

Literature and Power in the New Age: Institutions and Divisions

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The last time that literature had serious influence in this country and successfully competed with the authorities was during the period of so-called “*perestroika* and *glasnost*.” That period was characterized by an incredible jump in the circulation of books and even more of journals (2,500,000 for *Novy mir*, 1,800,000 for *Druzhba narodov*, 1,000,000 for *Znamya*, and similar figures for other periodicals). Another indicator of the high status of writers was their success in politics. Elections for deputies were direct, open, and honest, and writers won them: Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Vitaly Korotich, Fazil Iskander, Sergei Averintsev, Boris Oleynik, etc. The influence of literary criticism, even that written by non-specialists, was another indicator. Gavril Popov’s review (1986) in the journal *Nauka i zhizn* of Alexander Bek’s novel *The New Appointment*, in which he discussed the “administrative-command system” gained an unexpected and unprecedented level of popularity.

During this *perestroika*-era rise, real criticism took the lead, and one of its objectives was to introduce readers to the socio-historical context of the previously banned books now being published apace after the end of censorship in 1990.

Then the archive of “banned” books began to empty out, publications decreased, circulations went down, and the power of literature saw a corresponding decline, having turned out to be in large part illusory. Little by little, literature returned to itself, to its own literary purposes, and criticism stepped back from its higher objective of enlightenment and the public good to its primary aesthetic function. No wonder the first independent award for critics founded in the new era was named after 19th-century critic Apollon Grigoriev whose stance of “organic” criticism (aesthetic analysis) opposed criticism focused on significant societal goals and aims.

A new division of Russian literature emerged in the 90s, and a corresponding division of its influence on society and readers. Target groups of readers splintered. New literary institutions, unprecedented for Russia, appeared.

I would like to note here two important new Russian words frequently heard among literary circles at the time: Soros and Booker. Both these names came to Russia from the West, and both referred to institutions of key significance to the literary world: initiatives by Soros (the Soros Foundation, Open Society Foundations) include the support of literary periodicals, and the Booker (Russian Booker) is an award and support for the Russian novel independent of the state. The Apollon Grigoriev prize was also independent – its sponsor was ONEXIM Bank (new Russian billionaires Mikhail Prokhorov and Vladimir Potanin).

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As for the institution of “thick literary journals,” they were substantially stable (you could even call it “substantial conservatism”) for a quarter century; they showed an ability to adapt to new conditions, unlike their subscribers, who have been steadily dropping off. What do I mean by *stability*? Primarily in terms of their literary component, but also ideologically. During *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the journals became sharply divided, separating themselves by position; the exchange of hyperbolic recriminations (degenerating into personal insults) in the polemic between “patriots” and “democrats” came to be known as the “civil war in

literature.” The combative division and personal attacks was termed the “barricade mentality.”

In the war between the “patriotic” periodicals (*Nash sovremmenik*, *Molodaya gvardia*, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, *Literaturnaya Rossiya*) and the “liberal” camp, critics by necessity took on martial, front-line language. In the end, this accomplished nothing aside from mutual isolation and segregation from each other. It’s not that the opposing parties, whose positions hardly changed, made peace – they just stopped noticing each other. The polemic ran out of steam, and there was a minimal audience for the exchange of mutual accusations.

An analysis of the frequency of citations and references between different journals shows that they were nearly non-existent by the start of the 90s. Each publication maintained its own viewpoint – patriotism, conservatism, liberalism. But these concepts themselves underwent certain historical changes, and over time, the sharpness of these contrasting positions grew dull. The emergence and development of the, shall we say, “buffer” group of literary figures connected by the Yasnaya Polyana award (founded in 2003) played an important role in softening the polemic paving the road toward mutually assured destruction.

This extra-journal, or probably super-journal, developed along with a new institution. This became a new trend: writers were drawn to a particular award in possession of its own ideology, and backed by significant funds, as well. One can observe firsthand how the importance of this group, subsequently known as the *tusovka* (“the scene”), puts a certain look on the faces of its members.

And not just their faces. Participants voluntarily take part in certain rituals – their version of oaths of loyalty. Literary figures belonging to this group were not bound by any membership. But they were, and remain, bound by something much greater than membership – unity. For example, before the 2014 Olympics, all the members of the Yasnaya Polyana circle took a turn bearing the Olympic torch on the territory of Tolstoy’s Yasnaya Polyana estate, wearing special athletic outfits and hats inscribed with the Olympic symbol and the Russian coat of arms.

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The schism in August 1991 of the USSR Writer’s Union, the premier literary institution, revealed the true fragmentation of the literary community, exposing two new groups – the “patriotic” and “democratic” (the Letter of Russian Writers, 1990). Further division produced several more groups: “April” (the informal democratic association of writers in Moscow), the Writers’ Union of Russia, the Union of Russian Writers, and the Moscow Writers’ Union. Other writers’ unions split along the same lines in other Russian Federation republics and in regional organizations.

There were varying points of view on the matter among the writers themselves – from enthusiasm (Anatoly Pristavkin, Alla Gerber) to despair. Lev Anninsky: “I was naïve... That writers from the republics would bring down the Union, that I could have imagined. But that the writers in Moscow itself would bring down their own organization – that madness never even occurred to me” (Anninsky, 1999). What followed? I’ll quote Anninsky again: “...From a distance I can hear the sound of them dividing things up between the “unions of writers.” They split up property. Assets. The writers’ union(s), and, most importantly, the Literary Foundation (the subsidiary organization of the Writers’ Union actually in charge of these not insignificant possessions; the boarding houses, i.e., the Creative Center in Yalta, Koktebel in Crimea, Komarovo near St. Petersburg, and Maleyevka and Peredlkino near Moscow; kindergartens, polyclinics, hospitals, dachas, etc. Writers themselves joked that in the fight between democratic and patriotic writers, commerce won – commercial (mass) literature, the

“phenomenon of the book stall” (Roman Arbitman). The path to compromise was not ideological, but necessitated by economic conditions, and cut through the proudly pure arthouse and the self-consciously incorporated mass lit.

Starting in 1990-1991, several dozen writers’ organizations were founded, and some have even survived to the present day – the status and position of their leaders was usually the reason for their existence. To name a few:

- Academy of Zaum (Tambov, avant-garde forms of art);
- Academy of Poetry (founded 1998 – “a public association of the spiritual movement of Russian peoples”);
- Academy of Russian Literature (founded 1996; in 2009, Metropolitan (later patriarch) Kirill was appointed president emeritus);
- Academy of Modern Russian Literature;
- Antipodes (Australia);
- April (founded in April 1990, and shut down in 2008);
- Association of Russian Writers of the Republic of Moldova;
- Babylon (founded 1989);
- Congress of Ukrainian Writers (an alternative to the National Union of Ukrainian Writers), which also includes the South Russian Union of Writers (Odessa);
- Crimean Literary Academy (November 2005, Simferopol);
- International Association of Writers and Publicists (Riga, and then later London);
- International Federation of Russian Writers (founded in 2005 in Munich);
- International Federation of Russian-Speaking Writers (headquarters in Budapest);
- International Association of Writers’ Unions (founded as a successor of the Writers’ Union of the USSR on May 14, 1992).

The process of partition, division, divergence, and even schism among intellectuals and creative members of the intelligentsia increased after Crimea and Donbass (2014). Neologisms appeared demarcating the key positions: *krymnash* (“crimea-ours”), and the similar *krymnashest* “crimea-is-ours,” opposed by *krymnenash* (crimea’s-not-ours”). The split ran through many cultural institutions, following other schisms and divisions tied to specific events:

- 1993 — constitutional crisis, “White House”;
- 1994 — first Chechen war;
- 1996 — presidential election;
- 1998 — second Chechen war;
- 2001 — election of Putin.

The process of restoration has been growing more visible since 2012. But in actuality, this process (processes) have been ongoing under the surface since 1994. The conservative group, stubbornly turning history inside out with the help of Soviet discourse, naturally played an active role, but the liberal intellectuals did as well, with their post-modernist exploitation of that discourse. As for average consumers, they were entirely unconcerned as to whether the restoration of the discourse, through rhetoric, pop songs, Soviet cinema, art exhibitions, etc. (as well as the television shows immersing viewers in the Soviet period) was done in earnest or mockery, in parody.

The literary “sphere” is a word signifying something without rigid barriers, open to ingress and egress, open to influence, fluctuating – while comprised of completely concrete material: the material is always the same, but the form can be subject to alteration.

Schism, on the other hand, indicates a sharp division, a strict partition. Where there is a schism, there is an axe chopping (in the best-case scenario) a wooden log.

We are talking about a schism of the sphere.

The history of the Russian intelligentsia is the story of its schisms, starting with the split into westernizers and slavophiles and ending with the most recent events and reaction to them.

The schism in the creative sphere and in the creative organizations and cultural institutions of Russia began prior to the emergence of clear signs of a counter-*perestroika*, before Putin’s terms began, i.e., in the 1990s.

Each schism in the post-Soviet period has been instigated by ideological causes: to oversimplify, the division is between the state, or rather state-influenced “patriotism,” and free society, individual freedom. Looking deep into Russian literature, we see that Pushkin created a template for these future conflicts and schisms in his poem “The Bronze Horseman.”

Each schism involved a dispute about the choice of Russia’s path forward. This debate is now defined by the concepts of “sovereign democracy,” Russia’s “special path,” and the “besieged fortress.”

The process of the schism during *perestroika* and immediately after, named after Gorbachev and Yeltsin, went within the so-called liberal intelligentsia. Let us recall that the “Preobrazhensky Revolution” (August 19-21, 1991) was seen differently by different groups – the Novomir-Solzhenitsynites, liberal conservatives (like Irina Rodnyanskaya), and deomcrats (*Moskovskiy Novosti*, *Ekho Moskvy*, *Znamya*) (see Tolts, 2006)

The next schism took place in October 1993, after the events at the beginning of that month; those who supported those opposing the president, who called the incident the “shooting up of the White House” (“shooting up Parliament”) split off from the liberals (now frequently referenced as “so-called liberals”). The writer Alexander Prokhanov penned the editorial “A Letter to the People,” (published in the *Sovietskaya Gazeta* newspaper on the eve of these events); and writers “in support of Yeltsin’s policies” signed the famous “Letter of 42,” characterized as “bloodthirsty” by writers who supported, conversely, Ruskoy, Khasbulatov, and General Makashov.

The next schism among writers was tied to military actions in Chechnya (in 1994). The writer Grigory Baklanov, who served on the front lines in World War II, published an open anti-war letter in *Izvestiya*, and his example was followed by the writers and war correspondents of the new generation (Arkady Babchenko).

The liberals’ island was shrinking, losing territory. That of the conservatives (“patriots”) was expanding – partly due to the influx of former liberals (renegade liberals).

After the return of Alexander Solzhenitsyn to Russia, his conservative position strengthened the position of the “patriots.”

Former ideological allies discussed this topic in a “roundtable” discussion in the journal *Znamya* (2002, No. 1) – Alexander Ageev, Renata Galtseva, Denis Dragunsky, and Lyudmila Saraskina (“Schism of the Liberals,” 2002). A new time had come – the time of President Putin: “A new schism appears to be approaching among the liberal intelligentsia. The differing and frequently diametrically opposed views of Putin and his actions, the progress and purpose of military intervention in Chechnya, the “humanitarian” bombardment of Serbia and Iraq, <...> the NTV conflict <...> are becoming their own kind of “identifying texts,” points of divergence for the previously like-minded...” The main point of argument was “the currently system of governance and people for whom the state remains the main threat to freedom and civil rights.”

The literary critic Alexander Ageev rejects the notion of a “schism” – he compares the literary sphere to a flowing mass, a “pile of sand,” since the reaction of each person to these values (conservative or liberal) can be multi-faceted – not a reaction, but reactions: one “liberal,” for example, might value freedom and independence but angrily reject mass culture and hate gay people. The philosopher Renata Galtseva notes that in the split into “liberal and patriotic” there are “terrible” representatives of both sides (for example, liberals following in the footsteps of the “revolutionary democrats”; ex officio government employees inveighing against the government like Yury Afanasyev, the rector of the Russian State University for the Humanities; and liberals in Yeltsin’s circle who prevented the “decommunization of the country, etc.) According to Galtseva, these liberals aren’t liberals at all; they are “anarchists, radicals, who want to overthrow the foundations of existence.”

The writer Denis Dragunsky believes that it is the state that is at fault in the “endless schisms” and “ancestral dislike of the state,” and ends his observations with the phrase “Herzen is on our side, after all!” – not entirely convincing to Galtseva. The previously ardent liberal Lyudmila Saraskina (who published a hagiography of Solzhenitsyn soon after this discussion) separates herself from the liberals, passionately attacks the “liberal party” and is the first (in this discussion) to define the new standards: “In his first year in office, President Putin clearly articulated that Russian had its own national interests...” and now the heart of this former liberal, long suffering from the disgrace and humiliation visited upon her country, has been healed.” Saraskina is ready to hold “liberals” accountable: for everything from Yugoslavia to Hiroshima.

After Putin was elected president (the state-liberals and liberal-conservatives were behind him, by the way), new schisms formed in cultural organizations and creative spheres: literary, film, and theater.

It’s notable that these schisms were simultaneously both political and aesthetic in nature.

The Crimean situation with Ukraine brought a new force to these divisions. The instigation for the schism was not just the annexation of Crimea, support for the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic, and the idea of Novorossiia. The split was also brought on by a public initiative: the “Collective address to the Russian public by Russian artists in support of the President’s position on Ukraine and Crimea,” officially published in *Izvestiya* on March 11, 2014 (“Collective Address,” 2014).

Among the initial 85 signatures, including Oleg Tabakov, Vladimir Spivakov, Stanislav Govorukhin, A. Uchitel, Pavel Lungin, Valery Fokin, Nikolai Tsiskaridze, Karen Shakhnazarov, we find only two writers – the poet and critic Dmitry Bak (identified here as the director of the State Museum of Literature) and Alexei Konstantinov (author of *Criminal Petersburg*). Others later added to the open list of signatures (which eventually grew to 511) – the literary critic V. Y. Kurbatov and the writer (in the list, indicated as “playwright”) Yury Polyakov, then the editor-in-chief of the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (now president of the editorial board). Interestingly, Vladimir Gergiyev disavowed his signature when touring in the U.S. So the percentage of writers on the list was actually 0.5%. Rustam Abdullin (Republic of Mari El) published an alternative “List of Russian artists against Putin’s policies in Crimea!! People of conscience and honor” on his blog (03.13.2014). There are many more writers represented there: Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Gandlevsky, Grigol Chkhartishvili (Boris Akunin), V. Dolina, A. Arkhangelsky, B. Dubin, N. Ivanova, M. Chudakova, L. Rubinstein, S. Parkhomenko, A. Illichevsky, O. Kuchkina, Y. Sidorov, S. Stratanovsky, N. Katerli, N. Sokolovskaya, Y. Chizhova, Y. Yermolin, M. Stepanova, G. Morev, I. Kukulin, M. Rybakova, N. Gromova, M. Lipovetsky, K. Azadovsky, M. Yasnov, Y. Solonovich, D. Dragunsky, and many more.

From the angry comments: “Our cultural figures have demonstrated their ‘level of culture’ to the West” (Valery), “Putin is the pride of Russia, and this is just a list of pathetic bastards” (Ellina), “This the Russia’s fifth column” (Nikolai).

Nevertheless, the signatures beneath the letter performed something of an organizing function, consolidating the opposition. Those opposition members also saw themselves as being part of a particular sphere. This was demonstrated in several events that set the divergence into a schism.

But let us discuss other artistic unions before we get to the writers, for example, the Cinematographers’ Union.

In 2010, an organization opposed to the Cinematographers’ Union was registered by the government as *Kinosoyuz*, “Kino-Union” or “Film Union.” The founders of the Film Union elected Boris Khlebnikov as chairperson. (The chair of the CU is Nikita Mikhailkov, who practically seized the position from Marlen Khutsiev, elected by majority vote.)

In his first interview after the founding and registration of the Film Union, the director Alexei German, Jr. discussed the point of “divergence” for film production, and the film industry. “The fight around the CU is because a single person holds a monopoly on communication with the state, which determines the life of the industry” – Nikita Mikhailkov. “It is impossible to consider the Film Union in isolation from the existence of the state” (*Novaya*, No. 106, September 24, 2010). German is accused of causing the schism, but he asserts that, in fact, the objective of the union is the consolidation and integration of cinematographers; and the “relationship with the government will be one of partnership.”

A similar schism occurred in the theater – around the Zolotaya Maska (Golden Mask) award. An official in the Ministry of Culture (Deputy Minister Vladimir Aristarkhov) accused the festival of “violating moral norms and of Russophobia” (Ministry of Culture, 2015). I feel compelled to include here a very expressive statement by Aristarkhov: “When the classics are reduced to coarse instincts, when under the banner of the right to interpretation we see, not the classics, not Pushkin, Gogol, and our other great playwrights,

we see, ...that under the mask, under the Golden Mask, the classics have dragged in values alien to us” (“Russophobia in the theater or creative freedom?” – *RIA Novosti*, 05.28.2015).

In an open letter signed by the president of the festival, Georgy Taratorkin, Golden Mask recipient K. Raykin, and jury member Igor Kostolevsky, it is emphasized that the Golden Mask is an independent award for theatrical achievement. (The award was founded in 1993 by the Union of Theater Workers of Russia and is granted to plays in all genres. The scandal (and later, the schism) erupted around the composition of the expert council for the award and the suggestion by the Ministry of Culture to renew the practice of putting on previews of plays selected for the festival for “artistic councils,” i.e., censors.)

This dispute between officials and the theater came front and center after the production of the opera “Tannhauser” was banned in the Novosibirsk Theater of Opera and Ballet (the director was the 24-year-old Timofey Kulyabin). The director of the theater, Boris Mezdrich, was fired by Minister of Culture Vladimir Medynsky, who hypocritically announced at the time that “artistic freedom remains unchallenged.”

Oleg Tabakov moved to protect young non-conformist directors (including Konstantin Bogomolov, who put on the controversial “Brothers Karamazov” and “Ideal Husband” at MKhAT, and the play “The Prince” (based on “The Idiot”). But support from the older generation didn’t, and doesn’t, always help new avant-garde directors and non-conforming artists to survive and thrive. Oleg Tabakov himself signed onto *#krymnash*, but that didn’t prevent him from defending directors of an entirely different ideological mindset (Valery Fokin is another major *krymnashist* director). Maria Revyakina, director of the official theatrical Golden Mask award, came to the defense of arrested theatrical figures Kirill Serebrennikov, Alexey Malobrodsky, and Sofia Apfelbaum, and many of the actors speaking at the ceremony, broadcast on state television, followed her example (including Alla Demidova), and directors as well (including Lev Dodin).

The Golden Mask compromised with the Ministry of Culture in 2016, when, not easily or without a battle, it agreed to changes in the membership of its experts, to the inclusion of those suggested by the Ministry of Culture. But as a result, it preserved itself as an institution, its public position, and its reputation as an independent and important theatrical award.

As for writers’ association, specifically the Russian PEN Center, the schism there that began with the exclusion of Sergey Parkhomenko was followed by an avalanche of requests to withdraw from the body.

Lev Timofeyev, a human rights activist in the Soviet past, posted a chronicle under the title “The Loss of the Pen Club” on Facebook.

“Since I’m no longer interested, and sometimes even ashamed, to take part in the work of the Russian PEN, I have decided to leave.” In September, Lev Timofeyev published the account of the crisis in the organization on his own site (<http://levtimofeev.ru/utrata-pen-kluba>). He writes: “Here I will provide a documentary account of my attempts (mainly only my own, but I know that others have tried) to keep the PEN Club working effectively in Russia – about attempts that were, as should be immediately clear, unsuccessful....Along the way (not intentionally, specifically “along the way”) certain particularities of the worldview of that social stratum known as the “writers’ community” will be specified – that part of the

writers' community who voluntarily joined the PEN Club, which we call the Russian PEN Center..."

The former vice president, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, left the PEN Center, and was sharply criticized in absentia at the general meeting in December 2014, and accused of an attempt at seizing control over the organization. In any event, her name has been removed from the list of members published on the organization's official site (<http://penrussia.org/new/2014/100>). In an open letter in January 2015, Ulitskaya said the following:

"I am aware that the schism that has arisen in PEN is perfectly natural, and fully reflects the schism in our society as a whole. In all strata of society there are people who unconditionally support the actions of the government, approving the "main party line," and there are people who do not, who do not approve or support it. To call the first "patriots" and the second "national traitors" and "fifth columnists" is to follow an old Soviet tradition, always employed by the state against any critical opposition, from either the right or the left.

Do I really need to justify myself, to prove that it is only the pain of our people, growing ever poorer, brought about by shortsighted leaders causing the economic collapse of our country, shame for the greedy and unscrupulous leadership pushing the world towards war, that compel me to speak my mind completely and clearly? Not out of a desire to defend myself, but solely to clarify the situation, which is murky and fairly abhorrent.

Until the end of this past year I served as vice president of PEN and was on its executive committee. After a meeting with PEN's international leadership over a year ago, after they expressed their bewilderment over the Russian PEN's inactivity, with which I fully agreed, I made the effort to encourage several dozen young and active writers, journalists, and publishers to join. With the assistance of other like-minded members, we set up a Facebook page and update the PEN Center website. There were indeed some fairly critical documents published there, most of those on Facebook originally posted elsewhere. Traffic to the site jumped a hundred times. I was admonished by the executive committee for my failure to choose the right agenda for PEN, which is a human rights organization, not a political one. Need I comment on the impossibility in current conditions of drawing a line between human rights and political activity? Otherwise we will turn into an organization defending the rights of dogs and cats. As soon as Bitov's letter was published (To what end? I was prepared to meet with him and immediately cease all my work for PEN), I divested myself of all authority, as I announced prior to the general meeting."

After more than one hundred members of the PEN Center spoke in defense of the Ukrainian Library and signed a petition of support and solidarity, together with members of the Free Historical Society, with colleagues from the interregional public organization, Memorial Human Rights Center, who the Ministry of Justice accused of undermining the constitutional order, the PEN Center's executive committee (<http://www.penrussia.org/new/2015/6091>) attempted to expel a number of active members who had joined during Ulitskaya's vice presidency.

Russian PEN Center Vice President Yevgeny Popov "on behalf of 'colleagues from the Executive Committee'" wrote the following (<http://www.penrussia.org/new/2015/6093>) about the opposition:

“Certain PEN members, mainly among the “neophytes” who have recently joined, who are unfamiliar with the history of our organization and with a strange idea of its main objectives, are once again attempted stirring up controversy and intrigue, publicly accusing the president, executive committee, and directorate of all the seven deadly sins. The president, you see, is president for no apparent reason, the directorate is who know what, and the executive committee does who knows what, and they all respond too slowly with official statements regarding important events... These statements are not “sharp,” not politicized, AS THEY SHOULD BE, but are weak, maybe even conformist. They didn’t care that each such DOCUMENT must be justified, verified, not dashed off, that an OFFICIAL statement or protest is not some general public blah-blah-blah, but is discussed and edited by ALL members of the executive committee, and is not published, as it was in the past, at the whim of a single person in charge. Meanwhile, they all, without any permission, used the prestigious brand of the Russian PEN Center. That was the name given to the chat on Facebook created by public figure and radio journalist Sergey Parkhomenko, who used it to collect signatures of respected poets and writers.

It was in that chat that the authors saw fit to call their colleagues vulgar words like “scum,” “crazy,” “in delirium,” to call for PEN to split, for a demonstrative mass exit, to withhold payment of membership dues. For the life of me, I can’t understand the reason for all this!”

The differences between the “breakaway” group and PEN (headed by Yevgeny Popov, who has travelled a path from active non-conformity (he was a member of MetrOpolya, which was excluded, or rather, not accepted into the Writers’ Union of the USSR) to conformity, may seem to be a matter of stylistics. But stylistic differences and nuances mean a great deal in political statements. As a result, the PEN Center has lost its main human rights function. Here is the statement from the official PEN organization about Oleg Sentsov, the Ukrainian film director captured in Crimea and sentenced to 20 years:

“The Russian PEN Center is concerned about the fate of Oleg Gennadievich Sentsov and asks the President of the Russian Federation and the Russian courts to assist in *mitigating the conditions* of this film director and writer’s detention...” And it ends with the sentence: “We will be merciful, *but we will not be unlawful!*”

Sergey Parkhomenko commented in his column:

“Bold, isn’t it?

Decisive. A defense of human rights. Freedom-loving. “...*assist in mitigate the conditions of detention...*” What could be more precise, necessary, and timely when describing the fate of Oleg Sentsov?

Meanwhile, it appears to be someone else that is supposed to actually mitigate, the World Wildlife Fund, for example, or maybe UNICEF, while the “President of the Russian Federation and the Russian courts” are supposed to somehow “assist.” If they can. If they would be so kind, and if it’s not too much trouble.

The PEN leadership then went on to state in argumentative detail, with reference to several articles of the Criminal Code, why pardoning Oleg Sentsov is

impossible. So that His Excellency didn't have to trouble himself and find arguments to support rejecting one. And so that he doesn't get angry, God forbid.

The conformism of the executive committee of the PEN Center and its new president (alas, maintaining the line of the "late" Andrey Bitov, furiously condemning Lyudmila Ulitskaya in his letter, and having made a number of bold statements during his term as vice president) – that is what the writers and journalists who left the PEN Center disagreed with. Conformism expressed in the fact that PEN, for example, didn't defend authors (German Sadulayeva against the threat of Ramzan Kadyrov), didn't fight for freedom of speech in worsening circumstances (when a printing house refused to print the book by journalist and writer Sergey Khazov-Cassia, his prison memoirs), etc. – there are many examples.

Conformism is a failure to directly defend the freedom of culture. In the 90s, PEN did just that (as a writers' human rights organization). But now they are afraid, afraid of being labeled a "foreign agent." Thus PEN "has turned from a human rights organization into a decorative one."

Now we are considering the emergence of a "new dissident." Since the cultural institutions developed in the 90s (or in the late 80s) arose (or were transformed) at the peak of democratic society, and now gradually, step by step, the government has seized and is gathering the remnants of that bygone luxury (the freedom of speech and culture), all these institutions are experiencing a deep crisis. And they are either splitting, with opposition groups breaking off, or all together agreeing to compromise.

As a result of the schism, over 100 members left the Russian PEN Center and organized a new group – the Free Speech Association.

So, the debate over the purpose and essence of the intelligentsia, ongoing internally over the course of the "Russian 20th century," particularly when greater possibilities for discussion opened up during the "thaw" (1956-1968), has continued on in a series of divisions and schisms into the current era. These divisions between former allies during *perestroika* and *glasnost*, as it seemed during that romantic time (1986-1991) were to end in a professional separation into rational intellectuals and the intelligentsia, who would prioritize morality over "business," and moral responsibilities over strictly commercial ones. Alexander Arkhangelsky (2007) has a book of essays written in two voices – an intellectual and a member of the intelligentsia.

If this division did take place (by generation, in my opinion), then the intelligentsia, busy with its art, ignored it.

But its members did react quite strongly to each action and decision by the government – and split into groups based on their attitude towards events in society and government decisions. The many variants - conversation with the government à la late Solzhenitsyn, giving an indifferent Duma instructions and lessons, a symphony with the government, like Nikita Mikhalkov, inherited from his father the national anthem writer (one telling detail is the practically familial visit by the president to his dacha), the quarrelsome opposition of writers (Putin in the PEN Center in 1999), the sly conformity underlined by artistic performance (Oleg Tabakov, Alexander Kalyagin), the accentuated concern over the artistic collective, as if that gave carte blanche to submit (Galina Volchek, Valery Fokin), the

national pathos of the conformist (Yevgeny Yevtushenko), the hope for cash rewards in exchange for loyalty (the Russian PEN Center under the illegitimate new leadership), indifference to government decisions and demonstrative non-conformity (Sergey Gandlevsky, Mikhail Eisenberg), maintenance of distance and public oversight (the St. Petersburg PEN, Free Speech Association) – these are all gradations with a multitude of nuances difficult for an unconnected observer to grasp.

The creative intelligentsia prefers to close their eyes to the servile meetings between directors of creative unions and government leaders, while simultaneously enjoying the results in the form of grants. (The days are long gone when Solzhenitsyn demonstratively refused to accept the highest state order of Andrey Preobrazhensky granted to him by Yeltsin. In his later years, he graciously hosted the next president, much more like him.)

In closing, I will make note of a recent vivid episode testifying to the behavior, tactics, and strategies of the creative organizations in relation to the government.

Putin hosted at the Kremlin, among other officials, Alexander Kalyagin, head of the Union of Theater Workers, and informed him of a new decision to name 2019 the Year of the Theater. Do you think that Kalyagin took that opportunity to ask for a reduction in the penalties imposed on Kirill Serebrennikov and his colleagues? Nothing of the sort. He beamed, breathless from enthusiasm as he called this decision good fortune for the artists of Russia.

There will be a golden rain after all – so much money will be handed out!

And just think what demand there will be for comedic performers!

About the Author:

Natalya Ivanova is a literary and art critic, essayist, and historian of Russian literature. She served as president of the Academy of Modern Russian Criticism (1998-2000), and has been the founder, coordinator, and jury member for several literary prizes. Ms. Ivanova holds an advanced doctorate of philology, and is a professor in the literary theory department of the faculty of theology at Lomonosov Moscow State University. She is also the first deputy editor-in-chief of the literary journal *Znamya*. Her works include books, articles, and essays about modern Russian literature, and documentary film series on the life and art of the Russian Nobel-prize winning writers Ivan Bunin and Boris Pasternak, as well as Anna Akhmatova, Varlam Shalamov, and others. She has won the Tsarskoye Selo Award. Her books include the monograph *Proza Yuriya Trifonova* [The Prose of Yury Trifonov], *Smekh protiv strakha, ili Fazil Iskander* [Laughter against fear, or Fazil Iskander], *Boris Pasternak. Vremena zhizni* [Boris Pasternak. A life.], as well as the collections *Nostalyashchee* [Nostalginow], *Russkaya literatura pri perekhode cherez vek* [Russian literature in the passage through centuries], *Nevesta Bukera* [Booker's bride], *Russky krest* [Russian cross], *Takova literaturnaya zhizn.* [That's the literary life]. She is the co-author of the project *Vash XX vek I* [Your 20th century] in the New Tretyakov Gallery, and the compiler of the oral *Antologiya russkogo rasskaza* [Anthology of Russian stories]. She has compiled an edited a collection of Caucasian writers *Kavkas v poiskakh mira* [The Caucasus in search of peace]. She has lectured at universities in Switzerland, France, Spain, Japan, the U.S., and other countries. She lives and works in Moscow.

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