not as we would understand it, but as the Soviet liberals demanded, this real freedom of a sort that a very enlightened despot would grant, was about to...the day of such freedom was about to dawn in the Soviet Union, and more particularly, with respect to literature, that at last a real honest literature would be possible, and that 'novatorstvo', experimentation, modernism, also could be possible. This feeling was reinforced because the "watch-dog" of ideological purity, namely Dmitriy Polikarpov, got into trouble at the same time. Or rather, it became known in October that he was in trouble. He was in trouble, it would seem, for the following reasons: Khrushchev got around to reading, or at least looking at Doctor Zhivago only some time in the spring of 1962. After looking at it he blew up and said that this book, although it is not terribly pro-Soviet, is so abstruse that it could appeal to and be understood only by a handful of intellectuals, who think badly anyway, it was a great mistake to make a 'meshdunarodny skandal' out of this and a hero out of Pasternak, to cause a whole lot of embarrassment and trouble. The man who made this mistake is Polikarpov, he received a 'vygovor' (reprimand) and as of October, at the same time that it was decided

to publish Solzhenitsyn's story and Yevtushenko's verses, the rumor was going around that - then it was so widely believed that I think it reflects the truth- that Polikarpov was to be fired, his 'otdel' (department) of literature and culture, in other words 'otdel' of consorship, or rather 'big outfit' in the Central Committee was to be liquidated and in its place was to be put a much smaller ideological commission presided over by Ilyichev. Ilyichev is not exactly a nice man, however, what impressed the public was that this ideological commission would be a small affair and therefore could not engage in the massive preliminary censorship that Polikarpov's much bigger 'otdel' had engaged into, and indeed a few people with a sense of history and a knowledge of it compared this to 1857, when Alexander II said you could talk about the problem of how to emancipate the serfs, and this was sort of the green light to talk about all sorts of things that had been tabu for 30 years. So all these things taken together produced a tremendous upsurge of optimistic liberal feelings which, I feel it is not illegitimate to compare with the spirit in Poland in, let's say, the spring of 1956, not the fall, when the outbreak actually occurred. The main difference of course, between Russia and Poland is that in Poland in 1956, because of nationalistic reasons, the intelligentsia had the people with them, whereas in 1962 in Russia the people were quite remote from the whole thing and, as we'll see in a moment, when the chips were down, sided with the government and against the intelligentsia. So this was a wave of optimistic enthusiasm, which, moreover, had very practical results of two sorts. First of all, a flood of literature as daring as Solzhenitsyn's story, and often on the same things, namely the purges, the camps and so forth. It was stuff that had been sitting around in the bottom of desk drawers, or it had been shown to five or six, or ten or twelve very intimate friends, poured into the various 'izdatelstva' (publishing houses). Very often the people who did this knew that they didn't have a chance of getting it published, and the general expectation was that each periodical could take only one story on the camps. However, and as a matter of act, each one was supposed to, or at least this was widely believed - nevertheless, when you send your story into an 'izdatelstvo', by law it has to be read by, I forget exactly how many people, something between six and ten comes to mind - these people show it to their friends, it gets copied, it gets circulated, and to speak in terms of a concrete case, a story submitted to Sovetsky Pisatel (The Soviet Writer) presided over by Lesychevsky, and this was a deliberate gesture of defiance to him, this was done in Moscow. Three weeks later the author in question found out that the story was already circulating in Leningrad. So, once the stuff gets out, it goes very fast, and this, submitting a story or poem for publication, is, in fact, half publication, or crypto-publication, because the people who do this know full well that the stuff will get circulated; it will wind up in the KGB files, it might even get abroad, and so forth. Therefore, when they embark on this it's a very deliberate gesture, and they are expecting, and indeed hoping for a fair amount of notoriety. Well, an immense flood of literature that Polikarpov would call 'subversive', in other words, honest literature about the worst aspects of Soviet life, not only under Stalin but also under the present day, because people really believe that after Khrushchev had authorized so earth-shaking an item as Solzhenitsyn's story, that almost anything

short of a personal attack on him or on communism as such, could get by.

At the same time, and just as significantly, there were in all of the cultural organizations, rather dramatic revolts against the Stalinist establishment when the Stalinist establishment still controlled such an organization. Of course, the Moscow Writers' Union had for some time passed in the hands of liberals. However, the Union of Painters was not, the Academy of Fine Arts was not, and so forth. And so there were revolts against the organizational leadership in a whole series of organizations. The revolts were particularly dramatic in the Union of Cinema Workers, where it was quite openly said that all censorship has to be abolished, otherwise you'll never get any decent cinema in the Soviet Union, and the people who stand for this must be thrown out. In the Dramatists' and Actors' Union, and finally, and this is a very important item, in the Academy of Fine Arts and in the Painters' Union.

What happened in the Academy of Fine Arts was that Polikarpov himself, his position by the time greatly dented, appeared before the body to present the official Party list of candidates for the forthcoming elections, and he was whistled off the stage to hoots and boos and remarks about his past. Well, this is a real 'bunt'. This, together with the outpouring of subversive literature I've already mentioned, obviously created the deepest sort of alarm and panic among all the Lesyuchevskys, Yermilovs in literature, Serovs, Gerasimovs in painting and various names that come to you in any domain of cultural activity, also created the deepest alarm in the minds of such people at the very top, as Kozlov.

So there was this revolt on a scale that I think 1956, 1957 does not produce. Moreover, one thing that was quite significant about this revolt of the autumn, the late autumn of 1962, was that for the first time the 'peredovyye liberalnyye intelligenty' were followed by a rather large, let's say for want of a better term, middle-class liberal public of consumers of this culture. The word got around rather quickly what was going on in the various painters' and writers' and so forth unions; people of "liberal" persuasion obviously approved it. Then a few other events happened. Khrushchev's Cuba policy fell through. There is a fair amount of indirect evidence, which time forbids going into now, that this somewhat shook his position. It's fair to say that there was a great deal of "I told you so" talk in higher governmental circles, in the Presidium, a feeling of wounded national pride and nationalistic chauvinistic sentiment in the Party 'apparat', the armed forces at large. In other words he was in a certain amount of trouble. Kozlov, although not being in any way an enemy, out to remove Khrushchev, certainly acquired, for a time at least, a right to bridle his master's outbursts of enthusiasm somewhat. And it was...this is one thing. Khrushchev in a very bad humor and in temporary descendency. The second thing was that at the November Plenum of the Central Committee the splitting of the Party into two divisions, one for agriculture and one for industry, was announced. And here I'm not just speculating, I'm

repeating what a few rather informed individuals were saying. This threw the whole 'apparat' into great disarray because, in the way the split was set up, no provision was made for what had until then been one of the primary, if not the primary, functions of any given 'obkom', namely political and ideological control. The various 'obkomy' were, essentially, organs of political administration and the split was designed to turn them into organs of economic administration, and in the two new 'obkomy' foreseen for each province, no provision was made for a local Polikarpov. Now, whether this was oversight or deliberate is not clear. At any event, and this is important, it was felt as a slighting of the importance of matters ideological. Moreover, it meant that the average 'apparatchik', used to political administration and ideological control, was cast in a new, and to him unfamiliar role, namely that of economic administrator, where his responsibility for success or failure could be pinned down, where he was not at all sure of his ability to perform. At the same time, he was dismayed by this revolt of, let's say, liberal-intellectuals, followed by this, let's say, broad middle-class liberal public, which seemed to him to menace anarchy, disorder, weakening of Soviet power, and so forth. We should not forget that all this took place against a background where in the previous months, after the price rises of June, there had been a very considerable number of working-class revolts, not all of which we know about. We know about such things as Novocherkassk and Kemerovo. We don't know much about such things as Murom and so forth. There were quite a number of such things, which clearly, greatly preoccupied the average Party 'apparatchik' and hence increased their dismay at this revolt, coinciding with a disorganization of the administrative apparatus. The feeling of disarray in the Party apparatus strengthened the hand of those in the Presidium, such as Kozlov, and, it should be assumed, also Suslov, who thought that Nikita Sergeyevich had gone too far in authorizing this story. Nikita Sergeyevich no doubt was having after-thoughts himself when he saw the mess that had broken out. Hence, these people, let's say conservatives, Stalinists, whatever you want, organized what everyone interpreted to be the provocation of his visit to the Manezh.

Now, the immediate purpose of this provocation, and at least Polikarpov and Furtseva were in on it initially, if not Kozlov, the immediate purpose of his provocation was to undo what had been done when Polikarpov had been whistled off the stage when he presented the list of candidates for the elections to the Academy of Fine Arts, namely, to get the official list, headed by Serov, elected. Well, they took Nikita Sergeyevich in a very bad mood to this thing, showed him exactly the kind of stuff that would make an 'obyvatel' such as he, see red. He delivered himself of the remarks which you no doubt read in Encounter. The next day these people, that is, the conservatives, seized on this as a pretext to launch a massive campaign in modernism in art. The immediate purpose of this was to get Serov elected - they won.

Because the party was in such general disarray, however, and the liberal revolt was of such proportions, the attack was soon extended to literature, music and so forth, and in massive quantities. Day after day, obscurantist articles

of one sort or another poured forth, to the immense dismay and surprise of the liberal intelligentsia. However, the liberal intelligentsia did not lose faith in the leader because of this. They were still not impressed by the, what was to them, the unheard-of gesture of publishing this story, they felt the whole thing was a misunderstanding, he was in a bad mood, he doesn't understand this sort of art, 'okolpachki starogo duraka,' but this could be undone if only you could talk to him reasonably. Then it was announced that there would be a meeting between the heads of government and leaders of the artistic world, a meeting that finally took place on, I believe, December 17th, I think that's the right date. This was interpreted by the liberal intelligentsia as a liberal gesture. Nikita Sergeyevich was inviting them to explain to him what art was all about, and he would benevolently listen, just like he had benevolently listened to the people who had pleaded the cause of the story Ivan Denisovich. And on the eve of the December 17th meeting there was an atmosphere in Moscow of great hopefulness. The meeting was to take place on the Monday. Over the weekend people felt that when this great Monday dawned the misunderstanding would be cleared up and the progress begun and the publication of the story would continue. Well, when the meeting occurred, of course, exactly the opposite from what the liberal intelligentsia expected, took place.

First of all, in Ilyichev's speech, which was by no means published in full, there is a violent attack on Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony and the verses of Babi Yar, because this raises what to Ilyichev was the dead issue of anti-Semitism, stirred up national animosities in the Soviet Union. He requested Shostakovich in very stern terms to withdraw the symphony, which was to have its premiere the next day, saying that if you are with the people you will withdraw this thing. Nikita Sergeyevich interrupted several times, delivered himself of a few remarks that could easily be construed as condoning a certain anti-Semitism. The public, about 400 or 600 writers, I forget exactly what, was aghast at this, because it shattered the image of the enlightened despot they had, and destroyed let's say, their naive monarchist illusions. The high point of the meeting, however, was a speech by the biographer of Marx, a lady named Serebryakova, who, as you probably know, was the widow of the Minister of Finance in the twenties, Sokolnikov, former Trotskyite. In order to fully understand the import of what she said you should remember that she's Jewish. She spent 21 years in Siberia and, as people said, 'ona ne stolko sidela, skolko lezhala'. She didn't have too bad a time in the camps, was the mistress of at least one commandant, had two children, was eventually brought back and was sort of the regime's alibi for the whole camp business. She would say, "Yes, I'm grateful to the Party for having purged me of my Trotskyite errors, poor old Stalin carried the thing on too long, therefore I'm grateful to Nikita Sergeyevich for liberating me. Long live Nikita Sergeyevich and the Leninist Central Committee of our great and glorious Party!" This sort of thing, I mean, the alibi for the regime among the returnees from the camp, here was an ideal person to answer the clique that had promoted Solzhenitsyn, who obviously implies a very different picture of the meaning, of the phenomenon of the camps.

Well, she got up and exploded a bomb. This, incidentally, most of this is in Le Monde for December twenty-something, I forget the exact date, by saying that "many comrades are now shouting about the right to 'novatorstvo', to experimentation, shouting for more liberty, contact with the West, teaching us moral lessons. Yet what were they doing under Stalin? Let us take, for example, the case of Comrade Ehrenburg, who is now making so much of a noise. He was Stalin's favorite, he was Stalin's chief propagandist, and indeed it was he who 'pogubil' (destroyed) the other members of the Jewish anti-fascist committee. Comrades, how do I know all this? Because I passed my vacation, 'ya otдыхala', in the same sanatorium with Poskrebyshev, who was writing his memoirs." "Well, gasps of surprise and indignation, because everyone had assumed that Poskrebyshev had long since gone the way of so much flesh under Stalin. Also, realization that she had not made such a remark on her own, because Stalin and Poskrebyshev are by no means dear people to Khrushchev. She was, in a sense, criticizing, quite rightly, criticizing, Khrushchev. She could only have done this, only with connivance in the very highest places; in other words, in the Presidium, in other words, Frol Kozlov. If you put this together with the way Kochetov had dare fire, as I mentioned the other day, Dymshits, after he himself, namely Khrushchev, had ordered periodicals to produce reviews of Solzhenitsyn's book; this is what people did, you have the picture that this misunderstanding at the Manezh, which at the time, people realizes, went at least to Furtseva and Polikarpov - went right to the top, to Kozlov - they were faced with an enormous plot of the reactionary Stalinist establishment. Moreover, the injection of the note of anti-Semitism into the whole thing by the attack on Ehrenburg, by what Serebryakova said, by certain other remarks that were made by influential people at this meeting, resurrected for all those people the phantom of the xenophobic, intricate-nationalistic, anti-Semitic ideology of the Zhdanov and Stalinist period down to 1956, which the liberal intelligentsia feels is, to this day, a harpy ideology of the 'apparat', that they use particularly the anti-Semitic weapon as something to stir up popular support in favor of the government and against the liberal intellectuals in the middle. And it should be said that if you asked any member of the people while all this was going on what they thought of what Nikita Sergeyevich had said about abstract art, what they thought of Ehrenburg, you got the very reactionary 'chernosotensky' (black hundred) expressions of opinion.

So the December meeting seemed to resurrect the whole Zhdanovite, late Stalinist syndrome, and this definitely dashed the naive monarchist illusions of the intelligentsia.

Well, what happened next is, as one writer put it, the 'result of the meeting of the intellectuals and heads of government, was a Battle of Borodino'. Frightful losses on both sides, no victor, both armies were drawn from the field intact

ready to fight again another day. And this is just what the liberal intellectuals did. On the very day after the meeting, at Tsarskeye Selo, which is where the "pravitelstvennyye dachi" (mansions of the leaders) are located on the Lenin Hills in Moscow, Yevtushenko and Shostakovich go through with playing the symphony. Shostakovich almost backed out, at least, as Yevtushenko tells it, and he, Yevtushenko, heroically saved the day. The choir almost quit at the last minute - they were so scared - but Yevtushenko, with the kind of oratory and rhetoric that you saw the other night on films, talked them back into it, and the premiere took place. It was an electric event, people applauded like... I don't know they must have applauded the first performance of the Marriage of Figaro in Paris in 1785 or '86, whenever it was. It was a political event, in other words, the premiere of this symphony. At the same time, the Moscow Writers' Union, or the Party Bureau of the Moscow Writers' Union, again the day after the business between the government and the leaders of the artistic world met, threw out all the last surviving conservatives, elected an ultra-liberal bureau. I'll spare you the names, they're printed in Literaturnaya Gazeta if you want to get them, and moreover, reopened, formally reopened the case of Lesyuchevsky. The case of Lesyuchevsky had been opened once at the time Elzberg had been expelled from the Writers' Union early in 1962, in effect bringing criminal charges against him. The conservatives counterattacked an individual only mildly liberal, such as Kosolapov, the editor of Literaturnaya Gazeta. He's fired, one - for having printed Babiy Yar, which is not about German anti-Semitism, but which is about the anti-Semitism of the Stalinist post-Zhdanovite establishment, and this is why it's so significant in the Soviet Union, in spite of the fact that it's not terribly good poetry. One - for having printed Babiy Yar in the first place, and two - for having refused one of the more reactionary articles on modern art. Someone from Polikarpov's outfit, maybe it was Polikarpov himself - incidentally, Polikarpov was reinstated in the midst of all this and because it was decided that a big 'apparat' to conduct censorship was necessary - Ilyichev, who is more opportunistic than Polikarpov, and had for a moment wavered in the liberal direction, came resoundingly back into the conservative camp, either Polikarpov or one of his henchmen went down to Literaturnaya Gazeta to explain to them why Kosolapov had been fired and Chakovsky, who is a former NKVD agent, had been put in his place, and he explained for two of the articles and verses I mentioned, and someone said, "Well, if you fired Kosolapov you really ought to fire all the rest of us, because we're just as guilty," and they were told, "You wait. We will."

So what you had after the December meeting were these acts of defiance, doubled with repression in the form of firing, but nothing worse. Obviously it became more difficult to publish subversive stuff, although a trickle of it did get through in the course of the winter. I don't know if any of you noticed that the December issue of Novy Mir didn't come out until early January. It was about a month late. This was the one with Nekrasov's article about his visit to America, and if you look closely, in certain crucial pages, where he discusses abstract painting, or simply modern painting in America, and says "It is not all that bad," it seems that these have been tampered

with, that they were taken out, something else put in, then the something else taken out and later put back. At least, this is what sharp eyes perceive in looking at it.

There was a kind of struggle. Some liberal stuff, but not too much. Well, the ultimate result of all this was a general triumph for the Stalinist establishment in all key organizational positions, except the editorial board of Novy Mir and the Moscow Writers' Union, a fair number of firings. The whole thing was more brutal in the provinces than it was in Moscow, and we know much less about it in the provinces than we do in Moscow. But the liberals this time, unlike 1957, one - did not recant, and there were no vociferous recantations, and two - continued a campaign of active resistance in the sense of defiant talk. They couldn't go out and publish an opposition sheet, but they could answer Chakovsky or Polikarpov and so on.

The regime apparently grew more and more dismayed at this lack of docility or respect. I think the main evidence for this is Khrushchev's speech to the second meeting between the government and the leaders of the artistic world which was generally interpreted in the Western press as a very harsh, dogmatic definition of the line that art belongs to the people, in other words, to the government. In fact, if you read it closely, it is a rather apologetic affair. Now, what's he apologizing for? He's apologizing for certain of his own slips at the...verbal slips, that is...at the December meeting, and against accusations that had continued to be leveled against him in the party 'apparat', the issue of anti-Semitism, the question of 'What were you doing under Stalin?' The whole thing, and time forbids this, if you go through it, it's best read as a reply to the things that were being said throughout the winter in this campaign of passive resistance.

Well, to conclude, and I've gone on much longer than I expected and perhaps much too long in general, by the end of the spring it would seem that the campaign of passive resistance had borne fruit to the extent that the government gave up trying to discipline the intellectuals beyond what it had already done in the winter. And it would seem that the government decided tacitly to drop the whole thing, of course, not permitting the kind of 'bardak' that had occurred...this is a word that a highly placed person used at the December meeting, that had occurred back in November and December. As of the late spring or summer of this year there could be a certain amount of liberalism because after all there is a big public for this in the Soviet Union, you don't want to offend them too much, in the interests of national solidarity and security, but, keeping things much better under control than last December. And it would seem also that Khrushchev is now much better established on his feet than he was in the

winter, that he has probably had after-thoughts about some of the excessively sharp (he's a man given to impromptu), impetuous declarations that he later on reconsiders.

We should not look on him as some monolithic block of consistency. We considered that some of these things that he's said really didn't pay, and should be discreetly retracted. Moreover, Kozlov had disappeared, Khrushchev was entering into a period of certain amity with the Americans and the West. Bad publicity, all this business of suppressing writers and periodicals. And so, again in the interests of his very pragmatic politics, and the fact that he was now much more firmly in command of the whole situation, no doubt this is the explanation, coupled with the fact that the government at last announced it was impressed by this campaign of passive resistance, that lies behind the much more limited thaw now going on, it's more limited as compared to the really massive break-up of the ice-jam last fall.

Well, those are roughly the facts as I know them and I'll stop there.