

Discussion in the Meeting with the Creative Intellectuals (1946)

Stalin: What do you want to tell me Comrade Fadeyev?

Fadeyev: (A.A. was Secretary-General of Writer's Union from 1946 to 1954 – ed.). Comrade Stalin we have come to you for advice. Many think that our literature and art have reached a dead end and we don't know how to develop it further. Today in every cinema hall films are being run, where the hero is endlessly fighting with the enemy and where human blood is flowing like river. Everywhere scarcity and difficulties are being shown. People are tired of struggle and blood. We want your advice how to project a different life in our works: the future life, where there will be no blood and force, where all the innumerable difficulties which our country is facing is absent. In one word, the time has come to narrate about a happy, cloudless future.

Stalin: The main thing is missing from your reasoning. The Marxist-Leninist analysis of the task is missing. And this is what life is bringing before the literary workers and artists. Once Peter I opened window to Europe. But after 1917, the imperialists boarded it up for a long time out of the fear of socialism spreading in their countries. Before the Great Patriotic War through radio, films, newspapers

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and journals, we were presented before the world as northern barbarians with a blood dripping knife in our teeth. This is how they painted the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Our people were shown dressed in threadbare shirts, drinking vodka from the samovar. All of a sudden this backward Russia, these primitive cave dwellers as represented by the world bourgeoisie defeated two great world powers – the fascists in Germany and the imperialists in Japan – before whom the whole world was trembling in fear. Today the world wants to know, who are these people who accomplished such a heroic deed and saved mankind. Mankind was saved by simple Soviet people, who without any fuss under the most difficult situation achieved industrialization and collectivization. They fortified the defence system and at the cost of their own lives, under the leadership of the communists, destroyed the enemy. Only in the first six months of the war more than 500 hundred thousand communists died in the front-line and overall more

than three million. They were the best of us – noble, pure dedicated and selfless fighters of socialism, for happiness of their people. Now we miss them. If they were alive a lot of our problems would have been solved. The main task of our creative Soviet intellectuals today is to reflect in their works, all the aspects of this simple Soviet man, to reveal and to show the best traits of his character. Today this is the general line for the development of literature and art.

Why is the literary hero Pavel Korchagin in Nikolai Ostrovski's 'How the Steel was Tempered' dear to us?"

This is so because of his limitless dedication to revolution, to the people, to socialism and his selflessness.

The artistic image of the great pilot of our time Valeri Chkalova in the film had greatly contributed to the training of thousands of fearless Soviet falcons – fighters with undying fame during the Great Patriotic War. Sergei Lukonim Colonel tankist from the film 'Young man from our city' – is the distinctive hero of thousands of tankists.

It is necessary to continue with this tradition. Create such literary hero fighters of communism with whom Soviet people would equate and whom they would imitate. I have a list of questions, which I think would be interesting for the Soviet creative intellectuals. If there is no objection I will answer them.

Shouts from the hall: We request you to answer them please.

Question: What, according to you, are the main shortcomings in the work of modern Soviet writers, dramatist and film directors.

Stalin: Unfortunately, extremely substantial. In recent times a dangerous tendency is apparently discerned in a number of literary works emanating under the pernicious influence of the west in decay and brought into life by the subversive activity of foreign intelligence. Frequently in the pages of Soviet literary journals works are found where the Soviet people, builders of communism are shown in a pathetic and ludicrous form. The positive hero is derided and inferiority before all things foreign and cosmopolitanism, so characteristic of the political leftovers, is applauded. In the theatre repertoire Soviet plays are being pushed aside by disgraceful plays of foreign bourgeois authors.

In the films petty themes dominate and they distort the heroic history of the valiant Russian people.

Question: How dangerous ideologically are the *avantgarde* tendencies in music and the *abstract school* in art and sculpture.

Stalin: Today under the guise of innovation formalism is being induced in Soviet music and abstraction in painting. Once in a while a question can be heard 'is it necessary for such great people as Bolsheviks and Leninists to be engaged in such petty things and spend time criticizing abstract painting and formalism. Let the psychiatrists deal with it'.

In these types of questions misunderstanding of the role of ideological sabotage against our country and especially against our youth is clearly discernible. It is with their help that attempts are being made against socialist realism in art and literature. It is impossible to do so openly. In these so-called abstract painting there is no real face of those people, whom people would have liked to imitate in the fight for their peoples' happiness, for communism and for the path on which they want progress. This portrayal is substituted by the abstract mysticism clouding the issue of socialist class struggle against capitalism. During the war how many people came to the statue of Minin and Pozharsky in Red Square to instill in us the feelings of victory? To what can a bust of twisted iron representing 'innovation' as an art inspire us? To what can an abstract painting inspire?

This is the reason why modern American financial magnates are propagating modernism, paying for this type of work huge royalties which the great masters of realism may not ever see.

There is an underlying idea of class struggle in the so-called western popular music, in the so-called formalist tendencies. This music, if one can call it such, is created from the sect of 'shakers' – dance that induces people to ecstasy, trance and makes them into wild animals ready for any wild action. This type of music is created with the help of psychiatrists so as to influence the brain and psychology of the people. This is one type of musical narcotics under whose influence a person cannot think of fresh ideas and are turned into a herd. It is useless to invite such people for revolution, for building communism. As you see music can also fight.

In 1944, I had an opportunity to read the instruction written by an officer of British intelligence, with the title: how to use formalist music for corrupting the enemy army.

Question: What concretely are the subversive activities of the agents of foreign intelligence in the sphere of art and literature?

Stalin: While talking about the future development of Soviet art and literature it must be taken into consideration that it is developing in a condition of an unprecedented secret war, a war that has been unleashed on us and our art and literature by the world imperialist circles. The job of foreign agents in our country is to penetrate Soviet organizations dealing with culture, to capture the editorships of major newspapers and journals, to influence decisively the repertoire of theatres and movies and in the publication of fiction and poetry. To stop by any means the publication of revolutionary works which awaken patriotism and lead the Soviet people towards creating communism. They support and publish works where the failure of communism is preached. They are

ecstatic in their support and propaganda of the capitalist method of production and the bourgeois life style.

At the same time foreign agents are asked to popularize in art and literature the feelings of pessimism, decadence and demoralization.

One popular American senator said, 'If we were able to show Bolshevik Russia our horror films it most probably will be able to destroy communist construction'. Not for nothing did Lev Tolstoi say that art and literature is a strong form of indoctrination.

We must seriously ponder over who and what is inspiring us today with the help of literature and art so that we can put an end to ideological subversion. We must understand and accept that culture is one of the integral parts of social ideology, of class and is used for safeguarding the interest of the ruling class. For us it is to safeguard the interest of the working class, of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

There is no art for art's sake. There are no, and cannot be, 'free' artists, writers, poets, dramatists, directors, and journalists, standing above the society. Nobody needs them. Such people don't and can't exist.

For those who don't want to serve the Soviet people as a result of old traditions of the counter revolutionary bourgeoisie, or are antagonistic towards the power of the working class dedicated to serving the Soviet people we give the permission to leave the country and stay abroad. Let them be convinced of the meaning of 'free creativity' in the notorious bourgeois society, where everything can be bought and sold, and the creative intelligentsia is completely dependent on the monetary support of the financial magnates in their creative endeavours.

Unfortunately, friends, because of lack of time we must finish our discussion.

I hope that to some extent I have answered all your questions. I think that the position of the CC AUCP(b) and that of the Soviet government on the question of further development of Soviet literature is clear to all.

Zhukhrai V. 'Stalin: pravda i lozh', Moscow, 1996, pp. 245-251; I.V. Stalin, 'Sochineniya', Vol. 16, 1946-1952, Izdatelstvo 'Picatel', Moscow, 1997, pp. 49-53.

Translated from the Russian by Sumana Jha

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