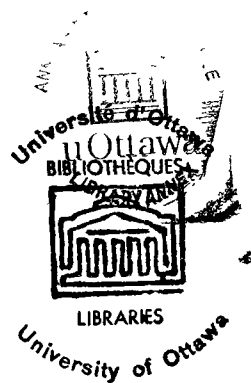


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SOME ASPECTS OF THE KOLKHOZ FICTION OF  
POST-STALIN PERIOD  
by Thaddeus Krukowski

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts of  
the University of Ottawa through the Department  
of Slavic Studies as partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of Doctor of Philosophy.



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## CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Thaddeus Krukowski was born in Poland, on November 12, 1923. He studied in Poland Italy; obtained M.S. degree from the University of Ottawa, in 1959.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis was prepared under the guidance of Professor N. Pervushin. Gratitude is here expressed for his interest and cooperation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite appearances the "peasant is the real autocrat of Russia"<sup>1</sup>; and no other question besides "what should be done with the peasants" has haunted more persistently every major area of modern Russia, including the Soviet Russia. The peasant question loomed large in the aristocratic salons of the mid-nineteenth century, provided the basis for Herzen's "bast shoe socialism", was the mainspring of the Great Reforms and has occupied a central place in the political programmes of all parties.

Inevitably, the magnitude of the Russian peasant population has inspired and permeated literature of both epochs-- the pre- and post-Revolution. Even a non-Russian with a token knowledge of Russian letters, especially fiction, has been made aware of the peasants' ubiquity. It would appear, therefore, that the peasant theme in Russian and Soviet-Russian prose has already been exhaustively explored and studied; this, however, is not the case.

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<sup>1</sup> Attributed to Chernov, a leading Social Revolutionary; quoted in John Maynard, Russia in Flux, New York, Collier Books, 1962, p. 33.

The moral, sociological, ideological and historical facets of the peasant theme in fiction have been studied relatively extensively, particularly by the pre-1917 Russian critics and scholars; their Soviet counterparts narrowed the focus of studies to conform with the ideological contingencies and requirements of the literary policies of the day. The peasant theme in fiction still awaits a systematic and synthetic study.

Russian critical literature has paid attention, in the main, to the extra-literary factors and forces seen from the point of view of a particular political philosophy. Literary histories by Ovsyaniko-Kulikovski, Pypin, Skabichevski, Engelgardt, Kropotkin -- to offer a few examples -- reflect the range of the political colouring in the presentation of the peasant world of letters. Histories of Russian literature accord less space to the voluminous populist fiction in comparison to the treatment given to a few truly "peasant" works written by the leading writers: Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky or Bunin. Clearly, the peasant world in Russian prose based on several masterpieces cannot be considered as a representative sampling of the major literary theme.

Soviet critical literature is even more restricted and less reliable. The few surveys and articles published during the twenties explore the thematic dimension couched in Marxist terminology and expressing Marxists' hopes. The Stalin period has even less to offer in this regard. The post-Stalin years, however, brought about a revival of critical interest in the peasant theme still relatively narrow in scope, and, for the most part, of topical character.<sup>2</sup>

The English-language literature on the Russian peasant in fiction is very meager, strictly of informative and peripheral nature, and adds nothing to what has already been said by Russian or Soviet critics. A thorough research in this area by this writer produced not a single item of value to this study.

The most striking deficiency of all the critical material pertinent to the topic of this thesis is the absence (apart from the attention given to the works of the masters of Russian fiction) of studies of the craft of writing and the aesthetics of peasant fiction.

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<sup>2</sup> The "primary sources" part of the bibliography appended to this thesis contains the basic works on the subject studied here. It is also a bibliography representative of various approaches, interpretations, assessment and scholarly levels.

The scope, range and the very structure of this thesis evolved, in part, from the preceding observation on the state of critical studies about the peasant world imaginative prose. The core of the thesis consists of the studies of the thematic and technical dimensions of post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction; to this end are dedicated the last two chapters. However, to gain a greater understanding of the direction, traits and phenomena found in the prose of the period analysed, it was found necessary to present a perspective of the earlier periods which supplied the artistic models and intellectual patterns for the contemporary writers. The first chapter, therefore, has, to some extent, an introductory, subject-setting function and character.

The main criterion dividing the thesis into two distinct parts is the study focus and the associated research-critical apparatus. Thus, the first part (the first two chapters) concentrates on the thematic range of peasant and kolkhoz fiction accompanied by lightly sketched socio-historical backgrounds. Included also are observations on the prevalent technical and aesthetic practices and tendencies.

The method of research and critical apparatus employed in the first part of the thesis is of the conventional socio-historical type of literary studies aimed at establishing the main pattern of the theme's development and its causes. The thematic analysis of the post-Stalin prose is carried out in a representative sample of prose works.

The second part of the thesis -- the last and the longest tri-section chapter -- contains an analysis of the writers' technical workshop and the aesthetic tendencies in the post-1953 fiction. Section 2 of this chapter deals with pertinent and hotly debated critico-theoretical questions having an important bearing on recent evolution in the area of the craft of fiction. The latter is studied in two phases: firstly, an analysis of the fiction's structural aspects (plot, narrative design, character development, background, point-of-view); secondly, a synthesis of the findings obtained from the analyses of theme and of structure.<sup>3</sup> In combining the two, one obtains a clear indication of the evolution marking the art of writing of the kolkhoz prose.

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<sup>3</sup> The linguistic stratum of the studied fiction does not enter into the design, purpose and scope of this thesis. It follows, therefore, that observations on language and stylistics of peasant and kolkhoz fiction found in various chapters are of general and complementary character.

Section 2 and 3 are, in a sense, an extension and a complement of the research done in section 1. The tracing of the polemical debate around the sketch genre revealed the ferment in Soviet criticism and literary theory engulfing the entire structure of the Soviet normative poetics of fiction. A partial confirmation of this thesis is sought in section 3, analysing one lyrical prosework of V. Soloukhin.

It is apparent that the most valid contribution made to the knowledge about the peasant world in Russian-Soviet fiction lies in a comprehensive study of the thematic range of the post-1953 period, and, above all, in the analysis of this fiction's structure and artistic forms. The latter two aspects remain relatively unexplored, at times totally ignored by Soviet , and more so by non-Soviet students and specialists of Soviet prose. Yet, it is the craft of writing, the skill to combine various elements into one organic whole that decides about the aesthetic value of prose, and not the intellectual and emotional content alone.

The transliteration system employed in this thesis is the one approved by the Department of Slavic Languages of Columbia University.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE PEASANT THEME BEFORE 1953

#### 1. The pre-Revolution period.

Although I. Turgenev's Hunter's Sketches (Zapiski okhotnika) began to appear one year after D. Grigorovich's Village (Derevnya), it is the former writer who has been credited with the introduction into Russian fiction of artistically viable peasant characters. However, the first powerful indictment of the peasant lot was Radishchev's The Journey from St. Peterburg to Moscow (Puteshestviye iz Peterburga v Moskvu) 1790, recognized also as "... a generalized cry of indignation"<sup>1</sup> uttered by a radical disciple of the philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment. One half of the century separating The Journey from Hunter's Sketches offers an instructive perspective of the "peasant problem" by two generations of Russian aristocracy. Turgenev's innocuous vignettes espouse the ideas of Justice and Freedom in the best

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Malia, Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 2. Actually, the first significant work of prose with the peasant as principal hero is M.D. Chulkov's Bitter Fate (Gorkaya uchast), published in 1789.

traditions of mid-nineteenth century liberalism.

The fiction of Grigorovich and Turgenev mark the beginning of an intensive growth of interest in the village manifested by almost every writer: Tolstoy, Goncharov, Pisemski, Saltykov-Shchedrin. They, the chief beneficiaries of serfdom, raised the spectre of peasantry that was to haunt Russian and Soviet-Russian fiction ever since.

The Russian "barins" were the first who showed that "... peasant-man exists ..." <sup>2</sup>, that indeed, he is not "... a two-legged pack animal lacking the image and resemblance of man" <sup>3</sup>, that he has his "... needs, his virtues and defects ..." <sup>4</sup>, as do his owners. Their fiction was permeated with unquestionable and "... sincere love for the oppressed peasant" <sup>5</sup>, although this love had

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2 P. Polevoi, Istoriya russkoi literatury, 5e izd., St. Petersburg, 1883, p. 330, "... sushchestvuyet muzhik-chelovek ..."

3 A.M. Skabichevski, Istoriya russkoi noveishei literatury; 1848-1892, S. Petersburg, vtoroye izd. Pavelnikova, 1893, p. 192, "...dvunogi vyuchny skot, neimmeyushchi obraza i podobiya chelovecheskogo".

4 P. Polevoi, Istoriya russkoi literatury, op. cit., p. 330, "... nuzhdakh, yego dobrodetelyakh i nedostatках..."

5 Ibid., p. 330, "... iskrennoi lyubvi k ugnetyonomu muzhiku".

"... a somewhat squire-like quality".<sup>6</sup>

The pre-Reform generation of writers focussed on the "nests of gentlefolk", rather than on the peasant huts; the peasant heroes tended to be poeticized and idealized -- both traits attest to the writers' limited capacity to probe "... the inner conditions of peasant life, to enter into the peasant soul and ideals".<sup>7</sup> This is an indication of the writers' cultural limitations and inhibitions which gave their protest a peculiar quality of "... the protest of suffering, the protest of the most humane feelings..."<sup>8</sup> lacking, though, "... the political and socialistic protest of later years".<sup>9</sup>

The "socialistic protest" became the prime mover behind the fiction of the post-Reform writers -- the populists. The 1860-1880 period of Russian history and fiction was saturated with populist philosophy, understood here in its broad sense as a movement united not by a

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6 A. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovski, Istoriya russkoi literatury XIX veka, Moskva, izd., "Mir", 1911, Vol. 4, p. 170, "... neskolko po-barski".

7 A.M. Skabichevski, Istoriya russkoi noveishei literatury, op. cit., p. 192, "... vnutreniya usloviya narodnogo byta, proniknut v dushu naroda i ego idealy ..."

8 N. Engelgardt, Istoriya russkoi literatury XIX stoletiya; 1850-1900, Petrograd, 1915, p. 192, "... protest stradaniya, protest samogo gumannogo chuvstva..."

9 Ibid., "... politicheski i sotsialisticheski protest pozdneishikh let"

... particular programme, or particular pronouncements by Herzen or Chernyshevsky, but by shared attitudes and preoccupations, hopes, fears, longings and hatreds that were merely given shape by one or another ideological formulations<sup>10</sup>

Within this formulation one can place all shades of populism; from conservative Slavophilism which saw in peasantry "... the vessel by means of which the religious and Christian way of life had been kept undefiled ..." <sup>11</sup> to the atheistic radicals' vision of peasantry as "... a seed which the revolutionary providence had nursed on Russian soil to generate from it, in good time, a socialistic world". <sup>11</sup>

Populism's tenets and beliefs were diffused, mainly, through the fiction of "raznochintsy" estranged from the culture of their literary predecessors. Among those who concentrated on the village were writers like N. Zlatovratski (1843-1912), Gleb Uspenski (1840-1902), P. Zasodimski (1843-1912), D. Mamin-Sibiriyak (1853-1912) and F. Nefedov (1838-1902). Zlatovratski and G. Uspenski represent the polarization of views and solutions with respect to the "peasant problem".

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Wortman, The Crisis of Russian Populism, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. ix.

<sup>11</sup> David Mitrany, Marx Against Peasants; A Study in Social Dogmatism, New York, Collier Books, 1961, p. 55.

Zlatovratski's fiction epitomizes a naive, optimistic, conservative populism convinced of the ethical and moral superiority of the peasant and his "mir" institution. Peasant characters drawn from this writer's works form a monotonous gallery of "golden hearts", true Orthodox Russians upholding and living by the national ideas of brotherly and communal love. Despite accumulating evidence denying the validity of his vision, Zlatovratski never swerved from the dreams of his youth, thus earning a well-deserved qualification of "... the most prominent literary spokesman of populism's village romanticism".<sup>12</sup>

In his earlier works G. Uspenski also "eulogizes in paeans"<sup>13</sup> the peasant and his world. Toward the end of his tragic life he became, however, a symbol of "... the intelligentsia's cry of despair"<sup>14</sup> unable to

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12 N.I. Sokolov, "Zlatovratski", in I.F. Belchikov (ed.), Istoriya russkoi literatury (literatura 70-80kh godov), tom IX, Chast pervaya, Moskva, Akademiya Nauk, 1956, p. 396, "... naiboleie yarkim khudozhestvennym vyrazitelem narodnicheskoi romantiki derevni".

13 M. Protopopov, Kriticheskiye stati, Moskva, Izd. Skirmukhta, 1902, p. 73, "...raskhvalit narod ...".

14 Richard Wortman, The Crisis of Russian Populism, op. cit., p. 61.

resolve the conflict between "... things as they are and as they should be ..." <sup>15</sup>. In his later works his earlier naive optimism and faith in "... the mir and "obshchina" (...) the supposed panaceas of all social ills" <sup>16</sup> were gradually shattered and supplanted, in The Power of the Soil (Vlast zemli), 1882, by a conviction that a passionate, elemental attachment to the soil is the most powerful determinant of peasant existence.

The populist euphoria had begun to subside in the early eighties due to changing philosophical, economic, political and literary ideas overtaking Russia. The coming of a new era in peasant fiction was initiated by Chekhov in his peasant stories -- among them Peasants (Muzhiki) and In the Ravine (V ovrage) -- published between 1896 and 1900. In them, filtered through a dispassionate sensitivity and executed in superb art, Chekhov presented a new dimension and solution to village realities. Instead of "golden hearts" and idyllic or gloomy villages victimized by outsiders, readers were presented with (especially in Peasants) a Zolaesque panorama of society riddled by greed, vulgarity, stupidity, inhumanity

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15 James W. Billington, The Icon and the Axe; an Interpretation of Russian Culture, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1967, p. 404.

16 A. Bruckner, A Literary History of Russia, London, T. Fisher & Unwin, 1908, p. 436.

of man to man, poverty, hard labour and ever-present hunger. Contrary to the prevailing populist notion, Chekhov pointed out that the peasants themselves contribute to their semi-savage existence by usury, stealing, vodka-selling and opposition to enlightened measures. Chekhov's proposed remedy goes beyond mere palliatives. Through the protagonist of The Artist Story (Dom z mezoninom), 1896, Chekhov insisted that no amount of good deeds will bring about a fundamental change in the peasants' life until they are freed from the eternal struggle for survival:

Famine, cold, blind terror and overwork -- those are the avalanches that seal off all roads to spiritual activity, the one thing that distinguishes men from animals and makes life worth living<sup>17</sup>

Although during the remaining years of the Russian Empire the peasant theme had to share the limelight with other themes and a host of new topics, some critics still complained about its ubiquity: "... the peasant is everywhere; one just cannot get away from him ..." <sup>18</sup>. Yet, despite this complaint from a modernist critic, the "ever-present peasant" was given a much more thorough and

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<sup>17</sup> The Artist Story in Ronald Hingley, Oxford Chekhov, Vol. VIII, London, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 106.

<sup>18</sup> A.I. Vvedenski, Literaturnyie kharakteristiki, St. Petersburg, izd. M.P. Melnikova, 1910, p. 258, "... vsyo muzhik, da muzhik, tak chto ot muzhika devatsya nekuda ...".

diversified interpretation by the post-realists' wide ideological and artistic spectrum ranging from the epigoni of the populists through neo-populists to symbolists and marxists. Basically, though, the peasant continued to be seen as "... an uncouth uncultured savage ... comparable in his interests to the domesticated animal ..." <sup>19</sup> epitomized by Bunin's Village (Derevnya), or was shown as a member of a socially-awakened class harbouring a revolutionary spark. The most significant phenomenon of the period was the emergence of the first writers of authentic village culture who, in the 1920's, became the mentors of the Soviet generation of peasant writers.

The fiction about peasantry published between 1842 and 1917 appears to have been changing with every generation of writers: first, the landed aristocracy, then the "raznochintsy", modernists, neo-populists and marxists. Yet, on closer analysis, the generation differences are not of the essence. For after 1861 the village theme began to run in two broad streams each originating in the intellectual ferment of tsar Nicholas I reign. At the headwaters of

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<sup>19</sup> V.V. Vorovski, Literaturno-kriticheskiye statii, Moskva, Goslitizdat, 1956, p. 324, "... grubym, nekulturnym dikaryom...chut ne odnimi interesami s domashnim skotom..."

each stream was either the Slavophile or the Westerner's concept of the village's position and function within Russian society. With time, most initial disagreements between these two factions of the gentry had lost their pertinence to the changing village, but the question of the need of retention of peasant culture in future Russia has remained a divisive factor until the present day, as will be shown in the study of post-Stalin kolkhoz prose.

The distinctiveness of the two streams is also evident in the domain of prose writing: material selection, the story's structuring and language, which were determined, to a large degree, by the writers' social origin, literary culture and their conception of art's role in society.

Masterpieces were produced by superb artists of the pre-Reform generation, from Chekhov and Bunin; as to the remaining huge volume of fiction about the village -- there is not a single work which can be placed alongside Hunter's Sketches, Polikushka, Peasants and Village. Some critics deplored the low quality of populists' aesthetics responsible, in their opinion, for "... a general regression, decline in literature ..." <sup>20</sup> but

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20 A.I. Vvedenski, Literaturnye kharakteristiki, op. cit., p. 357, "... obshchem regresse, upadke literatury".

originating in writers' "... feverish interest in the problems of the good of the people"<sup>21</sup>; both quotations refer to G. Uspenski, the most talented writer among populists.

This "feverish interest" translated into the priority of the writer's social duty over art influenced the populists' prose technical peculiarities which set it apart from the prose-art of the "barins".

One such peculiarity is noted in the focus of viewing of two distinctive streams: the Turgenev-Tolstoi generation concentrated on individuals (Khor, Kalinych, Anton Goremyka ), while the populists studied the peasant family, village or region within the network of social and economic relationships. Instead of presenting well-wrought portraits or pictures, they penned chronicles and diaries unified by a central concern or emotion.<sup>22</sup>

Other characteristics consisted of long digressions on technical, sociological and ethnographical topics,

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21 S.A. Vengerov, Ocherki po istorii russkoi literatury, S.Petersburg, 1903, p. 93, "... likhoradochnogo interesa k voprosu o narodnom blage".

22 Indicative of the chronicle and diary forms are many titles: Ustoi (The Foundations) by Zlatovratski; The Chronicle of the Village Smurino (Khronika sela Smurino) by Zasodimski; Men from Podlipovtsy (Podlipovtsy) by Reshetnikov; The Village Diary (Derevenski dnevnik) by G. Uspenski.

with a disregard of the novelistic devices and techniques so laboriously developed and practised by writers in the rest of Europe. The populists' rather unconventional fiction stressed facts, the seamier sides of village life, minutiae of its existence frequently rendered in a mixture of literary-publicist and popular language.

It is these structural, thematic and linguistic traits that gave Vvdenski and Vengerov cause for alarm. There were some critics, however, like Prince P. Kropotkin, who took a more sympathetic view of the populists' manner of writing, seeing in it

... an extremely bold attempt to describe life itself in its succession of petty actions, moving on amidst its grey and dull surroundings, introducing the only dramatic elements which result from an endless succession of petty and depressive details<sup>23</sup>

While admitting many an artistic flaw, Kropotkin insisted that the populists aimed "... at that inner realism which appears in the construction of such characters as they are truly representative of life taken as a whole".<sup>24</sup>

Identical explanations and arguments were to be frequently employed in the Soviet Union in defence of artistically weak, but ideologically correct fiction.

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23 P. Kropotkin, Russian Literature; Ideals and Realities, London, Dikworth, 1905, p. 241.

24 Ibid., p. 241.

"About peasants -- only sketches, about high society -- novels"<sup>25</sup> observed reproachfully G. Uspenski, thus pointing at a characteristic common to the entire fiction of the Russian period. There was no novel in the conventional sense of the term -- only short prose forms and their hybrids. Short prose forms were best suited for propagandist, didactic tasks -- the greatest effectiveness achieved in the shortest possible time. The choice of short forms of fiction was also an indication of a not too profound or intimate knowledge of the peasant world, even among the populists, this, notwithstanding their much-heralded affiliation with the "people".

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25 G.I. Uspenski, Polnoye sobraniye sochineni, T. VIII, Izd. AN SSSR, Moskva, 1949, p. 362, "O muzhike vsyo ocherki, a o kulturnom obshchestve romany".

## 2. The Soviet period; 1917-1934.

In 1926, A. Divilkovski noted that young Soviet letters "smelled of the village" no less "... than it had in the days of the Nekrasovs, Zlatovratskis and Uspenskis"<sup>26</sup>. The marxist critic simply acknowledged what others had found in the surging rebirth of literature, especially fiction. The peasant world continued to dominate fiction until 1934 -- the year of the completion of collectivization and the promulgation of a single literary doctrine.

Within the period extending from 1917 to 1934 the peasant theme went through several phases, each with a somewhat different thematic emphasis and ideological perception. During the first phase, approximately until the publication of C. Fedin's Cities and Years (Goroda i gody), in 1924, writers depicted the peasant masses as an amorphous mass of humanity driven by an irrational, elemental urge for rebellion.<sup>27</sup> The rôle of heroes in this fiction

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26 A. Divilkovski, "Na trudnom podyome", in Novy Mir, Vol. 2, No. 8, 1926, p. 206, "... ne menshe ... chem vo vremya Nekrasovykh, Zlatovratskikh i Uspenskikh".

27 To this early fiction belong: The Fall of Dair (Padeniye Daira), The Iron Flood (Zhelezny potok), The Naked Year (Goly god), Chapayev, Armoured Train 14-69 (Bronepoyezd 14-69).

is weak, yet the revolutionary leaders -- Kozhukh, Vershinin, Chapayev -- are peasants, twentieth century versions of Stenka Razin and Pugachev, and not city-bred ideologues of Revolution.

A return to a more sober look at Soviet contemporaneity, coupled with a return to a more conventional "realistic" style, brought about a more variegated treatment of the village which can be traced to the writer's social origin and political orientation. Nonetheless, contributing to peasant fiction were all three major segments of the still unregimented Soviet writers -- proletarians, fellow-travellers and peasant writers.

Were it not for M. Sholokhov's The Quiet Don Flows (Tikhi Don) the qualitative contribution of professed communists to peasant fiction would be very insignificant. However, as V. Polonski noted, this masterpiece of Soviet fiction "... smells too strongly of the village..." 28 to qualify as a genuine, marxist-inspired work.

A much stronger position has been accorded to fellow-travellers, and their works had been, until recently,

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28 V. Polonski, O sovremennoi literature, Moskva, Gosizdat, 1929, p. 261, "... slishkom pakhnet derevnei ..."

offered as the best examples of Soviet literature's interest in village. L. Leonov's Badgers (Barsuki), C. Fedin's Transvaal, 1927, usually lead the list. However, more praise has been accorded to the comparatively mediocre two novels by L. Seyfullina: Mulch (Peregnoi), 1922, and Virineya, 1924, because they projected a truer picture of peasantry during the Revolution. P. Kogan, for example, credited Seifullina with showing that in the Revolution the village found "... support of its deepest strivings ..." <sup>29</sup> thus proving the existence of "... young shoots in the masses of poor, the spiritual growth of the masses". <sup>30</sup>

The bulk of fiction published before the First Five-Year Plan was written by peasant writers of pre-Revolution and Soviet generations representing various attitudes toward the Soviet state ranging from Klychkov's conservatism through the ambivalent neutralism of Chapygin to the overt support of Kasatkin and Neverov. The most accomplished works artistically came from those who

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29 P. Kogan, Literatura etikh let ; 1917-1923, Ivanovo Voznesensk, Osnova, 1924, p. 110, "... podderzhku svoim glubokim ustremleniyam ..."

30 E.S. Dergacheva, "Povest L.N. Seifullinoy 'Peregnoi'", in V.P. Rakov, Sovetskaya literatura 20-kh godov, Chelyabinsk, Yuzhno-uralskoye knizhnoye izdatelstvo, 1966, p. 324, "... rostki novogo v bednyatskoi masse, dukhovnogo rosta massy"

established themselves in literature before 1917 -- from the much maligned "kulak" Klychkov and the moderately proletarian Neverov.

Notwithstanding Klychkov's "reactionary" vision of the Soviet village -- "... the world of tradition, immobility and wonders ..." <sup>31</sup> -- showing a tendency to go "... against the spirit of times, to swim against the current ..." <sup>32</sup>, V. Polonski along with other members of the marxist literary elite, proclaimed him unreservedly as "... the greatest and most remarkable artist ever to emerge from the Russian village". <sup>33</sup>

Neverov, who embodied "... the human strivings and hopes of revolutionary peasantry" <sup>34</sup> tried to accommodate the village's aspirations to communist-dominated society. His protagonists reveal a more conscious participation in re-fashioning the village, and his depicting of the tragic

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31 A. Lezhnev, Sovremenniki, Artel pisatelski "Krug", n.p. 1927, p. 132, "... mir stariny, nepodvizhnosti i chudes ...".

32 Ibid., p. 132, "... naperokor dukhu vremeni, plyt protiv techeniya...".

33 V. Polonski, O sovremennoi literature, op. cit., p. 262, "... samogo krupnogo i zamechatelnogo khudozhnika, vydvinutogo russkoi derevnei".

34 G. Yakubovski, Literaturnye portrety, Moskva, 1926, p. 20, "... lyudskiye stremleniya i mechty revolyutsionnogo krestyanstva".

confrontation between city and village strikes a more convincing note. Neverov died young, in 1926, yet he ought to be credited with a number of innovations which began to receive attention only after the post-Stalin "thaw".<sup>35</sup>

Not one of the motley of peasant writers who made their debut in the early twenties reached the artistic level of Klychkov or Neverov, but they were most active in sponsoring the official view of the village.<sup>36</sup> Although less deeply rooted in Klychkov's vision of a "peasant kingdom", the young modelled their fiction on the works of their seniors, who, in turn, continued the populist "byt" already discussed in conjunction with the art of pre-1917 prose.

As was to be expected, the marxists again cried out against the indulgence in "... animal-like cruel

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35 A. Neverov's one act play Marya the Bolshevik (Marya bolshevichka) was the first play about Soviet village. His unfinished novel Geese and Swans (Gusi-lebedi) preceeds Sholokhov's Quiet Flows Don in scope and design. Tashkent-City of Bread (Tashkent-gorod khlebny) provides a unique vision of Revolution through the eyes of children.

36 To this group of proletarian-peasant writers belong: A. Dorogoichenko, A. Demidov, A. Tveryak, A. Zavalishin, M. Karpov, P. Zamoiski, A. Dyakonov, E. Kamanin, M. Gromov, K. Gorbunov, Ya. Korobkov, E. Stavski, A. Bogdanov, V. Smirnov -- to name the more prominent ones.

prose of life ..."<sup>37</sup>, against pictures of the village steeped in "... savagery, cruelty, the power of darkness ..."<sup>38</sup>, a world of irrational forces. Their plea for writing "... about a <sup>new</sup> conscience, about a new psychology (...) new man in his process of strengthening life ..."<sup>39</sup> had no salutary effects on the fiction of the young. Valiant efforts to shake off the grip of "bytopisaniye" and to follow ideological directives produced a strange mixture of "raw slice of life" and marxist optimism. Deus ex machina contrivances, strange twists given to plots and conflicts, unbelievable characters of village revolutionaries -- all added up to a naive conception of realities, distortions and a very inferior fiction.

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37 A. Divilkovski, "Na trudnom podyome", No. 8, op. cit., p. 216, "... zverinaya, zhetstokaya proza zhizni ..."

38 P. Kogan, Literatura etikh let, op. cit., p. 109, "... zhestokost, grubost, vlast tmy".

39 Valeryan Polyanski, "Literatura -- orudiye organizatsii i stroitelstva", in Novy Mir, Vol. 14, No. 7, 1928, p. 202, "... o novom soznanii, o novoi psikhologii (...) novy chelovek v svoym stanovlenii i ukreplenii zhizni ...".

Despite disappointing results, marxist critics never stopped giving advice, admonishing, or praising the slightest sign of improvement shown by an apprentice whose panorama of the village was considered to be closer to reality than the fancied vision of "... the children of the boulevards -- the futurists and sundry city idealists"<sup>40</sup>. The moderates accepted cultural psychology's moulding function of the writer's vision hoping only that, in time, some elements of marxism and marxist realism might eventually be incorporated. Hence they staunchly defended peasant writers against attacks of the militant Left which was determined to eliminate altogether peasants' relative autonomy and distinctiveness. The most effective defender until his own eclipse, was A. Voronski, founder and chief editor of Krasnaya Nov.

The Party's move in 1932 to assume the role of arbiter and formulator of art's content and form was the culmination of long and bitter polemics between the moderate and extremist wing of marxists. A large segment of literature including the peasant writers kept to the sidelines of the battle while enjoying a modicum of artistic

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40 A. Divilkovski, "Na trudnom podyome", No. 8, op. cit., p. 221, "... kak deti bulvarov-futuristy i prochiye gorodskiye idealisty".

freedom provided for by the 1925 Central Committee Resolution. Furthermore, the numerical size of organized peasant writers and poets alone was also a factor to be reckoned with.<sup>41</sup>

As the NEP period drew to an end, pressures began to mount. The Party's views on literary matters were aired through its unofficial spokesman, V. Polyanski, whose articles questioning the soundness and the very need to retain a separate body of peasant literature began to appear, significantly, in Novy Mir and Krasnaya Nov, the bastions of Voronski's group. In one of them, printed in 1928, V. Polyanski, without proposing drastic measures, stated clearly that autonomous peasant writers, indeed the concept itself, is nonsensical: "If, the

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41 VPOKP (All-Union Association of Peasant Writers) founded in 1921, soon became the second largest organized body after RAPP. It grew rapidly from several hundred to seven thousand, in 1928, publishing several, usually short-lived periodicals, among them Zhernov and Sovetskaya zemlya, and a number of anthologies promoting young members. Toward the end of NEP one notes a slow but growing penetration of communist elements into key position which ended by a takeover in 1928. In that year the term "peasant-proletarian" was inserted into the association's name. The last four years were marked by a witch hunt of the "kulak" wing and terrorism against more independent spirits.

so-called peasant writer", wrote V. Polyanski,

... defends the dictatorship of the proletariat and reflects its worldview and perceptions, is he a peasant writer, a proletarian writer writing about the village, or a writer originating from the village? The question about the peasant writer is complex. It may be that there is no peasant writer in our time.<sup>42</sup>

Is there, or is there not such a species as a peasant writer? The answer to this question led to acrimonious polemics between Voronski's group and the militants who by that time, already controlled the peasant writers' association. Perhaps the last defiant answer to the question posed by V. Polyanski came from V. Polonski, editor of Novy Mir, in an article sardonically entitled "Who, finally, is the peasant writer?". After a detailed analysis of the opponents' refusal to accept the separate existence of peasant writers, V. Polonski offered his own definition of a peasant writer as one

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42 Valeryan Polyanski, "Literatura -- orudiye organisatsii i stroitelstva", in Novy Mir, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1928, p. 199:

A yesli tak nazyvayemy krestaynski pisatel-kommunist, zashchishchayet diktaturu proletaryata, otrazhayet yego mirovoznreniye i miropriyatiye, chto on - krestyanski pisatel ili zhe proletarski pishushchi o derevne? Vopros o krestaynskom pisatele ochen zlozhny. Vozmozhno, chto v nashe vremya krestyansko pisatelya i net.

... in whose works, in whose artistic imagery is expressed the worldview and feelings characteristic of man bred in village, and who expresses a rural and not urban perception of the world, whose feelings were formed in agricultural and not industrial labour, in whose approach to the world one sees the point of view of a man who has lived with (...) land (...) nature.<sup>43</sup>

Although in 1929 and 1930 the Party had many pressing problems, it kept a close watch on literary battles, restraining more ardent proletarians<sup>44</sup> but, at the same time, indicating its formula of a peasant writer. Accordingly, not every writer who supports collectivization and the class-struggle becomes automatically a communist writer; indeed, most are "... a long way yet from the communist ideology"<sup>45</sup>; he must also recognize "... socialistic

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43 Vyacheslav Polonski, "Kogo-zhe, nakonets, shchitat krestyanskim pisatelem", in Novy Mir, Vol. 5, No. 8, 1929, p. 182.

... v tvorchestve katorogo, v khudozhestvennykh obrazakh kotorogo vyrazhayetsya mirooshchushcheniye kharakternoye imenno dlya cheloveka, vyrosshego v derevne, vyrazhayushchego vzglyad na mir derevenski, a ne gorodskoi, cheloveka, mirooshchushcheniye kotorogo sformirovalos v proizvodstvennykh usloviyakh selskokhozyaystvennykh, a ne industrialnykh, v podkhode kotorogo k miru skazyvayetsya tochka zreniya cheloveka, imeyushchego delo s (...) zemlyei (...) prirodoi.

44 A mild reprimand was served P. Zamoiski who in an article "Knutom napravo" (Zemlya sovetskaya, No. 1, 1929) castigated moderates himself admitting only "peasant imagery" as a distinct sign of peasant fiction.

45 Unsigned editorial, in Pechat i Revolyutsiya, No.2, 1930, p. 6, "... yeshcho daleko do kommunisticheskoi ideologii".

development of the village under the leadership of the proletariat".<sup>46</sup> This meant total submission to the Party's definition which even excluded "peasant imagery" admitted by the militants of peasant-proletarians.

By 1930, the difference between Party spokesmen and the extremists were insignificant and of no practical consequence. By then, the peasant group of writers as a semi-autonomous body with distinct worldview and art had ceased to exist and its dissolution, in 1932, was but a mere formality.

The momentous decision taken by the Central Committee, in December 1928, to carry out total collectivization of agriculture introduced a new thematic era into Russian-Soviet fiction about the peasant. Since then until the post-Stalin era a newly coined term "kolkhoznik" replaced the old "peasant" term which acquired negative, pejorative connotations.

Collectivized farming as a topic had appeared in the early twenties but failed to establish itself, partly

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6, "... sotsialisticheskoye razvitiye derevni pod rukovodstvom proletariata".

because of its clearly "... utilitarian tendency ..." <sup>47</sup>, partly because of the Party's support of individualistic farming. Toward the end of NEP, the collectivization topic had returned and, by 1929, became the sole permissible treatment of the Soviet village. When individualistic farming disappeared in the early thirties, for those who ventured into rural world, obviously no choice remained but to depict the socialized peasantry.

The result of several years of organized enthusiasm about collectivization produced a huge mountain of fiction regarding the transformation of the village. This was .. contributed to by all the ideological segments of Soviet writers. The peasant writers, now officially known as peasant-proletarians, were the chief contributors; only moderate participation came from fellow-travellers and marxists.

Except for Sholokhov's Virgin Soil Upturned (Podnyataya tselina), the only Soviet epic about collectivization <sup>48</sup>, the marxist writers left nothing of literary

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47 L.F. Yershov and V.A. Kovalev, Istoriya sovetskogo russkogo romana, Moskva-Leningrad, Nauka, 1963, Vol. 1, p. 204. "... utilitarnoi napravlenosti ..."

48 The first parts of Virgin Soil Upturned, it should be recalled, appeared in 1932, the last in 1960. Consequently, Sholokhov's epic could not wield substantive influence on the literary projection of the collectivized village, but helped the writer to avoid the commonplace distortions of facts relevant to the greatest upheaval of modern times.

merit. The few who tried wrote the poorest works of their literary career. In this category is Gladkov's The New Land (Novaya zemlya), 1930, and Panfyorov's Bruski. The latter, a four-volume "epic" published between 1927-1937, has served recently as an example of what happens when a writer tried "... to catch up with life ..." <sup>49</sup> to follow government's fluctuating agricultural policy.

The symbolic contribution of the fellow-travellers focussed on the periphery of collectivization, describing its by-products, the exodus of peasantry from villages forming an immense "army in bast shoes" building Soviet industry. <sup>50</sup> Even this limited viewing of a great tragedy that swept the Soviet village subsided after some relaxation of the "social command" which followed in the wake of the Party's policy announced in 1934.

With fellow-travellers and marxists displaying only a token interest in the village going through the throes of collectivization, the brunt of the burden fell upon younger, Soviet-formed peasant writers. Of an

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49 L.F. Yershov and V.A. Kovalev, Istoriya sovetskogo russkogo romana, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 479, "... v dogonku zhizni ...".

50 Best known works in this category are L. Leonov's Russian River (Sot), 1927, A. Karavayeva's The Lumber Mill (Lesozavod), 1927, and I. Katayev's Milk (Moloko), 1930.

immense volume of writing printed between 1927 and 1934 only a few works deserve attention for their historical, rather than aesthetic values; even fewer works reached an artistic level comparable to the fiction of the NEP period. In the first group one can place several trailblazers of the kolkhoz topic, then acclaimed as approved models to follow.<sup>51</sup> In the second group belong works of several writers who managed to combine ideological structures and aesthetic requirements.<sup>52</sup> The greatest success in this difficult task was achieved by I. Makarov--purged in the thirties and rehabilitated in the fifties.

From his debut until his disappearance Makarov wrote about the village. His craft and psychological insight won him an instantaneous acclaim. It was noted,

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51 Big Kamenka (Bolshaya Kamenka), 1927, by A. Dorogoichenko; The Fifth Love (Pyataya lyubov), 1927, by A. Demidov; The Bast Shoes (Lapti), 1929, by P. Zamoiski; Breakthrough (Perelom), 1929, by D. Zorin; Icebreaker (Ledolom), 1930, by K. Gorbunov; Girls (Devki), 1929, by N. Kochin -- a sample of then much-discussed models of new perceptions.

52 V. Shishkov's Savagery (Dikolche), 1929; I. Shukhov's Hate (Nenavist), 1930; A. Platonov's tale The Doubting Makar (Usomnivshisya Makar), 1929, provided an uncommon analysis of the upheaval in village. Platonov's satirical treatment of the peasant's adventure in Moscow is, indeed, unique.

though, that Makarov struck out on his own, although his perception of the village remained dangerously close to that of Klychkov.<sup>53</sup> Makarov's masterpiece which caused a lot of consternation is his novel Steel Ribs (Stalnyie rebra), 1929, in which he tells the tragic story of an exemplary village-communist who collectivized his village single-handed. Nevertheless, the hero dies a disillusioned and rejected man -- why?

The reason lay in the fact that Philip Gurtov acted alone, without as much as a token recognition of the advice of other villagers. In doing this Gurtov showed himself to be a staunch Soviet individualist no less undesirable than his capitalistic counterpart. Critics were quick to spot Gurtov's fatal flaw; his type of socialism was understood as "... tasks and aims realizable through individual initiative of a leader leaning on masses as on an obedient .... semi-conscious power".<sup>54</sup>

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53 A. Nizovtsev, "Put Ivana Makarova", in Sovetskaya Zemlya, No. 3, 1932, p. 8, passim. This ominous remark had been made when I. Makarov fell in disfavour.

54 G. Fedoseiev, "Stalnyie rebra" Iv. Makarova", in Pechat i Revolyutsiya, No. 3, 1930, p. 69, "... kak zadachi i tseli osushchestvlyayemyie individualnoi initsiativoi vozhdya, opirayushchegosya na massu, kak na poslushnuyu ... polusoznatelnuyu silu".

This lesson has been well appreciated after the "cult of personality" era; only the novel's cryptic title creates some uneasiness which Soviet official interpreters have been trying to assuage by insisting that "steel ribs" symbolize individualism's deadening effect on man's socialistic spirit -- never the opposite.

Makarov's probing psychologism had been matched by only one novel of many that were published before 1953, by N. Virta's Alone (Odinochestvo) which, in 1935, became a literary event. Between Steel Ribs and Alone there stretches a barren field of kolkhoz fiction extending till the last year of the Second World War. A steep decline of interest in socialized farming can be credited to the novelty of a system which no one really knew how to treat without becoming a political propagandist or a suspect. In the thirties new vistas and a host of much more attractive and safer topics emerged, thus freeing writers from the stagnating and dangerous rural world.

Storozhev, the kulak-hero of Alone, who fought against communism with the proverbial peasant obstinacy and desperation, is the only successful anti-Soviet peasant literary character in the entire Russian-Soviet prose, including the post-Stalin period. Instead of creating a

stock-figure of an "enemy of the people", Virta delineated a tragic figure of a peasant passionately attached to land -- his own land, and not one communally held.

During the war years writers "... seldom turned to the theme of labour ..." <sup>55</sup> -- the home front. Scores of elderly writers were dispatched to the interior; much was published about the heroism of children, women and old folk, supplying foodstuffs to the fighting men, yet nothing persisted beyond immediate morale-boosting needs. Only toward the end of the war a concern about the post-war future began to attract writers. With the publishing of V. Ovechkin's With Greetings from the Front ( S frontovym privetom), 1945, it became the central issue. The story acted as a proverbial stone thrown into "... stagnating waters of contemporary literature about the village" <sup>56</sup>, as "... a reconnaissance. Such works pose questions, inform about what takes place in life, and what should take place". <sup>57</sup> And what should take place after the war

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55 I.K. Kuzmichev, Zhanry russkoi literatury voyennykh let, Gorki, Gorkovskoye knizhnoye izdaniye, 1962, p. 337, "... k teme truda pisateli obrashchalis rezhe ..."

56 A. Drozdov, "Literatura i kolkhoznaya derevnya", in Novy Mir, Vol. 21, No. 12, 1936, p. 219, "... zastoya-vshuyu vodu sovremennoi literatury o derevne."

57 B. Brovman, "Zametki o khudozhestvennoi proze 1945 goda", in Novy Mir, Vol. 21, No.3, 1946, p. 184, "... v rode razvedki. Oni stavyat voprosy, soobshchayut o tom chto proiskhodit v zhizni i chto dolzhno byt".

was clearly stated by Captain Spivak in his letter from the front to the people of his native village. In it, the protagonists of the story plead for a more just, humane and happier country. "We want much ..." wrote the Captain,

We have spilled a great deal of blood for our land and we want much from the future life ... Our goal is not to defend the frontiers of yesteryear, but to occupy new ones ... in this new life in the liberated land we want to see much beauty and happiness; beauty in relationship among the people ...<sup>58</sup>

The sincerity and outspokenness of Ovechkin's story was instrumental in attracting many young writers thus bringing about the revitalization of kolkhoz fiction.<sup>59</sup> The new wave of fiction shifted the focus from Socialist Realism's socio-economic and ideological exigencies to the complex psychological probings of demobilized kolkhozniks, giving strong emphasis to problems in adjustment to peace-time life. This trend characteristic of a large portion of the

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58 V. Ovechkin, S frontovym privetom, in Izbrannyye proizvedeniya v dvukh tomakh, Moskva, Gosizdat, Vol. 1, 1963, pp. 120-121, "mnogo khotim..."

Mnogo krovi prolili na etoi zemle, no mnogo khotim ot budushchei zhizni ... ne sokhranyat staryie rubezhi, zadacha nasha, novyye zanimat ... v novoi zhizni na osvobozhdyonnoi zemle khotim videt mnogo krasoty i radosti, krasotu v otnosheniyakh mezhdu lyudmi ...<sup>59</sup>

59 Among the writers who entered literature during or immediately after the war were: A. Koptayeva, A. Kalinin, S. Voronin, S. Antonov, G. Nikolayeva, S. Babayevski, A. Kozhevnikov, G. Medynski, V. Avdeiev.

Soviet fiction ended abruptly with Zhdanov's famous intervention in 1946. The prescriptions assigned to the kolkhoz fiction were elaborated in a lengthy article by A. Drozdov, published in December issue of Novy Mir, 1946.

In this exposition Drozdov raised a host of standard orthodox objections: excessive concentration on personal and intimate life at the expense of the ideological and political; untypical characters; pseudo-conflicts and the populist "byt". Having no choice, the writers followed re-instituted prescriptions, and some did so well as to earn several Stalin literary awards, only to become the first targets of the critical onslaught after the Dictator's death.<sup>60</sup>

Looking from the perspective of approximately one hundred years of Russian and Soviet-Russian prose about the village world one notes the persistence of perceptual dualism and traditionalism. Except for the periods of the most stringent control of art under Zhdanov -- 1934-1941 and 1946-1953 -- Russian and Soviet writers viewed the village either through the prism of the Slavophile concept or the

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60 A Stalin literary award was won by two of Babayevski's novels -- The Knight of the Golden Star (Kavaler zolotoi zvezdy) and Light over Land (Svet nad zemlei) -- for the year 1948 and 1949. G. Nikolayeva's novel Harvest (Zhatva), won the award for 1950.

Westerner one. The acceptance of one or another point of view with regard to the peasant world had, in the main, been conditioned by the writer's socio-cultural background. Thus, a more detached, objective panorama of the village was offered, mainly, by those who had not fallen under the spell of populism's emotional appeal and the mandatory overt social commitment.

Ideological commitment influenced, to a large extent, the writer's art of fiction. Unqualified acceptance of populism's tenets found their embodiment in the "byt" literary technique practised by the writers of both Russian and Soviet periods. The strength of "byt" was demonstrated by its re-emergence, after a decade of the starkest period of Socialist Realism, during a brief spell of "liberalism" in the immediate post-war years.

Although a relatively small number of writers showed no interest in the peasant theme, the best works artistically came from the foremost artists of Russian and Soviet-Russian prose: Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Bunin, Leonov, Virta, Sholokhov. Only a few of the writers of the nineteenth century populists, or those closely allied with the populist faith, rose above the level of a mediocre art: G. Uspenski, Klychkov, Neverov, Makarov.

Genuine epics and novels about the peasant world are limited to Sholokhov's two works. Apart from these, the entire prose about the village was written in short prose forms - chiefly sketches and tales.

## CHAPTER II

### THE POST-STALIN KOLKHOZ THEME

#### 1. Background

The period to be studied in this thesis encompasses, approximately, thirteen years of recent Soviet literature -- until 1966 -- during which art and letters sought to adapt to a new climate and attempted to exploit fresh possibilities accorded her by the changes in the political leadership of the Soviet Union. The kolkhoz fiction of the post-Stalin era has been marked by a spectacular growth in sheer volume, richer thematic diversity and, to a lesser extent, experimentation in the realm of prose-writing. After three decades of sterility the kolkhoz fiction attained the level of attractiveness, respectability and influence comparable to the nineteenth century populist period.

The purpose of the next two chapters is twofold: to study the thematic development of the kolkhoz theme in terms of several new and significant topics, and to analyse major aspects of the prose-writing techniques. In other words, to study the intellectual content and the craft of composition employed by a number of prominent or influential writers of the period. The extra-literary forces and factors, especially those of political and

ideological nature, will be limited to major events, people and facts strictly relevant to the undertaken studies. These areas have been submitted to a thorough going, continual scrutiny by specialists and students of Soviet cultural and political scene resulting in a large quantity of research material.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis of the topical range of the kolkhoz theme and its technical aspects will be contained in two chapters. The present chapter's division into two main sections correspond to two phases of the theme's development which parallel distinct periods of the post-Stalin history of the Soviet Union. The choice of the year 1957 as the demarcation line is justified, as will be shown in the subsequent studies, in the light of important changes in the treatment of the kolkhoz world and its literary presentation.

One early literary event, in particular (apart from economic, social and, later, moral issues) assisted in placing kolkhoz theme in the limelight of national

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1 Two works containing valuable material and scholarly analyses of the ideological dimensions of the post-Stalin literature deserve attention, Harold Swayze, Political Control of Literature in the USSR, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962, 301 p.; and G. Gibian, Interval of Freedom, Wisconsin, University of Minnesota Press, 1960, 280 p.

attention; it was a long article by F. Abramov published in the April issue of Novy Mir, 1954. In it, the critic and writer of merit, subjected kolkhoz fiction of Stalin's last years, especially the award-winning novels of G. Nikolayeva and S. Babayevski, to a perceptive and penetrating analysis. Abramov's findings and conclusions were valid to the entire post-war Soviet fiction written in similar spirit and craft. No other critical article ever since published in the Soviet Union has comparable force, sincerity and critical sting unleashed against the infamous Zhdanovite orthodoxy. No other Soviet critic has dealt so comprehensively, yet probingly, with the principal elements and manifestation of the distortion of life and the betrayal of art perpetrated during the most ludicrous phase of the "cult of personality" era. Abramov spared not a single important prescription regulating, then, the perception of the kolkhoz world, including those critics who share the responsibility for the debasement of fiction. Little wonder that during the first uncertain months of the post-Stalin era Novy Mir had to perform customary official apology -- a form of expiation for the lack of judgement shown in publishing several articles, among them

the one by F. Abramov.<sup>2</sup>

Repetitiousness, incredulity, overwhelming optimism, "pastoral romanticism"<sup>3</sup>, shallow and false perception of kolkhoz reality -- these are the worst excesses of the Nikolayeva-Babayevski type of fiction, concludes Abramov. Every aspect of prose writing, every ingredient of kolkhoz life were harnessed to the task of depicting a happy, conflictless socialistic Garden of Eden, this at the time when kolkhozes were going through the most difficult period of post-war reconstruction.

The heroes of these optimistic, utopian novels are inevitably "golden heart" men and women of pristine morality, speaking impeccable literary Russian and passing their days between the bouts of Kraft durch Freude and merry-making. Soviet readers were presented with characters having no spiritual life, no passions, no conflicts, not even mild idiosyncrasies and human foibles. Married

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2 The text of the apology of the editorial board of Novy Mir was published after an official statement issued by the Executives of the Soviet Writer's Union in Novy Mir, Vol. XXX, No. 9, 1954, pp.3-7. The other articles condemned by the literary orthodoxy were written by V.Pomerantsev, M. Shcheglov and M. Lifshits.

3 F. Abramov, "Lyudi kolkhoznoi derevni v poslevoynenoi proze; literaturnye zametki", in Novy Mir, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1954, p. 218, "... pastoralnogo romantizma".

couples, though involved in a traditional love triangle, radiate happiness, always solve their misunderstandings to everyone's satisfaction. A war veteran returns home as if from "... an excursion about which now (...) there is no time to talk ..."<sup>4</sup>; marital conflict develops around the question as to where and what crops should be sown. In summary, "... frequently a collective of Soviet toilers has been presented to the readers as a peaceful factory where there are no passions, no confrontations."<sup>5</sup>

The usual plotting strategy, continued Abramov, was to set the action in a particularly backward collective, a device allowing a writer to prove how a hopelessly run-down kolkhoz can be transformed into a shining example of miraculous recovery. To make certain that the climate of "universal admiration and glorification..."<sup>6</sup> is retained by the reader, the writers pressed into service all tools of their profession and well-worn literary conventions.

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4 Ibid., p. 222, "... s ekskursii, o kotoroi (...) i nedosug i govorit ...".

5 Ibid., p. 223, "... neredko kollektiv sovetskikh truzhemi<sup>kov</sup> predstavlyayut chitatelam kak tikhaya zavod, gde net nikakikh strastei, nikakikh stolknoveni".

6 Ibid., p. 219, "... vseobshchogo voskhvaleniya i vozvelicheniya..."

Natural settings included blue skies, the inevitable moon accompanying puritanical love scenes, idyllic vignettes of forests and fields -- all enhancing the "... sugary romanticism"<sup>7</sup> of the kolkhoz pastoral. In similarly detailed and devastating fashion Abramov took apart the false heroics, the schematic structuring of narrative, the idiotic goals and their consequences.

Abramov took to task critics, actually naming several of them, who were instrumental in raising Babayevski-like "varnished" reality to the status of masterpieces and imposing such models on many talented beginners. He assailed the critics who had demanded corrections often under the threat of fearful "naturalism, bytovism, archaism, deviation from the truth of life, lack of feeling for the new"<sup>8</sup> -- the most fearsome weapons of the orthodox arsenal.

This unceremonious, frank, thorough post-mortem on the kolkhoz fiction published during the hey-day of Zha\_novism had a salutary effect on the revival of village

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7 Ibid., p. 221, "...slashchavy'romantizm'".

8 Ibid., p. 228, "... naturalizm, bytovizm, ar-khaizm, otstupleniye ot pravdy zhizni, otsutstviye chuvstva novogo".

topics stimulated already by V. Ovechkin's sketches ushering in a new era in the Soviet prose.

Abramov's article belonged to the first salvo signalling the beginning of the struggle against the legacy of Zhdanovism and its promoters. Despite a temporary but mild setback suffered by the early critics of the state of the Soviet letters, the liberal forces gathered momentum to explode, in 1956, in near rebellion against prescriptive and restrictive literary policies and censorship. After three years of cautious probing of the frontiers of the ideological permissiveness (marked by ceaseless skirmishing between "liberals" and "conservatives" spurred by the relaxation of Party's control) came an outburst of dissent and openly registered dissatisfaction. Nineteen fifty-six, "The Year of Protest", is the year of emotional climax, the culmination of moral anger and forceful criticism of crimes and practices committed under Stalin on behalf of communism. The second volume of Literaturnaya Moskva (Literary Moscow), 1956, epitomizes the spirit, feelings, demands and aspirations of the reformist wing of the Soviet literature. However, these movements remained too inchoate to effect a fundamental change in literature. When the political strife ended with Krushchev's ascendancy to power, the Party resumed

firm control over art and re-confirmed Socialist Realism as the sole permissible literary method. The situation in literature seemed to have returned to its previous normalcy.

Indeed it had, but in substantially changed form. The Party retained its position in respect to literature with Socialist Realism as the literary creed. However, many important gains had been made, especially in the criticism of existing and past policies and mistakes. The turmoil and excitement of 1956 has never been repeated. Ever since that memorable year the Soviet literary scene has remained relatively calm but for sporadic "thaws" and "freeze-ups" reflecting the moods and needs of Party strategy. Instead of trying for more gains in key areas of art, the writers began to explore newly acquired territory, taking advantage of the freedom attained and of relatively more benevolent supervision, censorship and political control.

There should be no illusion however about the intrinsic value of the "liberalization" of literary policy and of art in general, as long as the political dogma and politicians remain final arbiters of the "what" and the "how" of art. For at no time, as W.N. Vickery's analysis indicates, has the dominant position of the Party and its literary method been seriously discussed, let alone

challenged, even during much-promising 1956. The most Soviet dissenters of the mid-fifties hoped to achieve was to endow "... the formulation of Soviet literary doctrine with greater flexibility, to place under its umbrella greater diversity of perceptions and style."<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the events, personalities and policies which affected the entire life of the post-Stalin era, there were other factors which assisted in recasting the image of the rural world in Soviet fiction, turning it into a leading subject of prose during the greater part of the fifties. The popularity and attractiveness of kolkhoz topics produced such a flood of prose in literary magazines that Ovechkin found it necessary to allay growing fears lest the Soviet fiction would become peasant fiction.<sup>10</sup>

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9 W.N. Vickery, Cult of Optimism; Studies in Theoretical, Ideological and Artistic Problems in Recent Soviet Literature, Unpublished doctoral thesis presented to Harvard University, 1957-1958, p. 248.

10 During 1956 symposium about kolkhoz fiction Ovechkin pointed out that only a small fraction of some 3,500 members of the Writers' Union can be considered as truly talented kolkhoz writers; V. Ovechkin, "Kolkhoznaya zhizn i literatura" in Novy Mir, 1955, No. 12, p. 116.

To discuss the sources of these specifically "peasant" factors one would have to examine elements of history, economy and ethics driven underground during the Stalin regime. Suffice it to recall here that the Soviet intelligentsia has been as aware of the hardships and second-grade citizenship of the peasantry as had its predecessors in tsarist Russia. The guilt complex had been too deeply ingrained in the psyche of cultural and intellectual elite to be disposed of by an official fiat. Now that the atmosphere had become more conducive to a re-evaluation of the past, more permissive for establishing new bridges linking the two Russias, the old mystification about "the people" had acquired novel and beckoning attractiveness. In summary, the developments in the post-Stalin Soviet Union and nascent traditional socio-moral proclivities of Russian literature combined to place rural topics into national prominence eclipsing, during the greater part of the fifties, all other topics and themes.

No other individual had done more for promoting kolkhoz topics than did Ovechkin. The sincerity permeating his sketches and tales, and the courage and forcefulness of his exposition of the plight of kolkhozes made him the chief spokesman and defender of the mute

village masses. Ovechkin's personal qualities and his prose served as an example to follow and as a model of critical, yet ideologically acceptable form of involvement in the current affairs of the country. "I think", wrote S.Zalygin in 1956, that

...among many active and quite numerous group of writers, predominantly young, who write about village, there are many whom Ovechkin has helped to find the way. I myself owe him a great deal. I think that much of my work would have not been written were it not for his stories.<sup>11</sup>

V. Ovechkin's position and stature in the early post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction which secured him a niche in Soviet literature, are founded on a bold analysis of the malaise of the contemporary village and on the drastic solutions suggested in his celebrated book of sketches Rayonnyie budni (The Rayon's Workdays). It should be noted that the first sketch entitled Borzov i Martynov (Borzov and Martynov), was published in 1952, that is at the time when Stalin was at the helm of the state. To write Borzov and Martynov in those days "... was an act of great civil and literary courage..."<sup>12</sup> wrote a Soviet

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<sup>11</sup> S. Zalygin, "Thoughts after the Conference", quoted by Vera Alexandrova, History of Soviet Literature; 1917-1964, New York, Doubleday (Anchor Books), 1964, p. 347.

<sup>12</sup> I. Vinogradov, "Derevenskiye ocherki Valentina Ovechkina", in Novy Mir, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1964, p. 127, "... bylo aktom bolshoi grazhdanskoi i pisatelskoi smelosti".

critic recently, because it required moral fortitude to tear down officially recognized "... classical masks (...) semi-mythical types ..."13.

A selective list of writers who have made important contributions to the post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction would include V. Tendryakov, N. Zhdanov, V. Nekrasov, Yu. Nagibin, S. Krutilin, V. Soloukhin, Ye. Dorosh, A. Solzhenitsyn, Yu. Kazakov, D. Granin, V. Mozhayev, S. Voronin, M. Alekseiev, M. Kuznetzov, A. Kalinin, V. Zakrutkin, M. Zhestyov, G. Troyepolski, G. Baklanov, P. Proskurin, F. Abramov, Yu. Yashin, S. Antonov, G. Nikolayeva -- a cross sampling of diverse talents, perceptions, attitudes and art representing several generations.

The biographies of these writers bring out several significant facts. Thus, relatively few made the village their exclusive literary interest; some writers -- Solzhenitsyn, Yashin, Nekrasov or Granin contributed a work or two and turned to other themes. Those who achieved literary prominence and became closely associated

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13 V. Chalmayev, "Raspakhannoye pole", in Znamya, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1965, p. 92, "...klassicheskiye maski (...) polumisticheskiye tipazhi".

with village topics include Ovechkin, Tendryakov, Dorosh, Abramov, Baklanov - to name a few.

In studying kolkhoz writers one notes a conspicuous absence of masters of Soviet prose of the Fedin-Leonov generation. Sholokhov, an acclaimed Soviet bard of the rural world remained silent. Only a few lesser lights of the first Soviet-educated generation of writers can be accounted for: Ovechkin, Virta, Yashin and Dorosh. One can therefore conclude that the bulk of the post-1953 kolkhoz fiction came from the pens of Soviet-born and bred generation commencing their literary careers during and after the Second World War, and many already after Stalin's death.

A study of the educational and professional background of the kolkhoz writers reveals that the majority have university education in various disciplines and specializations: architecture, medical doctors, teaching, journalism and agronomy. Moreover, the majority of writers come from urban milieu and are the members of the Soviet intelligentsia. Consequently, one is on a solid ground in suggesting that what made these men write about a relatively unfamiliar village milieu was not a sense of filial loyalty to one's kin, as had been the case of their predecessors, but an indignation at the injustice meted out by the Soviet system to the "insulted and injured"

masses of collectivized peasantry. There is little doubt, as it will be shown in the studies of some works, that the Soviet peasant's fate under the collectivized system has struck a responsive cord in many a younger writer.

An important influence in attracting writers to the village cause can be also ascribed to Krushchev's decision to bring under cultivation millions of acres of virgin steppe in Kazakhstan. A powerful propaganda stirred the imagination of the young, diverting their energies toward practical and ideologically expedient goals.

Not without influence on the growth of the kolkhoz fiction had been urgings, on the part of the literary critics, to purge letters "... of a tendency toward false romanticism, superficial illustrativeness, frequently false representation of life..."<sup>14</sup>, and of all signs of the "cult of personality" -- the remaining "violations of the leninist principles of collective leadership and

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14 M. Kuznetzov, Glavnaya tema; stati o literature, Sovetski Pisatel, Moskva, 1964, p. 200, "... tendentsii lozhnogo romantizma, poverkhnostnogo illyustratorstva, neredko falshivogo izobrazheniya zhizni..."

democracy".<sup>15</sup>

It can be concluded that the rebirth of interest in the kolkhoz world, had been the resultant of multiple and diversified forces and factors released after the death of Stalin. The village's plight was now officially recognized. The village's poverty, its social and cultural disintegration, the moral fervor of the intelligentsia and its dedication towards creating a more humane Soviet society concentrated on collectivized peasantry as the most suitable object of comprehensive reforms. In the mid-fifties, the village theme presented itself also as a relatively safe platform for less courageous spirits, as a vehicle for overt criticism of past abuses and crimes applicable to other areas of the Soviet life.

Whatever motivation there were behind the writers' decision to turn to kolkhozes the latter served as the rallying point for idealists and practical reformers, each offering solutions to the evils besetting

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<sup>15</sup> Tamara K. Trifonova, "Kolkhoznaya derevnya v sovremennoi literature", in Izdatelstvo Znaniye, series VI, No. 17, Moskva, 1956, p. 13, "... narusheniye leninskikh printsipov kolektivnosti rukovodstva i demokratii".

the largest, culturally homogenous and distinct segment of the Soviet population. "Every writer", as T.K. Trifonova succinctly summed up

...if he did not keep away from acute social problems, if the fate of his own nation and his own people was his fate, if he truthfully mirrored his contemporaneity, he could not pass by the problems of the lives of the millions of peasants-workers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 3, "...kazhdy pisatel- yesli tolko on ne stoyal v storone ot ostrykh obshchestvennykh voprosov, yesli sudba rodiny i rodnogo naroda byla yego sudboi, yesli on verno otrazhal sovremennuyu yemu deistvitel'nost', - ne mog proiti mimo problem, svyazannykh s zhiznyu millionov truzhennikov-krestyan"

## 2. The 1953-1957 years.

For reasons to be discussed in a later chapter, the kolkhoz prose of the first few years after Stalin's death had been written, almost totally, in the sketch genre. Many Soviet critics refer to the 1953-1957 period as one associated with "...the sketch school (...) sometimes called "the Ovechkin's school", which in certain sense is correct".<sup>17</sup> Ovechkin not only provided the prose model, but, more important, singled out in his prose the issue which, in his opinion, was the chief cause of malady in the kolkhozes -- bureaucracy and an assortment of related evils.

Agricultural bureaucracy epitomized by kolkhoz leadership had, for several years, ever since the publishing in 1952 of Ovechkin's Borzov and Martynov, been the subject of studies, analysis, and merciless, many-pronged criticism. Once Ovechkin's work had received the official imprimatur and became an exemplary piece of truly communist, constructive criticism, the flood of kolkhoz sketches swelled enormously.

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17 V. Chalmayev, "Raspakhannoye pole", in Znamya, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1965, p. 206, "... s ocherkovoi shk<sup>o</sup>l<sup>o</sup>i (...) Inogda eto napravleniye nazyvayut 'ovechkinoi shk<sup>o</sup>l<sup>o</sup>i', chto tozhe po svoyemu verno...".

A series of A. Kalinin's sketches, Na srednyom urovne (On the Average Level), serialized in Pravda in 1953, followed, in 1955, by other sketches under the title Lunnyie nochi (Moon-lit Nights), brought the writer a nation-wide acclaim and placed him among the leading writers of the sketch division of kolkhoz fiction. In both series Kalinin was concerned with the style of kolkhoz leadership as the priority on an agenda of agricultural reform.

Debuting M. Zhestyov followed a similar pattern in Pod odnoi kryshei (Under One Roof) -- also a book of sketches published in 1955. There he contrasts one kolkhoz chairman, correcting his own failings and mistakes, with another chairman who remains faithful to the Stalinist formula of a leader's function understood as "... standing on guard wherever they would send me".<sup>18</sup>

Another variant of destructive kolkhoz leadership was described by young G. Baklanov in the sketches V. Snegirakh (In Snegiry), published in 1955. Here, the chairman's talents and successes are nullified by the dictatorial streak in his character. Baklanov contrasts

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<sup>18</sup> I. Vinogradov, "Tochka oporu", in Novy Mir Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, 1959, p. 213, "... stoyat na chasakh tam kuda by menya ne postavili."

the hero with another chairman going about his business without fanfare, but achieving more. Similarly, S. Zalygin's hero in Vesnoi nyneshnego goda (In the Spring of this Year), 1955, a kolkhoz chairman has many virtues and one unforgivable sin -- self-aggrandizement accompanied by a total disregard of the needs of the community. Unlike the writers' of other sketches, S. Zalygin is chiefly concerned with the psychology of his protagonist. A. Isetski, another beginner in literature, portrays a chairman in Svoim umom (With One's Own Mind), 1955, whose failure to measure up to his responsible position stems from an insufficient educational background.

This gallery of inefficient and negative kolkhoz chairmen could be easily extended without, however, adding a new model -- only another variant of destructive leadership held to be chiefly responsible for the problems and shortcomings of contemporary village.

The exclusive preoccupation with kolkhoz leadership at the lower level of management extended into other short prose forms: tales and short-stories. These two prose genres which accounted for a relatively small proportion of kolkhoz prose in the first half of the fifties, include the stories by V. Tendryakov and G. Troyepolski. Tendryakov's handling of the topic in Padeniye Chuprova

(Chuprov's Fall), 1953, is significantly different from the already discussed works. Chuprov is introduced as a capable, intelligent and hard-working chairman credited with splendid results. Consequently he becomes an 'eternal' chairman always elected without serious opposition -- a factor which brings about his downfall. Lack of opposition and constructive criticism, coupled with the failure of industry to supply kolkhozes with needed material, push Chuprov into the arms of illegal operators and risky enterprises leading to worsening relations with other administrators and kolkhozniks. Gradually, Chuprov becomes a "little Stalin" choking even the slightest criticism, until a watchful Party member exposes his illegal operations and restores the democratic process. Clearly, Tendryakov shifts some responsibility from the chairman to the higher echelon of administration for Chuprov's illegal practices actually intended for the good of the community.

G. Troyepolski's book of sketches and tales, later published under the title Dnevnik agronoma (Diary of an Agronomist), strikes a different tone and takes a somewhat broader view of the village situation. The subject matter is presented from a satirical viewpoint and kolkhoz leadership becomes only one of several

topics; rank-and-file kolkhozniks are also taken to task.

Troyepolski's deviation from the dominant pattern is evident in six stories published in 1953. Three of them tackle the "negative" characters, the other three depict more "positive" characters. Significantly, all "negative" heroes are projected in a satirical vein, while a more dignified tone prevails in the stories centred on decent, honest villagers.

In the first group one finds Boltushok (The Babblers), Grishka Khvat (Grishka the Grabber) and Prokhor the Seventeenth -- two ordinary peasants and one leader-- all living by their wits and an assortment of non-punishable schemes, rather than by honest socialistic labour. There is the village philosopher, the Babblers, who "... likes strong and incomprehensible words ..." <sup>19</sup>, talks a lot about kolkhoz difficulties but has fewer work-days than irregularly employed school children. Grishka does well from petty stealing, but has never been apprehended because of his expertise in Soviet criminal code.

The two fade away when confronted with Prokhor the Seventeenth -- the seventeenth consecutive chairman of the

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19 G. Troyepolski, U krutogo yara: Prokhor semnadtsaty i drugiye, Moskva, Sovetski Pisatel, 1961, p. 310, "... rechi silnyie lyubit i neponyatnyie slova..."

kolkhoz and one of the pillars of the regional administration and the worst scoundrel. Everyone seems to know Prokhor's technique which enabled him to survive many purges and dangers, but few possess the qualities needed for survival. Prokhor has a built-in barometer forecasting change in local administrative weather which gives him enough warning to make appropriate adjustments and to find new and influential friends. Prokhor can be slavishly servile toward his superiors and a satrap toward his subordinates. His crowning virtue which gets him out of seemingly hopeless situations is the "courage" to confess errors, admit guilt and promise corrections.

Decent villagers, although handled with a greater respect, are not spared criticism. Thus, the fearless village critic of local aberrations and scoundrels becomes fearless only after a thorough soaking in vodka. In general, though, the "positive" protagonists are depicted with sympathy and understanding, including old Tugodum (Tough-minded), who refuses to join the collective living comfortably from a carefully tended garden plot. He and others like him are shown as the victims of bureaucracy, who live unrecognized and exploited because they lack the qualities of the Prokhors, Grabbers and Babblers.

Troyepolski's incisive, but light-hearted satire, enlivened the overly somber and serious prose of the immediate post-Stalin years winning him wide readership and critical acclaim, although not without frowns and warnings. The orthodox Trifonova noted that Troyepolski's density of sharply sketched portraits of the "negative" villagers "... deviate somewhat from truth of life ..." <sup>20</sup>, thus implying that the writer went a bit too far in his criticism. Even Ovechkin demurred, observing that in Troyepolski's book the kolkhoznik appears as the "... chief culprit for all our disorders..." <sup>21</sup> when everyone knows that the problems of the Soviet agricultural administration "... originate there, where regional affairs are directed." <sup>22</sup>

Short-stories on the kolkhoz theme became more frequent toward the mid-fifties. Most valuable works in this genre were written by the younger generation of writers, people like V. Tendryakov, S. Voronin, and

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20 T.K. Trifonova, "Kolkhoznaya derevnya v sovremennoi literature", op. cit., p. 24, "... v kakoi-to mere otstupayut ot zhiznnoi pravdy..."

21 V. Ovechkin, "Kolkhoznaya zhizn i literatura", op. cit., p. 127, "... glavny vinovnik nashikh neporyadkov..."

22 Ibid., p. 128, "... protsvetayut tam gde rayonami rukovodyat".

S. Antonov. The trend toward spotlighting still untouched aspects of rural administration and life can best be shown in Nenuzhnaya slava (Unwanted Fame) by S. Voronin, 1956, and Delo bylo v Penkove (It Happened in Penkovo) by S. Antonov, also published in 1956. Tendryakov's major work in this genre, Tugoi uzel (The Tight Knot) is analyzed in a later chapter.

The hero of Unwanted Fame is not the target of criticism, but an object of pity, a victim of administrative abuse and dictatorial practices. This late but happily married woman, an efficient supervisor of the dairy farm, is appointed to the chairman's position by the fiat of the region's boss who "... liked to bring up activists from among the people."<sup>23</sup> The "democratic" fancy of the region's high official disregards the woman's ability to serve as head of the collective and the effect of this nomination on her personal life. Soon it becomes evident that her marriage is heading for a breakup and the kolkhoz for disaster, both caused by Katyusha's long and frequent absences from home and office in order to attend endless

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23 S. Voronin, Nenuzhnaya slava, in Solnechnaya dolina, Moskva, Sovetski Pisatel, 1965, p. 178, "... lyubil vydvigat deyatelnkh lyudei iz gushchi naroda".

meetings. Although her husband leaves her, and despite growing grumblings and difficulties in the collective, she remains the chairman on the strength of the region boss' stubborn refusal to reverse his decision.

If Voronin only strayed from the cliché treatment of leadership issue, Antonov dropped it completely in It Happened in Penkovo, considered by some critics as a polemical work "... starting from its very title ..." <sup>24</sup>, permeated "... with acide criticism..." <sup>25</sup> and, according to others, "... anecdotic and lightweight" <sup>26</sup>. The book had stirred a critical furor but has been regularly appearing in the surveys and anthologies of literature of the fifties. What was the cause of such diverse critical assessments? What, indeed, happened in Penkovo?

As was the custom of these years, the story is set in a backward, struggling kolkhoz but without a chairman-villain. To this village comes a newly graduated girl-agronomist, brimming with wonderful ideas on modern

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24 N. Bazhin, "Polemicheskaya povest", in Zvezda, Vol. 37, No. 10, 1956, p. 172, "... nachinaya ot yego zaglavya..."

25 Ibid., "... propitana kislotoi kritiki..."

26 S. Gekht, "Chto bylo v Penkove", in Novy Mir, Vol. 21, No. 10, 1956, p. 217 "... anekdotichnost i legkovesnost ..."

agricultural methods taken as a sure cure for Penkovo's stagnation. After months of intensive exploration and work Tanya begins to realize that the source of the village's problem is not antiquated agricultural method, but its cultural backwardness spawning spiritual decay, material poverty and a climate of despair and hopelessness. Having come to this conclusion, Tanya set for herself a goal quite incompatible with her initial intentions and professional training. She decided to revive cultural activity by providing an appropriate clubhouse which would centralize diversified programs serving the needs of the better and poorly educated old and young. Such a club would not merely be a place for ceremonial ritual and a platform for travelling dispensers of official "cultural" lecturing. Despite heavy odds and the open enmity of many, Tanya succeeds in gaining enough support to attain her goal; the club is renovated and holds out the promise of fulfilling its intended purpose.

It Happened in Penkovo is one of the first aesthetically superior work of fiction indicating a changing perception and a more profound probing of Soviet rural reality. In addition to showing cultural poverty to be the crux of the village's problem, Antonov was the first to depict the detrimental effects of that poverty

on the young who grow bored, frustrated and acquire in the process a cynical, anti-social, almost anarchic attitudes. Matvei Morozov, one of the key characters in the story, is the contemporary version of the Soviet Pechorin, but with a glimmer of hope. Tanya and her ideas are put forth as the only valid remedy to stem the tide of growing unrest, dissatisfaction and final disintegration of rural society. It Happened in Penkovo, it should be added, is not only a significant departure from the prevalent and belaboured "bad versus good" kolkhoz chairman topic, but also a departure from a well-worn traditional technique of story-telling. Instead of structuring the subject in easily followed, strictly chronological story-pattern written in "clear" realistic manner, Antonov employs anecdotes, seemingly disjointed fragments, passing moods, off-the-cuff remarks, lyrical passages, comic situations, "acted out" episodes -- all carefully and tightly integrated. Consequently, It Happened in Penkovo depicts a broader, truer and more perceptive panorama of village life than most prose works published between 1953 and 1956.

Of all conventional prose genres the novel fared poorly during the discussed period. Of a small number of novels published before 1957, two merit mention:

N. Virta's Krutyie gory (Winding Mountains), and G. Nikolayeva's Bitva v puti (Battle on the Way), both appearing in 1956. Virta, the creator of kulak-hero Storozhev, attempted to review critically the Stalinist heritage in the countryside. His is the first larger work tackling the complexity of the agricultural situation showing the dilemma of peasants and containing many incisive psychological insights. But, on the whole, Winding Mountains, is artistically inferior to Alone.

G. Nikolayeva's novel is an example of a remarkable metamorphosis possible to achieve by a Soviet writer. In Battle on the Way there is not a shred of the utopian romanticism, optimism and "conflictless" action found in the novel Harvest for which she received the Stalin Prize. Instead, the focus is on the lives and loves of the protagonists shifting from the rural to the industrial background. Socio-economic elements play an important role, although not the main one; and this, too, is a clear indication of changing trends in kolkhoz prose and of the shifting focus from society to the individual. However, the climate and temper of the immediate post-Stalin years was not too favourable to longer prose genres, especially to bulky, polyphonic, epic-style novels, so much longed for by the Soviet conservative and

orthodox critics.

Singleness of focus, purpose and zealous reformism, permeated by a sense of urgency and a feeling of moral anger, best summarize the essential characteristics of kolkhoz prose published before 1956 "rebellion". The writers scanned a very narrow range of the rural scene, concentrating on kolkhoz administration and economy employing kolkhoz chairman position as the key answer to the problems of contemporary agriculture. The writer's ingenuity was employed toward describing numerous variants of objectionable chairmen whose portraits would form a long gallery, indeed. Only in relatively few works does one find strong hints implicating the higher echelon bureaucrats in the catastrophic situation of the kolkhozes -- in Tendryakov's works, in Antonov's It Happened in Penkovo and in Voronin's Unwanted Fame. Apart from these few, the exposition of reformist ideas and criticism is usually developed in a confrontation between "good" and "bad" types of leader-chairmen.

Criticism of administration of collectivized agriculture was done strictly on the basis of economics, i.e., it was analysed and judged by its economic performance. The ideal was to achieve a level of productivity

which would satisfy the needs of both of the state and of the kolkhozniks, and not of the state alone, as was the case under Stalin. The chief failure, therefore, was a disregard of the needs of the village population. The hero of a story was looked upon as an administrative cog of the bureaucratic machine. Rarely was the character of a chairman exposed beyond this function; his human dimension was seldom shown, as were the heroes of Tendryakov, Voronin and Antonov. In general, the characters are the stereotypes embodying writers' ideas and proposals with regard to solutions of kolkhoz difficulties.

A narrow viewpoint, the urgency of the issues raised, oversimplified remedies, official exhortations and reigning reformist zeal combined to make the sketch genre the most suitable prose form for the needs of the moment. The sketch, especially its formal flexibility and versatility, allowed literature of the fifties to play again the traditional role of social critics speaking with a sincerity unheard of since 1920's. The function which writers assumed in unveiling however limited reality of the contemporary village concurred broadly with Krushchev's

appeal to show "... good, light and bright aspects..."<sup>27</sup> of the country demanding, at the same time, that writers concern themselves also with "... uncovering and judging negative manifestations slowing down our forward movement."<sup>28</sup> Very few "... good, light and bright ..." areas of the kolkhoz world can be found in prose published in the fifties.

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27 N.S. Krushchev, Za tesnuyu zvyaz literatury i iskusstva z zhiznyu naroda, Moskva, Gospolizdat, 1957, p. 25, "...polozhitelnykh, svetlykh i yarkikh storon ..."

28 Ibid., p. 29, "... vskrytiye i osuzhdeniye otritsatelnykh yavleni , tormozyashchikh nashe postupatelnoye dvizheniye vperiyod"

## 3. After 1957

As was already pointed out, the harbingers of a slow thawing<sup>of</sup> the solid focus, single topic and one attitude to the kolkhoz world appeared in late 1955 and in 1956, the memorable "Year of Protest" against over-structured canons of Socialistic Realism. In those years, the "bad" chairman as a central topic began to lose its attractiveness and purely economic issues were treated along the other acute problems. Then, too, the first novelistic attempts at grasping the totality of the village life appeared. This tendency was accelerated by the events of 1956, a year which can be taken as a suitable dividing line in the development of the kolkhoz theme.

The post-1956 kolkhoz fiction has been markedly enlarged and has diversified its range of topics, attitudes and perception. Chairmen-leaders were eclipsed by a colourful motley of ordinary people; contemporaneity subsided and historical topic gained impetus. The prose craft received more attention leading to greater formal diversification of kolkhoz fiction previously identified with the sketch genre. While elderly writers as Ovechkin produced little of significance, new writers joined the ranks of the kolkhoz group, or made contributions before

moving on to other areas -- A. Solzhenitsyn or M. Kuznetsov, for example. The kolkhoz scene remained at the centre of writers' interest but it lost some of its previous exclusiveness. Indeed toward the end of the fifties one notes a slight decline in interest in the kolkhoz world which continues into the sixties. From the mid-sixties, however, the downward curve reversed its direction and, as a recent critic observed, "... today, as before, some ten fifteen years ago, there is no more popular subject in criticism than village and "village prose".<sup>29</sup> Recently renewed vigour and growing volume of works about the collectivized peasant coming from the youngest generation of writers falls outside the scope of this thesis.

The study of thematic development in the post-1956 decade will concentrate on dominant topics and trends thought by the present writer to best represent the new questions, the new issues and tone in the fiction of the period.

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29 I. Dedkov, "Stranitsy derevenskoi zhizni; polemicheskiye zametki", in *Novy Mir*, Vol. 44, No. 6, 1969, p. 231, "... segodnya, kak i prezhde, desyatpyatnadtsat let nazad, net v literaturnoi kritike predmeta boleie popularnogo, chem derevnya i "derevenskaya proza".

A - "What have they done to us"

Two stories in the second volume of Literaturnaya Moskva (Literary Moscow) literary almanach, published in late 1956, became the targets of especially vitriolic and vicious attacks from the orthodox die-hards: Richagi (The Levers) by the poet A. Yashin, and Poyezdka na rodinu (A Trip Home) by a much younger writer, N. Zhdanov. Both provide a very significant and disturbing to the Soviet orthodoxy approach to the contemporary kolkhoz world.

In The Levers, kolkhoz leadership is still of central interest, but at a level higher than the village administration. Now the critics offering their opinion as to "what is wrong with kolkhozes" are recruited from the rank-and-file communists, "the levers" of Soviet power in the countryside. This twelve-page story is structured around a very common occurrence -- a regular meeting of the village's Party cell. The action set in the kolkhoz office consists of two scenes; the first allows the reader to eavesdrop on casual, small talk between the gathering members of the cell; the second relates the official portion of the meeting.

From the first scene one learns about the villagers' everyday problems and worries; one hears their complaining and cutting remarks about remote, autocratic city-bosses who "... have no confidence in ordinary peasants..."<sup>30</sup>, although it is imperative "... that peasant must be trusted..."<sup>31</sup>, if the situation is to improve at all. Inadvertently, "the levers" expose the everpresent fear riddling this society, a fear "... that got to the point that we're even afraid of ourselves"<sup>32</sup>, remarked bitterly one communist. The tone of grumbling, the subjects raised prior to the meeting show these village Party-men to be indistinguishable from ordinary, non-Party members. Then, as the official part of the meeting is about to begin, as if touched by a magic wand, the friendly and relaxed atmosphere vanishes and

Everyone's face became set, tense and bored, as if they had prepared themselves to perform an extremely familiar but nevertheless solemn and important ceremony. Everything ordinary and natural disappeared, and the scene seemed to shift to another world, to which these unaffected, warm-hearted people had not yet fully grown accustomed.<sup>33</sup>

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30 A. Yashin, The Levers, in Hugh McLennan and V. Vickery, The Year of Protest: An Anthology of Soviet Literary Material, New York, Vintage Books, 1961, p. 199.

31 Ibid., p. 199.

32 Ibid., p. 202.

33 Ibid., p. 208.

What follows is routine, mechanical passing of resolutions, condemnations, appeals calling upon kolkhozniks for a still greater effort to meet the state-plan quotas -- all done in the tone, style and jargon of the unseen bosses about whom "the levers" were bitterly complaining minutes ago. The business of the meeting is disposed of quickly, and with a sigh of relief the participants disperse "... resuming their conversation about life, about everyday doings, work -- the conversation going on before the meeting."<sup>34</sup> They have performed the prescribed function of "the levers".

"Is it right or isn't it what they have done to us"<sup>35</sup> is the haunting question posed by an elderly village woman to a visiting city-based bureaucrat, a native boy who has succeeded in becoming a well-fed, - clothed and well-housed Soviet dignitary. To this pathetic question Varygin had no answer save for automatically dispensed ideological clichés to the effect that, whatever is at stake, the "... state must come first. Everything depends on the level of consciousness of the masses."<sup>36</sup>

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34 Ibid., p. 223.

35 N. Zhdanov, A Trip Home, in The Year of Protest, op. cit., p.223.

36 Ibid., p. 220.

Zhdanov's story is constructed around Varygin's one-day stay in the village to attend his mother's funeral. This enforced visit gives him an opportunity to renew old acquaintances and to listen to their complaints and questions. The central thought is the old woman's "is it right" what the Soviet regime had done to collectivized peasantry. And the answer, woven into the incident, amounts to a wholesale condemnation of the System which turned the Russian peasant into the pariah of Soviet society, the helot providing labour without sufficient remuneration: "So you are leaders; we are producers. That's how it is".<sup>37</sup> Implicitly, the "leaders" are robbing the village of the fruit of its toil, leaving only crumbs, the leftovers after state-imposed quotas are fulfilled. They cause the village's abject poverty, the de-population of its young which spawns hopelessness and despair. Varygin listens impassively as an elderly peasant relates the last years of his mother's life when

... sometimes she had white bread and enjoyed factory tea. This year they brought sugar several times, and she had some too. No, there is nothing to complain about.<sup>38</sup>

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37 Ibid., p. 217.

38 Ibid., p. 218.

concluded good-naturedly the old peasant. The pathos of this understatement is more eloquent and damning than any reformist novel. The tragedy of it lies in the fact that this old, emancipated peasant accepts his lot as something quite normal, as his prescribed place in Soviet society. Only the young are not willing to submit, balking at overt injustice, openly criticising the "... dispensers of official cheer"<sup>39</sup> and planning to leave the village at the first opportunity.

A Trip Home is not written in spirited, argumentative manner of Ovechkin's sketches, as it may appear from out-of-context quotations. The questions are posed, no answers offered. However, this "one-day visit" leaves even the impassive, well-conditioned to inequalities Varygin somewhat moved: "... some feeling of guilt remained with Varygin for a long time."<sup>40</sup> The same feeling struck sensitive readers even more deeply infuriating the orthodox magistrates of Soviet letters and control apparatus.

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39 Ibid., p. 222.

40 Ibid., p. 223.

The village is an organic thematic component of all major works of A. Solzhenitsyn; however, his tale Matryonin dvor (Matryona's House), published in 1963, is concerned only with the situation in the village constituting a powerful indictment of the de-humanization and demoralization of the Soviet peasantry. Like all true art, Matryona's House can be viewed on several planes; it can be relevant to local as well as to universal problems.

On the universal plane, the life and fate of Matryona exposes the moral bankruptcy of modern society which substitutes for "love thy neighbour" a selfish search for comfort and the acquisition of material goods. In such a society, anyone attempting to live for others, to live according to ethical standards becomes a misfit, an object of exploitation -- never a model.

On another, the Soviet plane, Matryona is an exposé of the fate and the plight of elderly peasants whose sole possession, the wages of life-long, back-breaking honest working for the collective is a "... dirty-white goat, a crippled cat and a rubber plant."<sup>41</sup> Matryona's diet consists of various potato

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, We Never Make Mistakes, Columbia, University of Carolina Press, 1963, p. 100.

dishes; she has no pension, and no one is interested in her, except for the instances when her labour is needed in emergency situations.

The topics central to these three stories are distinctly different from those interesting most writers of village life of the 1953-1956 period. Yashin, Zhdanov and Solzhenitsyn operate at the moral level, question the ethics of the System which inbred fear turning well-meaning people into split-personality "levers" of Soviet power. These writers exposed the chasm separating city-bureaucracy from kolkhoz masses, thus showing a consequent social stratification into the "have" and "have-nots" -- the Masters and the Slaves. The tragedy of this social structure is most strikingly symbolized by the fact that the ex-villager is immune to the plight of his own flesh and blood in the village. Solzhenitsyn's story shows the harvest reaped by the System which transformed kolkhozes into a "poor house" for enfeebled old peasants riddled by greed and immorality. The village emerging from Matryona's House is a vast and depressing cultural spiritual and economic Soviet wastelands.

Unlike the majority of writers of the immediate post-Stalin years, these three writers avoided the stance of a thundering practical reformer or preacher and chose instead a more subdued, restrained and indirect method of story-telling evolving around common people and everyday contemporary life in the village.

#### B - Village youth

The topic of youth has not been of primary importance in the kolkhoz fiction as it has in the non-kolkhoz Soviet fiction. The kolkhoz prose does not have writers like V. Aksyonov, V. Voinovich or A. Radov associated with the topics of youth of urban and industrial sectors of society. This does not mean, though, that the youth problem has not existed, or that writers have not been aware of, or concerned about it. In kolkhoz prose, difficulties faced by the young have, for the most part, been integrated with other problems usually expressed in terms of the village's inability to retain its sons and daughters, their disinterest in farming and menial labour. From this point of view, the outflow of the village young

to cities and towns, commerce and industry, has been a phenomenon present in all modern societies.

There have been, however, several prose works dedicated exclusively to the fortunes of youthful heroes, among them D. Granin's Posle svadby (After the Wedding), 1958, M. Kuznetsov's U sebya doma (At Home) 1964, and S. Antonov's Razorvanny rubl (The Torn rubl ), 1966. Of the three writers Antonov has shown the most persistent interest in the topics and issues relevant to the Soviet village youth. Morozov, the hero in already discussed It Happened in Penkovo, may be considered as the first study of the rural society's failure to integrate its young.

The storyweb of the three works is structured around three young protagonists: Galya (At Home), Pastukhov (The Torn Rubl) and Igor (After the Wedding). The first two, both in their late teens, came from the city to seek happiness and self-fulfilment among the peasants; the third, Igor, is introduced as a newly and happily-married agricultural specialist looking forward to a more comfortable life in a small agricultural centre.

The Party's decision to send Igor to a remote and backward corner of the region provokes in him a defiant refusal, despite his konsomol training and ominous consequences for his career. Igor has the full support of the wife, portrayed as a very much bourgeois type. Finally, though, after much soul-searching, and despite his wife's protestations, Igor takes up the challenge at the price of a broken marriage.

"How to achieve happiness in life" is at the core of Igor's dilemma; a similar question is posed by Galya, the heroine of Kuznetsov's At Home; but the road they travel to find the answer and the very conceptualization of the problem itself set the two apart. Igor seeks the answer which will satisfy both his craving for individual, "egoistic" happiness and his communist conscience, on the one hand, his obligations to his family and to the communist ideal, on the other. The two goals are diametrically opposed and, according to Granin, there can be no compromise between these conflicting strivings. The writer proves this thesis by pacing his hero through a tortuous, painful road leading to a victory agreeing with ideologically correct type of man's happiness achieved at the expense of man's personal happiness.

Kuznetzov's Galya, however, succeeds in combining the two; she does it by by-passing ideological mystification, entirely within confines of "egoistic" yearning for love, husband and socially satisfying work. Eventually, her initial pessimism, disenchantment and self-analysis dissolve as she enters into the village's society later becoming a very energetic and capable worker and a prize-winning milk-maid, credited with high achievements of her dairy farm.

Like Galya, Pastukhov migrates from the city, but in most other respects he differs from Kuznetzov's heroine. Pastukhov leaves a well-to-do family in Moscow, determined to "... become an honest kolkhoznik and to dedicate his life to agricultural work"<sup>42</sup>. However, he is not a stock figure of the city idealist leaving for the countryside in search of a "simple" and "natural" life among rousseauesque "beautiful savages". Pastukhov has studied the kolkhoz problems and has a concrete, practical improvement in mind. After some peripetiae he is allowed to experiment with his new technique of mechanized operations, gets accustomed to, and is accepted by the

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42 Sergei Antonov, Razorvany rubl, in Yunost, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1966, p. 13, "... reshil stat chestnym kolkhoznikom i posvyatit zhizn selskomu khozyaistvu".

villagers. The story seems to be heading for a "positive" finale, were it not for his interest in the supposedly accidental death of a young village girl which, after Pastukhov's investigation, turned to be a case of suicide caused by unrequited love. Now all his energies are directed toward bringing the culprit to account before the court for complicity in the girl's death. However, Pastukhov's idealistic undertaking is doomed because man's conventional justice excludes man's intimate affairs. To the youth it is a shattering blow to his ardent, ethical motivations from which he never recovers. Slowly Pastukhov loses his previous interest in improving life around him and begins to conform to established "practical" views and ways; he "... begins to walk as other do (...) became disciplined, more attentive and quieter (...) and he began to ask fewer questions of the chairman."<sup>43</sup> Finally, Pastukhov, falls into the prescribed social mould by becoming a "normal", predictable, law-abiding citizen.

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43 Ibid., p. 46-47, "...stal khodit kak ostalnyie (...) stal bol'e distsiplinirovannym, ispolnitelnym i tishel (...) I neyasnykh voprosov k predsedatelu u nego stanovilos vsego menshe".

Pastukhov's tragedy is a sad commentary on Soviet, or on any society failing to provide an outlet for youthful idealism rebelling against traditional norms, values and customs. Implicitly, a society which crushes Pastukhovs is becoming simply a human herd, a grey undifferentiated mass always in need of leaders. Thus the story's point is utterly pessimistic, notwithstanding the last-moment assurance from the participant-narrator that Pastukhov's sacrifice was not entirely lost, that her own courageous speech to assembled dignitaries and populace was inspired, and in fact, made possible, by his example and tragedy.

A comparison of the motifs and intentions activating these three heroes brings out several significant differences and common traits. Granin's purpose is to show "... the road of the building and of the renaissance of communist morality"<sup>44</sup>. Kuznetsov's Galya does not have so lofty an aim, but reaches a somewhat similar goal. Antonov eschewed the ideological pre-requisites, if one is to discount the last-page gesture intended to dilute his stark pessimism. Igor and Galya fit into a modified

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44 E. Dobin, in the afterword to D. Granin, *Posle Svadby*, Moskva-Leningrad, Khud. Lit., 1964, p. 430, "... puti stanovleniya i vrozhdeniya norm kommunisticheskoi morali ...".

variant of the "positive" hero, while Pastukhov refuses to compromise, choosing instead total defeat and withdrawal from combat.

As to the similarities -- it must be noted that the three kolkhoz youths are neither of genuine village origin, nor are they "rebels". None of them is endowed with the qualities usually bestowed upon "angry young men", including those of the USSR: apoliticism, alienation from one's social milieu and culture, seen, for example, in some characters of V. Aksyonov. The dissident youths of the kolkhoz, whether Igor, Galya or Pastukhov, seek to change the existing life by working within established institutions. Their distinctly evolutionary reformism is, therefore, in agreement with the spirit and tendencies of peasant culture.

One ought to point out another aspect of the three heroes, namely their city culture. Why did the writers select city protagonists? Is it because no authentic village youth could be found to perform the roles assigned to Igor, Galya or Pastukhov? Or, is it because the writers were too unfamiliar with kolkhoz youth to portray them in the roles of rebels? Or, perhaps, in selecting their heroes they projected their

own yearnings and followed the traditional models of Rudin-Bazarov lineage? This writer believes that both factors, the ennui of a city-man with his own civilization and an urge to establish closer links with nature and the Russian people, on the one hand, and the traditional Russian literary characters, on the other, influenced the writers' choice of the city-heroes playing the roles of kolkhoz dissident youth.

C - Revision of the past and new synthesis.

Krushchev's de-Stalinization was the most important single stimulus contributing to the re-examination of the past in the light of the new disclosures and expanded permissiveness. The opportunity to revise the past has been appreciated and exploited by the writers interested in the history of the peasantry during the Soviet period. The examination of history presented itself not only as a rich and diversified source of novelistic topics, but also as a chance to introduce omissions and to provide a more plausible historical perspective. The role of peasantry in establishing Soviet power, the village's

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transformation under communism, its post-1945 contribution to the reconstruction, even the turmoil of the early fifties, were saturated with drama, pathos, tragedy and critical questions offering writers new vistas and material.

Among widely discussed works dominated by historical interest one can place: Na Irtyshe (On Irtysk River) by S. Zalygin, 1961; Chernozyom (Chernozyom) by G. Troyepolski, 1961; Gorkiye travy (The Bitter Grass) by P. Proskurin, 1965; Iz zhizni Fyodora Kuzkina (From the Life of Fyodor Kuzkin) by B. Mozhayev, 1966; Vishnyovy omut (The Cherry Pool) and Khleb-imya sushchestvitelnoye (Bread, the Substantive Noun) by M. Alekseiev, 1961 and 1964 respectively; Ekho voyny (The Echo of War) by A. Kalinin, 1964; Tatyana Tarkhanova (Tatyana Tarkhanova) by M. Zhestyov, 1962; Lyudi ne angely (People are not Angels) by the Ukrainian writer I. Stadnyuk, 1963. Even such lyrical works as S. Krutilin's Lipyagi, 1963, and V. Soloukhin's Vladimirskiye prosyolki (By-roads of Vladimir District) and Kaplya Rosy (A Dew Drop), 1957 and 1959, are saturated with history.

Of all historical periods and events which had profound effect on peasantry, the collectivization produced the richest harvest of fiction, especially novels.

Fewer writers focussed on other historical phases and almost none on the thirties immediately following the completion of collectivization. Several novels span the entire Soviet history overlapping well into the pre-Revolution Russia.

Until the late fifties, the topic of collectivization was frequently hinted at, but never fully treated, if one discounts works written strictly along the official lines. Till then, such an important facet of collectivization as de-kulakization of peasantry had been employed as a symbol implicating kulaks in any real or imaginary anti-Soviet activity, making them responsible for all difficulties and problems haunting Soviet agriculture. Now, the kulak issue could be revised. Several writers attempted to deal with it extensively and probingly, among them M. Zhestyov, A. Kalinin and S. Zalygin.

Already before Tatyana Tarkhanova's birth menacing clouds entered into her life. All this happened because she was destined to be born into the family of Ignat Tarkhanov...<sup>45</sup>

With this cryptic and misleading beginning M. Zhestyov begins his bulky novel. The first sentence is misleading because at the centre of the story stands not Tatyana but her kulak grandfather, Ignat. He is a middle-class peasant, generally pro-Soviet, a Red Army man, one of the first kolkhoz members, but, as most peasants then, not overly enthusiastic about the new economic structure. Yet, Ignat meets the fate of millions of other peasants; he is branded as "enemy of the people", dispossessed and deported from his native place.

Ignat's fortunes, from the moment he illegally removes his own horse from the kolkhoz stable, serve the writer to expound his view on de-kulakization using Ignat as an example of an innocent victim of misguided

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<sup>45</sup> M. Zhestyov, Tatyana Tarkhanova, Moskva-Leningrad, Sovetski Pisatel, 1962, p. 5.

Yeshcho do rozhdeniya Tatyany Tarkhanovoi groznye sobytiya voshli v yeyo sudbu. I vsyo proizoshlo potomu chto yei suzhdeno bylo poyavitsya na svet v seme Ignata Tarkhanova.

and over-zealous officials charged with the responsibility for the collectivization of agriculture, "Maybe, really, there should be no deportations? (...) Maybe it would be enough to deport a few rich ones, just for a scare"<sup>46</sup>, muses the local militia man supervising a transportation of deportees. This is the starting point of the writer's argument woven into, approximately, twenty-five years of Ignat's clandestine existence as a run-away kulak. M.Zhestyov explores Ignat's fate hoping to show that a massive deportation was both unnecessary and harmful; that it resulted from the lack of understanding of peasant's mentality and life.

Consequently, the prime purpose of the novel is not to show suffering inflicted on the unfortunate Ignat, but to prove that his ambivalence with respect to certain aspects of collectivization (epitomized by the "theft" of his own horse) was an uncontrollable reflex of his cultural heritage founded on the concept of private ownership of land. This impulse proved to be so powerful and pervasive that even when toward the end of his life Ignat begins "... to see the sense of his life in

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25, "Mozhet byt, verno, ne stoilo vyselyat? (...) Mozhet byt, dostatochno bylo by dlya ostrastki vyslat pyatok-drugoi bogateiev".

joining the Party..."<sup>47</sup>, he could not take the last step -- he could not return to his native kolkhoz despite pleadings and gnawing nostalgia. The writer argues that it takes three generations for this step to be made in order to complete the cycle of transformation from peasant's individualistic to collectivistic mentality. It was left for Tatyana, already a thoroughly Soviet youth, to carry on where her grandfather had left off. Tatyana inherits most of her grandfather's admirable qualities -- love of land and nature -- in addition to the collectivistic spirit which he lacked. Tatyana has been endowed with other traditional qualities of Russian womanhood found in Pushkin's heroine and Tusenbakh's enthusiasm for work.

Entirely different approach to the de-kulakization issue was provided by Zalygin, <sup>in</sup> On the Irtysh River where the writer skirts historical dialectics, probing instead the victims' emotions and motives for opposing collectivization. Zalygin's short-story also exposes the principal reason behind the punishing of outwardly pro-Soviet peasant accompanied by an analysis of the circumstances and forces which assisted de-kulakization.

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47 Ibid., p. 403, "... vidit ves smysl zhizni svoeyi v tom, chtoby vstupit v partyu ...".

Chausov, the writer's hero, had, to an approximate degree, Ignat's social qualifications and attitudes toward the Soviet state. However, unlike Ignat, Chausov, earned the kulak label in a very deliberate, reasoned way by refusing, despite the pleadings and urging of local communists, to donate "... even a single grain ..." <sup>48</sup> to kolkhoz bins. He took this stand because he "... is not going to allow his children to go hungry. And myself, hungry and naked, I am of no use to anyone, myself or, let us say, to kolkhoz" <sup>49</sup>. This demonstration of an open defiance flung in the face of an outside official investigating his anti-Soviet act serves only as an illustration of a much more complex issue agitating peasants: "Well, so I would have given grain yesterday, and then what?" <sup>50</sup>. Then, there would be no end to other demands posed by outsiders, the men from the city, made without prior consultation with peasants. In this lies the crux of Chausov's "rebellion" and of ancient enmity between city and village.

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48 S. Zalygin, Na Irtyshe, in Novy Mir, Vol. 39, No. 2, 1964, p. 73, "... Ni zernyshka ..."

49 Ibid., p. 66, "... rebyatishek ya golodnymi ne ostavlyu. Ya sam bosy -golodny nikomu ne nuzhny - ni sebe, ni, skazat, kolkhozu".

50 Ibid., p. 79, "Nu, otdal by ya vchera zerno, a dalshe chto?"

The real reason for punishing Chausov was presented by the region's senior communist, Koryakin, who initiated court proceedings and had him convicted in the teeth of opposition from local communists and city prosecutor. Koryakin dismissed the defence's extenuating circumstances, using them for just the opposite purposes. Pointing out Chausov's role in putting out the fire in kolkhoz granaries and his subsequent and independently taken action against the arsonist, Koryakin argued that although today the accused defends kolkhoz' property...

... tomorrow he will go on to destroy the kolkhoz (...). Such people as Chausov one must isolate forever from the masses, deprive them of their influence (...). Now we are building a kolkhoz, and the atmosphere in a kolkhoz must be absolutely clear...<sup>51</sup>

There is the compelling logic in Koryakin's action designed as a preventive measure aiming at the elimination of all strong personalities constituting possible sources of opposition; it was the reasoning behind the genocide carried out by Stalin and Hitler.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.75.

... a zavtra on poidyot kolkhoz rushit (...). Takikh, kak Chausov, navsegda nado ot mass izolirovat, izbavitsya ot ikh vliyaniya (...). A ved kolkhoz sozdayom, i atmosfera v kolkhoze dolzhna byt absolyutno chista ...

On the Irtysh River gives explanations for the success of massive de-kulakization. For one, there was no other effective force which could match the toughness and dedication of men like Koryakin, blindly believing in their leader's wisdom and righteousness. He despised the flabby, bookish intelligentsia and was not afraid of ineffective local communists. Furthermore, the village youth supported Koryakin in the belief that suffering and injustice are unavoidable in

The reorganization of the entire life, Comrade Nechayev. And people are divided into two opposing camps: one is "for", another "against"; and some are still in the middle. These are the ones who can be pushed<sup>52</sup> by an insignificant event either here or there.

In The Echo of War A. Kalinin deals only with the aftermath, the by-product of the kulak question; he is concerned with the immorality of "guilt by association" concept and practices making the children of kulaks suffer for their parents' crimes against the Soviet state. The period of collectivization is employed by the writer solely

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52 Ibid., p. 79.

Peredelka vsei zhizni, tovarish Nechayev. I lyudi razdelilis na dva protivopolozhnykh lagerya: odni - 'za' drugiye - 'protiv'. A kto to yeshcho i poseredine. I takogo vot srednego samy kakoi - to nichtozhny sluchai mozhet tolknut tuda ili syuda.

as an impressionistic backdrop to the main story taking place during and after the last war.

Varvara Tabunshchikova's elemental and all-embracing hate of the Soviet system -- a hate that was to send her to Siberia -- was transferred to her two sons who turned traitors during the German invasion of the USSR. She was also instrumental in the death of a defenceless Red Army soldier as well as one of her own sons. However, because of advanced age and poor health she was permitted to live in her native village hating and hated with undiminished force, while cared for by her youngest child, a daughter.

The old mother and her two sons are lost and doomed and of little interest to the writer; he centres, instead, on unearned and undeserved punishment meted out by the village to Olga, the daughter who was too young to be involved in the family's anti-state and unpatriotic acts. Despite being a Soviet youth, Olga is ostracized and disliked by many villagers, chiefly because she cared for her bed-ridden mother. Even the husband shows no understanding of Olga's dilemma. There is nothing she can do, there is nobody she can appeal to and no sympathetic soul. Her life is ruined for uncommitted acts.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the treatment of the kulak issue by the three writers. The most evident is the lack of questioning of the de-kulakization per se which is understood to be an unavoidable prerequisite of successful collectivization of agriculture. What is questioned is the scale of deportation which affected multitudes of innocent peasants, as exemplified by the fate of Ignat and Chausov.

Zalygin and Zhestyov differ with respect to the sources of the peasant's ambivalence or their passive mute opposition. The former writer sees it, chiefly, in ancient city-village enmity, the city being accused of imposing its hegemony over village and thereby implicitly exploiting the peasantry. The latter, Zhestyov, points to socio-cultural forces which prevent the unqualified acceptance of collectivization by the peasants.

Although On the Irtysh River and Tatyana Tarkhanova have a score of important characters living "... in stone houses under tin roofs (always eager) to correct peasant life, who is good in it, who is guilty..."<sup>53</sup>, none

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53 Ibid., p. 43-44, "... gorodskikh kamennykh domov, zhelezom krytykh (...) muzhitskuyu zhizn ladit, kto v nei pravy, a kto vinovaty ..."

achieved moral and spiritual status of the peasant protagonists. Ignat and Ch<sup>u</sup>asov are endowed with qualities traditionally associated with Russian peasant: simplicity, innate wisdom, capacity for hard work, humility, pristine morality derived from their labour on the land and their intimate contact with nature. The two "kulaks" fit admirably into the mould of the peasant cast by mid-nineteenth century Slavophiles and the populists.

Most writers treating the historical topic have shown a preference toward a larger canvas including the kulak issue. In such works as Chernozyom and People are not Angels, for example, the kulak question and collectivization remain central; in others like The Cherry Pool, they occupy a subordinate position; still in others, collectivization is only an organic constituent of the re-writing of history of the Russian and Soviet-Russian peasant. Most writers aimed at re-establishing peasantry's dominant position in the history of both Russias, of the pre- and post-1917 periods. Of course, no two works are alike in perception, emphasis, tone, emotions and selection of historical material.

One approach to historical prose would be to study it in terms of novelistic patterns and the overall narrative design employed by various writers. On the basis of these technical criteria one may distinguish two broad groups of fiction, one patterned on traditional epic conventions, the other showing a tendency toward mixing of styles and techniques derived from literary inheritance and a more contemporary novelistic craft of prose-writing. In the first group one can place G. Troyepolski's Chernozyom, I. Stadnuyk's People are not Angels, M. Alekseiev's The Cherry Pool and P. Proskurin's The Bitter Grass. In the second group, B. Mozhayev's From the Life of Fyodor Kuzkin, M. Alekseiev's Bread-the Substantive Noun, S. Krutilin's Lipyagi and V. Soloukhin's lyrical prose.

Alekseiev's bulky novel, The Cherry Pool, represents an ambitious undertaking aimed at re-writing a long period of history of peasantry within allowable confines. It is in fact an annalistic rendition of the village's history from its early pioneering days, set in the second half of the nineteenth century, through the subsequent stages of Russian and Soviet historical periods. Alekseiev's historical panorama of the village follows the marxist dialectical process culminating,

inevitably, in the collectivized "solution" -- the Soviet kolkhoz. On this conceptual screen the writer projects a slow-moving story of two families each foreshadowing, from the establishment phase of the novel, future social stratification and unavoidable social strife: the Savkins, the first to raise the homestead near the ominous and murky pond, grow into a powerful kulak clan; the Kharlamovs, who eventually provided the backbone of pro-Soviet stratum of the village. The force that propels the story and shapes both Kharlamovs and Savkins is an ever menacing, severe, cruel nature which man tries to conquer and adapt to. Man-made history -- wars, epochal political events, revolution -- find but a faint reflection in the peasant socio-cultural microcosm and occupy a peripheral position in the writers novelistic scheme.

The product of the struggle and cooperation between man and the forces of nature is the Russian peasant with his markedly distinct psychological, sociological, moral and physical make-up which enable him to survive all adversities and to continue his ancestral mode of life. Neither the 1917 Revolution, nor the bloody Civil War, not even collectivization touched the foundation of peasant culture. The Soviet village

simply exchanged private ownership of land for a communal concept of farming.

The presumed elemental attachment of peasant to individually-owned land could not be ignored, not even in Alekseiiev's historical version. This is one thorny problem calling for a convincing argument, and Alekseiiev's explanation is rather uncommon. While admitting peasants' non-socialistic proclivity in respect to land ownership, he insists that in the village life it has never assumed as pernicious a form as it had among the city bourgeoisie. "A peasant is an individualist. Starting from the premises of middle-class bourgeois psychology we arrive at this conclusion"<sup>54</sup>, thus Alekseiiev begins his thesis. It is however wrong, he continues, to equate peasant and bourgeois concept and practice of private ownership and individualism since the former contains elements of cooperation and mutual assistance totally absent in the cities. To support his view the writer reaches for linguistic and sociological material:

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54 M. Alekseiiev, Vishnyovy omut, Moskva, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1964, p. 183, "Krestyanin - individualist. Iskhodya iz psikhologii melkogo sobstvennika, my delayem smelo takoye zaklyucheniye".

... for a peasant the word "community" is, one could say, held in great respect. This word you will find any time, in any context. Many communal enterprises are labelled as "communal" ... Community builds bridges, erects dykes, assist fire victims, judges horse thief, guards "communal" and other property ...<sup>55</sup>

Alekseiev's explanation of the Russia peasant individualism woven into the socio-economic web of the traditional "mir" is one of the fundamental tenets of Slavophiles and populists. However, it is a novelty within the context of the post-Stalin revision of peasant culture, especially its emphasis of peasant's deep and emotional attachment to his land.

The Alekseiev-like panorama of the pre-Revolution village is a rare occurrence in recent fiction in which the early twenties and the years of collectivization retained the strongest attention of the writers revising the peasant past. Troyepolski's Chernozyom and

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55 Ibid., p. 184.

... u krestyanina v naibolshem pochote, pozhalui, slovo 'obshchestvo'. Yego vy uslyshite v lyuboye vremya i v lyubom sochetanii. Mnogiye sovместnyie dela nazyvayutsya ne inache kak "mirskiye" ili "obshchestvennyie" ... Obshchestvo stroit mosty, vozvodit plotinu, vyruchaet pogoreltsa, sudit konokrada, okhranyayet 'obshchestvennyie' i prochyye ugodya...".

Stadnyuk's People are not Angels represent a diversity of views, attitudes, of narrative designs and intentional strategies in the voluminous historical fiction.

In Chernozyom, the rural strife between communist and Social Revolutionary elements differs sharply from the official Soviet histories belittling the serious contenders for power in the post-Romanov Russia-Social Revolutionaries. Troyepolski shows the vast majority of peasants to be ambivalent and suspicious of both, Bolsheviks and Social Revolutionaries. It would be better "if, let's say, the earth opened up now and you two governments fell in"<sup>56</sup> - that is how the majority of peasants felt about their "benefactors". Although there is no doubt as to the writer's sympathies, the years of the struggle for the hegemony in the countryside are depicted with relative objectivity, as a complex Soviet period. The writer avoided deux ex machina miraculous transformation of the patriarchal village into a socialistic one. Even the finale of the novel does not forecast an immediate utopia but a long and difficult road ahead.

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56 G. Troyepolski, Chernozyom, Moskva, Sovetski Pisatel, 1962, p. 36 "Yesli by vot, seichas rasstupilas zemlya i vy, oboye vlasti, provalilis tartarary, to-luchshe bylo-by".

Stadnyuk concentrates on, approximately, the same period, but, unlike Troyepolski's novel, his work is permeated with strong lyricism, abounds in angry condemnation of Stalin's terrorism and the administrative abuses perpetrated against the village. In a sense, Stadnyuk's work is the kolkhoz counterpart of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (Odin den v zhizni Ivana Denisovicha), minus Solzhenitsyn's art. People are not Angels focusses on one family amid complex human and social relationships of the village microcosm undergoing slow but irresistible changes under the impact of Soviet ideology.

Aside from nature's forces shaping the destiny of man, Stadnyuk gives a fuller play to irrationalism and man's cruelty to man, to "... incomprehensible (...) hurricanes of human passions"<sup>57</sup> sharing the responsibility for the tragedy of peasantry during the epochal transformation. Unlike most novels, People are not Angels is pervaded with oppressive pessimism hardly dissipated by a flicker of a better world to come which ends the story -- a sharp contrast to G. Troyepolski's moderate optimism and moderately positive protagonists.

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57 I. Stadniuk, Któż jest aniołem Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1967, p. 288, "... niezrozumiałe (...) huragany ludzkich namiętności".

The prose output becomes meager once writers move to the post-collectivization period; the mid-and late thirties are glossed over; the war years' focus is on the battlefields. Only the post-war Stalinist period has been given a relatively more probing reevaluation which denies the validity of the rustic idylls depicted in Babayevski's prize-winning novels.

N. Sizov's Trudnyie gody (Difficult Years) and P. Proskurin's Bitter Grass (Gorkiye travy) belong to this group of novels. The titles alone indicate the changing perception of the "bitter and difficult" years of the post-war reconstruction of the de-populated and ravaged village. Both writers review recent past in the spirit of Ovechkin's sketches: Proskurin through the vicissitudes of demobilized veteran, and Sizov in the form of vignettes of the rural life. Both spare no criticism of the then existing chaos, administrative abuses, misguided policies and unsuitable leadership -- the staple topics of earlier sketch fiction. The two novels, as much as the majority of works covering recent past, have a markedly weakened historicism because of their proximity to present-day events and their overlapping into post-1953 period. The last phase of Stalin's rule appears to be too fresh and too

contentious to lend itself to a conclusive assessment in the approved historical perspective.

Although the novels of G. Troyepolski, I. Stadnyuk, M. Alekseev, P. Proskurina and N. Sizov differ in the choice of the historical period and interpretational emphasis, they share a number of the novelistic fundamentals. All are executed in the epic style of narrative founded on chronological progression of plot using the traditional novelistic conventions. However, in recent years one also notes a tendency to revise the past in a more fragmentary, impressionistic manner and, more importantly, by using less common and even relatively novel techniques of story-telling. The selection of works that follows offers an illustration of changing attitudes toward history as well as a more diversified craftsmanship.

It would appear that B. Mozhayev's story about Kuzkin's "adventures" with kolkhoz administrators depicted in From the Life of Fyodor Kuzkin, published in 1966 issue of Novy Mir, is but another exposé of evil bosses. But this is only one, and a less important aspect of the short-story; the narrating of Kuzkin's many-years combat and ceaseless skirmishes with authorities is the leitmotif of the story.

Kuzkin is one of those rare specimen among kolkhoz heroes who does not buckle under the power and provocations employed by authorities to force recalcitrant peasants into the fold of collective. In Kuzkin's case, every kind of underhanded method, threats, blackmail and even a jail term only strengthened his determination to fight for the right of employment of his choice. His perseverance, calmness, innate intelligence and knowledge of a citizen's rights combined to outwit, to outmanoeuvre the powerful "leaders". He clearly wins his objective soon after the death of Stalin: "Now one can live"<sup>58</sup> is the closing comment forecasting a freer and better future.

Kuzkin's difficulties and quixotism spotlight the reasons which permitted the Stalinist bureaucracy to contravene and violate the rights of the Soviet citizen inscribed in the country's constitution and laws. Timidity and submissiveness on the part of the Soviet citizenry are, according to the writer, also responsible for illegal administrative measures. It may be that B. Mozhayev's thesis is unsound in the light of Stalin's absolute control of the country. However the thesis

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<sup>58</sup> B. Mozhayev, Iz zhizni Fyodora Kuzkina, in Novy Mir, Vol. 42, No. 7, 1966, p. 118, "Teper možno zhit".

itself constitutes an interesting and uncommon addition to fictional diagnosis of the collectivized peasantry.

In the second historical novel, Bread-the Substantive Noun, 1964, M. Alekseiiev dropped the chronological rendition of narration, employing instead a string of loosely connected episodes and a gallery of thumbnail sketches of the villagers "... without whom it would be difficult, if at all possible, to think about the existence of the settlement."<sup>59</sup> The novel's characters form a colourful motley of oddities: "kind hearts" and scoundrels, ancient peasants and the remnants of "modern" youth, elderly men and women making up the majority of the village's population. Through a loquacious old-time the reader is informed about a wide range of village "secrets" from a more remote past and contemporaneity. One is told about unusual bosses; about a postman addicted to opening everyone's mail, about peasant-believers, local celebrities and events, local problems and aspirations. The impression made by such a chatty, entertaining guide

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59 M. Alekseiiev, Khleb-imya sushchestvitelnoye, Moskva, Molodaya Gvardiya, 1964, p. 511, "...bez kotorykh trudno, a mozhet vovse ne vozmozhno predstavit sebe samo sushchestvovaniye seleniya".

and confidence man is that of lightheartedness and optimism. But through this thin disguise protrude the usual: poverty, an aging population, despair and bleak future. Only elderly peasants remained retaining boundless faith in Mother Earth that gives man bread: "Bread, the substantive noun, while everything else is subordinate"<sup>60</sup>, thus argues the old guide hoping to convince a young man to stay in the village -- the young man leaves.

Another village history which won critical and popular acclaim came from an entirely unknown writer S. Krutilin. His serialized stories and sketches, later published under the title Lipyagi, went through four printings in not quite two years -- certainly, a rare feat for a newcomer to literature.

Lipyagi is the history of the village of the same name constructed from episodes, portraits, musings and reminiscences of a retired school teacher, narrated with the love, compassion, tenderness and intimacy of which only a loving native son is capable. The narrator-guide studiously avoids overt critical comments, polemics and discussions; he pretends neither to extol the virtues of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 522, "khleb-inya sushchestvitelnoye a vsyo ostalnoye prilagatelnoye".

his Lipyagi, nor to condemn its failures, or accuse others. Yet after six-hundred pages of fire-side chats, intimate confidential information, chance meetings with local people and leisurely walks with Andrey Ivanovich, one comes to love this village, appreciate its problems and share the guide's wistful sorrow at the sight of the steady encroachment of city civilization swallowing meadows, fields, forests -- in a word, Lipyagi's ancient peasant culture. One readily repeats with its native son: "And I really feel sorry; then, there will be no more my native Lipyagi; there will be one sprawling railway station".<sup>61</sup>

The history of Lipyagi has more dimensions than the story of Alekseiev's village. Lipyagi's inhabitants, past and present are more representative and socially stratified; its lore encompasses man, things, ancient happenings and heroes. Hills, streams, ravines, ponds, roads, the old cemetery, dilapidated church and wells are not mere topographical details and ruins, but active participants of Lipyagi's past and contemporaneity.

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<sup>61</sup> S. Krutilin, Lipyagi, Moskva, Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1966, p. 669, "A mne pravo, zhal. Togda ne budet moikh Lipyagov. Budet odna sploshnaya stantsiya".

Lipyagi is more than a pleasant tour across a disappearing world seen and felt by a native son. Krutilin's sorrowful, longing lyricism, his seemingly uncoordinated compilation of vignettes, characters, events, reminiscences coalesce to form a powerful plea for better understanding, greater appreciation of, and, above all, a plea for assistance in improving the lot of kolkhoz people. Shorn of its rustic aura, deprived of its lyricism, Lipyagi is a picture of stagnation, decay and poverty -- the usual corollary of the post-Stalin village. Somewhat similar feelings are aroused by the lyrical prose of V. Soloukhin which will be studied more thoroughly in a separate section of the next chapter.

D - Miscellany.

Although a preoccupation with historical revision has accounted for an inordinately large proportion of the post-1956 fiction, there has also been a significant volume of writings which do not lend themselves to a facile placement in one of the already analysed topics. The late fifties and the sixties brought to the fore many

talented young writers who directed their attention to still newer areas and issues frequently presented in fresh perspective projected in more varied techniques of writing. One has in mind Yu. Kazakov's vignettes of the contemporary village, Ye. Dorosh's sketches and "diaries", F. Abramov's and M. Zhestyov's notions regarding the causes of the kolkhoz problems.

Ye. Dorosh is one of the most "peasant" of today's prominent writers, akin in spirit to Ovechkin, but with a strong lyrical strain along with an emphasis on factual rendition of subject-matter:

...there is not a line of imagined things, and this circumstance made me change the names of people of whom one speaks here; to change somewhat the names of the little town and the lake on which it is situated...<sup>62</sup>

Thus Dorosh begins his diaries made up of loosely assembled thoughts, musings, discussions, descriptions, episodes and situations which occurred to him during the peregrinations across rural Russia. The writer also dwells on a stock

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62 Yefim Dorosh, Derevenski dnevnik: 1954-1955, Moskva, Sovetski Pisatel, 1958, p. 5,

... net i strochki vymysla, i eto obstoyatelstvo pobudilo menya izmenit imena lyudei, o kotorykh idyot zdes rech, neskolko inache nazvat gorodok i ozero, na kotorom on stoit...

fare of village problems -- leadership, economic planning, low cultural level and the like -- with frequent harking back to the pre-Revolution past.

What sets Dorosh's prose apart from the earlier sketches is chiefly its tone. No longer does the writer assume the missionary posture characteristic of the "Ovechkin" school; he does not engage in arguments, polemics or offers infallible solutions. Instead, he projects the village world "... through the eyes of a peasant ... more precisely, through the eyes of a contemporary Soviet peasant"<sup>63</sup>. Unlike his illustrious predecessor, Dorosh does not expound but thinks and ponders over issues and manifestations frequently associated with or stimulated by a monument of the past or a striking detail buried in an old document. Dorosh ponders over the tenacity of traditional values and modes of life and the village's puzzling qualities. Such an enquiry and wondering often end with rather unexpected rhetoric:

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63 I. Vinogradov, "Po stranitsam 'Derevenskogo dnevnika' Yefima Dorosha", in Novy Mir, Vol. 41, No. 7, 1965, p. 241, "... glazami krestyanina ... glazami imenno sovremennogo sovetskogo krestyanina".

This land is Russia. In fact, the very word 'Russia' took on so many meanings that to talk about it, even in an abbreviated form, would take tens and tens of volumes. This word, to be more precise, this concept (...) is not accidental. I think, that in our language the word 'land' is the soil, the people, the country and the whole world.<sup>64</sup>

This reminds one of Tyutchev's dictum stating that

Russia cannot be understood with the intellect,  
You cannot take her measurements with a yardstick:  
She has a form of her own --  
You can only believe in Russia.<sup>65</sup>

A prominent critic, I. Vinogradov, noticed Dorosh's thought and promptly fitted it into the Socialistic Realism dogmatic structure. The writer's "narodnost", he pointed out, agrees with the official triade since "narodnost" and realism

...are very close(...) humanism and 'narodnost' also come close: an authentic narodnost is always humanistic, and an authentic humanism is also "narodnost".<sup>66</sup>

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64. Ye. Dorosh, Dozhd popolam z solntsem; dereveski dnevnik 1959, in Novy Mir, Vol.40, No.6, 1964, p.24

Eta zemlya Rossiya. V sushchnosti, samoye slovo "Rossiya" vozbravshyie v sebye mnogo, chto dlya togo, chtoby razkazat ob etom, khotya by beglo, neobkhodimy desyatki i desyatki tomov--eto slovo, tochnoie skazat, ponyatiye (...) ne sluchaino, ya dumayu, v yazyke nashem 'zemlya', eto i pochva, i narod, i strana, i ves mir.

65. F.I. Tyutchev, Stikhotvoreniya-pisma, Moskva, Gos. Izd. Khud. Lit., 1957, p.256

Umom Rossiyu ne ponyat,  
Arshinom obshchim ne izmerit:  
Y nei osobennaya stat --  
V Rossiyu mozjno tolko verit.

66. I. Vinogradov, "Po stranitsam 'Dereveskogo dnevnika'", op. cit., p.252, "...smykayutsya(...)Gumanizm i narodnost tozhe smykayutsya: podlinnaya narodnost vseгда gumanistichna i podlinny gumanizm naroden...

In plain words, the critic admitted Dorosh's Slavophil type of "narodnost" to the realm of the official triad.

It is doubtful if Abramov would agree with Dorosh's thoughts and notions. In his The New Life, Abramov searches for more concrete, practical reforms which will set kolkhozes on the road to recovery. Unlike the reformers of the early and mid-fifties, Abramov pleads for a more flexible and scientific organization of the agricultural labour allowing for private initiative and freedom of movement for the village people. Abramov views ideological economic orthodoxy as the main reason why despite "... seventeen years since the end of the war, but we are still fighting on the agricultural front. We have to battle for every forty pounds of grain."<sup>67</sup>

An uncommon turn to the kolkhoz problem is given by M. Zhestyov in Zolotoye koltso (The Golden Ring) 1956-1958. In it, the writer depicts the fortunes of a resourceful chairman who always manages to fill the farm's coffers, yet, at the end, he is dismissed on account of his "capitalistic" profit-yielding deals. Most important,

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67 F. Abramov, The New Life; A Day on a Collective Farm, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 114. The subject-matter and the art of this novelette is analysed in the next chapter.

he neglected to pay "... attention to land ..." <sup>68</sup>; the true and only legitimate business of the kolkhoz is to till land.

The remarkable art of Yu. Kazakov's prose is enhanced by this young writer's detachment from the din of moralists, reformers and history re-writers swarming over the collectivized countryside. Many of his stories and tales are set against a natural background employing rural characters and, indirectly, touching upon the problems of the village world. Kazakov's chief concern however is not economy, administration and the usual array of issues associated with post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction; his concern is the little man and his inner life, personal difficulties, yearnings and aspirations.

Kazakov's handling of the kolkhoz topic can be seen in a story, a dozen pages long, V.gorod (Going to Town) in which he relates the difficulties of a certain Kamanin in obtaining a permission to leave the collective for town employment. Kamanin is a good carpenter -- a skill much in demand in the kolkhoz. Consequently, the chairman tries everything in his power -- persuasion,

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68 Mikhail Zhestyov, Zolotoye koltso, Leningrad, Sovetski Pisatel, 1958, p. 251, "... nevnimaniye k zemle ...".

promises, threats -- to make him stay. After a lot of quarrelling Kamanin obtains the requested horse and cart to take his critically-ill wife to the city hospital and is given a vague promise to let him leave the village in a later date.

The Kamanin incident has several meanings pertinent to social aspects of the village life. The central thought of the story dwells on the crude, wolf-like relationship between men -- the chairman and the ordinary peasant. There is a total absence of mutual understanding; neither of the two men even attempts to see the other's needs and difficulties. Instead, the confrontation intensifies the bitterness and alienation heightened by the setting of gloom, poverty and pervading hopelessness. Going to Town is a story of misery and unhappiness in village achieved with utmost economy of material and devices and without falling into sentimentality or moralizing. Kazakov's art evokes a mood of pity and compassion for the lonely and bewildered "little man" pursuing his own goals of life within confines of an over-regulated society which shows no interest in the aspiration of an individual. Kazakov belongs to a growing number of Soviet writers who emphasize the humanistic

instead of social and ideological ideals. According to a more orthodox critic it is an "abstract humanism" with all the signs of unwelcome and "... known overstretching".<sup>69</sup> In the Soviet critical jargon it means an unnecessary indulgence in the negative and seamier side of the Soviet contemporary life.

E - Summary.

The preceding analysis of thematic trends and topics of, approximately, thirteen years of the post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction supports its division into two distinct time periods, each marked by divergent areas of interest, intention, tone and, to a smaller degree, of the craft of prose writing.

As to the first period ending in 1956, suffice it to repeat briefly, here, what has already been stated before: the hegemony of the sketch genre concentrated on kolkhoz leadership made responsible for the evil of

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69 L.F. Yershov, V.A. Kovalev, Istoriya russkogo sovetskogo romana, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 302, "... izvestny perekos".

the past. Angry, proclamatory but wholly sincere reformism and publicistic passion constitute the tone of the early post-Stalin kolkhoz prose.

Already in 1955, the thematic range began to broaden, the exploration of contemporary village became more thorough and the probing acquired strong moralistic overtones. The belaboured figure of the kolkhoz chairman-scapegoat recedes making room for "levers", Matryona and an assortment of ordinary kolkhozniks serving as vehicles of moral and ethical prism through which writers began to view the post-Stalin village. This change of tone and direction contained an ominous future for the official image of the kolkhoz community. Allowed to continue, they would inevitably undermine the myth and would place the Party in a position of the chief culprit and benefactor of a system which exploited Soviet peasantry thus bringing about its moral, economic and cultural stagnation. Allowed to continue they would, too, undermine painstakingly erected thought - and art-control apparatus built into the structure of Socialist Realism. Krushchev's reaction effectively nipped the bud infected with a "dangerous" disease.

The upshot of Party interference, of writers' weariness with four years of reformist euphoria was an attenuation of moral and ethical concern followed by a shift to new topics and dimensions of kolkhoz world. History re-writing consumed a lot of energy, but contemporaneity has also been subjected to more extensive analysis. Fresh perspectives, perception, interpretations and a heterogenous tonal range noted in the fiction of late fifties and the sixties have been rendered in a growing variety of craftsmanship and literary styles. As a consequence of this development one notes a slow erosion of the "socialistic realism" accompanied by the weakening of compulsory socio-economic and ideological framework. With increasing frequency the past and present have been constructed from documentary facts, opinions, feelings, aspirations and insights into the life of the "little men". By the end of the fifties the once dominating figure of a leader had been all but pushed out from the kolkhoz scene.

Episodic, lyrico-documentary and lyrical novelistic techniques gained ground at the expense of prescribed historical dialectics wrought in traditional epic narrative structure. The art of prose writing was one

of the principal factors contributing to a more convincing and many-dimensional literature about the Soviet rural world of the post-Stalin era.

Within thirteen years from the death of Stalin the kolkhoz theme developed from a single, narrow but powerful rivulet into a broad river of many streams, each having distinct texture, tone and focus. No other Soviet period of fiction, not even the vigorous twenties, offers such an heterogenous range of topics of the peasant theme.

## CHAPTER III

### PROSE ART OF THE KOLKHOZ FICTION

#### 1. Structure and form.

The purpose and scope of the preceding chapter was to study the thematic development and trends of the post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction; this chapter is concerned with the "how" of the kolkhoz theme -- the novelistic craft employed by the kolkhoz writers. The term craft means here the writer's use of techniques and devices with the help of which he arranges the various components of the narrative. As a foremost Russian critic and theoretician put it, "...art's uniqueness consist not in the 'parts' which enter into it, but in their original use"<sup>1</sup>.

The study of the prose craft of the kolkoz writers will be carried out on two prose samples: one consisting of three short-prose forms (sketch, tale, novelette), the other of V. Soloukhin's lyrical works. The selection of these works and prose genres was determined by their popularity among the Soviet kolkhoz writers and influence on

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<sup>1</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, "The Theory of the Formal Method" in Paul A. Olson, Russian Formalist Criticism, Regent Critical Series, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1965, p. 112.

the development of the formal aspect of the post-Stalin Soviet fiction. The sketch and lyrical prose have also received the lion's share of attention in recent critical literature and discussion in Soviet Union. The two short prose forms and lyrical prose, will be studied separately: the former in two sub-sections, one concerned with analysis proper, the other dedicated to the polemics and discussion of inherent qualities of the sketch.

Literary prose is the youngest, most vigorous and ever expanding branch of literature, and these traits, in part, have been responsible for an unsettled critical terminology and theoretical conceptualization, not to mention a single normative theory of fiction. Despite the absence of iron-clad formulae and definitions, a number of concepts and terms have met with widespread acceptance, among them the concept of form and major aspects of the structure of narrative: plot, character, background and point-of-view. However to indicate one's critical apparatus a brief discussion of terms and concepts to be used throughout this chapter was found wanting.

The concept of form and its derivatives implies a notion of "... a general formula of unity in variety..."<sup>2</sup>, although the time-honoured interpretation of form in terms of content-form dichotomy has not entirely disappeared from critical literature and schools. Form conceived as "... an envelope, a vessel into which one pours the liquid"<sup>3</sup>, namely, the content, becomes an abstract and autonomous agent of art, something mechanically shaping the "what" of creative work. The concept of form rejecting this dichotomy recognizes the cohesion between the diverse "parts" that enter into the making of a prose piece as the only determinant of artistic qualities and the final criterion of critical assessment. In the light of this conceptualization, a novel, wrote Dorothy Van Ghent, is

... one complex pattern, or Gestalt, made up of component ones. In it inhere such a vast number of traits all organized in subordinate systems that function under the governance of a single meaningful structure.<sup>4</sup>

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2 B. Bousanquet, A History of Aesthetics, New York, The Meridian Library, 1957, p. 5.

3 Boris Tomashevsky, "The Theory of the Formal Method", op. cit., p. 112.

4 Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function, New York, Perennial Library, 1953, p. 17.

A "single meaningful structure" contains that "... complex of emotions and ideas that lies at the core of the work..."<sup>5</sup>. The term "single meaningful structure" becomes the hub of structuring and the prime organising and catalysing agent of all ingredients - thematic, linguistic and technical - employed in a given work of art. A "single meaningful structure" can be a word, an utterance, a symbol, an event, or whatever, functioning as the cornerstone on which an artist erects the superstructure of his work. For a critic, a "single meaningful structure" serves as a reference point of his analysis and study.

In some instances this centre piece can be so well hidden or diffused in the texture of a work of prose as to render it very difficult to locate suggesting the artist's failure to give it a proper form. On this point even the world's masters of prose have been censured. Liddell, for example, called L. Tolstoy's epic War and Peace a "baggy monster"<sup>6</sup> and a "fluidpudding"<sup>6</sup>, because, in his opinion, the writer failed to give his work a more controlled form, a more cohesive unity and a structure corresponding to the

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5 Louis Cazamian quoted in, Jacques Sauvage, An Introduction to the Study of the Novel, Gent, Story-Scientia, 1965, p. 16.

6 Robert Liddell, Some Principles of Fiction, London, Jonathan Cape, 1961, p. 95 and p. 102.

European models. L. Tolstoy was however very much aware of the aesthetic importance of form. Taking a mischievous pleasure in upbraiding those critics who failed to find a "single meaningful structure" in Anna Karenina Tolstoy insisted:

On the contrary, I am proud of its architecture; the arches have been constructed in such a way that it is impossible to see where the keystone is. And that is what I was striving for.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of a "single meaningful structure" is the fundamental criterion in literary study on the synthetic level which is concerned with the inter-relationships between various strata of a work of art. In fiction three such strata are usually recognized: linguistic, thematic and structural. Each one of them can, and normally is, explored separately, which means moving to the analytical level. Thus in a study of a work of fiction in terms of its structure "... the factor of meaning does not, practically, enter into it"<sup>8</sup>, nor does the linguistic material.

The term "structure" to be used throughout this chapter denotes the manner in which "... the elements

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7 B. Meilakh, Ruskiye pisateli o literaturnom trude, Leningrad, Sovetski Pisatel, 1955, Vol.3, p.534.

Ya gorzhus, naprotiv, arkhitekturoi--svody svedeny tak, chto nelzya i zametit, gde zamok. I ob etom ya boleie vsego staralsya.

8 Jacques Sauvage, An Introduction to the Study of the Novel, op. cit., p. 19.

other than words are disposed and organized"<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, in C. Brooks' and R. Warren's formulation, structure stands for "... the ordering of larger elements as episodes, scenes and details of action"<sup>10</sup>. Both sources emphasize the function of structure in organizing thematic material. To offer an analogy, the structure of prose acts as a framework of a building to which finer texture is later applied.

The study that follows will, firstly, analyze major aspects of the sample's structure; secondly, it will investigate the sample's form in term of the writers' use of structure in expounding kolkhoz topics. Finally, it will be shown how the three writers used structural techniques to elucidate their particular perception of the "kolkhoz problem".

Three relatively well-known prose works constitute the sample: Valentin Ovechkin's book of sketches Rayonnyie budni (District Workdays), published between

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Sauvage, An Introduction to the Study of the Novel, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Fiction, Appleton, Century-Croft, 1969, p. 684.

1952 and 1955; Vladimir Tendryakov's Tugoi uzel (The Tight Knot), 1955; and Fyodor Abramov's Vokrug da okolo (The New Life; a Day on a Collective Farm) henceforth referred to as The New Life, 1963. The three writers have distinguished themselves as avowed defenders of the kolkhoz "cause" and, with the exception of V. Tendryakov, have dedicated practically all their works to the kolkhoz theme. They also represent two Soviet generations of writers differing, however (as will be shown later) in their perception of, and their answers to the problems of the contemporary village.

The prose works in the sample share a number of traits: all three focus on the leadership question<sup>11</sup>; in all three the "slice of rural life" is confined to single agricultural district and the action takes place mainly in one, usually a run-down collective. Further similarities are to be found in the conflict pattern, tone and an ardent spirit of reform.

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<sup>11</sup> F. Abramov's treatment of the leadership issue is less prominent and implicates remote, city-based administration instead of the local First Secretary; The New Life was published at the time when the analysis of the kolkhoz ills went beyond district leadership, the lowest level of the Soviet agricultural administration.

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Before delving into the writers' techniques of structuring their fiction, a brief resumé of the stories' skein is presented herewith. Ovechkin's sketches depict a confrontation between two concepts of kolkhoz leadership: one embodied in the district's First Secretary, Borzov, who runs the administration by means of ukases, intimidation and fear. The other concept is represented by his deputy, Martynov, who professes a more humane approach to his duty taking into account the need of the people as well as of the state. Essentially, the two administrators represent two faces of the same coin: Borzov's side eschews the participatory democracy much in vogue during the immediate post-Stalin years; Martynov's side makes conciliatory moves in that direction. However, for both, the needs of the state come first, and both understand their function as the government "grain-agents". The basic difference between the First Secretary and his deputy lies in the latter's recognition of the need for change, especially in the kind of leadership: "Why, the whole problem lies in the kolkhoz chairman"<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Valentin Ovechkin, Rayonnyie budni, in Izbrannyye proizvedeniya v dvukh tomakh, Moskva, Gozizd., khud.lit., Vol. 2, 1963, p. 33, "Ved vsyo delo v predsedatelyakh".

The conflict between these two versions of "how kolkhozes should be run" ends in Martynov's victory, with the job of the First Secretary as the reward. The change of leadership occurs in the sketch already published after the death of Stalin. However, Martynov had no opportunity to fully implement his theory of "the right man in the right place" which proved inadequate by 1954, and its exponents became superfluous. Consequently, Martynov is unexpectedly hospitalized thus making room for a new man representing up-dated ideas about proper remedies for the agricultural problems. Thus enters Dolgushin - an engineer by training, a Moscovite and an old-guard communist of the Leninist brand and a victim of the "cult of personality" era, who has never lost his belief in "democracy" nor his dedication to communist ideals. Unlike his predecessor, Dolgushin has no reform plan; indeed, as a city-man and an engineer he moves cautiously learning the business of agriculture and, above all, seeking and listening to the advice of rank-and-file kolkhozniks. The epilogue follows the usual scenario: the "good" man wins and succeeds as the First Secretary.

The story web of V. Tendryakov's The Tight Knot follows the outline of Ovechkin's sketches. Here, too,

a reform-spirited district chief of propaganda, Mansurov, collides with a Borzov-like administration and, after a lengthy investigation of conditions in the region, submits well-documented dossier to higher authorities who, eventually, appoint him as the First Secretary. Seemingly the roadblocks hampering reforms were removed. Mansurov soon learns, though, that paper-planning is one thing and its implementation quite another. Established tradition and resentful bureaucracy cannot be surmounted overnight. Compromises have to be made which would still permit a true reformer and a practical man to incorporate improvements benefitting the state and people.

Mansurov would eventually have succeeded were it not for a fatal flaw in his own character which differed in degree, but not in essence, from the type of leaders he apparently opposed. As the First Secretary, Mansurov soon shows himself as a dictatorial, overly ambitious and misguided leader committing the district to useless programs which satisfy his ego. Gradually, once popular Mansurov becomes alienated from his most faithful supporters, who turn into enemies. Finally, he is unceremoniously dismissed and despatched to a higher Party school to

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learn more thoroughly "... the process of dialectics"<sup>13</sup>, as commented dryly his successor, Gmyzin.

Instead of a story spanning several months, F. Abramov selected one day in the life of a kolkhoz chairman, Anany Yegorovich -- a decent, hard-working and dedicated communist. The day chosen by Abramov is not quite ordinary, though, as the collective headed by Anany Yegorovich is threatened with the ruin of its hay and sillage crops endangered by a long spell of rains and kolkhozniks' unwillingness to put in extra effort. Aware of the consequences, Anany Yegorovich sets out on a door-to-door campaign intended to ferret out additional labour for Sunday work; but which results in no volunteers. The campaign stratagem gives the readers a chance to get a closer look at the villagers and their difficulties.

No volunteers can be expected in the households of sick, elderly, or absentee kolkhozniks. The village's well-to-do Party member also refuses to help because, in his opinion, he had done his share for the Soviet system

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13 Vladimir Tendryakov, Tugoi uzel, in Izbrannyye proizvedeniya v dyukh tomakh, Gozizd. khud. lit., Moskva, Vol. 1, 1963, p. 372, "... o dialekticheskom razvitii...".

and expects that now"... the Soviet system has to serve him"<sup>14</sup>. The chairman hopes to get an assistance from retired Pete the Bulldozer -- but the latter gets additional income from his private garden plot and does not need extra earnings. Pete does not need hay either because he has no cow, just as "... a good half of the kolkhozniki had no cow. Wasn't it fantastic?"<sup>15</sup>. Nor does the last stop at the house of the foreman-builder produce any volunteer labour.

What else can the chairman do? He cannot make promises, any more than he can ask the kolkhozniks for more patience:

"You've got to wait a little. We'll improve the labour norm soon enough". But he, the kolkhoz worker of today, refused to wait. He did not want to wait any longer. That's what the trouble was<sup>16</sup>,

and this is the chief reason for Anany's failure to mobilize people -- in other words, this is the core of the agricultural problem.

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14 Fyodor Abramov, The New Life: A Day on a Collective Farm, (trans. George Reavey), New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1963, p. 89. The revelatory character of F. Abramov's story is attested by the fact that already during the year of its publishing in Soviet Union (the January issue of Neva, 1963) two English translations appeared.

15 Ibid., p. 99.

16 Ibid., p. 73.

The chairman must find the way out; he must devise a formula, perform a miracle, if possible. And a miracle does happen. Late next morning, to Anany's utter amazement, the entire village is hard at work in the fields as a result of a thirty percent share in the hay harvest promised by the chairman the night before, while drinking with the boys: "And all this is the result of thirty percent. Thirty percent. No sessions, no fuss, no noise"<sup>17</sup>. The crops are saved, but Anany's own position is endangered because of his unsocialistic crop-sharing proposition. Nevertheless, Anany is a happy and totally changed man; he is happy because the state and people will have fodder; and he is a changed man because the decision was entirely his own:

Yes, he'd made his decision. He'd made it. And whatever happened, whatever might await him, nobody would be able to say that he'd issued a drunken order... Anany Yegorovich straightened his back and, treading firmly on the sandy soil, went forward...<sup>18</sup>

to confront his inscrutable superiors.

Among a number of technical decision a writer must make before the actual writing, one pertinent to the

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17 Ibid., p. 130.

18 Ibid., p. 134-135

narrative structure will most likely be the first task to be tackled, as it has a direct bearing on other aspects of his story's structure -- point-of-view, plot, character, background. The narrative structure functions as an overall strategy of orchestration of the thematic, linguistic and technical components of a piece of fiction; it is "The proper use, the right mingling of scene, description and summary in the art of fictitious narrative"<sup>19</sup>.

In 1920's Percy Lubbock established two basic categories of narrative: "dramatic" and "panoramic", sometimes labelled as "dynamic" and "static". He arrived at this distinction on the basis of the ratio of "acted-out" and "narrated" portion in a work of prose; in other words, the difference between the technique of "showing" and of "telling" a story.<sup>20</sup> The writer's choice of either of the two narrative structures determines the position of the story-teller. In "dramatic" presentation

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<sup>19</sup> Phyllis Bentley, Some Observations on the Art of Narrative, New York, MacMillan, 1947, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, London, Jonathan Cape, 1921, p. 276. Percy Lubbock's is a seminal type of work laying the foundation for the science of fiction, especially in respect to the point-of-view aspect.

a writer will employ acted-out episodes and scenes, reserving for himself a less conspicuous and omniscient role than in the "panoramic" narrative where he will don the mantle of an epic bard. Most twentieth century fiction has been written in one of the hybrids of "dramatic" and "panoramic" narrative structure, with a pronounced tendency to "show" rather than to "tell" a story.

The narrative pattern of Ovechkin's District Workdays is of strongly dramatic type. One feels it after a relatively brief exposure to one of his sketches, especially to Borzov and Martynov which begins the series of five sketches comprising the book. This is confirmed by the analysis of the distribution of pure narrative, episodes and scenes and their proportion in respect to each other. The result is as follows: about thirty-two out of thirty-five pages of Borzov and Martynov are taken up by six energetically "acted-out", or, rather, "talked-out" episodes and scenes. The three remaining pages are distributed among several longer descriptive passages and numerous brief comments, summaries and other types of narrative information.

An examination of all scenes and episodes reveals dialogues as their backbone and a main device for moving the action along the path unfolding the story's idea. It is important to note that, despite the pre-eminently dramatic mode of Borzov and Martynov, the directing hand of the hidden narrator is strongly felt, notwithstanding his dramatic camouflage.

Dramatic tension and dynamic progression of the story is also felt in Abramov's The New Life, although it is achieved through a narrative stratagem relying less on quick-changing "dialogued" episodes and scenes (as is the case in V. Ovechkin's sketches). Abramov also minimizes Ovechkin's technique of sharp confrontation between the opposing forces, choosing, instead, one centre around which he organizes the story's components. Abramov differs also in the selection of his material: the episodes and scenes are fewer, shorter and more dispersed across the narrative. The dramatic effect is attained by the reader's immersion in the chairman's emotions, thoughts, musings and reminiscences which accompany him during the one-day pilgrimage through the village in search of voluntary labour.

In contrast, Tendryakov's narrative design leans toward the hybrid category -- neither overwhelmingly "panoramic" nor decidedly "dramatic". This is, mainly, the consequence of a greater prominence given to pace-slowng digressions, descriptions, comments and the background setting. The task of projecting the story is distributed between the narrator and several characters of The Tight Knot.

The narratives of the sample works contain therefore two examples of the strongly "dramatic" design, and one, Tendryakov's, falling into the hybrid category of Percy Lubbock's typology.

The choice of dramatic technique of narration is reflected in the structure of plot. V. Ovechkin begins from medias res: after a five-line weather communique there follows the first scene, introducing two of the four main characters: Martynov, then deputizing for the vacationing Borzov, and Opyonkin, Martynov's close friend and supporter -- also a most successful kolkhoz chairman of the district. Without preliminaries the reader is acquainted with the purpose of Opyonkin's visit, namely, his worry that the collective he leads will be asked to make up for the district's deficiency

in fulfilling the state grain quota. Of course, Martynov tries to dispel his friend's fears, sounding, however, unconvincing, because he knows that, socialism or not, far too many people believe in "...riding to heaven on someone else's back..."<sup>21</sup> Martynov is also well aware that glaring disparities between comparable collectives stem from the situation where kolkhozniks receive

...crumbs, because the harvest was poor the kolkhozniks worked little, and they worked little because last year they received little bread for their labour. This is not so much a wheel, as a vicious circle...<sup>22</sup>

which must be arrested in order to improve the people's life. But how? To Martynov the answer is clear "... one must search for better men. Without a cadre the whole house will tumble down around us"<sup>23</sup>. This is the essence of Martynov's reform and, indeed, the battle-cry of reformers of the immediate post-Stalin years.

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21 V. Ovechkin, Rayonnyie budni, op. cit., p. 10, "...na chuzhom gorbu v tsarstvo nebesnoye vekhat..."

22 Ibid., p. 13.  
... krokh, potomu chto byl plokhoi urozhai, plokho rabotali kolkhozniki, a plokho rabotali potomu, chto i v proshlom godu poluchili malo khleba po trudodnyam. Tut uzh poluchayetsya ne koleso, a zakoldovanny krug.

23 Ibid. p.34, "... nuzhno iskat lyudei. Bez kadrov provalimsya s treskom".

The following episodes add a few insights into the First Secretary's maladministration and several uncomplimentary traits of the man himself. They prepare the ground for the entry of Borzov in the third setting. Thus, whatever Borzov does moments after his arrival it follows the foreshadowed pattern. Firstly, Opyonkin's fears are realized -- additional grain quota is imposed on the kolkhoz that has already over-fulfilled its obligations to the state. Secondly, the district's telephone lines begin to hum with a stream of orders and directives issued in accordance with Borzov's motto: If "...I dont sleep, the whole district does not sleep either."<sup>24</sup>

With this scene ends the establishment phase of the plot presenting a clearly delineated conflict between "good" and "bad" regional leadership. The area of future combat is also well outlined and the groundwork for the ascending segment of plot is set. The subsequent developments agree with the indicated direction although they move forward in much slower pace and with

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 81, "... ne splyu--ves rayon ne spit".

an unexpected, artistically unjustified events toward the end of the plot.<sup>25</sup> The single and straight plot axis extending between the two poles of the leadership is marked by two climaxes and a low-key, open-ended denouement. All the ingredients and components of action are strictly subordinated to the needs of the conflict and the plot line.

As already mentioned, Abramov's narrative is permeated with strongly-felt dramatic qualities. However, its plot is modelled on an ancient Greek drama, adhering to the classical pre-requisites: three unities, prologue, epilogue, chorus, messenger displayed within the usual establishment, peripetiae, climax, catharsis and denouement phases. The story begins, as it had in the Attic play, with a prologue in which the gods

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25 V. Ovechkin's failure to develop later stages of the plot according to the initially indicated course and pace stem from the writer's determination to keep abreast with the fast-changing political climate and the government's agricultural policies and directives during the immediate post-Stalin years. In the light of a more thorough agricultural reforms Martynov had to be replaced by Dolgushin representing the new ideas.

stepped out to explain the forthcoming events. The prologue in The New Life consists of three telephone calls made by unnamed, remote superiors who convey to Anany Yegorovich, the kolkhoz chairman, their wishes, displeasure, and warnings in the event of failure to meet harvest goals. Additional elements of the plot course and the essence of the conflict are given in the first chapter, tellingly entitled "Anany Yegorovich's Misfortunes". The conflict springs from the incompatibilities between absent, high-level of the agricultural bureaucracy and the village's realities later explored through a well-tried journey novelistic pattern -- a very suitable plot structure when a good deal of freedom is required to develop a topic.

The dramatic tension of the plot is intensified by the concentration of action around the kolkhoz chairman who is fully aware of the conflicting interests and who finds himself in an unenviable position. As a representative of the System he is obliged to carry out the orders, knowing, at the same time, how impossible and unfair they are for the villagers. Anany Yegorovich's position exemplifies the classical dilemma: whichever course of action he follows, it leads to his doom.

The plot-tour with the chairman as a guide falls into two phases, two acts, as it were: in the first act of his door-to-door campaign the reader is given a panorama of the village inhabited by the old, infirm and retired people and dotted by the newly built cottages owned by absentee kolkhozniks now working in industry and cities, but never completely abandoning the native place as if "... still expecting some changes to take place in the countryside"<sup>26</sup> . There is not a smallest chance to recruit volunteers for the Sunday work. The first act is of the exploratory character and ends on a note of dramatic expectation.

The second act opens therefore on a definite hope that the personal persuasion will produce results at the last three stops: at the house of a Party member, elderly Pete the Bulldozer and the foreman-builder. These three visits push the plot to its climax illustrating the chairman's insoluble problem. Here, as in the previous calls, he meets definite refusals although

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<sup>26</sup> Fyodor Abramov, The New Life; A Day on a Collective Farm, op. cit., p. 71.

springing from different motivations. The Party stalwart will not come out because the chairman refuses to do him a favour; Pete, because he does not need extra earnings; and the foreman, because he is too drunk and is sulking over Anany Yegorovich's refusal to let him leave for a city job. Thus an impasse foreboding an unavoidable disaster.

The climax and the denouement is contained in a short last chapter depicting the amazed chairman watching the dividend of the "miracle" of his thirty percent crop-sharing offer made the night before. Significantly, the man's desperate act was concealed from the audience; it is a masterful stroke which introduces suspense and mystery, and unknots the issue in a positive manner. The chairman's "thirty percent deal" serves as a catharsis which liberates him from all his deeply engrained fears and inhibitions. When the curtain falls the spectators are no less surprised at the turn of events and just as purified and pleased as the play's protagonist, Anany Yegorovich.

Unlike the already discussed plots, V. Tendryakov's action in The Tight Knot opens with a solemn burial scene which brings together local dignitaries and

friends of the deceased and future protagonists of the story. The information is supplied by the narrator and by one of those attending the funeral, Gmyzin, the district's most popular kolkhoz chairman. The principal motif of the first scene is contained in a brief eulogy extolling the deceased man's virtues, especially his love for the ordinary people -- a motif repeated several times, each time in a different context. The scene also ends with Gmyzin's cryptic musing: "It is far easier to express love than to prove it".<sup>27</sup>

Within a span of several chapters Mansurov, the most inconspicuous member of the funeral party, emerges as the counterpart of Ovechkin's Martynov. Similarly, the District Workdays pattern of conflict between "good" and "bad" leaders takes shape although at a much slower pace due, in part, to the development of the second plot centring on Sasha, the deceased First Secretary's young son. Only toward the first part of The Tight Knot (there are three fairly equal parts in the story) is the conflict irrevocably formed and the plot direction clearly indicated.

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<sup>27</sup> Vladimir Tendryakov, Tugoi uzel, op. cit., p. 151, "Prosto lyubit -- kuda legche, chem dokazat lyubov".

Tendryakov's distribution of the story's action between two plot-lines, giving, however, to the Mansurov plot the progression-pacing task, does not alter the contours of the overall plot design which follows the beginning-middle-end pattern with appropriately positive over-tone in the denouement. The plot-flow moves forward as envisaged in the establishment phase without unexpected twists, surprises or suspense, noted in Abramov's structuring of action.

The three analyzed strategies of plotting adhere to the traditional convention of story-telling based on the Newtonian concept of time-space with consequent logical progression of action. In all three works the conflicts are structured around diametrically opposing ideas which constitute the force moving the action across the Aristotelian phases of mimesis. The peripetiae stage is of ascending, rather than cumulative type, felt especially strongly in Ovechkin's design of plot. All three plots have the open-ended denouement with a positive colouring -- again a traditional Russian and Soviet-Russian feature. The stories' ending differs from the pre-1953 model in the degree of optimism. The utopian optimism postulated by Zhdanov was replaced by a more subtle and restrained tone,

but there was never doubt left as to the final ideologically satisfying outcome of even most depressing situation.

As to the differences in the structuring of action -- they are of degree and not of kind. For example, Tendryakov's more involved story texture posited the need for correspondingly more complex plot design -- hence the double plot-axis which, in turn, influenced the pacing of action through various stages of the narrative. On the whole, the writer's design of plot does not betray an appreciable concern with, nor ingenuity in plotting techniques. This characteristic has its source in the Russian traditional lack of interest in the manipulation of story's material for the sake of unusual effects. Of the three writers Abramov chose the plot pattern which called for a greater technical skill giving the narrative material an "orchestration" not too common in the kolkhoz fiction.

Although the authors of the kolkhoz prose sample have not introduced innovations in the domain of plot structuring, they have made a contribution to the gallery of Russian-Soviet literary characters. The name and the works of V. Ovechkin may soon be forgotten, except for more

specialized studies; but his protagonist, Borzov, will, most likely, remain for long in the company of such Soviet fictional heroes as Korchagin and Melekhov. Borzov symbolizes the most flagrant excesses of the Stalinist era in the socialized village; he is also a product of the deliberate technical strategy of its creator.

Borzov is the sum total of contributions from various sources and of the writer's technique of a multi-angle exposure. Even before his entrance on stage, in fact, from the very first page of the sketch Borzov and Martynov, the reader is aware of Borzov's unhealthy influence and omnipotence. In the first scene, and before Borzov's actual appearance on the stage, the reader is informed that he walks with "... a self-assured and proprietary walk..."<sup>28</sup>. This is confirmed moments later in showing the protagonist acting very assuredly and, generally in accordance with the intimated pattern. Borzov talks in a booming voice which brooks no opposition. His physical appearance does not contribute to a pleasant disposition on the part of a newcomer: Borzov is "... of medium

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 16, "... uverennoi, khozyskoi pokhodkoi..."

height, stocky, with sickly, yellowish face and long, almost floor-reaching leather coat"<sup>29</sup>.

The remaining part of the first sketch supplies a wide array of the complementary traits: Borzov's attitudes toward, and relationship with other people below and above his official position, his behaviour in various circumstances, his mannerisms, appropriately negative information from his past and family life, even the furnishing of his house is pressed into the service. Obviously, V. Ovechkin left no proverbial "stone unturned" to ensure that his "hero" is repulsive beyond salvation. The writer's strategy succeeded in creating a symbol of a Stalinist bureaucrat whose only quality is a proven dexterity in the art of "... getting grain out of ..." <sup>30</sup> the villagers. Borzov is so totally warped by the "cult of personality" phase of history that there seems to be no hope for him even to expiate for his sins. Such is the portrait of a leader painted, one ought to emphasize, when Stalin was still firmly in power, in 1952. However, important and significant extenuating qualifications were

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29 Ibid., p. 16 "...srednego rosta, koreņasty, ...s nezdorovym zheltovatym litsom, v dlinnom, pocti do pyat, kozhanom palto"

30 Ibid., p. 18, "... kak vzyat khleb..."

added in the second sketch, published in 1953, where ex-First Secretary, still unrepenting, takes pride in his past prowess in "... keeping the district in God's fear"<sup>31</sup>. Borzov himself estimates that he is the victim of the dialectics, of new policies introduced by "The resolutions of the Nineteen Congress... Somebody had to become the scapegoat of others. I fell under the wheels of history"<sup>32</sup>. Martynov, Borzov's successor, meets similar fate, although in his instance, the process of being crushed by historical determinism is more merciful and salutary.

The remaining protagonists of District Workdays are drawn in a less intensive black-and-white colour scheme, although in essentially the same technique -- sketchy external appearance, attitudes and behaviour, biographical fragments -- all selected with care and complementing each other. Taken together, Ovechkin's characters appear as people without human frailties, without private lives and without interests apart from their positions and official responsibilities. They are

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31 Ibid., p. 81, "... derzhat rayon v strakhe bozhem".

32 Ibid., p. 81, "Reshenya devyatnadtsatogo syezda..Nado bylo kogo-to pustit pod nozh, v nazidaniye drugim. Popal pod koleso istorii".

"... built around a single idea or quality"<sup>33</sup>, thus fitting admirably into E.M. Forster's category of "flat" characters. Not a single figure in District Workdays is endowed with dynamics capable of bringing about unsuspected change and growth. Once the mould is cast no character deviates or can deviate from the set shape and form. Indeed, any attempt at changing it jars the reader's sensitivity and imposes a strain on his credulity. This happens when Ovechkin introduces a "romantic" ingredient into the characterization of Martynov, while throughout some four-hundred fifty pages one is not given the slightest indication that the hero-reformer could ever show sentimentality toward his wife, or be capable of admiring the beauty of nature.

But, "flat" as they are, Ovechkin's characters are not one-piece constructions accomplished in one sitting, nor are they presented in several solid insets. His protagonists are distributed throughout the texture of the story and exposed through dialogues or revelatory traits and idiosyncracies. This technique of character-structuring saves Ovechkin's protagonists from becoming wooden

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33 E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, England, A Pelican Book, 1964, p. 75.

mannequins, hardly believable and easily forgotten.

Apart from the chairman, most of Abramov's characters are identified by their name, occupation and age -- little more than census data. Only Klavdya the supervisor, the drunk and sullen foreman-builder, and Pete the Bulldozer are slightly more expanded figures met during a one-day pilgrimage packed with people and events.

Anany Yegorovich, the chairman, is revealed only to the extent that his inner life (practically nothing else is known about him) meshes with and develops in relation to a particular situation or issue encountered during one day in the "New Life". He leads no independent life which could be dissected without involving a discussion on a wide array of topics, issues and emotions motivating his actions. The chairman and several other characters are so highly functional and tightly integrated with the intellectual strata of the story, that they can be analysed profitably only in terms of their roles in the writer's thesis. Alone, they constitute the fleeting, barely discernible profiles.

A closer reading of the first scene in The Tight Knot of V. Tendryakov produces only minute indications of Mansurov's future key role; that from an inconspicuous

member of the funeral party he will soon advance to the position of a leading character. However, from the perspective of several episodes, a few observations and hints incorporated in the first scene well dovetail into the writer's design of Mansurov's figure. He is introduced as a handsome man who "... bowed his curly head, retaining something majestic about his bearing"<sup>34</sup>.

Mansurov is an immaculately dressed man -- something rather uncommon in a peasant milieu -- a significant clue to the writer's strategy. Several episodes later Mansurov emerges as an uncompromising foe of the inefficient and dictatorial administration. Gradually, though, as the crescendo of his scathing denunciation increases in intensity, one becomes somewhat uneasy and more guarded in one's admiration of Mansurov's spirit of reform. His merciless criticism, couched in lofty-sounding speeches directed to Gmyzin, casts a shadow of doubt on his "idealism" and sincerity. An initial uneasiness becomes a suspicion after reading Mansurov's monologue in which he heaps scorn on those benefactors

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<sup>34</sup> Vladimir Tendryakov, Tugoi uzel, op. cit., p. 148, "... uronil kurchavuyu golovu, khranit v statnoi figure torzhestvennost".

of humanity who leave behind nothing but "... children and mound of earth in the cemetery..."<sup>35</sup>. No, Mansurov is not one of those; his life-goals are set much higher:

I am searching for something greater; I want to straighten my shoulders(..) I feel strong, I want to grow, yet I am motionless as a mushroom ... I want my work to be useful; (..) Well, how does one do it? I have strength and a head on my shoulders, yet I am helpless...<sup>36</sup>

Similar "revelations" occurring at an early stage of the story indicate that the force that makes Mansurov a knight fighting for a great cause originates in his inner-self and egoistic "I" rather than in social and ideological reforms. To ensure that this trait of Mansurov is well planted in the reader's mind Tendryakov intersperses throughout the first part of The Tight Knot information attesting to the character's irritability, his habit of nervous pacing and gesticulation, his uneven jittery manner of speaking, and, generally, making him behave and talk like "... a weary man..."<sup>37</sup> who at thirty-seven "... looks back at his

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 152, "...detei i kuchu zemli na kladbishche".

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 152.  
Ishchu chego to bolshogo, khochu raspravlit plechi (...) Ya sily chuvstvuyu, rasti khochetsya, a vot zastyl kak grib (...) Khochu, chtob polza byla (...) Da kak eto delat? Sily yest i golova na plechakh, a bespomoshchen...

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 168, "...ustalogo cheloveka..."

past ... with bitterness and longing..."<sup>38</sup> -- the usual indications of a man's instability and premature aging.

Having revealed the fundamental traits, the writer raises Mansurov to the position of power which provides an opportunity to confirm what has initially been postulated, namely, to demonstrate that a man like Mansurov is more suitable for a psychiatric couch than a responsible post in the kolkhoz administration. Although Mansurov's first steps in his new position promise reforms, it is a smokescreen soon dissipated and one sees him heading for the inevitable debacle and degrading exit.

Tendryakov's character drawing strategy falls into two phases: the first establishes the basic traits and tendency which, in the second phase, are submitted to a process of testing the hypothesis. Tendryakov's main interest is the character's psyche exposed during the first stage of the story, then projected in the second stage within a network of human and social relationships. More personal and intimate aspects of Mansurov's life are assigned a minor role.

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38 Ibid., p. 171, "... oglyadyvatsya na svoyo proshloye ... s ogorcheniyem i toskoi...".

As to the technique of character-building, the writer relies chiefly on the hero's self-exposure. Anything coming from other sources -- the narrator's, other characters' and Mansurov's own actions -- serve only to confirm the traits already indicated as part of his psyche. The process of self-revelment consists of monologues, even when structured as dialogues, which is illustrated by Mansurov's outpourings in front of Gmyzin, who acts as passive and sympathetic partner. Tendryakov's exploration of Mansurov's inner-self is confined to those areas and phenomena which underline his egotism and selfishness. Such protagonist, and no other, had to be constructed to agree with the writer's concept of the kolkhoz leadership issue central to The Tight Knot.

To offer a positive counterpart to Mansurov, Tendryakov uses a technique of very intentional contrast. Gmyzin is the antithesis of the First Secretary; he is constructed in an identical manner, although treated less extensively and probingly, even somewhat naively. Gmyzin is presented as the right man for a complex and responsible post despite his limited education and lack of polish in the workings of dialectics. He is clumsy, taciturn, non-eloquent; but his every utterance and action comply

with a simple formula of existence: "... simply live and work so there will be some use"<sup>39</sup> -- a philosophy of life countering Mansurov's "metaphysical" struggles. To create an ideal stereotype of a peasant the narrator tells the reader about the chairman's "... integrity and common sense"<sup>40</sup> ; that he loathes those who are only "... out for money..."<sup>41</sup>. It is also hinted that Gmyzin is not overly sympathetic toward city-folk. Very appropriately, Gmyzin is frequently shown among ordinary kolkhozniks and depicted as a man in intimate contact with nature and farm work.

Comparing the protagonists of the three works one notes that different spheres of their existence are exposed and executed with dissimilar techniques and devices. Ovechkin and Tendryakov employ contrast and parallel, which Abramov does not. Ovechkin ignores the characters' inner life -- his two fellow-writers, especially Tendryakov, use it as a base. Borzov is created from dialogues -- the

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39 Ibid., p. 153, "... prosto zhivi, rabotai chtob polza byla".

40 Ibid., p. 156, "... chestnost ... da zdravyy um".

41 Ibid., p. 162, "... gonis za dlinnym rublem....".

characterization of Mansurov and Anany Yegorovich depends on spoken or internal monologue. However, notwithstanding these and other technical differences in the writers' character-building craftsmanship, all protagonists belong, essentially, to the "flat" category; they are two-dimensional, offer no surprises, and are fully predictable as well as typical. Mansurov, Tendryakov's most carefully developed character, has a slight "curve" which may place him outside the genuine example of "flat" character. This "curve" however has not been given an opportunity to develop into a truly dynamic line owing to the pre-eminence of the intellectual stratum in the story.

A comparison of the sample's characters suggests an analogy between portrait and vignette: Tendryakov's heroes are full-scale portraits painted in a variety of colours and hues; Ovechkin's -- boldly drawn caricatures, and Abramov's -- lightly executed sketches. Looking at this gallery of pictures one would also notice another striking difference -- the varying use of the background element, whether natural or man-made.

Indeed, Ovechkin and Abramov employ background with the utmost economy, and, when they do, it seldom exceeds a medium-size paragraph giving the precise

location of an event or character. Somewhat more extensive background material found in the last sketches of District Workdays results from the writer's changed attitude toward the concept of leadership, rather than technical needs.

Abramov is even more stringent in the employment of background. Apart from several brief meteorological announcements placing an episode in a particular surrounding, there are only two larger settings -- one at the very outset, the other at the very end of The New Life -- both have remarkable evocative qualities achieved through a minimum use of metaphorical language.

Flip-flap, flip-flap, flip-flap... That's what it was like underfoot. And from above it just kept on pouring down. It had been like that for two weeks running. Anany Yegorovich had a tooth-ache and he was holding up the collar of his raincoat and keeping his hand to his cheek as he went along.<sup>42</sup>

The matter-of-fact vocabulary and observations fused into a picture exuding the dreariness of the rainy day is matched by the mood and thoughts of the kolkhoz chairman. Identical technique of welding together of several dissimilar elements is employed in the final setting. The two settings provide the story's frame.

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42 Fyodor Abramov, The New Life, op. cit., p. 23.

Tendryakov's frequent use of natural background has already been mentioned in the analysis of his characters. It was pointed out then that nature plays an important role in the portraits of Gmyzin and Sasha -- the peasant protagonists. The nature setting is put to a variety of uses and is always integrated with the mood of the contiguous episode. For example, a joyous event like a meeting of young lovers under an old tree is accompanied by a moon which "...rested its chin on the tip of an old linden tree..."<sup>43</sup> with shadows and flickering shafts of moonlight transforming the place into an idyllic scene. When things turn gloomy and depressing, nature too, is filled with forebodings about an oncoming calamity:

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43 V. Tendryakov, Tugoi uzel, op. cit., p. 188, "... uperlas podborodkom v verkhushku staroi lipy..."

Cheerless and unattractive is the unploughed fallow field. Land flooded with the thawing snow, now almost dry everywhere with cracked earth crust here and there. (...) growing weeds resemble the hair of a louse-ridden dog. The field languishes, the field awaits the day when ploughs will comb it, will tear away all uncleanness, will bring freedom and health.<sup>44</sup>

The above quotation serves to intensify Sasha's first awareness of rupture in his relation with Katya. The youth's inner turmoil is transferred to surrounding nature endowed with anthropomorphic qualities. Similar vignettes of natural settings abound in The Tight Knot wherever Gmyzin or Sasha appear. Tendryakov's imagery is constructed from traditional tropes, almost clichés, for example: "lazy waters", "sleeping pools", "moon rested its chin".

To conclude, only V. Tendryakov makes an extensive use of background material in the form of rich metaphorical language functioning as a principal agent of mood permeating a particular scene. It should also be noted that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

Unylo, neprīvlēkatelno vyglyadit pole, yeshcho ne rozpakhannoye pod pary. Zaplyvshaya pri tayane snegov zemlya seichas pochti vsyudu podsokhla, koye-gde yeyo verkhnyaya korka potreskalas ... kak sherst na oparshivevshei sobake, rastyot sornyak (...) Pole tomitsya, pole zhdyot togo dnya, kogda zheleznyie lemekha rozcheshut yego, sorvut vsyu nechist, prinesut svobodu i zdorove.

Tendryakov's settings, unlike those of Abramov, are normally set apart from the adjacent scene thus becoming completely autonomous narrative units. Ovechkin's background provides essential information about the time and place of the adjoining scene.

The point-of-view, albeit the focus of narration, or the "central intelligence", as Henry James would have said, has received a great deal of critical and theoretical attention ever since the craft of fiction had become an object of serious study. Whatever the nomenclature of the term, the point-of-view is regarded as the "...question of the relation in which narrator stands to the story"<sup>45</sup>, a question as to how a subject matter can be

...brought into focus? From what angle, what point of observation can the drama be best seen? From the author's own? or from the point of view of several characters.<sup>46</sup>

Point-of-view is the fiction writer's principle criterion in his selection and arrangement of the narrative material, techniques and devices.

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<sup>45</sup> Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, op.cit., p. 251.

<sup>46</sup> Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function, op. cit., p. 45.

Although point-of-view has been formulated in several theoretical schemes <sup>47</sup>, the choice is, basically, between the third-person and first-person angle of viewing, or between an omniscient or a totally effaced narrator. However between the two poles writers find almost limitless hybrids combining, in different proportions, the two extremes of viewing a story. A relatively small segment of modern prose is written from the point-of-view of either omniscient or effaced narrator.

All three stories of the sample are narrated from the third-person point of observation, but with varying degree of authorial omniscience. Ovechkin reserves for his narrator the strongest control, this despite a clearly dramatic structuring of the story. The outsider's control in District Workdays seems inevitable in the light of the story's subjection to the unswerving logic of the principal

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47 More elaborate and somewhat different schemes of the point-of-view in fiction have been proposed by Norman Friedman, in "Point of View in Fiction; the development of Critical Concept", PMLA, Vol. LXX, No. 5, Dec. issue, 1955; Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren in Understanding Fiction, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959; and Bertil Romberg, Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962.

idea. Were the writer to give free rein to his characters, the sketches' composition would have to be altered substantially. Less stringent authorial control would tend to weaken the clarity of the exposition of the thesis and remedies to kolkhoz problems. Obviously, Ovechkin was not prepared to make sacrifices in so vital an area to him. Consequently, District Workdays can serve as an example of dramatically structured story with an omniscient narrator in full control of the actors.

Tendryakov's third-person point-of-view employs a selective focus which enables the writer to remove the narrator from all too conspicuous controlling position. The slower-moving action of the story and psychological probings assist in camouflaging authorial omniscience. By presenting the story from several angles of viewing an impression of a more spontaneous unrolling of the principal theme is achieved. But, as in Ovechkin's work, the editing of the various angles of projection follows too closely the development of the writer's thesis to pass for "natural", uncontrolled flow of the story.

Abramov's third-person point-of-view is the furthest removed from authorial omniscience; indeed, in

some segments of the story it comes close to the "stream of consciousness" technique. The bulk of the story-material is projected through the prism of Anany Yegorovich's feelings and intellect. The narrator's presence is skillfully hidden making him appear at times, to be inside the chairman. The stage directing is so unobtrusive that, were it not for an occasional betrayal of the narrator's presence, one might have taken some passages for a genuine Joycean technique:

With his boot he turned over a layer of hay -- the heavy, heady scent of rotting manure struck his nostrils -- and glanced up the sky. There was not one break in those lowering, water-clogged clouds. Yes, another couple of days and you might as well write off the hay (...) What were they thinking about? Once there had been a hold up with the hay, it would seem obvious to get a move on with the fodder -- the weather had nothing to do with that. But they balked like a lot of stupid sheep -- till you had to drag them at the end of the rope. And this day, too, the milkmaids were the only women out in the rain in the field...<sup>48</sup>.

This passage relates the chairman's mixed emotions; his mind wondering over many subjects while his eyes scan the rotting fodder on the fields. Here are the elements of simultaneity and discontinuity evoked by an experience at

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48 Fyodor Abramov, The New Life, op.cit., p. 23.

the sight of the imminent catastrophe. The two qualities constitute the basic requirement of the "stream of consciousness" technique. Only the pronoun "he" repeated several times indicates an outsider (narrator) controlling and balancing the outer and inner worlds, thus effectively directing the flow of narrative.

Abramov's point-of-view (which was rather uncommon in the early sixties), assures him of a greater intimacy between the reader and himself, the narrator -- with a consequently stronger feeling of sincerity and convincingness in the ideas put forward. It is not suggested, however, that his point-of-view is intrinsically superior to the ones employed by his colleagues. Literature is not written according to ready-made formulae assuring success, and the assessment of the value of one or another technique can be made only after a study of its function in the overall structure and its effectiveness in the assigned task. This dimension of the study of fiction already belongs to the area of form, i.e., the writer's method of integration of various techniques and story material into an organic whole.

Although the study of the language stratum does not lie within the scope of this thesis, a sampling of the use of language offered here aims at giving a fuller perspective of the kolkhoz prose's art. The examples that follow are taken from the first scenes of District Workdays and The Tight Knot; both scenes are of approximately the same length and both have an identical position and function within their respective stories. The choice of the two writers was dictated by their artistic and conceptual polarization.

The language stratum of a work of fiction is usually divided into two distinct types: the language of the narrator and the language of the protagonists -- in other words, the pure narrative and the direct speech. In the pure narrative one can distinguish two categories: the informational and descriptive narrative.

The rain poured for three whole days; during these three days the sun peeked through twice for a few hours and did not manage to even dry up the roofs, not only fields which, in places in low-lying areas were covered by water, as the early spring meadows during thaw <sup>48a</sup>.

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48a V. Ovechkin, Rayonnyie budni, op. cit., p. 7  
Dozhd lil treti den pod ryad. Za tri dnya raza dva vsego proglyadivalo solntse na neskolko chasov, ne uspevalo prosushit dazhe kryshi, ne tolko polya, mestami, v nizinakh, zalityie vodoi, slovno luga rannei vesnoi, v povodok.

His horse ... stood ... restlessly wagged his head trying to break off the halter; he neighed <sup>48b</sup>

He lit a cigarette, sat down and asked Marya Sergeievich to pour him some tea <sup>48c</sup>

These three quotations -- the first two taken from the introductory narrative passage -- contain the essential elements and traits of Ovechkin's language in the informative category of narrative. The first quotation contains five verbal forms, one adjective (*rannei*), the remaining words being distributed among other parts of speech. The third quotation consists almost entirely of verbs.

Ovechkin's informative narrative could hardly be made more informative; it is very laconic and deals with concrete things and states. The feeling of movements and dynamics is created by a heavy concentration of verbs, chiefly in the past tense and arranged in chronological sequence of action, or condition of animate and inanimate objects.

The descriptive category of Ovechkin's narrative has a larger number of adjectives. The protagonists, for example, are depicted as "fat" (*tuchny*), "mustached"

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48b *Ibid.*, p. 7-8, "yego kon ... stoyal ... bespokoino motal golovoi, silyas oborvat povod, rzhal."

48c *Ibid.*, p. 39, "Zakuril, sel, poprosil Maryu Sergeievnu nalit yemu chayu"

(usaty), "greyish" (sedoi), "heavy-set" (gruzny), "sun-burnt" (zagorely), "blue-eyed" (sineglazy), "plump" ("razpolnevshaya), "good-natured face" (dobrodushnom litsom) with "happy, hazel eyes" (vesyolyimi karimi glazami). These and similar adjectives employed by Ovechkin have a general rather than specific value of meaning attributable to a particular person or object. Ovechkin's adjectives have a long grammatical form and denote rather than connote.

Basically, the main difference between Ovechkin's informational and descriptive narrative lies in the ratio of adjectives to the other parts of speech, especially to verbs. In both categories of his narrative, the grammatical and semantic qualities of adjectives strive for maximum clarity, factualness and concreteness.

In Tendryakov's work these two categories of narrative tend to merge in a single passage; the informational narrative is less distinct and less dynamic. Tendryakov's narrative contains more adjectives which accounts for its connotative character. Moreover, his narrative functions on two levels and this double purpose is evident in his handling of characters in the first scene.

Esteemed teacher ... primly correct in his long ancient coat looked directly ahead with sad calmness. What is he thinking about? 48d

The answer to this question is suggested in the second part of the same passage.

The quotation offers an example of Tendryakov's double projection executed in the informational and descriptive categories of narrative. The adjectives "esteemed" "primly correct", "long, ancient" and "sad calmness" reflect both the outer and inner lives of the character, delineating a striking silhouette of an elderly gentleman-teacher. The double-level projection is achieved through more selective and suggestive adjectives and the technique of character exposure.

Apart from the differences in respect to the quantity and quality of the adjectives, the language employed by the two writers in their narratives does not deviate from the standard morphology, syntax and grammar; there are no barbarisms, dialectisms, neologisms or professional argot which abound in the second layer of fiction's language -- direct speech.

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48d V. Tendryakov, Tugoi uzul, op. cit., p. 148.  
Zasluzhenny uchitel ... choporno akkuratny v svojom dlinnom starikovskom pidzhake, s grustnym spokoistviyem glyadit pryamo pered soboi. O chom on dumayet seichas ?

Exploitation of language potentialities in direct speech is shown in the first scenes. On his way home from the burial ceremony Gmyzin is asked by an old village woman with regard to whom they burried. Told that it was the First Secretary, the old woman comments: "Obviously someone from the bosses; they fired a salvo".<sup>48e</sup> She then makes the sign of the cross, asking the Lord to "Accept ... the soul of your slave"<sup>48f</sup>. In this briefest of dialogues Tendryakov masterfully, and solely through the use of different types of language, exposed the social and cultural division existing in the contemporary village. "Nachalstvo" (bosses) and "S ruzhei palili" are highly colloquial and charged with meaning relevant to the principal thesis of The Tight Knot.

Since Ovechkin's sketches, especially Borzov and Martynov are structured around the dialogues, language

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<sup>48e</sup> Ibid., p.151, "Iz nachalstva, vidat. S ruzhei palili".

<sup>48f</sup> Ibid., p. 151, "Primi ... dushu raba tvoyego".

differentiation has been assigned an important aesthetic function. The writer carefully distinguishes between the grammatically correct speech of the better-educated Martynov and that of the peasant Gmyzin. The latter's conversation is interlaced with colloquialisms, administrative jargon and proverbs.

The exposition of the principal ideas of both works is built around the strategy of contrast; careful selection of different layers of language employed in spoken dialogues carry out the writer's intentions.

The samplings of the stylistic use of language by the two writers may serve as the two poles between which are distributed other techniques of language stylistics. The majority of writers of the immediate post-Stalin years wrote in the spirit of Ovechkin's linguistic models. Those writers who projected their panoramas of the contemporary village after 1956 gravitated toward Tendryakov's models, but within a more involved novelistic framework.

Before proceeding to the synthetic level of the study of the sample, a brief summary should be given of the main findings of the foregoing analysis concerned with the structuring of the major aspects of fiction.

Along with the third person point-of-view the three writers made use of literary conventions in plotting, characterization and background structuring, all submitted to the logical progression of the narratives. Consequently, the plot lines are linear and follow the Aristotelian pattern from establishment through ascending phase of action (*peripetiae*) and heading toward the climax and denouement. In all three instances the conflict is defined in the early episodes, and is structured around the diametrically opposed ideas. The element of surprise and suspense has been employed and well exploited only by Abramov. The analysed sample shows no significant use of such devices as flashback, inversion or substantial mixing of styles and different methods of narration; the narrative pattern and the pace of action remain constant throughout the entire span of the stories.

Tendryakov's technique of the psychological exploration and Abramov's drama model and "journey"

device are no technical innovations. Especially traditional is the manner in which Tendryakov uses nature to exteriorize an inner world of his characters; his tropes and imagery do not strike as ingenious nor too evokative. As to the character drawing technique -- only Abramov deviates significantly from time-honoured progressive development of his protagonist, Anany Yegorovich.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the noted differences in organising of the major structural aspects of prose, all three writers work with the traditional concepts and tools of the craft of fiction.

Before examining formal aspects of the sample one should like to recall the positions taken by the three writers in respect to the kolkhoz chief issue -- the leadership question -- and the proposed remedies. Both, Ovechkin and Tendryakov, advocated the replacement of Stalinist bureaucrats at the district level by people more attuned and responsive to the needs of the ordinary villagers: Dolgushin, a city man and a Leninist embodies Ovechkin's solution; Gmyzin, the peasant, represents Tendryakov's solution. Abramov was sufficiently removed from the earlier overriding concern with the lower-level leadership to see the crux of kolkhoz

difficulties in social and economic rigidity of the socialized village. He proposed a common sense approach and a more efficient utilization of manpower and talents.

The writers' remedies, even if they are identical as Ovechkin's and Tendryakov's, originate from strongly polarized views in respect to peasant culture.

Tendryakov insists on the leadership cadre formed from culturally peasant people as the antidote to the mismanagement of village affairs by men of urban cultural origin. The other two writers-- Ovechkin and Abramov -- ignore their colleague's thesis and seek answers to the problems of contemporary village in economic and administrative reforms dissociated from cultural area. This differentiation becomes more evident in a study of the sample's form.

One should begin by locating the cornerstones -- Dorothy Van Ghent's "single meaningful structure"(cf.p.118), functioning as the primary organizing agent of various elements and techniques which enter into the composition of the three stories.

Tendryakov and Abramov employ extensively symbolism -- the kind of symbolism which requires no special

effort or ingenuity for undisputed identification. This is especially evident in the The Tight Knot in which three symbols are very conspicuous: the title of the book itself; the dead man's cap left in Mansurov's office the night of the suicide; and the old pine tree. The symbolism of the "tight knot" and of the "cap" represent Mansurov's character and actions: the former, summarizes Mansurov's ambitions and activities likened to a self-made noose; the latter serves to remind the reader of Mansurov's complicity in the chairman's desperate action -- a suicide. Both symbols are easily decoded, chiefly on account of their limited and one-dimensional level of meaning.

The third symbol, the ancient pine tree functions as the story's formal centre in the "single meaningful structure" sense. The old tree towering on the outskirts of the village is the story's compositional hub: a converging point of all the structural elements, the warp and woof of associations, and the embodiment of the writer's thoughts, feelings and attitudes toward the village. If the pine tree were removed from The Tight Knot, the entire composition would fall apart becoming a conglomeration of episodes, scenes and narrative passages.

The pine tree is introduced toward the end of the first part of the story, soon after Mansurov's true nature has been sufficiently disclosed, and at a point where Sasha's function as contrast and a parallel demands a clear delineation. The pine tree is ushered in already discussed Tendryakov's style -- an autonomous inset of richly textured imagery. The pine tree is introduced when Sasha overcame the shock caused by overheard criticism of his father's Stalinism and decided to remain in the village. The pine tree's appearance also coincides with Sasha's budding first love. In summary, the symbolism of the pine tree is planted at the beginning of the ascending phase of the plot, the peripetiae.

On the outskirts of Korshunov, near the highway on a sandy hillock grows a pine tree. Having grown up in freedom, it was formerly of astonishing might. Even today one cannot help noticing the remnants of its past strength. A huge trunk requiring more than two men to girth it, all in strange knots and entanglements; the very image of fossilized muscles of a giant in supernatural strain. The lower branches of the thickness of a young pine are spread out with audacious freedom and hang over the entire hillock. This is all that is left (...) The dried up branches protrude sideways like gigantic bony arms in the deadlike clasp, as if in some mysterious passionate prayer. The pine does not care about freedom, sun, rain. Only at the very tip a bunch of tough old leaves are the sole sign of smouldering life. Bony dead limbs guard this pityful happiness, the last hope. But from this bunch seeds still scatter like tiny, pergamin-like

butterflies; cones are still falling; the tree is almost dead. But either through the force of habit or out of sheer stubbornness it blooms, bears offspring, persistently fulfills the obligation trust upon it by nature -- to perpetuate its kind.<sup>49</sup>

This canvas of an old pine tree contains several analogies to the situation of the contemporary Soviet village, chiefly to its plight in the face of possible extinction. The pine's surviving top branches "... the only sign of smouldering life symbolize the village's last efforts to secure competent peasant leadership. Just as the pine's sole raison d'être is to perpetuate its kind", so the village's main task is the procurement of people capable of perpetuating its

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49 Vladimir Tendryakov, Tugoi uzel, op. cit., p. 199. Na samoi okraïne Korshunova, nepodaleku ot shosse, na peshchanom vzlobke stoit sosna. Vyrosshaya na privole, ona kogda-to porazhala svoeyi moshchyu. I teper yeshcho nelzya ne zametit ostatkov yeyo byloi sily. Tolstjenny-vdvoyom tolko okhvatish-stvol ves v chudovishchnykh uzlakh i spleteniyakh: ni dat ni vzyat okamenevshyie v sverkhstestvennom napryazhenii muskuly giganta. Nizhniye vetki, sami tolshchynoi v stvol molodoi sosenki, raskinulis s udaloi svobodoi, visyat nad vsem vzlobkom. No eto ostatki (...) Vetvi vysokhli, torchat v storony, kak gigantskiye kostlyavyie ruki, svedennyie namertvo v kakoi-to zagadochnoi, strastnoi molbe. Derevu uzhe ne v radost privole, solntse, dozhdì. Tolko na samoi verkhushe klochok zhostkoi starcheskoi khvoi-yedinstvennyy priznak tleyushchei zhizni. Kostistyie myortvyie suchya okhranyayut eto zhalkoye shchaste, poslednyuyu nadezhdu. No i s etogo klochka yescho syplyutsya kroshechnymi pergamentnymi motylkami semechki, padayut shishki; pochti myortvoye derevo - po privychke li, no upryamstvu li-tsvetet, plodonosit, nastoichivo vypolnyayet obyazannost, vozlozhonnoyu na nego prirodoi, - prodolzhat svoi rod.

culture. The maintaining of the peasant culture is therefore the book's central idea and message and Tendryakov's answer to the principal question: "What is to be done with the village". Implicitly, the symbolic pine tree is the backbone of Tendryakov's thesis postulating a mandatory continuation of the rural culture. Like the pine tree, the village survived many crises, both man-made and natural, and at present is on the verge of extinction unless appropriate measures are taken promptly. Any reform platform must recognize as the priority, the preparation of a cadre of leaders equipped to deal with modern collectivized agriculture. Such leaders, apart from leadership qualities and professional knowledge, must possess peasant's emotional and spiritual make up.

Both Gmyzin and young Sasha meet the requirements since both are of true peasant stock. Furthermore, both have had life-long communion with nature and prefer farming above any other type of labour. The two -- an old man and a youth -- epitomize generational differences taken into account in the writer's argumentation. Gmyzin belongs to past and lacks the type of education needed to meet the demands of the modern socialized agriculture. It is made clear, however, that Gmyzin

carries out his obligations better than leaders of non-peasant origin, like Mansurov. Gmyzin can serve until a new generation of peasant-Communists is brought up. Thus, the fate of the Soviet village depends from youth like Sasha, and for this reason he, and not Gmyzin, is a model of future leadership and a contrast to the Mansurov type of bureaucrats responsible for much what is wrong with kolkhozes.

To bring up a new generation of modern peasants imbued with collectivistic spirit is not an easy task, as has been shown by the writer's design of Sasha's fortunes and trials. To ascertain Sasha's allegiance to a rural mode of life one must neutralize the attractions of a more comfortable life in cities, combat past mistakes and current negative influences exemplified by Mansurov. Then, there are the usual vicissitudes of the youth's formative stage of life strewn with conflicts, disappointments, infatuations -- all part of man's accommodation to the village world. Tendryakov steers his hero through dangerous shoals of maturing, confronts him with bitter lessons from which he emerges holding out a promise of fulfilling the role assigned to him in the writer's thesis. Toward the end of

The Tight Knot Sasha emerged relatively unscathed from the most trying period committed to peasant culture and the kolkhoz.

Although at the end of the story he leaves for the city, it is only to complete his study of agriculture. The last object that catches the eye of the departing youth is the towering pine tree.

Sasha's character is tightly and organically enmeshed with Mansurov's "rise and fall" plot axis. Why, one might ask, in the light of aforesaid key position of Sasha, the writer reserved for Mansurov the undeniable limelight. Why all the efforts which have been lavished by the writer upon this misfit and failure? Similar question has been troubling some Soviet critics conditioned to see a "positive" hero at the centre of the stage. One critic of Tendryakov's works noted the writer's repeated inability to draw "... a counter-balance to the negative hero (...) a positive character"<sup>50</sup> -- an entirely correct observation. Another, and more viable explanation to Tendryakov's tendency, lies in the

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50 V. Chalmayev, "Problema kharaktera v ocherkakh V. Tendryakova", in P.F. Yushin, Ob ocherke; sbornik statei, Moskva, Izd. Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1958, p. 107. "... v protivoves otritsatel'nomu geroyu (...) polozhitelnogo geroya".

aesthetic advantages offered by a sinister rather than saintly hero. Mansurov, aside from portraying the failures of kolkhoz leadership, provides a superior contrasting background to the principal question posed by the writer, namely what kind of leaders are needed.

The answer embodied in the character of Sasha and Gmyzin differs in its very essentials from the one proposed by either Ovechkin or Abramov. Apart from Tendryakov's insistence on a true peasant cultural extraction requested from the kolkhoz leaders, there is also a significant disagreement regarding the causes of the failure presented by Mansurov and Borzov. Unlike Ovechkin, Tendryakov does not attach much weight to the influence of the "cult of personality" period stressing instead self-love and egotism as the most destructive forces. Implicitly, the writer derives Mansurov's weakness from urban upbringing which, it is intimated, has none of goodness, virtues and moral timber found in the Russian peasant.

Abramov, too, employed symbols as the composition-al centres of his story: the "garden", the "passport" issue and the "thirty percent miracle" -- all constituting the main arguments in his exposé of the kolkhoz ills. The "garden" and the "passport" stand for the need for a

policy of free movement and choice of employment unavailable then to the village population. Abramov shows that Pete the Bulldozer's "capitalistic" venture had not affected his collectivistic virtues which are, indeed, far healthier than those of other members of the kolkhoz. The "thirty percent" share symbolizes the kind of stimulant that rouses everyone, old and sick kolkhozniks included.

Of the three symbols-ideas, the "garden" occupies a strategic position in the story's composition and functions as its "single meaningful structure". The chairman's visit to Pete's cottage is contained in the longest chapter placed in the culminating phase of Anany Yegorovich's tour -- the life of the retired kolkhoznik is more fully explored and offers some of the most incisive criticism of the agricultural policies. Indeed, the major part of the chairman's inner monologue in the earlier part of the tour is a form of a preparation for the issues touched by Pete who also summarizes and expands on what has been said or hinted at before.

Abramov's analysis of the situation and the program for reforms is more detailed and unorthodox than anything contained in either District Workdays or

The Tight Knot. Yet his work does not suffer from belabouring the issues, ambiguity or declamatory publicism characteristic of Ovechkin's sketches. On the contrary, it is a lucid, compact and well-written piece of prose. Abramov's success in avoiding the pitfalls of most writers treating kolkhoz theme in strongly reformist spirit is due, chiefly, to his choice of form and professional dexterity.

Abramov showed himself to be capable of exploiting the aesthetic potentialities of the dramatic form of the narrative which eliminated the tedium of the narrator's omniscience and an open preaching. Every component, technique and device found in The New Life is highly functional and relevant: every gesture, comment, grimace, utterance, down to the titling of the chapters. The tour plot pattern, the inner monologue and the impressionistic structure of the narrative enabled the writer to make use of a variety of material and techniques. Abramov also succeeded in avoiding the overly serious tone which marks the other two stories of the sample; humour, delicate irony and comic situations woven into the texture of the story offer an example of effective treatment of a serious matter without becoming a publicistic tract or a sermon.

Notwithstanding the variety of issues, techniques and narrative material, Abramov retained balance and achieved a high degree of organic integration of content and techniques. The drama form combined with "journey" novelistic device served well as the vehicles for a plethora of ideas, issues, moods and emotions implanted in a relatively "thin" book depicting one day in the life of Anany Yegorovich.

Another conspicuous characteristic of Abramov's art is the writer's avoidance of "profundities"; he neither plunges into complicated "philosophying" nor seems to be intent on creating a "golden nugget" peasant type à la Tendryakov's heroes. His symbols and remedies stand for easily grasped practical solutions where communion with nature and the peasant's presumed elemental love of land have no relevance.

Ovechkin employed no symbols as a "single meaningful structure", in the manner his two colleagues did. Instead, the form of his sketches is modelled on a smoothly running polemical exposé of a cogently formulated and convincingly argued case for the prosecution. To this end the writer chose linear plot, very "flat" characterization and techniques and devices associated

with the art of debate. Lucidity and brevity of the presentation are the guiding criteria responsible for extreme concentration on the selected aspects of the issue of leadership. Dialogues are the carriers of the thematic units -- a characteristic of Ovechkin's fiction where "Correct decisions crystallize in debates, discussion and speechmaking"<sup>51</sup>, as somewhat reproachfully observed a Soviet critic accusing the writer of having his characters "... talk too much and do little."<sup>52</sup>

Although the three writers chose different compositional centres (the symbols and the debate), the force that shapes the distribution of material as well as its arrangement is the intellectual stratum -- whether a single idea, or, as in F. Abramov's story, a set of ideas strictly relevant to the socio-economic reforms of the contemporary village. Idea or concept, and not Man and his personal life are the writers' overriding concern which determined the stories' form and influenced all

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51 M.Lapshin, in "Rayonnyie budni" Valentina Ovechkina" in Ob ocherke, op. cit., p. 97, "Pravilnyie resheniya vykristalizovuyutsya v sporakh, vystupleniyakh, besedakh".

52 Ibid., p. 98, "... mnogo govoryat i malo delayut".

other decisions involved in prose writing. Hence the characters' minor role in the narrative and their static qualities as well as a high degree of functionality in the writers' conceptual scheme. The same considerations determined the background aspect and the point-of-view technique.

As the form-determining ideas are pertinent to a narrow sector of the kolkhoz world, the depicted "slice of rural life" is small, truncated, spotty and selective. In fact, the manifestations of the kolkhoz life worked into the stories' canvas are, for the most part, extracted from contemporary socio-economic and administrative domains. Together, they constitute a highly selective and effective dossier in the hands of intent, well-meaning and talented "prosecutors" of the Stalinist kolkhoz bureaucracy.

Whatever tools of the craft of writing and whatever material were employed by the writers -- the real test of the aesthetic qualities is based on a writer's success in creating an organic and harmonious entity out of varied and different elements that went into the making of a work of fiction. How well have the writers of the sample fared in this crucial and difficult task?

Abramov's skill in "orchestrating" his thematic material and techniques into well integrated whole is, on the basis of the analysis, decidedly superior to that of his colleagues. Despite a great number of characters, more contentious issues and mixing of several narrative techniques -- all within, approximately, one hundred twenty-five pages of the pocket book format --

The New Life achieved the art's "dulce et utile". One derives both pleasure and enlightenment as to the difficulties of the Soviet contemporary village. This rather uncommon feat in kolkhoz fiction is indicative of Abramov's technical dexterity. There is nothing glaringly redundant in The New Life, nor repetitious; the writer effectively reveals many sores of the village life and argues as strongly and persuasively as Ovechkin. The success of The New Life lies in that Abramov moulded the idea into an appropriate form.

Ovechkin the publicist overwhelmed Ovechkin the artist. The writer's undisguised emotional involvement, authorial omniscience, overly detailed and biased against Borzov dossier constitute the major failures weakening the literary qualities of District Workdays. The writer's intentions and position with regard to the issue treated in the sketches are clear and irreversible after the

first two episodes of Borzov and Martynov. Consequently, all subsequent information about Borzov add nothing new and are therefore redundant. Ovechkin's difficulty in marshalling his material into an organic entity is even more apparent in later sketches which lack the cohesiveness noted in the first one. The merit of Ovechkin's sketches lies in the forcefulness and topicality of his argument which required a great deal of courage during the immediate post-Stalin years.

Tendryakov difficulties in integrating the ingredients of the story material into an artistic amalgam are less apparent, partly because of a more ambitious thesis which called for wider perspective and psychological probing as well as more complex structuring. These exigencies and traits of The Tight Knot diluted the weaknesses noted in V. Ovechkin sketches, but have not eliminated them altogether. On closer analysis Tendryakov appears as adamant about his convictions and remedies and as intent in controlling the flow of argument as is his teacher, Ovechkin. Tendryakov also shows difficulties in organizing his over-abundant material. There are episodes which puzzle rather than elucidate, episodes which may be excluded without causing a discernible damage to the story. For example,

the one showing Masurov<sup>n</sup> staging a dangerous bull-fighting performance intended, presumably, to exteriorize his ego or impress young Katya. Moreover, Mansurov's stubborn rejection of warnings and advice from dependable friends strikes a false note; at any rate, there was no need to stress this trait of the protagonist's behaviour in so many episodes. The complexity of plotting created some difficulty in coming up with credible situations assuring a logical flow of action. In one instance the writer employs dubious and conventional device of "overheard conversation" intended to inform Sasha about his deceased father's Stalinist leadership -- an occurrence which may well take place in real life, but becomes suspect in fiction. Similar devices are used several times to link more difficult phases of action.

The Tight Knot bears the label of short-story. However, in view of double-plotting, multiplicity of characters, complex thesis, the story loses a solid focus which, according to normative poetics of fiction, is the main prerequisite of the short-story genre.

A number of characteristics noted in the prose of the three writers, and especially in the works of Ovechkin and Abramov, can be traced to the influence of sketch --

the most popular genre of the immediate post-Stalin years. Indeed, without an acquaintance with recent growing critical literature about sketch one cannot put in a proper perspective the evolution of the kolkhoz fiction, and of the Soviet fiction, as a whole.

## 2. Sketch genre.

An important reason for the relative poverty of critical studies of kolkhoz fiction is the paucity of critical literature about the sketch genre. In the mid-fifties, however, one notes a revival of serious studies in this prose form gradually developing into a lively polemical discussion which extended beyond questions and issues relevant to the theory of sketch itself, encompassing the entire domain of the art of fiction. Since a great portion of kolkhoz fiction has been classified as sketch, the subsequent section will survey the main directions and issues which have received a great amount of critical attention centred on short prose forms, in general, and sketch, in particular.

Of many aspects of sketch scrutinized during the last decade there are only few which caused mild disagreements. One such aspect is the sketch's membership in the family of prose genres. However, unlike the irreverent twenties calling for throwing "overboard from the ship of modernity ..." <sup>53</sup> old masters and sacred

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53 From the Futurists' manifesto published in 1912. Quoted in Alexander Kaun, Soviet Poets and Poetry, New York, Books for Libraries Press Inc., (reprint), 1968, p. 16.

formulae, among them denying sketch's place in creative literature<sup>54</sup>, no contemporary would suggest such a drastic measure even if he harboured a gnawing doubt on this question. Infrequent reiteration of the sketch's undeniable literary qualities in the last decade might be taken as an indicator that its position in imaginative prose is not yet universally accepted. A. Shumski, for example, goes to a great length in repudiating any implicit wavering on this question and to reinforce his point he quotes Gorky's opinions, remarks, speeches and observations -- a common in Soviet scholarship practice, if a final authority is required to support a particular view. Inadvertently, some quotations have a double edge, that is, they weaken Gorky's unreserved acceptance of sketch as a full-grown fiction genre. This conclusion can be drawn from Gorky's placement of sketch somewhere

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54 The LEF, Proletkult and other radicals of the twenties saw sketch as a distinctive form of fiction having no place in the traditional structure of the imaginative prose. This was a factor in a widespread notion about lowly "literariness" of sketch.

"... in the middle between the tale and study..."<sup>55</sup> or from his advice meant for the beginners in literature suggesting the learning "... from sketch and tale, but not from the novel..."<sup>56</sup>. On the whole, though, the sketch is now a recognized genre, never a "lower, secondary sort of literature..."<sup>57</sup>, as some contended during the 1920's.

The second question which has been receiving more attention than the literary legitimacy of the sketch is its genealogy. The concern with the historical development of the genre is understandable in the light of marxian dialectics and historical determinism. A clear and sound line of the Soviet sketch's predecessors is an ideological necessity; moreover it is also of assistance in dispelling any residual uneasiness about the first point, namely, the sketch's membership in the literary family.

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55 A. Shumskĭ, Gorki i sovetskĭ ocherk, Moskva, Sovetskĭ Pisatel, 1962, p. 47, "... mezhdū issledovaniyem i rasskazom ..."

56 Ibid., p. 36, "... na ocherke i rasskaze, a ne na romane ..."

57 Ibid., p. 22, "... kak k nizshemu, vtorosortnomu rodu literatury...". A. Shumskĭ refers here to already mentioned demands on the part of LEF and proletarians responsible for popularizing the notion of the sketch's "lowly" character.

Those working in the historical domain have not had to contend with basic issues although a number of points have aroused dispute. In general, though, the sketch's curriculum vitae customarily begins with Radishchev's The Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg<sup>58</sup>, then cuts across the breadth of Russian literature gathering contributions from almost every prominent writer, not to mention a voluminous populist prose fitting in its entirety into the sketch prose. A similar process is repeated during the Soviet era where sketch can boast of even greater success. Thus, under the label of sketch are found such pieces of fiction as Lermontov's Hero of our Time (Geroi nashevo vremeni), Turgenev's The Hunter's Sketches, a good part of Gogol's works, short forms of L. Tolstoy fiction, then Chekhov, Bunin, Gorki -- to name several outstanding names in Russian fiction. A few critics have also included Pushkin's Captain's Daughter (Kapitanskaya dochka) in the sketch genre. Admittedly, such a wide coverage given sketch prose may appear preposterous to some; the reason for mentioning it here

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58 A.G. Zeitlin pushes the frontier of the sketch to decades of Catherine I satirical prose; A.G. Zeitlin, Stanovleniye realizma v russkoi literature; rusскиye psikhologisheskiye ocherki, Moskva, Nauka, 1965, pp. 6-7, passim.

is to illustrate lack of agreement among critics and to indicate the Soviet critics' difficulties in working out widely acceptable theory of sketch -- difficulties, one might add, common to the endeavours devoted to building a system where each prose work is neatly fitted into a "proper" compartment.

Recent polemical flare-ups in respect of the genealogical tree have been caused by unavoidable disagreements between those who see Russian and Soviet-Russian sketch as identical twins, and others who see them as just fraternal twins. M. Shaginyan's observations can serve as an illustration. She contended that the classical Russian sketch, as exemplified in the works of Herzen, G. Uspenski, Leskov, lacks Soviet "operationality" (operativnost) -- a quality which signifies "... quick and immediate influence on life..."<sup>59</sup>. Shaginyan claimed that the predecessors of the Soviet sketch-writers often gave pre-eminence to "... moments of personal reflection, descriptive beginning, philosophical and lyrical ..." <sup>60</sup> These elements cast doubt on a most vital area of kinship

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59 M. Shaginyan, Po dorogam pyatiletki, Moskva Nauka 1955, p. 3, "... bystrym i neposredstvennym vozdeistviyem na zhizn..."

60 Ibid., p. 3, "... moment lichnogo razdumya, nachalo opisatelnoye, filosofsko-liricheskoye ..."

between Russian and Russian-Soviet sketch: its topicality, social usefulness, which are also the basic quality of sketch.

However, as in the case of the sketch's membership in imaginative fiction, there have been no serious attempts to disrupt a tacit agreement on an unbroken line between Russian and Soviet-Russian tradition and practices in the sketch genre. Similarly, any doubts have been quickly subdued by an appropriate quotation from Gorki and other canonized Soviet oracles in literary matters -- Lenin, Belinski, Lunacharski. Indeed, the sketch's genealogy and historicism have occupied relatively minor position among the problems and issues discussed by the young generation of critics and writers who have shown greater interest and concern with regard to the formal aspects of the sketch.

Critical literature of the last decade has been striving to provide more elaborated "science" of sketch than a mere statement that it is

... an epic form of narrative in which depicted persons, manifestations and events are those that have taken place and which a writer describes on the basis of his own observations.<sup>61</sup>

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61 V.I. Sorokin, Teoriya literatury, Moskva, Ochpedgiz, 1960, p. 228.

... epicheskoye proizvedeniye, v kotorom dayetsya khudozhestvennoye izobrazheniye takikh lits, yavleni i sobytiy, kotoryie v deistvitelnosti i kotoryie avtor izobrazhayet na osnovanii svoikh neposredstvennykh nablyudeni.

... one of the kind of narrative (artistic, scientific publicistic) literature at the basis of which lies the re-creation of real facts,<sup>62</sup> events and persons directly seen by the writer...

The two almost identical formulations taken from two different official sources single out, from all possible qualities of sketch, one mandatory pre-requisite, namely, the matter-of-factness, or factual realism expected from the genre. The insistence on documentary, factual realism of the sketch based on the writer's personal and thorough acquaintance with the topic of his work has produced innumerable variations of the afore-enunciated principles. In reading Soviet literature on the sketch subject one is ceaselessly told that it is "... a militant type of literature..."<sup>63</sup> expressly charged with socio-educational and publicistic tasks and obligations; that a sketch is characterized by

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62 Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1955, Vol. 31, p. 486.

...odin iz vidov povestvovatelnoi (khudozhestvennoi, nauchnoi, publitsisticheskoi) literatury, v osnove kotorogo lezhit vosproizvedeniye realnykh faktov, sobytiy, lits, uvidennykh avtorom neposredstvenno v samoi zhizni.

63 B. Kostelanets, "Traditsii boyevogo zhanra", in Puti sovetskogo ocherka, Leningrad, Sovetski Pisatel, 1958, p.3, "... boyevoi zhanr literatury..."

its "... mobility, operationalism, and documentary veracity..."<sup>64</sup>  
and "... concreteness, factualness and directness"<sup>65</sup>

(tochny adres). A sketch has been recognized as the most suitable form of fiction for presenting "... the questions of time and moment..."<sup>66</sup> through its use of belletristic and publicistic means..."<sup>67</sup> and by speaking in "... clear, human and simple language"<sup>68</sup>. This litany of the qualities expected from the sketch genre could be easily extended without adding anything strikingly new.

Most attributes of the sketch are equally applicable to other forms of the Soviet prose, and literature in general, but with a weaker emphasis and a variable degree of

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64 V. Kardin, "Geroi nashego vremeni" in Voprosy literatury, Vol. 3, no. 6, 1959, p. 7, "mobilnost, operativnost ... i dokumentalnaya dostovernost..."

65 G. Lenobl, V. Kantorovich, "Problemy ocherka", in Voprosy literatury, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1958, p. 208, "... konkretnost, fakticheskost i adresovnost".

66 M. Shcheglow, Literaturno-kriticheskiye stati, Moskva, Sovetski pisatel, 1965, p. 23, "... na zaprosy vremeni, momenta..."

67 V. Roslyakov, quoted by G. Lenobl, V. Kantorovich, in "Problemy ocherka," op.cit., p. 203, "... sredstvami belletristiki, tak i sredstvami publitsistiki..."

68 A. Shumski, Gorki i sovetski ocherk, op.cit. p.59, "... prostym i yasnym chelovecheskim yazykom".

enforcement. This persistent clamour for factual and documentary reality has aroused indignant response from some sketch writers, like V. Ovechkin, who saw the sketch being consigned to a special and inferior category of prose.

Ovechkin was particularly incensed by the arch-dogmatist Yefimov's claim that sketch-writing prohibits the use of inventiveness and creative imagination, which he had accorded the tale genre. "In a sketch", commented sarcastically Ovechkin,

...everything is done in a documentary manner;  
a simple photography, a second sort of literature.  
Here, really, there is no need for talent -- know  
yourself, stick to reality, copy nature.<sup>69</sup>

By withholding the faculty of imagination one places a sketch writer outside the pale of creative literature; the doubts about the literariness of the sketch are implicitly raised. Therefore, the question of imagination has to be settled if the sketch form is to be seriously

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69 Valentin Ovechkin, "Kolkhoznaya zhizn i literatura", in Novy Mir, Vol. 30, No. 12, 1955, p. 130. "A v ocherke vsyo dokumentalno, eto prostaya fotografiya, vtoroi sort literatury, tut, sobstvenno, talantu i delat nechego -- znai sebe, spisyvai s natury, kopirui zhizn."

considered as a true work of art. This task has been rendered difficult because of the lack of unanimity among the most prominent sketch writers. V. Polevoi, for example, maintained that his twenty years of "...journalistic and sketch-writing practice tell me that the sketch does not accept inventiveness"<sup>70</sup>; Yefim Dorosh agrees with this stand when he assures the readers in the first lines of his Derevenki dnevnik (The Village Diary) that in it they will not find a single "...line of invention..."<sup>71</sup>.

The term imagination signifies "... an act or process of forming a conscious idea, or mental image before never wholly perceived by the imaginer"<sup>72</sup>. In the light of this definition and the factual, documentary reality demanded from the sketch, it has really no right to the precincts of creative "imaginative" fiction, until a more flexible and discriminating formula is advanced.

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70 G. Lenobl, V. Kantorovich, "Problemy ocherka", op. cit., p. 206, "... gazetnoi praktiki, praktiki ocherkista, govorit mne, chto ocherk vymysla ne dopuskayet".

71 Yefim Dorosh, Derevenski dnevnik: 1954-55, Moskva, Sovetski pisatel, 1958, p.5, "... net i strochki vymysla..."

72 Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Springfield, Mass., G. & C. Merriam Co., 1966, p. 1128.

Mark Shcheglov had done it in his 1954 essay on kolkhoz prose. At first, he dismissed the unacceptability in the sketch the fore-quoted definition of imagination. On the contrary, he found it "... indispensable in the work of an artist, with the help of which he fills in (with obvious risk, of course) all "lacunae" from direct observation of 'nature' "<sup>73</sup>. A sketch writer, maintained Shcheglov, can invent people, dialogues, events provided they enhance the lucidity and truth of the subject matter. Shcheglov derived this "right" from the theory of imagination which distinguishes between the active and passive faculty of imagination, between creative and re-creative processes, assigning the latter to the art of sketch. In a sketch, he wrote, a writer "... does not create but re-creates reality..."<sup>74</sup> and this process will keep him close to earth, in touch with living people and contemporary problems. The re-creative faculty of imagination continued Shcheglov, will compel the writer to depict "... mainly real and not allegorical events and facts,

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73 Mark Shcheglov, Literaturno-kriticheskiye stati, op. cit., p. 24, "... neobkhodimuyu rabotu voobrazheniya khudozhnika, s pomoshchyu kotoroi on dopolnyayet (s izvestnym riskom, razumeietsya) vse 'pustoty', ne zapolnyonnyie pri neposredstvennom nablyudenii 'natury' "

74 Ibid., p. 22, "... ne sozdayot, no vossozdayot deistvitel'nost ..."

and direct thoughts and feelings of the author"<sup>75</sup>.

Shcheglov clearly aimed at bridging two extremes hoping to find the way out of the sketch writer's dilemma.

Shcheglov also dispensed with other inhibiting strictures especially those eschewing psychology and philosophy from the sketch writers' range of topics. Having first shown that no similar restrictions had been implemented by eminent Russian predecessors, Shcheglov stated firmly that the elimination of psychology and philosophy was "... profoundly untrue..."<sup>76</sup>, therefore not binding.

Shcheglov's re-evaluation as well as re-formulations of the key tenets of the sketch genre, perceptive as they were for those years, would not be seriously contested today. Those who followed him have taken his views and concepts for granted, diverting their attention to more specific areas and elements of the sketch genre's thematics, typology, language and craft.

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75 Ibid., p. 24, "... preimushchestvenno realnyie sobytiya, fakty i ne inoskazatelnyie, a pryamyie mysli i chuvstva avtora".

76 Ibid., p. 17, "... gluboko nevernym".

Thus the traditional sketch-journey, character-sketch and sketch of the customs have been expanded and sub-divided according to topical or literary criteria: village-sketch, war-sketch, industrial-sketch, lyrical-sketch, documentary-sketch. There are those who would like to dispense with the entire typological edifice and apply the sketch label to any form and genre of fiction which displays the spirit and techniques normally ascribed to the sketch genre from which is derived: thus sketch-proper, sketch-novel, novel in sketches, sketch-tale. Consequently, instead of various types of sketches one would have a novel, short-story or a tale falling into a very broad sketch category. Such a proposal amounts to a thinly disguised dismissal of the normative structure of fiction and, understandably, it has been found unacceptable to a majority of critics, scholars and writers. Even a critic who called for a concentration on "... aesthetic criteria helpful in studying a tale, a novel as well as a sketch"<sup>77</sup>, and who confessed a dislike

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77 V. Kantorovich, "Novoye v ocherkovoï literature" in Voprosy literatury, Vol. 2, No. 7, 1958, p. 65, "...kriteriyev khudozhestvennosti, s kotorymi sleduyet podkhodit k rasskazu, k povesti, ravno kak i k ocherku".

"... for definite formulations of traits and borderlines between the genres..."<sup>78</sup> could not support a motion doing away with conventional division of fiction. Like most students of the science of literature, he would agree to a greater generic flexibility being convinced, however, that "... sketch has its limits and principles which no one can transgress"<sup>79</sup>. What these "limits" and "principles" are exactly neither he nor any of his colleagues ventured to state save for repeating diluted ideas about sketch's realism of facts, contemporaneity and an obligation of active participation in building socialism.

One can discern two tendencies in the writings on the sketch subject which have appeared since the mid-fifties. One tendency aims at re-assessing and re-defining such traditional concepts as "exact address", style (documentary, literary and publicistic) and the area of reality falling within the sketch writer's competence; in

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78 Ibid., p. 65, "... k definitivnym opredleniyam priznakov i granits zhanrov..."

79 V. Kardin, "Geroi nashikh dnei; zametki o sovremennom ocherke", in Voprosy literatury, Vol. 3, No. 6, 1959, p. 19, "... ocherk imeet svoi granitsy, zhanrovyye zakonomernosti, beznakazanno narushat kotoryie nikomu ne dano".

this respect V.P. Roslyakov's book Sovetski poslevoyenny ocherk (Soviet post-War Sketch), 1956, is a representative illustration. The other tendency focusses on the art of sketch, and E. Zhurbina's Iskusstvo ocherka (The Art of Sketch), 1957, is the first major work in this direction. In it the critic analyses the sketch's linguistic stratum, compositional and structural diversity and peculiarities.

The studies of these two critics, and many others published during the post-1956 years, have not resulted in a comprehensive theory of the sketch genre. Too many areas have not been sufficiently explored, and too many contentious issues unresolved to provide sketch the theoretical apparatus comparable to one possessed by novel, short-story or tale. Despite voluminous but qualitatively uneven literature about the sketch genre, its definition which would meet the consensus of the majority, remains very broad and general. By and large, the sketch is recognized as "... a complex, fine and many-dimensional kind of literature having its own laws and poetics"<sup>80</sup>

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80 E. Zhurbina, Iskusstvo ocherka, Moskva, Sove\_tski Pisatel, 1957, p. 9, "... slozhny, tonki i mnogogranny vid iskusstva, imeyushchi svoi zakony, svoyu poetiku".

of which

... the iron clad law of lucid expression of its publicistic topic (...) density demands maximal proximity and mutual pervasiveness of all elements: topic, composition, sujet.<sup>81</sup>

are mandatory.

To those accustomed and committed to normative theory of fiction the question of the sketch genre is a classical example of Scylla and Charybdis; of, on the one hand, a need to provide something more than the afore-mentioned broad ramifications and discordant, competing views and concepts, on the other. The older generation of critics brought up in the climat of Zhdanov's dogmatism has attempted to preserve the semblance of order and unanimity on the fundamentals of the literary triad (ideinost, partinost, narodnost). They allowed for some broadening, however, responding to the pressure and practices of the younger generation showing rather perypherial interest in matters of restraining theorizing and manifesting a studied disregard of the traditional demarcations between the various prose genres.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125, "...zheleznomu zakonu vyrazheniya publitsisticheskoi temy (...) szhatost yego trebuet maksimalnogo sbliuzheniya i vzaimoproniknoveniya vsekh elementov temy, kompozitsii, syuzheta".

Literary theorists usually work with already established trends, perceptions, forms and techniques by enshrining them in a conceptual system. The gap that exists between them and writers is considerably wider in Soviet literature than elsewhere caused, in part, by a proliferation of fiction which defies the existing norms and cares even less for having any traditional label pinned on it. The lyrical prose of V. Soloukhin has done more "damage" to the traditionalists concept of fiction than any other kind of imaginative prose published after 1956.

## 3. The lyrical view.

Now, tell me, what are you writing?  
 I am writing a book.  
 A short-story?  
 Well, not exactly.  
 A novel?  
 No. It really cannot be called a novel.  
 Now I know; you are writing sketches.  
 Rather not...  
 Then, obviously, it must be something biographical.  
 It will really depend how one understands biography.  
 To write a biography one must tell about people one  
 met during one's lifetime. Autobiography consists  
 not from describing oneself, but from the description  
 of everything one saw and loved on earth.  
 Finally, what do you write?  
 A book.<sup>82</sup>

This unconventional beginning of V. Soloukhin's short-story Kaplya Rosy (The Dew Drop), published in 1959, structured as an exchange between a reader and the writer, shows the writer's determination to write a "book" rather than a novel, short-story or any of the established genres of fiction.

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82 Vladimir Soloukhin, Kaplya rosy, in Liricheskiye povesti i rasskazy, Moskva, Izd. Khud. Lit., 1964, p. 251:  
 Nu, a teper rasskazhi mne, chto ty seichas pishesh.  
 Ya pishu knigu.  
 Povest?  
 H... ne sovsem.  
 Roman?  
 Net. Yeyo sovershenno nelzya nazvat romanom.  
 A, ya znayu, ty opyat pishesh ocherki.  
 Vryad li ...  
 Tak, vidno, eto budet nechto avtobiograficheskoye?  
 Smotrya kak ponimat avtobiografiyu. Chtoby yeyo napisat, nuzhno rasskazat o lyudyakh, s kotorymi prishlos povstrechatsya v techeniye zhizni. Avtobiografiya sostoit ne iz opisaniya samogo sebya, a iz opisaniya vsego, chto ty videl i polyubil na zemle.  
 Tak chto zhe ty pishesh v kontse kontsov?  
 Knigu.

It will be a "book" of an undetermined generic classification; it will also be a lyrical book since it was placed in a volume entitled Liricheskiye povesti i rasskazy (Lyrical Short-Stories and Tales) containing also another longer work, Vladimirskiye prosyolki (By-roads of Vladimir District), published in 1957. The latter is the first major piece of fiction which placed Soloukhin in the forefront of the kolkhoz fiction establishing his reputation as the most promising and distinct literary talent. By-roads of Vladimir District signalled, then, a departure from the dominant narrative form treating kolkhoz theme. The purpose of this section is to study several aspects of the "book": the overall structure of its content, its intentional scheme, its lyrical elements and the quality of its lyricism.

By-roads of Vladimir District has no story to offer in the conventional sense of the term. It rather reminds one of a collection of articles, of reports, a sort of a diary offering daily account of the writer's forty-day excursion across the region of Central Russia. Some material from the same tour was used later in The Dew Drop, dedicated expressly to the writer's native village situated in the same area. The introductory, untitled chapter of

By-roads of Vladimir District contains various information, such as a brief exposition of the tentative itinerary, problems and preparations involved in any more extensive exploration of an area without guides and modern tourist amenities. But there is also an indication that the writer's account of his tramping, indeed, his very decision to visit the area has another motivation, apart from the personal liaison with the district. The region to be visited is not an ordinary region, one of these geographically undistinguishable regions of Central Russia; rather it is the ancient Vladimir-Suzdal, "... the root of Russia..."<sup>83</sup>, the cradle of "... the Moscow state which developed into an immense Russian Empire, the size of which surpassed all other states of the world"<sup>84</sup>. This may sound like a native son boasting about his native place. To correct this impression Soloukhin provides a lengthy exposition of the area's central position in Russia's

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83 Ibid., p. 12, "... koren Rossii ..."

84 Ibid., p. 12, "... moskovskoye gosudarstvo, razvernuvshe~~lesya~~ vposledstvi~~i~~ v velikuyu Rossiskuyu imperiyu protyazheniyem svoim prevzoshedshuyu vse gosudarstva mira".

history: Vladimir-Suzdal, the writer informs readers, is studded with historical sites and monuments of Russian culture. It is a region where many great patriots, military leaders, prominent artists and intellectuals were either born, lived or are buried. Vladimir-Suzdal was associated with such great names of Russian history as Alexander Nevski, Dimitri Pozharski, General Bagration, Tyutchev, many Decembrists, innumerable boyars, several tsars and Russian mythological figures. Can any other region match this rich and diversified historical texture -- this appears to be the challenging question. And another query -- how many Soviet Russians are aware of or interested in the historical significance of Vladimir-Suzdal? How many, indeed, show an appreciation of their cultural heritage?

The answer to both questions is in the negative, confesses the writer sadly. Vladimir-Suzdal is now a forgotten area, seldom mentioned in tourist literature or visited by travel-minded citizens who are ecstatic about the country's exotic north or south, but are flagrantly ignorant of and indifferent to the spiritual and cultural riches just a short distance away from Moscow. The tour's chief aim is, therefore, to correct this deplorable situation, and, at the same time, it represents a

repayment of the "moral debt" the writer owes his native land.

It is important to note at this point that what Soloukhin "loved most on earth" appears to be the "land of Rus" rather than the "land of Soviet"; the past can therefore be expected to occupy a prominent position in the writer's account without singling out of a particular historical period. This is intimated in the book's epigraph which consists of three quotations from three, widely separated epochs: it opens with a stanza from A. Tvardovski's poem, followed by an apostrophe to the land of Vladimir taken from an ancient chronicle, and concludes with an excerpt from P. Vyazemski, one of the poets in Pushkin's pleiad. The non-chronological sequence of the three quoted sources gives an indication of the structure of the book itself which can be expected to be an amalgam of various epochs of disparate philosophy and temper without regard for logic, historical dialectics and hierarchy of values.

The result of the summer tour -- descriptions, report on meetings, sites visited, historical buildings, people, things -- is structured in thirty-eight chapters each corresponding to major stop-overs lasting from one to a maximum of four days. Most chapters have one main

point of central interest in a particular area; most, too, lean heavily toward manifestation of the past whereas contemporaneity occupies a complementary, subordinate position and function.

"The Fourteenth Day" chapter is a typical specimen of the writer's composition of material and its formal mould. The chapter is of average size -- about ten pages. It begins, as most chapters do, with a sketch of the area's terrain; one half of the page of the background setting presented in a strikingly laconic and factual manner. The natural setting of the area starts off with the dominant feature, a pronounced hill "... one and half kilometers long and half a kilometer high..."<sup>85</sup>, at the base of which are strung peasant cottages with "... the white square of the church at the centre"<sup>86</sup>. Gliding over the strips of meadows the eyes reach the horizon line of hills dotted with villages, church towers and wheat fields. Above -- "... white heaps of cumulus clouds, and still higher -- the sun"<sup>87</sup>.

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85 Ibid., p. 117, "...dlinoi kilometra v poltora i vysotoi v polkilometra..."

86 Ibid., p. 117, "... belym kubikom tserkvi poseredine"

87 Ibid., p. 117, "... belyie kopny kuchevykh oblakov, a yeshcho vyshe -- solntse".

Upon entering the village the writer draws the reader's attention to a large stone house to which he returns soon after having found a place to stay overnight. This unusually large building, actually a mansion, is the focus of almost all the remaining pages of the chapter; to be exact, nine out of ten pages dwell on the manor house in the village Varvarino.

In the introductory chapter Soloukhin speaks about his laborious and thorough preparation for the tour; it is confirmed by the enormous amount of information passed on to the readers about the history of the house, its occupants, and particularly its guest, Ivan Aksakov. The manor itself had belonged to a Decembrist before it passed over to the Tuytchev's family. Since I. Aksakov married into this family, Varvarino was selected by the Russian government as a place of exile for his strongly and publicly articulated criticism of the government's acceptance of the humiliating conditions of the Berlin Congress, 1872. I. Aksakov, "... in comparison with others a genuine and strong Slavophile"<sup>88</sup>, according to Soloukhin, is the central figure around whom the writer weaves the thematic and emotional texture of the chapter.

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118, "...po sravneniyu s drugimi, posledovatel'nyy i yarym slavyanofilom".

The "Aksakov" case" is presented from several points of view with the assistance of material drawn from several sources, both of more remote and Soloukhin's own times. One is treated to documentary evidence of the angry reaction to the government's action taken against Aksakov who defended Russia's honour; here the writer quotes from letters of men like Chaikovski, Dostoevsky, Tretyakov (the founder of the famous art gallery) which they exchanged with the illustrious exile. Then Soloukhin passes on to the exile himself for whom the forced stay in Varvarino proved to be a blessing in disguise. In Varvarino's unhurried atmosphere of the rural life, among truly Russian people, Aksakov found relaxation and inspiration for poetry writing in which he immortalized the village as an embodiment of

The toiling Rus' sacred labours...  
A wonderful world of the native land,  
How full you are of truth and wisdom.<sup>89</sup>

Thanks to Aksakov's detention Varvarino was also immortalized on canvas by one of Russia's greatest painters, Repin. Indeed, Repin's sketch helped Soloukhin to reconstruct the village's

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89 Ibid., p. 121.  
Rabochei Rusi trud svyatoi ...  
O chudny mir zemli rodnoi,  
Kak polon pravdy ty svyatoi.

bustling economy of which not a trace remains. Only the oldest citizens and certain traditions attest to its more glorious days.

No doubt Aksakov lifted Varvarino from obscurity. How did the village repay him? The present day Varvarinians, tells the writer, showed a disgraceful ignorance of Aksakov's role in extolling the village's virtues and beauty. The mansion was turned into a dilapidated club and housing quarters; the club was given a nondescript name. When visiting Sofia, recalls Soloukhin, he stumbled on the street bearing Aksakov's name which shows how "... Bulgarians (...) immortalized the memory of their Russian friend and defender (...) Why not name (the club) after him ..."90 if a club it must be, mused the disillusioned visitor distracted by the chatter of an elderly woman complaining about the village's problems. Both, the chatter of the old woman and Soloukhin's reflections are suddenly interrupted by unusually vivacious singing of women returning from the field -- the unusual vivacity of the war-widows' singing was helped by vodka, the city-tourist is informed by his

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90 Ibid., p. 125, "... bolgary (...) uvekovechili pamyat svoego russkogo druga i zastupnika (...) Pochemu by im ne nazvat ..."

host. "If you see anything like this, you do not need any placards agitating against war. Early next morning we left Varvarino"<sup>91</sup>; with this terse statement end the visit to Varvarino and the "Fourteenth Day" chapter.

In the above chapter Imperial Russia overshadows the contemporary element. In Soloukhin's "book" there are chapters dealing with even more remote epochs of Russian history, but only a few where the present is given a more prominent place. Thus, the allusion made in the book's epigraph is fully borne out: the past is not only much in evidence but it constitutes the primary dynamic element of the present. True, the kolkhoz world of today has no landowners and titled aristocracy, but the material and spiritual culture of the pre-Revolution peasant society is the matrix of the Soviet village culture.

Soloukhin shows this relationship in several ways, one of them is the attention given to the simple folk of the older generation of the villagers. Although during

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 126, "Uvidish takoye, i ne nuzhno nikakikh plakatov, agitiruyushchikh protiv voiny. Na drugoi den na rassvete my ushli iz Varvarina".

the tour he met people representing a cross-section of the region's population -- young and middle-aged, field and office workers, managers and kolkhoz chairmen, educated and illiterate -- nevertheless, he treats those who remember the olden days with special care, respect and obvious love. These "survivals" of the pre-Revolution era are presented as the custodians of disappearing crafts, skills, mores and memories. They are unassuming people, living frequently on the periphery of the "modern" village, often forgotten and ignored by the socialistic society. Yet, in all instances they are stronger spiritually and morally than other and younger members of the community. In the "Thirty-second Day", for example, Soloukhin stays overnight with an old religious couple, the only ones who refused money for shelter. Moreover, they are possibly the only sober people in the entire village on that particular evening when everyone else is drunk while celebrating the church holiday of the famous Vladimir Mother of God. Another remarkable "survival" in the "Twelfth Day" chapter is a former butler of the princely household who proudly shows to the interested party a memento of his youth. In the "Thirty-fifth Day" Soloukhin visits the artel of the ikon-painters who perpetuate this ancient art that made Vladimir famous, this notwithstanding a lack of appreciation and support,

and the crass commercialism of their city-based superiors. There are many more "survivals" whose fate and plight is depicted in By-roads of Vladimir District.

An entirely different treatment is given to the "modern" layer of the society -- an assortment of "bosses", specialists and youth who do not hide their disrespect, annoyance with and ignorance of the past and its custodians. Indirectly Soloukhin attacks various phenomena and manifestations of shallow, bureaucratic and downright stupid approach to and the understanding of the cultural heritage. Repeatedly, directly and by implication, Soloukhin exposes the many threads in the texture of today's Vladimir-Suzdal of which the Soviet world is but one component, and a minor one, too.

The writer shows the neglect, poverty, mismanagement and stagnation of the area, but his primary concern is this Vladimir-Suzdal which can be still seen in its innumerable monuments -- churches, monasteries, mansions, cemeteries, historical sites -- all in the ambiance of an unchanging nature. Soloukhin constantly stumbles upon examples of shameful neglect of the cultural heritage and genius of the Russian people. Time after time he utters an exasperated "why?". What is really behind this unconcern about one's own past and this premeditated erasing of its traces,

as in the case of wholesale and unjustified changing of the names of villages? As Soloukhin asks in the "Twelfth Day" chapter: do we really care less about our national past than other Europeans who go to great lengths and expense in preserving historical monuments?

The relics of the past and its cultural manifestations should and must be preserved, argues the writer implicitly, but not out of academic curiosity and not as museum pieces. "If these outward signs of the ancient world remained and continue to exist, it means that they are also of spiritual value, imbedded in the people's souls, in their conscience"<sup>92</sup>. The past therefore should be cultivated because it is alive, because it is an organic element of the present as well as its foundation.

Outwardly, Soloukhin sets out to pay a moral debt to his native land by describing what he "saw and loved best on earth" which now coincides with the most destitute sector of the Soviet population. The result of this "modest goal" is a powerful plea on behalf of the post-Stalin village. In this, however, there is nothing new. Others had pleaded for an improvement in the lot of the

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109, "No yesli ostalis, prodolzhayut zhit primety starogo mira vneshniye, znachit, dolzhny byt i vnutrenniye, v dushakh lyudei, v ikh soznanii ..."

kolkhoz people and in much stronger terms, tone and in more precisely formulated demands. Soloukhin did not offer a programme of reforms in the manner of his contemporaries for he was not interested in immediate practical goals and temporary measures. Instead, he proposed a complete re-assessment of attitudes toward the past and its culture which would lead to a reconciliation of the various historical epochs and culminate in a new, organic and dynamic synthesis. Only on this newly elaborated base one can, Soloukhin seems saying, build a brighter and happier communist society.

Ever since the promulgation of Socialistic Realism much of the pre-Revolution past has been reinstated. The war years and Krushchev's de-Stalinization accelerated the process. Still many areas, groups, individuals and movements has been either left out or incorporated conditionally into the official manuals of history. What Solouskhin proposes is almost a non-selective and unqualified acceptance of the pre-Revolution era as a viable manifestation of the national genius and culture. As for Boris Pilnyak, so for Soloukhin, the Soviet period appears as a continuation, as another phase in the development of the Russian culture which he identifies with the culture of the village and not of the city. This brings him close to the

ideas and beliefs of the Slavophiles, populists and Social Revolutionaries.

However, it is not the content of Soloukhin's proposal that earned his By-roads of Vladimir District a popularity among the readers, a critical accolade and many followers, but the tone, tenor and, especially, the form of his presentation of his proposals with respect to the village world and Soviet-Russia culture. It may be that it would have been impossible to speak about the past with Soloukhin's reverence and piety within the confines of the conventional novelistic form universally employed in the fiction of the immediate post-Stalin years. Even if it were, there are grounds to believe that an epic "story" about the need for the reconciliation of the two Russias would not receive a special attention from readers weary of proclamatory reformism. Soloukhin allowed the readers' intellect to rest after several years of exhortation; instead, he struck at his sensitivities. He brought into play the reader's emotions, feelings and imagination. Soloukhin did not tell him yet another "realistic" story according to the canons of ruling literary conventions of what is going on in his beloved native region; instead, he confronted him with a "realism" of his own making -- a lyrical realism.

Although recognized as a distinct form, lyrical fiction has no comprehensive normative theory and method which would facilitate defining and measuring all the qualities and characteristics setting it apart from non-lyrical fiction. The term lyrical applied to fiction implies the presence of qualities associated with poetry lyrical poetry, i.e., the predominance of feelings, emotions and thoughts originating in the poet's self and articulated in images. It would appear that only rhythm is lacking to qualify a work of fiction as poetry. What then are the main criteria which determine the distinctiveness of lyrical fiction without becoming poetry, or an ordinary piece of fiction with lyrical elements?

Ralph Freedman, in his detailed and instructive study of nature and forms of lyrical fiction based on several representatives of the European twentieth century prose -- A. Gide, H. Hesse, V. Woolf -- proposes one fundamental quality which distinguishes lyrical from non-lyrical fiction. Lyrical fiction, he writes, must objectify "... not man and times, but the experiences and themes for which men and events have been used"<sup>93</sup> by the writer.

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<sup>93</sup> Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 2.

From this pre-requisite emerge several derivative qualities of which the lyrical "I" and lyrical progression are the most important ones.

A non-lyrical fiction writer has been preoccupied with telling a story about "man and his time" understanding it as the "real reality" mirroring the outward world as the mimesis within a temporal framework. The conventional fiction theory is founded on two key concepts: Aristotelian mimesis and Newtonian concept of time recognized as the principal forces enabling the reproduction of reality in logical causal sequence taking a form of a forward-moving progression shaped into the plot line of action.

A writer of lyrical fiction does not subscribe to the type of reality conditioned by Aristotle and Newton. This, however, does not mean that he ignores "man and his times" -- the outward world; he could not do it no matter how philosophical and eclectic his mind and work may be. A lyrical writer will employ "man and his times" for different purposes and he will exteriorize it in a different manner, claiming it to be reality as well.

The primary function of the outward world in the lyrical design is to stimulate, to arouse experiences, apart from serving as material from which the writer fashions his reality. The phenomena and manifestations of

the outward world have no separate existence in a lyrical piece of fiction; instead, they are integrated with the writer's innerself -- feelings, emotions, thoughts -- to be transmuted in an inimitable vision of reality objectified by the lyrical "I" of a writer. This compound world is verbalized in a string of images arranged according to the writer's choice and not according to causation, logic, dialectics and whatever else conditions the rationalized poetics of the epic tradition. This "illogical" and "formless" exteriorization of lyrical reality is known as lyrical progression, as opposed to the narrative progression of the conventional novelistic tradition.

In conclusion, the essential difference between two modes of fiction -- lyrical and non-lyrical -- lies in different concepts of reality, structured in different types of progression which are exteriorized through different processes of objectivization.

Apart from the pre-requisites of the two key concepts, a lyrical writer is freer than his epic counterpart in employing diverse methods, techniques and devices. He can borrow from the workshops of conventional fiction, drama and poetry. A release from obligatory mimesis and Newtonian time frees him from the restraints of logic,

chronology and the popular notion of reality. Consequently, a lyrical writer can telescope or juxtapose past, future, present; he can mingle moods, emotions, facts and fantasy in the combinations and ratios of his choice, provided the world that emerges is objectified by the lyrical "I" in the form of lyrical progression.

The lyrical design of By-roads of Vladimir District is already implied in the choice of diary-reportage-journey form as the confining pattern of the book. Additional freedom in the arrangement of the material was obtained by dividing the work into thirty-eight chapters which have no other purpose apart from that of breaking up the book into smaller segments. Even the titling of the chapters indicating the numerical sequence of the day during which a particular event takes place is of no structural consequence; one can, if one wishes, read the book with any sequence of chapters without losing one iota of meaning or enjoyment. Clearly, the story of the summer tour of Vladimir-Suzdal is not a "story" in the conventional sense of the term.

Each chapter, nevertheless, is an autonomous unit and an organic whole having its own independent existence. The self-sustained existence is not synonymous however

with the absence of elements, or qualities which unify By-roads of Vladimir District; this aspect of the work will become evident after studying the composition of a sample chapter.

The differences between various chapters are noted in their thematic texture and internal disposition of their ingredients. Thus the ratio relationship between nature, situations, things and characters do vary somewhat from chapter to chapter although none is exclusively concentrated on a single element. There is, therefore, a consistent balance maintained between a variety of components in the individual chapters which gives them, and the entire work, an appearance of an even flow -- of "flatness". Consequently, By-roads of Vladimir District does not have a triangular structure having its peak (climax) and two slopes -- the ascending and descending.

At first glance, the composition of a chapter -- any chapter -- gives an impression of lack of composition, of a disorderly and chaotic throwing into a cauldron of various and disparate ingredients without evident effort on the part of the chef to "stir his stew". Of course, this effect is obtained through the strategy of the writer: there is a definite structural pattern, and Soloukhin's feigned disengagement plays a key role in the lyrical

design of his work and its intentional goal.

The structural analogy of the book is a panorama where each frame has a different subject yet constitutes an organic part of the whole. A chapter itself resembles a single frame made up of independent canvasses, insets and sketches, yet no antithetical but supporting each other. To illustrate this structural trait of Soloukhin's technique one can refer once again to the previously discussed chapter. Here, as elsewhere, the writer employs several methods: dramatic, lyrical, documentary and purely narrative, all serving to spotlight the "Aksakov case" from different angles of viewing and supported by different sources. However it is not an exposition of the subjects following a discernible logic and causal chronology arranged in a beginning-middle-end pattern of time and argument. The time categories, supporting evidence and emotional moods are put together in an seemingly haphazard manner. The writer's detachment is achieved through the use of the quoted documentary sources and "acted-out" episodes; there is a minimal editorial comment.

The progressive flow of time is not felt because of abrupt shifts from the past to contemporaneity, or the projection, superimposition of a past event on Soloukhin's own times. This stratagem achieves a feeling of simultaneity

and organicity between events and people which took place and lived one hundred years apart. This unity is strengthened by the material evidence of Aksakov's stay in Varvarino which is preserved in painting, poetry and the mansion itself. Furthermore, there are certain traditions still alive in the village although the majority of the present day inhabitants are not aware of their origin.

Through an "illogical" sequence of episodes, quotations interspersed with brief descriptions Soloukhin effectively telescopes past and present into one temporal situation -- the present. The Newtonian time flow is stopped and the reader relives the "Aksakov case" in the manner of a viewer experiencing a painting or a sculpture.

The feeling that arouses after being exposed to the chapter has a quality of factuality and concreteness which is a composite effect of the writer's techniques and devices. The use of usually brief dramatically-rendered episodes, where a native character does most of the talking, is one example of Soloukhin's art enhancing the matter-of-factness of the book. Another, is the created impression of the writer's detachment from the subject, thus forestalling any possible accusation of partiality and sentimentality natural in a man talking about his native place and kin.

With the exception of purely lyrical and highly evocative passages, Soloukhin, the narrator, acts as an affable and knowledgeable guide gently steering his reader along the road of "re-discovery" of the land. The authorial directing takes the form of very brief summaries, comments and descriptions executed in extremely laconic manner. "Take the hill (...) bend it in the shape of a horseshoe..."<sup>94</sup>; "I shall not insist..."<sup>95</sup>; "Here I should like to go ahead and tell you..."<sup>96</sup>; "To end the story I should like to remind you..."<sup>97</sup> -- these are the examples of direct, unobstrusive guidance taken from the "Thirteenth Day" chapter. This device establishes a climate of intimacy and cordiality and, at the same time, diminishes the need for impersonal, third-person point-of-view authorial intrusions. Consequently, the descriptive-narrative passages originating from the authorial omniscience are few and inconspicuous; where used, they are submerged by the preceding or subsequent portions, or both, which are done in entirely different technique and imbued with a different mood and tone.

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94, 95, 96, 97 *Ibid.*, pp. 117-125, "Vozmite kholm (...) Sognite yego v podkovu..."; "Ya ne budu utverzhdat..."; "Zdes ya dolzhen zabezhat vperyod i rasskazat ..."; "Chtoby konchit s istoriyei, dolzhen vspomnit...".

Nature in By-roads of Vladimir District is also made to contribute to the concreteness of Soloukhin's lyrical realism. Soloukhin disappoints those who are accustomed to see a lyricist giving a free rein to his imagination and fancy in constructing images of nature in picturesque, metaphorical, or, in a word, "poetic" language. In this sense, there is nothing "poetic" in Soloukhin's nature as exemplified by these quotations:

Young oaks stood on the hill (...). Reaching the horizon stretched the forests, black at the forefront, bluish further on and misty there where the eyes' vision ends. Here and there on the backdrop of the forest's darkness the smoky patches of forest fires.<sup>98</sup>

I woke up as the result of a strong impact and looked through the porthole. Outside was night. Cold air gripped the deck. A black ship stood in the middle of black water. On the black shore, faintly outlined against the black sky were piles and stacks of boards, logs and firewood. The entire shore -- to the left and to the right -- resembled a huge warehouse. Black people wandered about.<sup>99</sup>

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98 Ibid., p. 63.

Dubki stoyat na gore. (...) Do gorizonta tyanulis lesa, chornyye na perednem plane, siniye vdali i zatumanyonnyie tam, gde obryvayetsya glaz.koye- gde raspolzlis po lesnoi chernote belesyie dymnyie pyatna lesnykh pozharov.

99 Ibid., p. 235.

Ya prosnulsya ot silnogo tolchka i posmotrel v illyuminator. Za nim byla noch. Na palube okhvatilo kholodom. Chorny parokhod stoyal posredi chornoi vody. Na chornom beregu grudami i shtabelyami, slabo prorisovyvalis na fone chornogo neba, lezhali doski, bryovna, drova. Ves bereg -- vpravo i vlevo -- predstavlyal odin bolshoi sklad. Brodili chornyye lyudi.

The syntactical pattern of these quotations consists of expository sentences arranged in staccato rhythm, especially in the river port picture. The lexical material is made up of concrete, non-synonymous verbs, nouns and adjectives. There is practically no truly "poetic" trope, and those technically falling into this category -- "young oaks stood" -- have long since lost their metaphorical quality and have become part of everyday language. The colours of Soloukhin's palette are of the basic variety: gold, blue, black. Thus, the verbal and syntactical patterns and the colour range condense and emphasize the sense of concreteness of Soloukhin's lyricism.

The latter quality is re-inforced by the writer's technique of viewing. It seems that Soloukhin's optical apparatus is attuned only to simple planes and surfaces, angular forms and the main patches of colour. There are no colour nuances, no gradual transition from one form to another. Most successful and evocative is the one-dimensional plane of vision obtained by the scanning of the port-scene through a porthole -- a good example of the horizontal flattening of space and consequent perspectiveless canvas. The port scene attests to Soloukhin's striving for simplicity of colour and forms which tend to

render things as they are and not as they might appear in the poet's imagination.

Purely lyrical passages, that is, lyrical in a conventional sense, are interspersed throughout all chapters chiefly as brief, strongly rhetorical, rhetorico-reflexive and reflexive utterances, exclamations, sardonic off-sides and comments on things, people, events and situations encountered during the excursion. These laconic passages, rarely several-sentence paragraphs, condense the subject to which they refer. The already quoted concluding remark with regard to the Varvarinians' ingratitude and the needlessness of anti-war propaganda among those who lived through the last war, is an example of Soloukhin's restrained lyrical intervention. There are other examples, though, more emotionally charged, at times amounting to poetic invocations inspired by the site of ancient battlefield or monuments. A visit to the site of a bloody struggle between the warring Ruriks reminds the writer of Ruslan's exclamation "Oh, field, field, who sowed thee with dead bones" followed by the writer's own reflection on the fratricidal war: "The Russian land here soaked up streams of Russian blood; only Russian, and no other"<sup>100</sup>.

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100 *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114, "O pole, pole, kto tebya useyal myortvymi kostyami" --"Russkaya zemlya vpitala zdes potoki russkoi krovi. Tolko russkoi, a nikakoi drugoi".

Does Soloukhin's By-roads of Vladimir District comply with the principal requirements distinguishing lyrical fiction from non-lyrical, i.e., lyrical objectivity exteriorized through the lyrical "I" and in the form of lyrical progression? The answer is in the affirmative.

There is no rational and temporal ordering of the "story" of the Vladimir-Suzdal region; instead, a number of large panoramic pictures composed of a multiplicity of disparate ingredients, techniques and moods projected through the prism of the lyrical "I". As a catalizer which transforms these heterogenous elements and techniques into a homogenous whole Soloukhin employs the authorial reflections placed at the very end of a particular event, issue or situation. The function of these lyrical utterances cannot be over-emphasized; without them a chapter would leave the reader unmoved, perhaps even puzzled as to the raison d'être of the work itself. Without these closing lyrical points By-roads of Vladimir District could hardly be labelled as a lyrical fiction. Soloukhin's closing reflection acts as a flash which in an instance fuses all the preceding material into a picture striking the reader's sensibility with a single emotion.

To take the "Aksakov case" as an example; the writer's pointed remarks about the lack of recognition of Aksakov's stay in Varvarino transform the historical account into an awareness that something is basically wrong with the society that forgets its defenders. Immediately the reader will ask what Soloukhin wants him to ask: does Aksakov really deserve his present obscurity? Of course, the content of the chapter is organized in such a way that the treatment accorded Aksakov by the government and Varvarinians ignorance appear as unfair and that some restitution should be made.

It should be stressed that the effectiveness of this device lies in its unexpectedness and the writer's feigned detachment in presenting supposedly day-by-day account of his journey. There are also the means giving Soloukhin's lyrical reality that particular quality of concreteness and factuality which distinguish his fiction and make him an innovator in the realm of the kolkhoz prose.

Soloukhin's lyrical panorama of Vladimir-Suzdal world is very much earth-bound; it is a reality of "being" rather than of "becoming", of an almost existentialist order. It is not suggested that the writer professes the existentialist philosophy; it is suggested, though, that

his realism is largely denuded of, what Robbe-Grillet called, "... old myths and depth"<sup>101</sup>. Solouhkin's world is markedly bare of "big words", profundities of all sorts and loftiness, save, of course, his demand for a synthesis of both Russias.

The denudation of By-roads of Vladimir-Suzdal of "depths" was accomplished with the process of "flattening out" of pictorial plane, of climaxes and, to a lesser degree, of values. With regard to the flattening out of the pictorial plane; the picture quoted of the port scene at night is a classical example of a depth-less, perspectiveless manner of painting. Similar, although less pronounced flattening out is noted in the other settings showing little effort, on the part of the writer, to arrange various elements in the conventional three-dimensional viewing. Soloukhin's settings frequently remind one of tourist guide booklet rather than the work of an inspired artist-lyricist.

The flattening out of the climaxes is enhanced by the lyrical form which rejects mimesis and Newtonian

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<sup>101</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction, New York, Grove Press, 1965, p. 49.

time, on the one hand, and Soloukhin's determination to stay clear of climatic emotions, on the other. The lyrical reflections which serve as catalyzers occupy an anti-climatic position in the book's design.

The absence of the climaxes tends to the flattening out of the values. If this process is carried out to the extremes, a work of art will be shorn of Absolutes, Ideas and, consequently, of a hierarchical scheme of values; there will be no values but, rather, a display of things, people, thoughts and feelings as they are, as they present themselves to the writer's senses. Soloukhin, though, is a Party member in good standing and a good Russian committed to the moralistic concept of literature. The historical and cultural synthesis he proposes in By-roads of Vladimir District is the book's Absolute -- the principal Value. Beyond this, however, it would be difficult to establish a firm hierarchy of values associated with various elements of a particular chapter or canvas. How would one, for example, draw up a scale of values for the ingredients contained in the "Aksakov case"? Is Aksakov's poetry higher on the ladder than excerpts from old letters, or ancient bridges and mill, or Varvarino's panorama? The various pieces of the chapter-frame have rather equal relevance and importance, with the

exception of the anti-climatic lyrical reflection.

The "Twenty-fourth Day" chapter contains a sketch relating Soloukhin's plodding, one rainy afternoon, through a muddy rural road. Although tired and sodden, he notices the glimpses of a more remote horizon, blue skies, patches of forests and the greenness of the step. At the same moment he is made aware of a less pleasant and closer reality of "... the muddy road and my own feet trying to overcome this particular portion of the road"<sup>103</sup>. Two worlds -- the more alluring and remote vistas, and the more immediate microcosm -- claim the writer's attention. Thus, concludes Soloukhin, "... we kept on going shuttling from one world to another"<sup>104</sup>. The image is an allegory of the writer's perception of the native region which recognizes the existence of two worlds, one of the past and another of the present. Neither of them can be disregarded, conveniently disposed of or left behind "... since it moves together with us"<sup>105</sup>. The shuttling from one world to another also expresses the basic technique

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 181, "... gryaznoi dorogi i sobstvennykh nog, staravshikhsya preodolet etot uchastok"

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 181, "... my shli, perekidyvayas iz odnogo mira v drugoi".

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 181, "... ibo on dvigalsya vmeste s nami."

of composition of lyrical panorama of Vladimir-Suzdal. The perceptual and **compositional** switching from one subject to another, from one mood to another, one world to another enables Soloukhin to create a vision of the organic unity of the Russian culture irrespective of the reigning ideologies and socio-economic systems.

The organicity of culture is Soloukhin's thesis, the book's leitmotif and its "single meaningful structure" encompassing "... complex of emotions and ideas that lies at the core of the work."<sup>106</sup> This "complex of emotions and ideas" serves also as a substance which unifies chapter-frames, canvas and fragments into a homogenous entity and permeates the texture of By-roads of Vladimir Suzdal. Furthermore, Soloukhin's choice of the lyrical form assured a fuller exploitation of the potentialities of this "complex of emotions and ideas" which, in 1957, marked a totally new approach to the kolkhoz question.

Ten years separate Abramov's The New Life from Ovechkin's District Workdays and Tendryakov's The Tight Knot. Within this span of time the art of prose-writing had achieved a substantial and meaningful evolution from

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106 Quoted on page 119.

the epic model of narrative, appropriately adapted to the prerequisites of Socialistic Realism, to a new model combining the old and the new. Ovechkin's and Tendryakov's works could be easily fitted into any preceding Soviet period of literature with relatively minor thematic and tonal changes. Both writers assign a dominating position to authorial omniscience; their fictional world is logical, symmetrically constructed and adheres to the concepts of mimesis and time chronology. The plot structure, character building, background, point-of-view and other devices and techniques belong essentially to the nineteenth-century prose workshop. The novelistic art of these two prominent writers represents the reigning literary convention in the kolkhoz as well as non-kolkhoz fiction published during the fifties.

In The New Life, the key concepts of the epic narrative model -- mimesis and Newtonian time -- are considerably blurred. The drama-like construction deforms the linearity of the plot, diminishes the central role of the protagonists and background, and places the author away from the centre of the stage. The world in The New Life consists of highly compressed issues, topics, people, things and events arranged without a strict hierarchical system. Abramov's seemingly unselective, concrete and quasi documentary

reality concerns itself with the everyday existence of an ordinary Soviet villager and an ordinary kolkhoz chairman. The overall composition tends toward a one-dimensional, rather than the two-dimensional panorama noted in the works of Tendryakov. The denouement, for example, tends to be less emphatic and reassuring than in the other two selections in the sampling.

If Abramov's work shows a slight departure from the artistic tradition, Soloukhin's lyrical vision of the contemporary village stands already in opposition to the art of Ovechkhin and Tendryakov. The process of "flattening" of the triangular epic composition is more advanced, the lyrical realism more concrete and factual and the mixing of styles, techniques, devices and tone -- to name a few traits -- is even more "irreverent" with respect to the reigning tradition.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Two major aspects of Russian and Soviet-Russian prose dealing with the peasant world has been studied in this thesis and, in part, analyzed. During the period encompassed here Russia underwent a most thorough transformation in all the principal domains of the life of a nation: the feudal agrarian system was followed by a free economy and then replaced by collectivized farming; Russian history was marked by several upheavals; the agricultural state became one of the world's industrial giants; and the social extraction of those who wrote about peasants changed from that of a land-owning nobility through classless intelligentsia to the Soviet-reared generations. Yet, despite these thorough changes, the emotions and minds of the writers have been energized and shaped by basically the same set of views and concepts which characterize the Myth of the Soil.

The Myth of the Soil, as the term itself indicates, is not a rational theory rather, it is a compendium of beliefs in the special, almost immutable and mystical qualities of a society which has evolved its culture through an intimate communion with land, nature and agricultural labour. Of course, any group of men engaged in common

economic activities within a relatively stable environment will develop a distinct culture. The peasant society, however, has been granted a special status, while other social groups have not.

In literature, whether the vision of the world of peasant takes a form of an idyll, of a romantic "colourful peasant", or presents a realistic and naturalistic raw "slice of life", one always feels an aura of mystification and reverence accorded to rural culture. This treatment of the village and peasant is perhaps an expression of a non-peasant's nostalgia and longing for mankind's primitive state, a yearning to return to a "natural" mode of life, to Mother-Earth-the-Provider and to the allegedly more purifying labour on the land. The village, land and nature seem to act as an antidote to the urban civilization and its ant-hill society.

Each nation has its peasant stream of literature conditioned by national traits and historical circumstances. Some of the masterpieces of European fiction of the last hundred years depict the vanishing peasant culture: Knut Hamsun's The Growth of Earth, E. Zola's La Terre, W. Reymont's Peasants. However, no other literature has given as much space, energy and efforts to the peasant culture as has the Russian and Soviet-Russian literature.

Two chapters in this thesis devoted to the study of the development of the peasant theme show a strong persistency of the core elements of the Myth under different socio-economic and political systems. It is evident that the Revolution and the first decade of the Soviet state intensified rather than weakened the traditional conceptions of peasantry developed by the Slavophiles and populists. After about one quarter of a century of enforced proletarianization these basic views and beliefs about the Russian peasant have again surfaced. Like fiction before 1934, post-Stalin prose continues, in the main, to depict the village leading its own separate existence dominated by the forces of tradition and nature. The peasant world emerging from this fiction is a community and a family which submerge the individual. Although toned down, the traditional features attributed to the peasant remain: pan-biologism, anti-urbanism, strong attachment to land and a responsiveness to primordial passions rather than reason.

Of these main traits, the strongest reappearance has been made by the ghetto existence of the village which indicates that the contemporary village is still estranged and alienated from society at large. The kolkhoz

village is an organic cultural body without meaningful relations with the rest of the population. There is no significant amount of the kolkhoz fiction showing the career of the village man or woman surmounting the walls of the ghetto. Those who leave the village burn their bridges behind them. Those who go back are doing it either after a prolonged inner struggle (Igor in After the Wedding), or show an affinity with the idealistic youth of the "going to people" movement in the 1870's -- S. Antonov's protagonist in The Torn Rubl fits into this category.

The retention of the fundamental notions originating in the Myth of the Soil did not impede the writers of the post-Stalin era from giving a much more diversified panorama of the kolkhoz world expressing varying attitudes. Basically, though, the perceptions and attitudes of all the writers fall into two groups: the one, espousing concepts and attitudes similar to those of the populists and the Slavophiles; the other, looking at the kolkhoz as an object of socio-economic reforms without idealistic motivations. Soloukhin and Tendryakov represent the first group; Ovechkin and, especially, Abramov, the second one.

A broadened topical and attitudinal range of the kolkhoz theme could not have been achieved without changes in the writers' literary workshop. Indeed, the most

meaningfull and lasting achievements have been made in the realm of the art of writing -- the "how" of fiction and not the "what". For one, the "byt" technique which had reigned supreme before 1934 did not re-appear after 1953. The "byt", one might recall, had a brief spell of revival between 1944 and 1946. One can conclude that, having failed to return during the "thaw", the "byt" lost its appeal and artistic usefulness for the Soviet-reared generation of writers.

Looking at the entire post-Stalin period -- the kolkhoz fiction presents a yet unmatched formal and technical variety. No sketches and tales only for the peasant society, as in the days of Gleb Uspenski; the village world had been well represented by all genres of fiction. The dominance of sketches during the early post-Stalin period characterized the entire Soviet fiction. After the 1956 stabilization of the country under Khrushchev, the kolkhoz fiction's artistic diversity began to flourish. From then until today the life of the village can be gleaned from conventionally and non-conventionally written works; from fiction permeated with traditional lofty moralism or with Chekhovian mood, or satirical tone; from epic panoramas to psychological explorations. The fiction about peasantry published after the death of Stalin is no longer grey, monotonous populist fare, but an aesthetically pleasing

variety of styles and techniques. This most important achievement can be credited to the young generation of writers.

Another outstanding feature of the post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction is in the area of personalities. The village world ceased to be a monopoly of writers of genuine peasant extraction and upbringing. About peasants wrote men and women of all cultural origins, most having an urban background.

Furthermore, among those who contributed to the post-1953 kolkhoz fiction are some of the best talents of contemporary Soviet literature. One remembers that best prose works of Russian and early Soviet-Russian fiction were few in number; and not many of the peasant writers before 1934 rose above the level of mediocrity.

The afore-mentioned developments and phenomena of post-1953 kolkhoz fiction permit one to conclude that the literary vision of the village lost its previous formal and technical distinctiveness, preserving, however, the essential of the Myth of the Soil. The fiction about peasants-kolkhozniks is now in the mainstream of Soviet fiction by virtue of identical formal, technical and attitudinal variety and similar directions of evolution. The prose craftsmanship of kolkhoz fiction finally divested itself of uniformity and a conservative stamp. The kolkhoz writers are in the forefront of Soviet innovators

challenging the staid poetics of fiction.

One particular trend noted in the lyrical "book" of Soloukhin and Abramov's The New Life is the withdrawal of the omniscient writer and his substitution by a more detached narrator. These two works are not an exception to the rule, but an indication of a growing tendency among the young writers who seem willing to give up at least some of their traditional but onerous role of overt moralist and interpreter of the official views and policies. In doing this, the Soviet generation of writers is moving away from the concept of realism forged by their Soviet and Russian predecessors enshrined in the doctrine of Socialist Realism. A young writer does not, as did his teachers, take "... a stable and hierarchical society absolutely for granted ..." in a belief that his works "... shared the views of what is significant in human experiences ...".<sup>1</sup> The moralistic realism of the fathers' generation has been losing ground among the sons whose works are more in tune with an age of technology, space flights, atom bomb, and a world of confusion, fear

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<sup>1</sup> David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 3. The quoted reference is made in the context of a discussion of Jane Austen's fiction.

and a disintegrating traditional code of values and social patterns. After one quarter of a century of immobility the Soviet writers have begun to move in the direction of the world fiction at a pace permitted by their traditional social commitment and the Party controllers of art.

The emerging new realism exemplified in the works of Soloukhin and Abramov is a flat, rather than "profound", world of highly condensed organic and inorganic dimensions of reality based on facts, concrete things and people. Soloukhin's journey and Abramov's tour is less of a Stendhalian "mirror driving along the highway of life" and more of a document of the writers' consciousness.

This metamorphosis of realism did not pass unnoticed and was explained by a contemporary critic as a return to "... profound, concrete, "factual" presentation of the realistic flow of life"<sup>2</sup>. But, in the same breath he fulminates against the Soviet taboo--formalism, as if wishing to forestall any move toward crediting the old enemy with this new realism. However, it is not the formalism of the Soviet twenties that the critic had in mind,

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2 M. Kuznetsov, *Sovetski roman*, Moskva, Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963, p. 279". . glubokomu, konkretnomu, "delovomu" izobrazheniyu realnogo khoda zhizni".

but its latest and even more perverse manifestation, "... the rachitic child of bourgeois formalism ..." <sup>3</sup> -- the French New Novel. The reader is then assured that "Modernism and formalism had suffered a shattering defeat in attempts to transplant these bourgeois abnormalities on Soviet soil." <sup>4</sup>

The anti-formalism campaign is beyond the scope of this thesis. The fact is that the best post-Stalin fiction has been made possible because of the writers' willingness to use differently the old tools of their craft and to add a few new ones. Difficulties arose when the young writers borrowed indiscriminately and used techniques and devices as they pleased, provided it suited their artistic purpose. This irreverence led to polarization between the conservative and progressive elements which undermines the normative theory of genres and its ideological foundations.

The real victim of the warfare between the partisans of two concepts of reality is the novel. One reason

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3 Ibid., p. 259, "... rakhitichnoye ditya burzhuaznogo formalizma ..."

4 Ibid., p. 259, "Modernizm i formalizm poterpeli sokrushitel'noye porazheniye pri popytkakh peresadit eti burzhuaznyie porozhdeniya na sovetskuyu pochvu".

reason for omitting it from the analysis carried out in the last chapter was the novel's overwhelming conventionality, traditionalism and lack of creative vigour seen in the other genres -- the short forms of fiction, in general. The novel recognized long ago as a nadir of the writer's career, has been studiously attacked by many a young who loudly proclaim that the future of fiction lies in "... short stories of ten to twelve folios and novels written in strongly-controlled language".<sup>5</sup> The short forms of fiction and "slim" novels are considered by their partisans most suitable for "... annotating true details of life, events and the 'atmosphere' of the epoch..."<sup>6</sup>

Even those who have never given up a hope of seeing new Tolstoys and Sholokhovs acknowledge the "... dominance of short novels, tale and sketches of the fifties over novels in these years"<sup>7</sup>. The sixties brought an increased production of novels, but, as one critic observed sadly, there

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5 Yuri Bondarev, "O nastroyenii, syuzhete i yazyke", in Voprosy literatury, Vol. 4, No. 11, 1959, p. 83, "... korotkikh, strogikh po yazyku romanov i povestei razmerom 10-12 listov".

6 Ibid., p. 86, "... zapechatlet pravdivyie detali zhizni, sobytiya i 'vozdukh' epokhi".

7 A.F. Yershov, V.A. Kovalev, Istoriya russkogo sovetskogo romana, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 258, "... prevoskhodstvo korotkikh povestei, raskazov i ocherkov 50'kh godov nad romanami etikh let".

are none "... which could be placed alongside The Life of Klim Samgin", "Quiet Don", "Road to Calvary"<sup>8</sup>.

The post-Stalin fiction about the peasant world not only kept abreast with the evolution of Soviet imaginative prose, but also has been instrumental in aiding and spearheading some developments, chiefly through the popularity of certain qualities of the sketches and Soloukhin's lyrical view of reality. For the first time in more than one hundred years of existence the peasant fiction has ceased to live on the periphery of Russian literature and has ended the role of recipients of benefits derived from other themes. While giving a full reflection of the trends and tendencies in the domain of the art of writing, the writers concerned with the vanishing peasant culture have recorded its most enduring traits, in addition to a number of new, exclusively Soviet phenomena. Although still subject to limitations imposed by official directors of art, the kolkhoz writers, employing more refined tools of literary craftsmanship, have entered the national current and with it moved closer to the world mainstream of letters.

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<sup>8</sup> M. Kuznetzov, Sovetski roman, op.cit., p. 261, "... kotoryie mogli by stat v odin ryad z "Zhiznyu Klima Samgina", "Tikhom Donom", "Khozhdeniyem po mukam".

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## ABSTRACT

The present study of the peasant in Russian and Soviet-Russian fiction falls into two parts. The first covers the pre- and post-Revolution prose about the peasant world and collectivized peasantry. The second part (chapters 2 and 3) studies separately the thematic and technical aspects of kolkhoz fiction published after the death of Stalin.

Section 1 of chapter I treats the pre-1917 peasant world emphasizing works written by the populists. It deals chiefly with thematic range of the populist fiction illustrated by Zlatovratski and Gleb Uspenski who represented the polarization of attitudes, perceptions and interpretations of the "peasant question". The technical aspects of the populists' prose is limited to those characteristics which set it apart from the reigning literary convention. It has been shown that the most important qualities of the populist fiction (short prose-forms, zolaesque realism, the weakness of novelistic conventions) entering into "byt" technique, had served as models for peasant fiction of the Soviet twenties and have still echoed strongly in the post-Stalin period.

Despite some decline of interest the peasant theme had continued to attract writers of the modernist period whose works show a greater diversity of views, feelings, interpretations and artistic methods.

A strong return of the peasant theme executed in traditional "byt" technique is the most important phenomenon of early Soviet fiction. Another, -- for the first time in the history of Russian literature -- a large group of writers of genuine peasant origin entered literature. The enormous output of fiction in the twenties was chiefly the work of peasant writers; the works of non-peasants -- Leonov, Fedin, Sholokhov -- are usually acclaimed as the best literature.

Chapter I also discusses certain extra-literary factors which permitted peasant writers to retain a modicum of autonomy and distinctiveness. Until 1928, they practiced their art relatively unhindered by extremists of the Marxist orthodoxy, thanks to the protection of the moderates led by Voronski. Later, however, when the moderates lost their position within the Party, the peasant writers and their vision of Soviet rural reality was devitalized by an inorganic grafting of Marxist dynamics onto the traditional "byt". With the completion of collectivization, the independent group of peasant writers ceased

to exist, as had the world of private ownership of land and individual farming.

Section 2 of chapter I studies also the development of the theme of collectivization which, by the end of the twenties, became the only permissible focus of interest. During the First Five-Year Plan peasant fiction was as voluminous as in previous years; its quality, however, was immeasurably lower. With few exceptions, (Makarov's works, for example), the prose of these years is mostly propaganda pulp devoid of artistic values. Attempts to unite a vision of the socialized village with the traditional world of the Russian peasant had served the Party, but had failed art. One also notes a slackening of interest in the village on the part of non-peasant writers.

During the 1934-1941 period the once flourishing fiction about the village became nearly extinct. Of the works that managed to meet the demand of Socialistic Realism and escape then reigning terror only Alone, by N. Virta, remains of interest -- even to the contemporary reader. Alone is the best psychological study of the anti-Soviet peasant.

The war years brought an even worse slump in the kolkhoz fiction. Only toward the end of the hostilities,

when, both the writers' and readers' minds turned toward the questions of peace-time, the kolkhoz theme reappeared with V. Ovechkin's With Greetings from the Front, 1945, which set the tone and direction of several subsequent years. Thematically, the post-war fiction strays from its prescribed ideological and pedagogical functions, turning to the psychology of demobilized soldiers and criticism of life in the kolkhozes. The "byt" also is revived. These developments ended abruptly with the imposition of the strictest yet controls leading to the award-winning novels of Babayevski and Nikolayeva. In them, the kolkhoz world was transformed into a socialistic Garden of Eden peopled by soulless, passionless men and women in a non-conflict society. During this climactic period of the "cult of personality", the last vestiges of the "byt" were completely extirpated.

In the last two chapters are studied the thematic and artistic dimensions of the post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction. Study of theme (Chapter II) is distributed among several major topics and trends: the leadership question monopolizing the fiction of the immediate post-1953 years, the ethical and moral questions raised later, the re-assessment and rewriting of peasant history in the Soviet Union, and the lyrical trend.

It is clear that topical and formal developments of the kolkhoz fiction were largely determined by somewhat liberalized literary policies under Krushchev. Thus, after a short-lasting concentration on the lower-level kolkhoz bureaucracy, the kolkhoz theme broadens and diversifies its perceptual, emotional and interpretational range. The analysis of Soviet collectivized peasantry touches areas and questions which, in turn, strike indirectly at the foundations of the kolkhoz system. Some writers, chiefly of the younger generation, offer a more detached view presented in fresh techniques or appropriately accommodated traditionally Russian perspectives. Alongside the thematic diversifications one notes improvements in the art of writing which are studied at greater length in Chapter II. Among the writers who have contributed to the growth and transformation of the kolkhoz theme are A. Solzhenitsyn, S. Antonov, Yu. Kazakov, G. Troyepolski, V. Soloukhin, S. Krutilin -- some of the best talents of contemporary Soviet-Russian prose.

The art of fiction writing, especially its structural domain, is analysed in the three-work sampling of the short forms of fiction: The District Workdays, by V. Ovechkin, The Tight Knot, by V. Tendryakov, The New Life, by F. Abramov . The results show that the first

two works are done according to prevailing literary conventions based on the nineteenth-century models of epic narrative. Abramov's work, however, marks a significant departure, manifesting itself in language economy, mixture of techniques and different narrative model.

The first novels about the peasant world appeared in late fifties, and their number grew. This has not hampered the popularity of the short prose forms, nor has it inhibited the trend toward experimentation in their forms and techniques. Section 2 of Chapter III surveys critical and theoretical debate concerned with sketch genre, but, actually, having relevance to the entire area of Soviet poetics of fiction. The theoretical postulates and formulations paralleled by the art of fiction of the young generation of writers have been reflected in the kolkhoz prose of the last decade, especially in a growing volume of lyrical prose.

Section 3 dissects By-ways of Vladimir District, by V. Soloukhin, the most talented and prominent exponent and the principal promoter of the revival of interest in the national culture. In his work, Soloukhin breaks off with traditional mimesis and the Newtonian time. The lyrical reality of his vision of the Soviet village emerges from the juxtaposition of moods, facts, documentary quotations,

descriptive episodes and acted-out scenes. The underlying emotion is a love of Russia, of rural Russia with its traditions, icons, generals, tsars and Slavophiles. Soloukhin proposes a new synthesis of the two Russias, which would provide the foundation on which the future Soviet-Russian should be built.

Several observations from the concluding chapter can be repeated here: one, the vitality and persistency of the peasant theme in Russian and Soviet-Russian fiction; another, the artistic diversity of the post-Stalin kolkhoz fiction. The latter, unquestionably, is the most important achievement of the Soviet-reared generation of writers. The "byt" technique of the populist age had lost its attraction. And, finally, despite the many and important changes noted in the recent kolkhoz fiction, the world of the peasant has continued to be treated as a distinct and separate social entity.

## RUSSIAN TRANSLITERATION TABLE

(Approved by the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University)

1. Russian Christian names (Петр, Александр, etc.) that have common English equivalents (Peter, Alexander, etc.) retain their English form, except when they appear in the titles of books or articles.

2. The family names of a few Russian authors that have acquired fixed spellings in English (Gorky, etc.) retain their popular English spellings, except when they appear in the titles of books or articles.

А	А	Н	N
Б	B	О	O
В	V	П	P
Г	G	Р	R
		С	S
Д	D	Т	T
Е	E (when initial and after ъ, ь and all vowels, except ы, е = ye; after ы, е = ie)	У	U
		Ф	F
Ё	Yo (after з; and ы, ѐ = o)	Х	Kh
Ж	Zh	Ц	Ts
З	Z	Ч	Ch
И	I'	Ш	Sh
Й	I <sub>i</sub> (the combinations ьй = i, and ый = y)	Щ	Shch
К	K	Ъ	(omitted)
Л	L	Ы	y
М	M	Ь	(omitted)
		Э	E
		Ю	Yu (after ы, ю = iu)
		Я	Ya (after ы, я = ia)