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ABSTRACT

Vladimir Voinovich is the freshest satirical voice in Russian literature in the past fifty years. He has been called the new Gogol and his honest re-examination of his country's past has forced him into exile to West Germany. His novel, The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin, is a satire of the idiocy of Stalinist times. It shows a slice of society from its lowliest representative, Ivan Chonkin, to its highest, Joseph Stalin. The authorial intent is to show the natural man in unnatural circumstances.

Chonkin is the norm in this satire. He is the honest, natural, real man that Voinovich has described in various interviews as his favourite literary type. Standing opposed to the conventional hero of socialist realism fiction, Chonkin is the end of a line of Voinovich's own kind of positive hero that began in his early stories. Chonkin is official idiocy's final undoing.

The purpose of satire is to criticize targets that are not fictions, but representations of reality that are, or should be, obvious to the reader. In Chonkin Voinovich critically portrays various realia of the Stalin era, puncturing various myths and fictions. The novel's various characters represent mutilating aspects of the Stalinist regime in the 1930s and 1940s. The author successfully uses low burlesque to ridicule these satiric targets.

Each of the chapters in the thesis identifies satirical targets and explicates them in the light of the appropriate historical, political, intellectual, or economic events. These realia may be immediately
recognizable to the older, more astute Russian readers who have survived Stalin. They are not recognizable nor is their impact fully understood by the common reader either in the Soviet Union or in the West. Consequently, this fact alone justifies my attempt at a commentary and explication of Voinovich's masterful satirical portrayal of Stalinist Russia.

Supervisor: Dr. Michael Futrell
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INTRODUCTION

Many Soviet prose writers who begin their careers as conventional writers reach a decisive point in their careers in their fifties. When they reach those mature and fullest years of their creativity, a number find themselves having to make a crucial decision: to continue within the Soviet literary establishment or to make a break with it and finally write the novel they have always wanted to write. One of the best examples is Vladimir Nikolaevich Voinovich. His biography reveals what happened to the man with a model Soviet writer's background (working class, service in the army) who in December 1980 found himself expelled from the Soviet Union because of his uncompromising views and his novel, Zhizn' i neobychainye prikliucheniia soldata Ivan Chonkina (The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin).

Vladimir Voinovich was born on 26 September 1932 in what was then called Stalinabad. In an interview given in Moscow and published in the West in 1975 Voinovich described his childhood and education:

I was born in Dushanbe and afterwards lived in various places. My family moved continually. During the war it was very difficult to study. I finished the first class before the war; in the second and third classes I learnt absolutely nothing. Then I left the fourth class in which I studied for two months, and then I didn't study again. From childhood on I worked on the collective farm, then I went to the technical school in Zaporozhe. I finished this school, worked as a carpenter and then went into the army.
I completed the sixth and seventh classes at evening school. I served four years in the army and when the end of my 'term' was near, I began to consider what I would do after leaving the army.  

Originally the young man did not consider literature as a profession. His father was a journalist and a poet and translator. The work his father did seemed to Voinovich hopeless and useless. But, nonetheless, after leaving the service, Voinovich began to write:

The only profession I had was that of a carpenter. At least in the army I was a mechanic. I hadn't the least inclination to work as a carpenter; I didn't like this profession at all. I started to consider whether there was a job for which one didn't need an extensive training. I joined a theatre group and tried to go on the stage, but did not succeed. I tried drawing, but did not succeed at that either. I tried to write and began writing poems. I wrote a terrible poem and sent it to the army journal. To my amazement the army journal printed it. Afterwards I wrote some more but nothing else was published. But I had decided ...  

When he finished his service in the army, Voinovich began to write and to feel like a writer. He felt, he says, "a great need to say something, but I didn't myself yet know what that was." At first his poems were not accepted for publication, but after a while some were published in a local newspaper in the Crimea. With this small success Voinovich decided to go to Moscow and attempt to enter the Literary Institute in the capital. He was refused admission, was told that he had failed the entrance competition. To stay on in Moscow and get a residence permit proved to be difficult. To get work he joined an organisation outside of Moscow which
was responsible for repairing the railway. After a while he settled in Moscow, where he worked as a carpenter on a building site and joined the Writers' Union. He managed to publish a little in newspapers and in a magazine.

A year after his initial application to the Literary Institute, in 1957 he applied again. His second refusal came about as a result of his surname:

... I was not accepted because my family name appeared suspect - they decided I had a Jewish surname. I have a Jewish mother, but according to my passport I am Russian, although I didn't write that in my application because I said to myself: 'If I am suitable they will take me anyway, regardless of that.' And because I didn't write anything, they decided that Voinovich was a Jewish name.6

He was never told that he was not being admitted because of his supposed Jewish name. He was even informed that he had passed the entrance competition. But some time later he learned that ten people with suspect names had been taken out and that their poems had been re-examined and they had been refused admission into the institute.

Voinovich, however, was accepted into teacher training college where he studied for a year and a half. There he began writing what would become his first published prose effort: "My zdes' zhivem" (We live here). He left the college to work in a radio station where he continued writing stories and began writing songs. One song from that period became almost the official hymn for the cosmonauts: "14 minut do starta" (14 Minutes Until Launch Time). Every time Soviet
cosmonauts went into space they sang that song. Khrushchev sang it from the platform of the Lenin mausoleum when he greeted the cosmonauts, Nikolaev and Popovich. It was published and a record made of it.

Voinovich's song made him famous and this fame may have been responsible for his being able to publish his first story in the journal *Novyi mir*. "My zdes' zhit'" was published in the first issue of 1961 and secured Voinovich a place: "It was then, you might say, that I entered our literature." In 1963 two more stories were published in *Novyi mir*, "Khochu byt' chestnym" (I Want to be Honest) and "Rasstoianie v polkilometra" (A Distance of Half a Kilometer), both very popular and earning Voinovich much praise from his fellow writers and much official abuse in the press.

The official abuse may have arisen from other than literary circumstances. Voinovich claims that "Khochu byt' chestnym" was written in the spirit of socialist realism, despite attacks made on it. His problem was the spirit of the time: a freeze in cultural policy. Looking back on this time, Voinovich notes:

At that time Ilyichev was advising Khrushchev. Shortly before that Solzhenitsyn had been published — in the second issue of Novyi Mir for 1963. His first work had been published in the eleventh issue of 1962, in November. In December came the affair at the Manege, and then in March 1963 there was a conference of intellectuals just at the time my stories appeared. Ilyichev attacked them.

The screen version of "Khochu byt' chestnym", for which
Voinovich had written the script, was banned – though later it was staged quite successfully. From 1963 to 1967 he published next to nothing. In 1967 the story "Dva tovarishcha" was published in Novyi mir; it was Voinovich's compromise:

I thought I would be left in peace for a while because the story had nothing special about it. I had taken the trouble to write it well, but at the same time I did not criticise our society or anything else. At first the story got a friendly reception from the critics, there were good reviews in the newspapers and Mosfilm requested me to write a film script.10

The friendly official reception was not to last for long; in February 1966 Voinovich signed a letter in defence of Siniavskii and Daniel'. The two writers were on trial and the intelligentsia saw a return to the past. After the trial a number of writers met with the judge and asked him various questions. In all innocence Voinovich offered the following proposal: writers would stand surety for Siniavskii and Daniel'. Since a criminal could, if convicted, be taken on by a collective that would stand surety for him and re-educate him, Voinovich expected that his suggestion would be acceptable in the case of Siniavskii and Daniel'. The suggestion was rejected outright by the authorities but taken up by other writers. A letter appeared with Voinovich's proposal and was signed by sixty-three writers. All those who signed the letter were later summoned before the authorities and accused of supplying "ammunition for bourgeois propaganda" but there were no direct prosecutions.
In 1968 Voinovich signed a letter in defence of Ginzburg and Galanskov. Like all the signatories, Voinovich
now suffered real persecution. Both his plays were banned; a book which was about to be published by Sovetskii Pisatel' was also banned; five film scripts he had written were banned. He was told: "'Renounce your signature and everything will be all right. Your play will be shown - you have a good play Two Friends, a good patriotic play. We need this play, but we cannot publicize you if you feed bourgeois propaganda.'" Voinovich refused and hard times began for him, a time when he could not even earn a living. He was puzzled why he was punished, however, more severely than any other signatory to the Ginzburg-Galanskov letter. He was being hard pressed to either renounce his signature or he would not be allowed to earn a living as a writer any more. And then someone told him:

'Well, you have plays running and these plays bring in rather a lot of money when they are running. And if your plays are running, other people's plays can't run and you are taking the money out of their pockets. And that's the only explanation and it's nothing to do with ideas or principles. That's the reason for banning your plays.'

By 1970 the situation had improved. His plays were gradually allowed back into some theatres and a book was to be published by the Sovetskii Pisatel' publishing house. At this time, however, his novel Zhizn' i neobychainye prikliucheniiia soldata Ivana Chonkina had been circulating
in samizdat. An extract from the novel appeared, without Voinovich's permission, in the emigré journal Grani in Germany. As a result all his books and plays were banned. Work became impossible to obtain: "Even when I was offered a mediocre literary job somewhere in the provinces, a telephone call or a letter came without fail from Moscow to say that this was prohibited."\(^{13}\)

The publication in Grani had been entirely against Voinovich's will and caused him no end of problems:

I got into a very complicated situation because in such a case one has to issue an official protest through our press. That is always somewhat humiliating because one is obliged to express opinions which are not one's own. And I would not consent to it, just as I had not consented to renouncing my signature on the letter. But I was personally in a difficult situation. My mother was ill and in hospital and I thought she was dying. I didn't know what I would live on and therefore I made a compromise. I wrote a letter and was told: "Write just two lines in the literary newspaper and afterwards we will allow everything and your plays will be performed." And I thought: "To hell with it, why should I suffer just because Grani printed my work without asking me?"\(^{14}\)

But the persecutions continued. For example, Mosfilm Studio proposed to enter into a contract with Voinovich for a film script. The general manager of the studio, however, refused to confirm the contract: "'No, we can't draw up a contract with Voinovich because he must show his political face.'"\(^{15}\)

The manager repeated what Voinovich was told everywhere, that he must do something to show that he was a genuine Soviet person who is devoted to the Party and the government –
without that assurance he would not be published anywhere.

During all this time Voinovich still had a contract with the Political Publishing House (Politizdat) that he had signed previous to the Grani episode. Voinovich had agreed to do a book about Vera Figner. The book, Stepen' doveriia (povest' o Vere Figner), did not encounter any difficulties (Voinovich assumes that a decision to publish was made in the Central Committee) and appeared quickly. A second book, Povesti, also appeared; concerning its appearance, Voinovich commented: "And when my other book [i.e., Povesti] had stayed at the publishers for some years and they had taken out everything that I wanted to put in and put in everything that I didn't want put in, there were no problems with that book either."16

As Voinovich's difficulties with the authorities increased, so did his public profile. In 1973 he refused to sign an official letter of Soviet writers criticizing Andrei Sakharov. In October of the same year Voinovich protested the founding of "The All-Union Copyright Agency" (Vsesoiuuznoe agenstvo po avtorskim pravam) by the Soviet government. In a letter to the agency's president, Boris Pankin, Voinovich responded to an interview given by Pankin and published in Literaturnaia gazeta on the 26 September 1973.17 Voinovich asked two questions: why has this agency been founded? (to protect copyright abroad) and who would be most concerned about possible infringement of his copyright abroad?
"Logically," Voinovich argued, "those whose works are extensively published here [i.e. the West] - for instance, A. Solzhenitsyn, V. Maksimov, Academician A. Sakharov and other such 'dissidents', if you will pardon this fashionable term. Consequently, these are the people one would expect to find on your founding council. However, as soon as I learned that the council would be headed by Comrade Stukalin, I immediately discarded my first suppositions." 18 About those writers who would be members of the agency, Voinovich offered the following observation: "On the one hand, it is reassuring to learn that the council will be composed of such major creative talents as G. Markov, Y. Verchenko, S. Sartakov, et al. On the other hand, it is not quite clear why these writers in particular should suddenly evince such extraordinary concern for the protection of copyright. I mean, it is highly unlikely that any foreign publisher would want to issue pirate editions of their works." 19 The sarcasm continued in the next paragraph of Voinovich's letter:

The strangest thoughts flashed through my mind. I even wondered, for a moment, if perhaps, without my having noticed it, these authors had suddenly produced unprecedented literary masterpieces which were in imminent danger of dissemination through samizdat, or publication by Possev or maybe even Gallimard. Or perhaps they had rushed to the defence of copyright through sheer altruism. 20

With Chonkin-like innocence, Voinovich uncovered the basic hypocrisy inherent in VAAP by following its tenets to their logical end. For example, he noted that one of the agency's
main tasks will be "to further the mutual exchange of authentic achievements in various fields of human creative endeavour." Would the agency take on itself, he asked, the difficult task of determining authenticity, a task that usually takes years or centuries? What would the criteria be? Would the works of Solzhenitsyn be considered "authentic" or only those of Comrade Verchenko? Voinovich continued with a consideration of authors' copyright in the West. In his interview Pankin had stated that the agency was necessary because it was "bothersome and uneconomical" for individual writers to worry about matters pertaining to their copyright. Reading between the lines Voinovich made a knowledgeable guess that it would also become extremely "bothersome" for any author whose works were published in the West without the intermediary of VAAP. Any author who published abroad would become a criminal and his "protection" would be the same kind given to any other Soviet criminal:

In consequence of this, it would be quite logical to start immediate proceedings to have both the Lefortovo and Butyrka prisons placed under the direct supervision of your agency. The necessary number of guards and police dogs should also, naturally, be placed at your disposal. There you could intern not only a great number of recalcitrant writers, but also quite a few of those who inherit their rights.

Voinovich's tone was a mix of irony and truth-telling because the response to recalcitrant writers usually has been prison. He continued in a pose of innocent bewilderment: if the agency is ostensibly a social organization and not a government
department would not its foreign trade, which falls under the jurisdiction of the government, be viewed as criminal activity?

"How," then he asked, "could the agency possibly protect anyone else, being itself, as it were, 'subject to protection'? This possibility surely deserves thought."\textsuperscript{23}

The letter included a fantastic and yet at the same time honest suggestion. The true meaning of the agency would be indicated, Voinovich offers, by a slight modification of its name:

As your agency intends to decide arbitrarily when, where, and in what conditions to allow publication of a given work or even to forbid its publication, this 'legal' aspect of the agency's powers should be indicated in the name of the agency. Therefore, I suggest that in future your agency should be known not as VAAP (All-Union Copyright Agency) but VAPAP - the All-Union Agency for the Appropriation of Copyright. All this involves is the addition of one little letter - but how it helps the true meaning to come through.\textsuperscript{24}

Pursuing this line of thought Voinovich ended by suggesting that the agency also appropriate the author's authorship. VAAP might then become the sole author of everything and anything written by Soviet writers and be responsible for all ideological and aesthetic content of these works. Voinovich's suggestion, of course, would mean that the agency and, hence, the government would be responsible for anything written by a recalcitrant writer (or "dissident") and would find itself in the odd position of turning against itself for "its" writings.

Voinovich refused to acknowledge the Copyright Agency
because he saw it as a way to expand censorship, not only in the Soviet Union but also into the West. If the Agency wanted to defend his rights, he declared, they should begin by defending them in the Soviet Union: "If they could defend my rights here then I would perhaps trust them to represent my rights in the West as well. I have a lawyer in the West who defends my rights as an author." Voinovich, however, had been warned by the Writers' Union that if he did anything else wrong he would be expelled. His letter in opposition to the founding of VAAP circulated from hand to hand in the Soviet Union and eventually reached the West where it was printed in Die Welt. He was expelled from the Writers' Union in February 1974, a week after Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was deported on 13 February. Voinovich disputes the common belief that his own expulsion was a direct result of Solzhenitsyn's deportation:

"But it was the opposite way round: they didn't want to expel me just then because they had obviously resolved to say: 'We have chased Solzhenitsyn out now and remained as one single, stable family. We have condemned him, we have various writers who make mistakes at times, we put them back on the right path, etc., but we have none like Solzhenitsyn, we have chased him out and now everything is all right with us.' For that reason they didn't want to expel me." 26

On the day he was finally expelled the secretary of the Writers' Union (a former NKVD general, Voinovich notes) telephoned Voinovich to ask him to attend a meeting to discuss his recent behaviour. Again he took a stand; he refused to
attend and instead wrote a letter explaining why he would not come to the meeting and why he did not necessarily want to stay in the Writers' Union. Voinovich offered three reasons: because it was to take place illegally, i.e. behind closed doors and he had no desire to participate in illegal activities; because he and the Union had opposing opinions and, therefore, no basis for any discussion; and, because the secretariat was not a democratically elected body and had no authority over Voinovich in questions of creativity or morality.

Except for two or three, there are no real writers in the Writers' Union. The typical Union member, Voinovich continued, is a bureaucrat who produces "circulars written in the form of novels." His plays and poems are handed out as literary models, but their quality is judged according to the author's official position. He is a so-called patriot whose "colourless boring compositions" earn him as much or more than the entire kolkhoz he so extravagantly praises. At the same time he either steals party funds, sells government property for his own profit, or channels co-operative funds into his own savings account. Yet, he is never expelled from the Union for any of these crimes. The one crime that will lead to expulsion, according to Voinovich, is the "honest word." He says:

You only need to say one honest word (or at times just to keep silent when everyone is yelling his head off) for every possible sort of punishment to follow at once: the book you have been working
on for years is stopped and the type broken up, your play is banned, and the film for which you wrote the script is put on the shelf. And this is followed by utterly prosaic pennilessness.\(^\text{28}\)

All Voinovich wanted from the Writers' Union is that they not come between him and his readers and viewers.

Unlike the majority of Union members Voinovich actually has been a worker. Attacks in the name of workers did not intimidate him and he proposed that instead of a closed-door meeting the Union hold an open meetings of writers and workers. At this type of meeting he dared the Union to lie about his being an imperialist shark or an agent of foreign intelligence services. The lie is the Union's greatest weapon, the one used to drive the greatest of all citizens out of the Soviet Union, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Voinovich ended his letter in outrage: "You think the whole crowd of you together will be able to fill his place. You are mistaken! The places in our great Russian literature are not yet determined by you. And not a single one of you will manage to creep even into the last rank."\(^\text{29}\)

The letter signalled the end of Voinovich's prospects for publication in the Soviet Union. Nor could he officially write for anyone else. The day after he was expelled from the Writers' Union he received a telegram saying that he had been taken into the PEN Club though PEN membership was both a hindrance and a help, he has declared.

Despite his image as a "dissident" writer, Voinovich
sees himself as a completely apolitical person - perhaps the Russian term "inakomysliashchii" (other-thinking) better describes him. He has said:

I have never held literature to be a part of politics. Many people here who administer art believe that literature is a form of political propaganda. This view was always foreign to me. I took care to write within the framework of possibility inasmuch as I am a realist. I did not have experimental aspirations, which are not well received here, and I didn't want any conflict with the powers-that-be. But it turned out that way: when you write - the better you write, the less chance there is of publication.30

He did not willingly concern himself with politics but the imprisonment first of Siniavskii and Daniel', Ginzburg and Galanskov, and then Bukovskii made it difficult for him not to protest. Once he began to protest he was subjected to official punishment. The change in the regime's leadership also hardened his outlook:

In Khrushchev's time the degree of freedom for literature was sufficient for me personally. I talked with a writer at that time and we discussed what we would write if there was complete freedom and I said: "I would write the same as I write now." Since then, however, some time has passed. I have more complicated and serious pretensions now. I can no longer go on saying what I was saying then. That may have been all I wanted to say then, but today I want to say considerably more, and I have considerably fewer possibilities.31

Free literature, he declared, is to be found in samizdat. Chonkin, one might recall, denied publication in the official press, finally found its readership by circulating in samizdat.

Voinovich's professional life was not so troubled in
the beginning. Indeed, at first glance it would appear that he had a relatively easy entry into Soviet literature. A month after the publication of his first short story in Novyi mir, for example, Vladimir Tendriakov hailed his appearance with an article in Literaturnaia gazeta entitled "Svezhii golos - est'!" Later that same year in an article in Voprosy literatury Voinovich was referred to as, "judging by his first short story, one of the most talented of the young prose writers."33

Voinovich also had his detractors. In 1963, for example, the conservative literary critic, Grigorii Brovman, called Voinovich to task in an article entitled "Grazhdanstvenost' avtora i geroia" (The Citizen-ness of the author and his hero).34 Brovman set the tone for his remarks when he reminded young writers that "an active social position denotes above all an understanding of the more important themes of contemporaneity, the knotty questions of life of a society building communism."35 He also reminded them that as good Soviet authors they should turn to the tenets of socialist realism to solve any of their creative problems. Voinovich's "Khochu byt' chestnym" comes under attack for his failure to portray positive heroes - the very aspect that later would so endear Chonkin to its Western critics. "Rasstoianie v polkilometra" is chastised for Voinovich's failure to show the new, Soviet village. Brovman's suggestion, of course, was that neither Voinovich nor his heroes have
sufficient citizen-ness. Some three years later Brovman again returned to discuss Voinovich in his book, Problemy i geroi sovremennoi prozy, where again faulted him for creating less-than-positive heroes in the tradition of socialist realism.36

Voinovich's early stories found a more sympathetic critic in Lev Anninskii. In a collection of critical articles curiously entitled Iadro orekha (The Kernel of the nut), Anninskii devoted a section to a discussion of "My zdes' zhivem."37 Anninskii located Voinovich's interest in "that profound and authentic life of the individual which lies at the basis of his existence." Voinovich, he wrote, has a feeling for the authentic and the real life that lies below illusion. Fifteen years later Geoffrey Hosking echoed Anninskii's remarks when he described Chonkin as the search for the authentic self.

In 1968 Voinovich had still not fallen totally from official grace and he made his one and only appearance in a Soviet encyclopaedia, the Ezhegodnik bol'shoi sovetskoi entsiklopedii, in a one-line reference to his short story "Dva tovarishcha" (Two Comrades).38

In the foreward to his anthology, Putem vzaimnoi perepiski, Voinovich himself commented on his early years in Soviet literature. He took issue with "a certain emigre critic [who] recently stated that everything I had published before Chonkin could have been published in any Soviet journal including Molodaya Gvardia and Krokodil. That is
not quite true." While his first story, "My zdes' zhivem" did not have the same trouble being published as did his later stories, even it attracted negative criticism because, to quote one reviewer, it "adhered to an aesthetic alien to us, of representing life, 'as it is'." "Dva tovarishcha" was called ideologically harmful, anti-socialist, and pornographic, while "Khochu byt' chestnym" received harsh critical reviews in the newspapers and personally from Leonid Il'ichev, chairman of the newly organized Ideological Commission of the Party Central Committee. Other early stories never were published. In the West Voinovich attracted little attention before YMCA Press published Chonkin in 1975. "Khochu byt' chestnym" appeared as "I want to be Honest" in a collection of recent Russian prose translated by Andrew R. MacAndrew and published in 1965. Deming Brown mentioned both "Khochu byt' chestnym" and "Dva tovarischa" in a survey of contemporary Soviet writers entitled "Soviet Russian Fiction: Changes, Challenges, and Frozen Propositions." Geoffrey Hosking, who would become Chonkin's most perceptive reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement, discussed "Khochu byt' chestnym" in an article entitled "The Search for an Image in Contemporary Soviet Fiction."

In 1975 the Italian journal, Rossiia, published an interview with Voinovich in which he discussed his views on literature, history, and his own work. Voinovich talked in some length about his favourite hero: the natural man
chelovek estestvennyi). This is a man who, regardless of his age, looks at the world each time anew. He speaks in a plain language and does not fear that his opinions will appear foolish to anyone else. The natural man is dogmatism's undoing. Voinovich made an analogy to Andersen's well-known tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes" in which only a child will say out loud that the king is naked. The people finally acknowledge that the child is right, but this truth, in its turn, becomes the new dogmatism. Again a child is needed, Voinovich continued, to speak the truth: my goodness, good people, the king was clothed long ago!

Voinovich has frequently been accused of portraying fools ("duraki") or making his heroes into fools. He disagreed: "Attempting to depict natural people, I portray their natural reactions to events." Voinovich prefers to create eccentrics ("chudaki"), those people who have kept in themselves a childish quality. Every grown person, he argued, has a bit of child within. Some people fear this childish quality, fear how it will make them appear in the eyes of others. The natural person, on the other hand, never hides the child within and, as a result, appears eccentric.

Chonkin comes to mind as Voinovich discussed fools, eccentrics, and natural men. He described his hero as follows:

I have been writing a novel for many years about a simple Russian soldier, Ivan Chonkin. He is also an eccentric. But he does not play at anything. A little-educated peasant lad he falls into complicated circumstances. He is natural because he speaks
plainly his ideas, not fearing to lose anything in the opinion of those around him. The opinion of those around him about him is so low that he can allow himself to speak any foolishness which sometimes is offered to nonplus those people who appear clever. His own opinion of himself is not particularly high. This is a man who always fulfills his obligations. I wanted to show the simple Russian man. For some time I have been attracted by the popular character. This is not Shveik nor is it Terkin. Shveik and Terkin are active heroes, Chonkin is passive. He stands where he is placed and stands to that time when they relieve him. But he stands until the end as required of him. The image comes from folk-tales. This is Ivanushka-durachok who does everything inopportune. This is a man who, one would say, is necessary to no one, but who proves necessary to everyone. This is an adventure novel.

The interviewer's last question centered on the meaning of literature. In his answer Voinovich returned to the question of heroes at one point. Some people feel that literature should create ideal heroes, images worthy of imitation. (These are the demands of the party and such established critics as Brovman.) Voinovich felt that such creations are literature's last task. Writers of less-than-the-highest-class create such images and readers of less-than-the-best-type need them as examples. Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Gogol' never created such heroes; unstated, but understood, is the idea that neither will Voinovich.

Voinovich told the interviewer from Rossiia that he had been working for many years on a novel about a soldier called Ivan Chonkin. The novel is usually dated from 1963, but it was begun much earlier. It began as Voinovich's first attempt at writing a short story. The idea came from
a conversation he overheard between two women. The first woman told the second that life was difficult; she lived with her son who was a hooligan. Life was particularly difficult without a husband and her husband had died during the war. He had been a colonel ("polkovnik"). Voinovich listened to this woman, looked at her, and decided that she was lying - that she never had a husband and that she had never been married to a colonel. There were many women in Russia who had never married and these women publicly blamed the war for their unmarried state. For some it was a legitimate excuse, for others it was a justifying explanation. Having overheard this snatch of conversation Voinovich went home and wrote his first story.

The story was about an unmarried woman who lived in a village. The evening before WWII broke out she attended a dance, met a soldier, brought him home, and spent the night with him. The next day the Germans invaded Russia, war broke out, and the soldier was called to the front. The woman began to await letters from him because their night together had been an important event for her and she expected him to write similarly to her. She waited and waited, but no letters appeared. In the story the reader never learns why the soldier never wrote; perhaps he forgot about her or perhaps he died in battle. So she began to write letters to herself. She worked at the village post-office so that after she wrote a letter she postmarked it as well. At first she showed the
letters to no one, but in a village, where everyone knows everything, her neighbours soon learned that she was writing letters to herself. They laughed and demanded she read what "he" had written to her. At first she refused but eventually she became accustomed to reading these letters and in winter when there is little to do about the village women would gather to hear her letters. The womenfolk enjoyed the letters, laughing and crying at what the postmistress' soldier had written to her. The women became so used to listening to these letters that they could not manage without them. There was in the village a woman who actually received letters from a real husband at the front. She demanded of the women why they preferred to fool themselves and listen to the postmistress' letters when she could read letters to them from a real husband. Yours, they told her, writes poorly; but hers writes very well indeed. The postmistress, Niura, was at a loss as to what to write in these letters and made up all sorts of events at the front. She also awarded her soldier decorations and eventually made him a colonel in the Soviet Army. When the war ended and husbands returned home to their wives, Niura's soldier, of course, did not return. So she wrote herself an announcement informing herself that her husband had died a hero's death during the war. The soldier had left a photo behind. There were people after the war who travelled through the villages making large portraits out of these photos and for thirty rubles Niura had a large portrait made
from her photo and that of the soldier. She asked the photogra-
pher to paint in medals and decorations on the soldier's
uniform, so that in her portrait she was portrayed with a
colonel. Voinovich ended his story at this point.

The original story was mislaid and lost. In the
meanwhile Voinovich wrote other things but decided to return
to his original idea and write a second story on this theme.
This time he intended to make the soldier the hero of the
story and to show what happened to that soldier. Voinovich
recalled that when he himself was a soldier in Poland he was
walking through a military camp when he was approached by a
horse tied to a cart. However, no one was riding the horse.
Looking underneath the cart he saw a soldier lying between
the wheels, sound asleep. The next time Voinovich saw the
soldier and asked who he was, he was told that he was Chonkin.
The name so attracted Voinovich that he decided that at some
time to write something with Chonkin as its hero.

First official notice of The Life and Extraordinary
Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin came in 1963 when the
October issue of Novyi mir announced the works slated for
publication in the journal in 1964. Voinovich's novel was
announced as "Zhizn' Ivana Chonkina" and was described as a
story about soldiers in the Soviet Army. As Voinovich
described in his interview in the Index on Censorship, his
stories had just begun to appear when Khrushchev in 1963
attacked the liberal intellectuals. Not until 1967, when

Both the Russian edition of Chonkin and its English translation were greeted enthusiastically in the West. Some thirty articles, mostly book reviews in various newspapers and journals, have been written to date about the novel. A few deserve close attention.

The first long review, some twenty-eight pages, appeared in Kontinent. Violetta Iverni devoted the major part of her article to discussing the characters, one by one,
to see how well they play what she terms the "Rules of the Game", i.e. the rules of behaviour in order to survive and even prosper in Stalinist Russia. Chonkin is the hero because he does not play the Game and does not know the rules.

Another valid point Iverni raised was the attitude to the "word." Under the Soviet regime the attitude toward the word-as-such has changed dramatically and the word has changed from being a means of conveying information to become a symbol.

Following the Kontinent review was another long book review in the August 1975 issue of Posev, written by Voinovich's friend and fellow writer, Naum Korzhavin. He pointed out that what is being discussed in the novel was brought to light at the XXth and XXIIth Party Congresses. But today the "cult of personality" and the events connected with it are treated as if they had never existed. But then, as Korzhavin noted, even between the two congresses there was the pretense that the terror had existed but that life had not been terrorized. Korzhavin called that terror the main hero of the novel. Voinovich, he declared, had given a full picture of the Stalinist period and its logic (a logic that has not died but rather has returned in recent years).

Most reviewers that followed mentioned that Chonkin was not a positive hero but a new type created by Voinovich. Most agreed with Geoffrey Hosking that Chonkin describes "the inauthentic existence forced on everybody by an over-bearing system of authority, . . ." Both the reviewer for
Time magazine and the review for the New York Times Book Review noted that Voinovich's heresy was a lack of sufficient seriousness about one of the leading heroes of Socialist Realism, the Red Army.\textsuperscript{52} Edward Crankshaw continued the idea in his review: "Mr. Voinovich treats all sorts of sacred cows with cheerful and unfailing disrespect."\textsuperscript{53}

Barry E. Lewis, in his article in World Literature Today, made the point at the beginning and the end of the article that "Chonkin could only come after the cathartic denunciation of Solzhenitsyn had exhumed the specter of Stalinism."\textsuperscript{54} Voinovich's sustained comic satire of the political hypocrisy that was the essence of Stalinism, Lewis added, is the final exorcism of the spirit of Stalinism.

In his most recent book on contemporary Russian literature, Geoffrey Hosking continued his discussion of Chonkin that began in his initial book review for the Times Literary Supplement. Hosking repeated his earlier suggestion that the leads Soviet society in the novel is an inauthentic existence. To this description he added another: Soviet society as a fantasy. Voinovich, Hosking pointed out, is himself ambiguous about whether his story is reality or a fantasy or both from the first sentence of the novel: "It is impossible to say definitely whether it all really did happen or not, because the incident which set the whole affair in motion . . . happened in the village of Krasnoe so long ago that there are practically no eyewitnesses left . . . I've collected
everything I've heard on the subject and added a little something of my own as well, in fact maybe I've added a little more than I heard." Hosking argued that "On one level, what Voinovich is doing in Chonkin is showing up one set of fantasies, inhumane and harmful, and trying to replace them with another set, more gentle, fruitful and humane." With his insistence on the use of term "fantasy" Hosking failed to go further and point out that most of the "fantasies" in the novel are grounded in the realia of Stalinist Russia.

Only one critic realized that the novel's impact depended on its being understood in its proper historical setting. At one point in his article entitled "Vladimir Voinovich and the Comedy of Innocence" Robert C. Porter discussed a scene in the second part of the novel in which the local paper refuses to announce the German invasion but instead devotes columns to lessons in etiquette. He noted that "In the context of the novel this may seem like little more than good feuilleton; it takes on a serious and grotesque aspect when one recalls the lack of psychological and military preparation with which the Red Army faced operation Barbarossa." Nonetheless, this one sentence was not typical of the article. Earlier Porter argued that Chonkin might just be accommodated, as were Ilf and Petrov's writings, "if it were read as a biting satire on peasant backwardness, the shortcomings of collectivisation, and Russia's unpreparedness for war in 1941," though Porter did add the disclaimer that
even if the novel were published officially in the Soviet union, conventional Soviet literary criticism would fail to come to terms with it.\textsuperscript{57}

Russian literature since WWII has seen some truthful depiction of Soviet society. Konstantin Simonov's war novels (\textit{Zhivye i mertvye} [\textit{The Living and the Dead}, 1959] or \textit{Soldatami ne rozhdaetsia} [\textit{They Are Not Born Soldiers}, 1963-64]), Grigorii Baklanov's \textit{Iiul' 41 goda} (\textit{July 1941}, 1965), and Vasili Bykov's \textit{Mertvym ne bol'no} (\textit{The Dead Feel No Pain}, 1966) are only four examples out of many that portray the excesses and injustices of the Stalinist period. Many of the "village" writers, beginning with Ovechkin, described the problems that still beset the countryside more than a generation after collectivisation. The "young prose" writers (the group to which the early works of Voinovich belong) present young people in the process of discovering themselves, a discovery in no way directed by the Party or Party ideals. Hosking argued that "Some will find it surprising that the censorship should permit recognizably truthful descriptions of the recent Soviet past" and then goes on to point out that most censorship takes place not by the state but by the writers, by editorial boards, and various commissions of the Writers' Union.\textsuperscript{58} The state defines what is unmentionable and the party sets general guidelines and limits. From time to time, in a most unpredictable fashion, the party will step in to stop what it views as excesses by certain authors.
Writers, like Solzhenitsyn, Maksimov, Voinovich, and Zinov'ev, for example, have been stopped when their "excesses" made them unacceptable to their fellow writers in the Union and to the Party. The four mentioned above, the most recent being Voinovich, are exiles from the Soviet Union.

Considering the proposed publication announced in Novyi mir in 1963, what were Voinovich's excesses? Or were there any? If the "liberal" atmosphere in 1963 had continued would Chonkin have been serialized in Novyi mir? If Voinovich had not signed letters in support of various people like Siniavsky, Daniel's, Solzhenitsyn, and Sakharov, would Chonkin have been published in the Soviet Union? There may be other reasons. The various novels referred to above re-examined the Soviet past in a serious light. Satire, on the other hand, criticizes through ridicule and the ridiculous appears comic to the reader. To laugh at something is to deny it any serious import. As Barry Lewis has observed, Chonkin is written in a carnival tradition "whose gaiety illuminates every page." Satire also sets up norms of behaviour. Voinovich's satire revolves around its characters, all of whom represent some Stalinist idea or institution. The exception is the hero, Chonkin (and Niura). The Stalinist idea – the positive, Socialist Realist hero – against which Chonkin is to be compared is introduced in the novel's beginning by the narrator: "... wasn't the author able to take from life a real military hero – tall, well-built,.
disciplined, a top student in military and political training?' He could have, of course, but didn't manage. All the champions were grabbed up and so I got Chonkin." Chonkin emerges by the novel's end as the norm: the honest, natural, real man that Voinovich described as his favourite type in the Rossiia interview. Chonkin, however, no matter how much recent Russian literature has broadened the concept of the positive hero, is not a permissible type of hero. Chonkin, in a word, is an "excess."

If satire demands norms, it also has targets. The purpose of satire is to criticize and "it should be obvious to the reader what it is that is criticised. . . . The targets of satire are not fictions. They or the objects they represent exist or existed in the realm of reality. In satire, the fictional constructions have definite referents in the real world. The illusion of fiction is inevitably broken as the reader recognizes the satiric target." In The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin the satirical targets have definite referents in the real world of Stalinist Russia. Since the novel is basically a novel of characterizations, the targets may be linked to a particular character, so that the following groupings emerge:

- Stakhanovism - Liusha Miakisheva
- camps - Lesha Zharov
anti-semitism - Moishe Stalin
trials and arrests - Jr. Lieutenant Bukashev
collective farms - Ivan Golubev
Communist Party - Borisov, Kilin, Revkin
Lysenko - Kuz'ma Gladyshev
secret police - Afanasii Miliaga and the "Institute"
Red Army & WWII - Lt. Colonel Lapshin, General Drynov, Chonkin's regiment, Chonkin

An argument, perhaps, could be made for any one of the above-mentioned satirical targets being the most important in the group. As historical realia they all represent some mutilating aspect of the Stalinist regime in the 1930s and 1940s. However, they are not given equal weight within the novel. Their appearance is in direct proportion to the length of the appearance of the character representing them. Some targets and their representative characters appear only once in short scenes (like Liusha Miakisheva, Lesha Zharov, and the Two Thinkers). Some appear in rather extended scenes, like Moishe Stalin, and then disappear from the novel. The war as a battle-front never appears - this is not a war novel in the sense that Simonov's novels are. The war is never in the foreground, but it shapes the events of the novel, specially the Second Part. The novel is organized as a series of anecdotes told by the narrator as he and Chonkin
witness various events and encounter various characters. Satires in general are episodic in structure and, though in the Second Part of the novel the reader senses a more rigorous plot development, the novel as a whole appears as a loose arrangement as Voinovich moves from one level of Soviet society to another, introducing and, in some cases, devastating its various representatives. In the organisation of my discussion of satirical targets I have chosen an ascending order of importance of the characters within the novel, leaving the main characters – like Golubev, Miliaga, Gladyshev, and Chonkin – for the last chapters.

The sub-title of this dissertation describes it as a commentary and explication. The various chapters will identify the target, describe and explain what event or person or institution is being satirized, and then comment on how that satire is achieved in the novel. In this way various characters and scenes in Chonkin will be examined in the light of the appropriate historical, political, social, intellectual, or economic events in Stalin's regime. These realia might be immediately recognisable to the older, more astute Russian reader, survivors from that time, but not to the common reader, I would argue, in either the Soviet Union or the West. Western readers, for the most part, will read Chonkin in translation. Voinovich himself has said that those who read his novel in translation may understand its essence -- the relationships between people. In general, however, he feels
that readers in one country would find it difficult to understand those experiences through which people in another country have lived.\textsuperscript{62} This dissertation attempts to fill those kinds of gaps.

In each generation the Soviet Union needs, like the proverbial wheel, to be rediscovered in its true essence by the West. One of the most successful myths taken up by the West has been the one that portrays the Soviet Union as a peaceful and progressive country, building socialism, and slowly achieving, with some setbacks, the final goal of communism. A successful propaganda machine, both internally and internationally, sweeps mistakes under the rug. Khrushchev's speech to the XXth Party Congress on Stalin's crimes, however, opened the way to a flood of memoirs and stories about those very crimes. Solzhenitsyn led the way with "Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha" (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich). In his subsequent works, specially the massive \textit{Gulag Archipelago}, Solzhenitsyn began, in effect, to give his people back their history, to remember for them those things the authorities would like as not have them forget. In many ways Voinovich is a part of that remembering. Nadezhda Mandelshtam remembered for years after her husband's death in the camps, but she could never say in print what had happened until her memoirs appeared in the West. Chonkin too had to appear in the West first and then be smuggled back into the Soviet Union to join the ranks of the unofficial
histories of the Soviet Union.

Since December 1980 Vladimir Voinovich has been in the West and many commentators have wondered about his future as a writer. He has said recently that his readers are in the Soviet Union and he will continue writing for them. A writer needs to imagine an ideal reader and Voinovich imagines his reader there, in the Soviet Union. Unlike other Russian writers who have emigrated Voinovich has no intention of trying to write, for example, like an American writer. He will only write about those things he knows about. Chonkin's adventures will find their way, by various means, to Voinovich's readers in the Soviet Union. Voinovich has no fear of losing his audience: "Oni tam est' - da, i mnogo est'" (They are there and there are many of them).
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1 Carl Proffer, "The Immediate Past and Future of Russian Literature," Department of Slavonic Studies, University of British Columbia, 26 February 1981.

2 The city has seen three names changes in this century: until 1921 it was called Diushambe, from 1929 to 1961 it was called Stalinabad, and after "de-Stalinization," it was re-named Dushanbe.

3 Vladimir Voinovich, "I am a realist," Index on Censorship, IV, No. 2 (1975): 49. A part of this interview was published in German in Die Zeit, 17 January 1975 and in Russian in Russkaia mysl', 27 February 1975.

4 Voinovich, p. 49.

5 Voinovich, p. 49.

6 Voinovich, p. 50.

7 Voinovich, p. 51.

8 Voinovich, p. 51.

9 Voinovich, p. 51. Leonid Ilichev was Khrushchev's adviser on ideological and cultural matters. "Thirty Years of Moscow Art," an exhibition including modern and some abstract art, was held at the Manege' Gallery in Moscow at this time. Khrushchev attended, was outraged by what he saw and had the exhibition closed. This incident marked a turning point in cultural policy and a shift away from liberalisation.

10 Voinovich, p. 51.

11 Voinovich, p. 52.

12 Voinovich, p. 52.

13 Voinovich, p. 54.


15 Voinovich, p. 54.

16 Voinovich, p. 54.

18 Voinovich, "I am a realist", p. 52.

19 Voinovich, p. 52. Voinovich's italics.

20 Voinovich p. 52.

21 Voinovich, p. 52.

22 Voinovich, p. 53.

23 Voinovich, p. 53.

24 Voinovich, p. 53.

25 Voinovich, p. 57.

26 Voinovich, p. 56.


28 Voinovich, "I am a realist," p. 55.

29 Voinovich, p. 55.

30 Voinovich, "I am a realist," p. 56. During his interview with the KGB in May 1975 Voinovich described himself as "apolitical" and, to his interviewer's amazement, added "like Chekhov." See Vladimir Voinovich, "Proisshestvie v 'Metropole'." Kontinent, No. 5 (1975): 67.

31 Voinovich, "I am a realist," p. 57.

32 Vladimir Tendriakov, "Svezhii golos - est'!", Literaturnaia gazeta, 25 February 1961, p. 3

34 B. Brovman, "Grazhdanstvenost' avtora i geroia," Moskva, No. 6 (1963): 197-203.


40 Lourie, p. ix.


45 Voinovich, "O sovremennosti i istorii," p. 231.

47 Personal interview with Vladimir Voinovich, 29 May 1981.


57 Porter, p. 100.

58 Hosking, Beyond Socialist Realism, p. 199.

59 Lewis, p. 549.

60 Peter Petro, "Four Twentieth Century Satires: Novels of Hašek, Bulgakov, Orwell, and Vonnegut," Diss. University of Alberta 1978, p. 25. One might add that in Russian literature as well the fictional constructions have definite referents in the real world, a fact recognized by both those who create that literature and those who criticize it here and in the Soviet Union. The statement also holds true for more-or-less realistic works like Chonkin and fantastic novels like Aleksandr Zinov'ev's Ziliaushchye vysoty.

62 Personal interview with Vladimir Voinovich, 29 May 1981.

63 Personal interview with Vladimir Voinovich, 29 May 1981.
CHAPTER ONE

THE STAKHANOVITES: LIUSHKA MIAKISHEVA

Work has always been a major theme for Soviet writers. The industrial or production novel of the 1920s and 1930s showed man in his workplace: hydro-electric power plants, blast furnaces, rolling mills, railroads, and so forth. The characters in these novels were involved in developing or perfecting some industrial process or product or attempting to increase the output of their plant. Characters were judged by their attitude to their work and their fellow workers. The positive hero inspired his fellow workers to greater feats by his example of dedication, hardwork, and social sensibilities. The novel showed the characters, including backward peasants and occasionally members of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia, awakening to the wider social meaning of work. The novel's main purpose was to show the value of work in forming the psychology of the true Soviet worker. Fedor Gladkov's Soviet classic, Cement (1925) was a model for the production novels that followed. One of the best, perhaps, was Valentin Kataev's Vremia Vpered! (Time Forward, 1932). It describes the building of the huge metallurgical plant at Magnitogorsk in the Urals. The novel tells the story of an attempt by a brigade of workmen to break the world's time record for pouring concrete. The novel successfully captures the tempo and mood...
of these men as they prepare for their competition.

Voinovich has his own record-setting worker in The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin. In a few short chapters in the second part of the novel the reader meets Liushka Miakisheva, the milkmaid heroine of labour. A clever and bold woman, she is a credit to her native village where she is a favourite daughter. No longer a kolkhoznik, nevertheless, she retains all the cunning and shrewdness characteristic of most villagers in the novel. She has returned to her native village to urge her fellow citizens to do their part for the war effort. In the episode Voinovich satirizes one feature of the Stalinist period: the Stakhanovite, the shock-worker who, the state myth declares, changed the pace of work by destroying outdated work norms. Voinovich also shows the reader an example of how the word-as-such lost its meaning in Stalinist times when he describes the labour a labour heroine does.

Liushka's initial appearance is set in Gogolalian terms. She is "an enormous backside covered in dark blue material" emerging from a car door.¹ She has arrived at the kolkhoz in an MK jeep, a symbol of power and provincial-level officialdom that causes surprise in the village people and unease in the kolkhoz authorities. When she emerges from the jeep she is immediately recognized and her name, the narrator tells his reader, rustles through the crowd like the sound of "dry leaves." As she walks toward the kolkhoz office the crowd
of villagers parts respectfully for her. When she seats herself at the chairman's desk, Kilin, the kolkhoz partorg, turns the conversation to Stalin. Kilin supposes that Liushka and Stalin have tea at least once a day together. To Golubev's question as to what Stalin is like, Liushka answers, after a fast sidelong glance at the reporters, that he is simple, modest, and very sympathetic. Golubev, apparently taken aback by her answer, repeats her last epithet with questioning in his voice. Then he asks how Stalin looks. Liushka answers that he looks good and then breaks into tears because "It's so hard for him right now. Having to think for us all himself (p. 165).

Liushka is a shrewd woman with a fine sense of using the situation at hand to her own advantage, a characteristic that helped her to achieve fame initially, as her biography goes on to illustrate. Her description of Stalin, for example, is told less to answer Golubev's question than to impress the retinue of reporters who follow her everywhere and record her every word. This description, therefore, is as much a product of calculation as she herself is. Her biography describes how the Liushka Miakisheva the reader has just met was created from a village milkmaid.

Her biography gives the narrator the opportunity to give a tongue-in-cheek history of both Liushka and the Miakishevite movement. A clever peasant, she learned quickly how to advance herself. Before collectivization, she was
a young girl who lived with her poor peasant family, working as a farmhand in the summer and spending winters on the stove because she had neither felt boots nor pants. Without collectivization she would never have become famous because the "half-dead" cow on her farm did not give record yields. The cow, in fact, soon became of no use to the would-be-famous milkmaid; because of skimpy feeding it became "entirely" dead. At this point in time Liushka was saved from a similar end by collectivization because she was one of the first to register for the kolkhoz. She was given cows that had once belonged to kulaks and, though they were not very co-operative, "no po inertsii prodolzhali doit'sia obil'no." Though fame did not come immediately when she joined the kolkhoz, many things did: shoes, nice clothes, a husband, and a Party card. When heroes of labour ("peredoviki i udarniki") appeared, the narrator tells us "by all accounts" Liushka fell into this category. Her achievements at first appeared only in the local and regional press. National fame came when a reporter wrote a sensational article about her; though, the narrator notes, he wrote it "based on her own words, or else he made the whole thing up" (p. 166).

Liushka's achievement was the abandoning of the traditional method of milking cows for a new and more efficient way: "to grab four teats at the same time, two in each hand" (p. 166). She then gave a speech at the Kremlin, met with Stalin, and pledged to teach her method to all
milkmaids, assuring him that everyone of them could learn it because "every milkmaid's got two hands" (p. 166). From that time on Liushka's career as a working milkmaid was over and her career as a public figure began.

One of the first signs of her new career was that from that time on Liushka was never to be found on her own kolkhoz. She was always on the move, taking part in the Supreme Soviet or attending a conference or receiving a delegation of English dockworkers, chatting with the German writer Lion Feuchtwanger or being presented with a decoration in the Kremlin. The reader wonders what any of this has to do with milking cows. Great fame came to Liushka: newspapers wrote about her, the radio talked about her, newsreels filmed her, the magazine "Ogonek" printed her photo on its cover, and soldiers wrote letters of marriage proposal to her. A typical day was an exhausting one: racing to her native village to have her photograph taken milking a cow, then a session at the Academy of Agriculture, a meeting with writers, a speech before the veterans of the Revolution and so on. The reader still wonders what any of this has to do with milking cows. Reporters followed her everywhere, writing sketches, articles, and songs about her, always with her so that even she began to believe they existed just to write about her and to photograph her.

Liushka's example gave rise to a Miakishëvite movement that grew very popular. Miakishëvites filled government bodies,
wrote for newspapers, and appeared on the movie screen. But, as the narrator points out, there was no one left to milk the cows. Apparently heroines of labour, the reader learns, do not labour.

Liushka and the Miakishevite movement recall the Stakhanovite movement of the latter part of the 1930s. The Stakhanovites modelled themselves on Aleksei Stakhanov, a coal miner who, on 31 August 1935 cut 102 tons of coal in six hours, exceeding the existing shift quota by fourteen times. Much later it was revealed that the management had allowed Stakhanov to concentrate solely on cutting and had given him a group of assistants. At the beginning, however, Stakhanov's achievement was presented as a heroic feat of labour worthy of serving as a model to all Soviet workers. The movement quickly spread to other industries. Other Stakhanovites appeared: Aleksei Busygin in the automobile industry, Petr Krivonov in the railway industry, Evdokiia and Mariia Vinogradova in the textile industry, and Mariia Demchenko and Praskovia Angelina in agriculture. The movement was not without direction from above. In a speech on 4 May 1935 Stalin had called for an increase in industrial output. He demanded a speed-up in the work-rate. Aleksei Stakhanov appeared to provide the example.

Victor Kravchenko, at one time a plant manager in the Soviet Union, described Stakhanovism as "a miracle made to order for the Kremlin in launching a new religion - the
religion of speed-up." It was a deceit, one in which Kravchenko in his role as a plant superintendent, had to participate:

In the end, in my own sub-plant I was obliged to resort to artificial speed-up which, in my heart, I considered a crime against the machine and workers alike. On direct orders from the Party Committee, I regrouped my labor, putting the best workers, foremen and engineers into one shift. Then we selected the best tools and materials, setting them aside for the special shift. Having thus stacked the cards, we gave the signal for the specious game to start.

At eleven o'clock one evening, with reporters and photographers present, the "Stakhanovite" shift got under way. As expected it "overfulfilled the normal quota by 8 per cent. There were flaming headlines. Congratulations arrived from officials in the capital. Everyone breathed more freely - we had diverted the lightning. As the responsible technical leader I was given a lot of credit.²

The drive to speed up labour involved strain and tension. Defective goods resulted from workers more concerned with setting records within their work-shifts than with the quality of their product. A second consequence was the destruction of machinery, ruined as workers operated lathes, looms, furnaces, drills and so forth at a furious pace. A third consequence was a wedge driven between workers and technical staff. Administrators, engineers, and technicians were blamed for any lags in production on the pretense that they were sabotaging the new socialist production and failing to provide proper Stakhanovite working conditions. Some were dismissed, many were arrested. A fiction was created for the general public: scheming managers were holding up workers eager to
step up production and break old norms.

The new records set by forced speed-ups soon became the norms for every worker. Kravchenko describes what happened at his plant:

It was not long before the worst misgivings of the workers came true. Peremptory orders arrived to revise the "norms" of production, on which wages were based, upward by 10 to 20 per cent. It was nothing more than a roundabout order to exact 10 to 20 per cent more work for the same wage. In my plant, of fifteen hundred men, perhaps two hundred qualified as Stakhanovites or speed-kings. For the others the revision of norm meant simply a serious cut in earning power. The general resentment was silent, sullen, unmistakable.

To add insult to injury, the new norms had to be presented and accepted by the workers "themselves," not only "voluntarily" but enthusiastically. The farce was played out in a series of meetings.3

Patriotic devotion did play some part in the Stakhanovite movement. The movement did enlist communist and more socially conscious workers. But motives were not unmixed. The American journalist, Eugene Lyons, who interviewed many workers during his stay in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, described the selfish motives that were also involved:

Udarniki [shock-workers] became a class apart on any job, compensated for their brigadiering by extra rations, priority in the distribution of deficit goods, first claim on new housing space, and other privileges. Their children were the first to receive milk or places in the schools. The best vacation resorts were set aside for their use. Shops on Moscow's principal streets began to display luxuries like boots and textiles with placard announcing "For sale to
udarniki only!" They became a sort of aristocracy within labor.  

The Stakhanovites were not well loved by their fellow workers. They were people who curried favour with the administration and forced down wages by setting new standards of speed. 

Was Stakhanovism successful as a state fiction? Lyons answered: "That it did not suffice to stimulate the best efforts of the workers may be judged from the fact that ultimately the Kremlin had to appeal more directly to the motives of self-aggrandizement through old-fashioned goads of personal initiative like piece work, bonuses for better work and 'docking' for inferior work." 

Among kolkhoz workers Maria Demchenko gained fame as the initiator of a mass movement of kolkhozniki who strove to achieve high harvest yields of sugar beets. From 1930-1936 she was field-team leader at the Comintern Kolkhoz in the Gorodishchenskii district. At the Second All-Soviet Congress of Kolkhozniki-Shock Workers in 1935 she committed herself to cultivate not less than 500 centners [1 centner = 100 kilograms] of sugar beets per hectare. She successfully carried through her promise, obtaining 523.7 centners per hectare. Demchenko's initiative turned into, according to the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, "a powerful socialist competition," taking the name "The Five Hundred Centner-ers."

Fedor Belov, once a chairman of a collective farm, had described the Five Hundreds campaign as he witnessed it
in the years 1935-1939. He begins by noting, reminiscent of Kravchenko, that "the administration of the kolkhoz was obliged to render them [the Five Hundred Centner-ers] assistance." He gives an example:

... in 1936 a woman squad-leader on our farm undertook to raise 1,000 centners of sugar beets from one hectare. A particularly good piece of land was allotted to her squad, special quantities of fertilizers were provided, three manurings were made, and so on. Not only the kolkhoz but the entire raion watched over this squad; the agronomists never left the area where it worked, and during the dry days the area was artificially watered.

The achievement of a record harvest of beets could not be managed, however, without considerable connivance. Since it soon became evident that 1,000 centners of beets would not be obtained from the single hectare, the board of managers of the kolkhoz, on orders from the raion, made up the missing centners from the communal area. As a result, the squad "grew" 1,017 centners of beets from one hectare.

The woman was rewarded with an appointment as deputy of the oblast' executive committee. Belov adds a final note: "The raion press made much of these people, and they were widely praised and advertised as the vanguard of socialism. When collective farmers read in the papers about new 'records,' they only smile; they know how these records and these Stakhanovites are created."

Despite all Stakhanovite efforts industrial output in the Soviet Union lagged behind that of other leading industrialised nations. The average Soviet worker was not technologically advanced and output was low. The Stakhanovite
speed-up brought pressure to bear on the rank and file worker to increase production. The average workers had to keep up with norms set by Stakhanovites working under prepared conditions and not concerned with either machinery or the end product. Under these special conditions the Stakhanovite essentially performed a stunt. Like Belov's sugar-beet grower, the Stakhanovite usually performed a miracle of production within a given period of time, became a "labour hero," and then was promoted to a managerial or party position.

Alexei Stakhanov and Maria Demchenko could be considered real-life models for Liushka Miakisheva. But where history records the movement's exploitation of human labour, Voinovich uses the historical event to create a gentle humour. The reader laughs at the description of a "half-dead" cow that becomes "entirely dead"; at the use of the vulgar term "to pull on teats" ("dergat' korovu za soski") rather than the usual "to milk" ("doit'"); at Liushka running about to various meetings, all of them unrelated to being a milkmaid; at the narrator's describing Liushka's renown by repeating her name in short simple sentences, as if in an advertisement; at Liushka finally believing that the ever present reporters were created for her sake; and the reader laughs at the Miakishevite movement that grew and produced politicians, writers, and actresses, but no milkmaids.

Voinovich's main satirical targets of this episode call forth the most laugh. The targets are two-fold:
Stakhanovism (in the Miakishevite-movement story) and the war (in Liushka's speech). In both instances Voinovich evokes a gentle Horatian humour at what are potentially explosive issues: the exploitation of human labour and the blunders of Stalin's near-sighted foreign policy. The author makes of Liushka a humorous character and her appearance in the novel an amusing diversion from the main action centering on the Chonkin-Niura-Golubev-Gladyshev group. Though the targets of the satire are historically serious ones, the overall effect is still a comic one because of Liushka's behaviour, language, and her biography.

Liushka's speech is her last appearance in the novel. First she tries to explain away the Stalin-Hitler Pact (23 August 1939), a treaty that made Soviet annexation of the Baltic states in June 1940, as well as Bessarabia and Bukovina possible in July 1940 and extended Soviet influence into Poland (September 1939) and Yugoslavia (April 1941). While Stalin looked to his own plans, Hitler was assured of a war fought only on one (Western) front and time to prepare for a second (Eastern) front. Hitler's decision to attack the Soviet Union (31 July 1940), his issue of direction for plan "Barbarossa" (12 November 1940), and his orders for troop concentration in the East (18 December 1940) took place as Stalin extended the borders of his Soviet empire. Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 caught Stalin by surprise. Stalin had been sent warnings from Churchill, from
Soviet intelligence about German troop movements on the border since the early spring, and from Richard Sorge, a Soviet spy stationed in Tokyo – but he had decided to pay no heed. Only on 3 July, almost two weeks after the invasion, Stalin made a radio appeal to the Soviet people, admitting that the Soviet Union was in mortal danger. He denied that the Soviet Union (or, more particularly, he himself) had made a serious mistake when it had concluded a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. He argued that the year and half of peace had given the Soviet Union time to make military preparations. He appealed to the national and social consciousness (as will Liushka). He did not admit, however, that the pact had allowed Russia to make substantial territorial gains between 1938 and 1940 nor that the Soviet military was in a poor state of preparation to meet the German invader (nor will Liushka mention these weaknesses).

Liushka, the pride of the village as well as a representative of the government, had been sent to Krasnoe to explain away any contradictions and urge the kolkhozniki to support the war effort. In this role she is an agent of the government's prevarications. She appears in the village not to discuss the circumstances of the German invasion and the Soviet declaration of war, but to put the issues into a simple form and to make a simple appeal: "'Everything for the front, everything for victory!'" (p. 169).

The village milkmaid who became a labour heroine proves
also to have learned how to deliver a speech effectively. She begins to speak quietly and simply ("tikho i po-domashnemu"). Her speech starts with conventional official phraseology: "'A great misfortune has come down on us all. A treacherous enemy has attacked our country without declaring war. It wasn't so long ago they were pretending to be our friends.'" (p. 168). Liushka then introduces a personal note: "'Two years ago I was in Moscow and I had a chance of seeing their Ribbentrop up close.'" [Ribbentrop was in Moscow as the German signatory to the non-aggression Pact] and she adds personal insult: "'I'll tell you the truth, he didn't make much of an impression on me. Not much to look at, sort of like our, let's say [here the narrator points out that she had already prepared the comparison] our Stepan Frolov, except of course, with a little more on the ball.'" (p. 168). Liushka forwards the notion that all along the Soviet leadership were aware that the Nazis planned to betray the Soviets because once Kliment Voroshilov had whispered in her ear, as Ribbentrop was making a toast: "'Liushka, don't think he's all that friendly, he's got a stone behind his back and you should see the size of it.'" (p. 168). She makes a clichéd official appeal: "'Men, women, now, when misfortune is already upon us, there's nothing left to do but close ranks around our Party and around the person of Comrade Stalin.'" (p. 168). Comic relief comes with Liushka's spat with the photographer who attempts to photograph her in mid-speech,
but she quickly returns to her speech, in fact to the very words with which she had stopped ("every last drop of their blood") and to her official appeal: "'Everything for the front, everything for victory!'"

The second part of Liushka's speech is devoted to women and to their proposed contribution to the war effort. Before she speaks to the womenfolk she pauses, appears to collect her thoughts, and then continues with her speech. Liushka foresees what will be their actual historical lot: "'But while they [men] are away we'll be left here by ourselves. It won't be easy. There'll be the children and you'll have to clean and cook and wash at home and look after your gardens and not forget the kolkhoz either. Whether we like it or not, each of us has to do the work of two or three now.'" (p. 169) (Liushka, however, does not go on to explain how much different her forecast differs from the present work load the women carry during peacetime.) She urges the women to work on the kolkhoz "'For ourselves and for our men. We've got to see this thing through and we will.'" (p. 169), "and urges the men in conventional war rhetoric, to fight in the battlefield: "'Men, go to the front! Do your duty as men, defend our country from the foe until there's not a single one of them left. And don't you be worried about us. We'll take your place...'" (p. 169).

Liushka is not only characterized by what she says but also by what she does. Not only her words but also her
actions are a source of humour. Her first appearance in the novel is as an "enormous backside (ogromnyi zad) backing its way out of a jeep; then the rest of her appears and she is introduced as the "the backside's owner." She rushes into the crowd to drag out her husband and to intimidate him, first by ordering him to wipe egg off his face before he kisses her and then by wrinkling her nose at the smell of tobacco on him and commenting on its attractive "masculine" smell. When Liushka defends Egor before her brother's charge that her husband sleeps with a horse now that she is away, the reader suspects that she does it more for the insult done her than her husband.

Liushka covers a wide gamut of emotions and expressions (and one suspects, theatrics) whenever she speaks. To Kilin and Golubev she poses her question in a brisk, cheerful and business-like voice when she asks about the kolkhoz's affairs. When she speaks about Stalin she is pensive at the start and then suddenly breaks into tears. She checks to see that her retinue of reporters takes note of her appropriate bearing and enthusiastic descriptions of the Leader. When she speaks to the kolkhozniki she presents her prepared speech with all the proper gestures. Liushka shouts at the photographer who tries to photograph her and then tells him to take his pictures from the side, a brief and comic entr'acte in the midst of her appeal to the kolkhozniki to give their all to the war effort. If Liushka's biography has not already
suggested to the reader the probable hypocrisy in her motives for giving this speech, this brief incident — when a photograph supersedes the war in importance to the speaker — finally does. Like a true "star" she makes her speech, climbs into the jeep, and immediately drives off.

Often a name provides some insight into a character and Liushka's name is a good example. Originally from Lukiia meaning "svetlaia" the name originated in the Latin "lux" meaning "light." Liushka's married surname, Miakisheva, is taken directly from the adjective "miagkii" meaning "mild, gentle." Consider how the images her name conjures contradict the image Liushka has presented as a character: a large woman who intimidates husband and kolkhoz authorities, and gives speeches about the war effort. Perhaps the best clue to Liushka's character is own name, her maiden name, Plecheva. It suggests the big and strong (physically as well as psychologically) woman that is Liushka Miakisheva.

Voinovich provides Liushka with a language that successfully characterizes her village background and upbringing. Her speech diverges from the norm in many ways: use of colloquialisms, diminutives, interjections, enclitics, and phonetic distortions. Colloquialisms abound in her language: "lopat'" ("to gobble up," a vulgarity), "raspivat'" ("to drink"), "kak" (for "kogda"), "ikhni" (instead of "ikh"), "muzhichonka" (for "muzhik"), "pobashkovityi" ("sharp,
clever"), "pazukha" ("bosom"), "sgotovit'" ("to cook, to make"), "pribrat'" ("to put in order"), "postirat'" ("to do a little washing"), "prigliadet'" ("to look after"), "tepericha" ("now"), "supostatov" ("foes"); as well as colloquial interjections "nu" (which Liushka also makes into a verb, "nukat'"), "uzh," and "okh." Liushka uses diminutives, a characteristic of peasant speech: "ruchka," "muzhichonka," "teperichka," and the name "Stepka" (as well as her own name, Liushka, which is a diminutive of Lusia). Phonetic distortions are found in her speech: "kazhnyi" for "kazhdyi" (twice), "symat'" for "snimat'," "robiata" for "rebiata", and "vydiuzhit'" for "vyderzhat'" (recalling within the distortion the colloquialism "diuzhii" meaning "stalwart" and so intensifying the image within the verb). She uses the enclitic "-to," a characteristic of spoken language: "A uzh ia-to po tebe kak skuchala, peredat' ne mogu. Kak-to, tam, dumaiu, suprug moi ..." (p. 150). She also uses the word "baba" (three times), a disdainful, as well as peasant, term for "woman" and "muzhik," a colloquial term for "man." The substantial peasant coloring of Liushka's language portrays her as still a villager, despite her career or her travels in "higher spheres."

Within its few pages the Liushka episode presents the two main themes of Voinovich's novel. In Chonkin the reader meets fictionalized re-creations of the official fantasies of the Stalinist period. These fantasies, based on state
fictions or state myths, mutilated life for the average Soviet citizen. One example of a state fiction in this episode is the notion that Soviet workers were striving of their own free-will to overtake outdated work-norms. The fantasy was called Stakhanovism. There were those, however, who could learn "the rules of the game" and take advantage of official delusions. Liushka recalls the Stakhanovites who performed their stunt once and then went on to national fame, material rewards, and new careers – careers totally removed from their original work-place. The second theme concerns the language of the time. Official attitudes to the language encouraged old words to lose their meaning. Liushka provides an example: she is a labour heroine who does not labour.

Liushka is a willing agent of delusion as she explains away pacts with the newly-discovered enemy and replaces awareness of the vulnerable military position of the country by demands for support for Stalin, an increased harvest and volunteers for the front. Liushka has learned to work the system and its delusions to her own personal advantage.

2 Victor Kravchenko, I Chose Freedom: the Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 188. "Udarnichestvo" (shock-worker movement) preceded the Stakhanovite movement, though as an all-encompassing term the former includes the latter. Adam Smith describes the "udarnik" movement as he witnessed it in the early thirties. Smith and his wife went to the Soviet Union as enthusiastic supporters of the regime. They gave up their American citizenship, sold their personal belongings, and gave away all but a few hundred dollars. The "udarnik" movement was just one of the Soviet experiences that disillusioned them and led to their return to the United States within three years. Smith wrote:

To become a udarnik meant to be late less than three minutes in one month, to fill out the required speed-up programme, to attend every meeting and demonstration, to contribute toward all Government-sponsored raffles, funds and loans, to belong to all the required organizations, to vote without question for all party measures, to volunteer one day's additional labour each month, and in general to be a loyal, submissive and untiring slave against whom no vigovor (complaint) was registered by the foreman.

A udarnik was usually one who collected funds for the press, for relief, defence, the Party, or good roads, etc., outside of his regular work. The udarniks were usually the smoothest bootlickers. The factory was full of these official favourites who wandered about aimlessly doing nothing. I found that the self-respecting mechanics who knew the trade very rarely humiliated themselves in this way. It was usually those who were technically incompetent who sought this method of gaining favour. Udarniks were entitled to speedy promotion, and were not docked when they were sick. A udarnik
secured special consideration when looking for lodgings. He was entitled to first call for vacations to the Sanatoria, for clothing, shoes, candy, fruit or other luxuries in the magazin (general store) as well as low-priced theatre tickets. I found this method of favouritism on the one hand, and slave-driving on the other far more exacting and pernicious than anything I had ever experienced in the United States. See Adam Smith, I was a Soviet Worker (London: R. Hale, 1937), pp. 61-62.

3 Kravchenko, p. 189.


5 Lyons, p. 209.

6 Lyons, p. 209.

7 Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 3rd ed. (Moskva: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1972), VIII, 86.


9 Belov, p. 17.

10 Belov, p. 17.
A good evocation of the temper of Stalinist times is found in a brief scene in the first part of the novel. In this scene Voinovich presents his hero, Chonkin, speaking to the five-year-old daughter of the village partorg, Kilin. Chonkin asks the little girl who she loves more, mamma or papa. "Stalin," she replies and then runs off in embarrassment. Chonkin admits to himself that "Stalina on po-svoemu tozhe liubil." (p. 65).

The child who loves Stalin better than parents was a successful achievement of the Stalinist reign. These children were raised in a pernicious state fantasy that taught them to love Stalin as the "Father" of the Soviet peoples while destroying the very fathers and mothers of these children during the great terror of the 1930s. The state's agent was the school system, including its ancillary youth organizations like the Pioneers and the Komsomols. This system attempted, and in many cases succeeded in teaching young people to distrust their own parents.

Introducing a Soviet text on education, George S. Counts noted that it would be appropriate "to entitle, not only the present work, but also the entire program for the rearing of the young in the Soviet Union, 'I Want to be Like
Counts found that the loyalty to Stalin that was being inculcated in the young a very disturbing features in
the textbook:

... the Russians are building in the minds of the young a perfectly fantastic loyalty to Stalin and the Communist Party. This assertion requires no documentation whatsoever for anyone who has the slightest knowledge of Soviet education. Stalin's picture hangs in every classroom and Stalin's name is invoked at every gathering or assembly of children or youth. He is consistently portrayed in heroic proportions, the embodiment of all that is wise and good, the architect of both the civil and military triumphs of the time. Gradually he has come to overshadow Lenin, as well as Marx and Engels. All harsh and ugly features of his life have been completely expunged from the record. The young hear not a word of public criticism of his character or leadership. They hear only praises without stint.  

Writing in the Bolshevik in December 1946, V.N. Mikhailov stated that "the principal role in the education of the youth must be played by the propaganda of the Soviet State." The school played a role in the service of the State. In the 17th February 1934 circular to headmasters of primary and secondary schools in the RSFSR are found the following instructions: "The party, and political-ideological and organizational questions, will form the centre of study in all classes on the basis of the masterly report of Comrade Stalin. ... Above all, the role of the Communist Party and the person of the great leader of the International proletariat, Comrade Stalin, must be stressed." Note that Stalin and the Party are intimately associated and that one is identified with the other. The Party is Stalin and Stalin
is the Party.

The young were instilled with a blind and unswerving loyalty to Stalin and the Party. This loyalty, George Counts said, is "one of the major realities of the Soviet Union and in the world. Indeed this may be the key to that understanding of Russia about which so much is said today." This kind of loyalty was also the kind demanded in an army, so that whatever orders were given - even if they contradicted previous ones - were followed. The Soviets built a mentality in their people that will make any change in policy possible without serious criticism or loss of support. Policy would be accepted because it had been endorsed by Stalin and the Party.

Lessons, lectures, games, and free time were organized and coloured so that the child would worship the regime and, above all, the Leader. Adam Ulam argued that indoctrination, however, cannot entirely explain the worship of Stalin among children. Stalin, said Ulam, was a great teacher:

He had a feeling for the psychology of his people such as is seldom given to an outsider. He knew how to evoke that blend of idealism, romantic craving, and brutality which is often typical of the young. . . . He appealed to their need for action and enthusiasm, and he did it without Hitler's theatricality and without Mao's grotesque exaggerations. Unlike Mao, Stalin knew how to prevent young people's censoriousness of their elders from turning into undisciplined hysteria. He encouraged his own cult but was careful to make himself appear as an executor of the Party's will and as Lenin's pupil. Like every great teacher, he had a gift for simplicity and a passion for detail. He not only remade his
country, he reeducated his people, and it has been Russia's tragedy that in the twenty years since his death the impact of his teaching has not worn off.9

The pedagogical text introduced above devoted a section to the love children feel for their mothers and fathers. Nowhere do the authors suggest that devotion to Stalin contradicts filial devotion. The title "mother," the text told its readers, is so honourable in the Soviet Union as to have become established as a state title, "Mother-heroine." With the title "father," however, "we address the Great Stalin when we wish to express to him the feeling of filial nearness and of love and respect."10

Filial love and respect was intended only for the Leader, only for Stalin. Ronald Hingley offered a reason why Stalin found it necessary to redirect children's devotion.11 By the mid-thirties Soviet citizens were under harsh constraints - but to Stalin himself they seemed inadequate. His situation was still vulnerable to an assassin's bullet, a military coup, or an unfavourable vote (still theoretically possible) in the Politburo or Central Committee. He could never be sure that he had insured his system and his person against all possible threats while there remained in the Soviet Union any established and cohesive institution - however thoroughly Stalinized - that could turn against him. Constantly "reconstructing, refreshing and reforming," Stalin still found it necessary to destroy each new organi-
zation as soon as it achieved a degree of cohesion. Stalin's own interests were best served when all human associations were prevented from acquiring stability and esprit de corps. His range included not only the Politburo but also the individual family. Within the family, therefore, traditional ties would be broken and all loyalties redirected to Stalin. Thus little girls would declare a love for Stalin greater than for their parents.

Voinovich plants the scene between Chonkin and Kilin's daughter between a description of his hero's domestic concerns and his conversation with the village "scientist," Gladyshev. In itself the exchange is brief enough to be missed by a casual reader - the little girl is not a major character and the short chat appears to have little influence on Chonkin's behaviour. Kilin's daughter is, moreover, not of school-age and atypical, being the local partorg's child. What makes the scene and the child-character important is that they prepare the reader, however briefly, for another child in the second part of the novel - Junior Lieutenant Bukashev.

Junior Lieutenant Bukashev appears initially as adjutant to the regimental commander, Colonel Lapshin. When Bukashev admits to having studied German in school - though he remembers little of it - he is sent to interview the "German" prisoner, Captain Miliaga of the Soviet secret police. After questioning the prisoner, Bukashev, too
excited at the prospect of the next day's battle to sleep, writes a letter to his mother. In this letter the reader sees Kilin's daughter some fifteen years later. The little girl who loves Stalin more than either parent is now the young man (teenage boy) who loves Stalin more than his father.

Bukashev's father was arrested when his son was in the eighth grade. His father was a director for one of the nation's largest metallurgical plants. Though a Civil War hero with an inscribed saber from the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the elder Bukashev was accused of being a spy working for the Polish secret police. He later testified that he had wanted to put one of the latest-model Martin open-hearth furnaces out of commission.

The 1930s were a decade of trials in Stalinist Russia. Voinovich's elder Bukashev recalls many real-life managers, officials, technicians, engineers, economists, and so on, who were tried and sentenced on tenuous and often fabricated charges:  
1. June 1928: the Shakhtyi trial wherein both foreign and Russian technicians admit fantastic acts of sabotage;  
2. 1929: trials in camera of Ukrainian technicians, officials of the waterways and forests, officials of the Food Commissariat and railway engineers;  
3. Spring 1930: trials of the "Industrial Party" wherein the group is accused of sabotaging Soviet industry and facilitating an Anglo-French military intervention against the Soviet government;  
4. March 1931: trial of the Mensheviks;
5. March 1933: trials of high officials of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture wherein the accused admit responsibility for all the setbacks in agriculture for the previous three years;

6. April 1933: Metro-Vickers trial wherein eighteen engineers, including a number of British citizens, are accused of sabotage;

7. December 1934: without a trial one hundred and seventeen leading Leningrad Communists are executed and ninety are condemned to forced labour following the assassination of Sergei Kirov, number two man in the Politburo and, in the consideration of some, the leading contender for the position of Leader;

8. August 1936: trial of the "Sixteen" wherein Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and other prominent leaders of the Revolution confess to various crimes including sabotage, conspiracy, provocation, and terrorism;

9. November 1936: trial of nine regional party leaders in Novosibirsk who are charged with conduct inimical to the State;

10. January 1937: trial of the "Parallel Centre" wherein Piatakov, Radek, Muralov, Sokolnikov and other leaders of the Revolution confess to every conceivable crime;

11. June 1937: trial in camera of Generals Tukhachevskii, Iakir, Putna, Eidman, Primakov, Verk, Uborovich and Feldman, all prominent heroes of the Civil War, who confess to espionage;

12. July 1937: trial in camera in Tiflis of Mdivani, Kovtaradze, and Okudzhava, all veteran leaders of the Bolshevik movement in Georgia;

13. 1937: trial in camera of the judges at the trial of the generals, followed by the trial of the judges of these judges;

14. March 1938: trials of the "Twenty-One," the so-called "Right-wing Trotskyites," including Rykov, Bukharin Krestinskii, and Rakovskii, all leaders of the Revolution; joining them in the dock were Iagoda, Levin, and others.

All those who were put on trial were found guilty and sentenced, some to be shot and many to hard labour in the camps in Siberia.
The above list of trials is not exhaustive nor does it indicate the thousands of men and women arrested and sentenced (and often shot) without trial. The Bukashev story is typical and found again and again in memoirs from the period. The circumstances of the arrest are typical: the arrest occurred at night; a number of armed men come to arrest Bukashev; the apartment is thrown into shambles as feather beds and pillows are ripped apart, furniture smashed and crockery broken; a neighbour is used as a witness – he, later, is also arrested. The accused, like many of his real-life counterparts, has a seemingly glorious (political) past: Bukashev had been a decorated Civil War hero. He was also a politically astute man who was not surprised by his arrest.

The elder Bukashev's lack of surprise ("I'll get it. It's for me"), his calm, his confession of attempted sabotage – all these items added up to guilt in young Lesha Bukashev's mind. Two things tormented him:

Later those words "It's for me," became, in Bukashev's mind, the strongest evidence against his father. They meant that he knew he was guilty because an innocent man would not be capable of such a feeling. (p. 291)

But there was just one thing Lesha found difficult to accept – why had his father wanted to put that particular furnace out of commission? Could he really have thought the loss of this one furnace would cause the entire Soviet state to collapse? If he had concealed his true nature from the Party, the people, and, finally, from his own family, so cleverly and for so long a time, he couldn't have been that stupid. And he'd had much greater opportunities for sabotage. No, Lesha could
make no sense out of any of it and it was precisely that which tormented him most of all. (pp. 291-92)

Sabotage - which is what Lesha's father was charged with committing - was a common charge in the thirties. As Robert Conquest has pointed out, sabotage was a well-established Soviet Stalinist fiction. It was a crime especially created to try industrialists and engineers or anyone with access to relevant machines. It was also a crime that could be invested with tradition, so that a group of saboteurs on trial could be linked to any other group of saboteurs from an earlier period. Conquest, however, illustrated the essential absurdity of the concept of sabotage as a political weapon:

The very word, with its implications of peasants throwing clogs into machinery, is a fair description of what is almost invariably an individual and illiterate protest. The only real exception is to be found in large underground movements in occupied countries in time of war, operating with the sympathy of most of the population. In those circumstances, on the one hand, it becomes possible on a fairly wide scale; and on the other, it becomes, or at least appears, a genuine contribution to the defeat of the enemy. In peace-time, a small conspiracy could scarcely hope to achieve any political result whatever by such means. In any case plotters working to remove the political leadership by terror would hardly dissipate their forces, or run the extra risk of discovery, for local and indecisive actions of this type. Nor had any previous conspiracy of the sort ever done so. The illogic of the accusations was not the sort of consideration to stop Stalin, and over the following years sabotage became the theme of a mass purge at all levels.15

Lesha does not recognize the inherent inanity of the
charges against his father. With the logic at a child's command, Lesha has little understanding of the Stalinist policy. The ridiculous accusation plus filial loyalty should have led him to a belief in his father's innocence. Because he is Kilin's daughter, however, older by twelve to fifteen years, he has been prepared by the Stalinist regime during those years to accept not his father's innocence but rather his guilt. Therefore he writes to his mother on the day before his first battle about "the stain of shame forced on us by your former husband, my former father."

Voinovich presents in Lesha Bukashev an intermediate stage in the success of the Stalinist rearing of children-citizens. The logical end is the child who not only believes a parent guilty, but who also will denounce a parent to the Soviet authorities. The disintegration of family loyalty was a conscious Stalinist aim. Stalin wanted, as well, not only submission from family members but also complicity. The result was a Soviet child-hero, Pavlik Morozov. A full biography is found in the second edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia: when a Pioneer organization was created at his school, Morozov was chosen as chairman of the detachment. The Pioneers led an active struggle against the kulaks. Morozov denounced his father who had been until that time (1930) chairman of the village soviet but who had fallen under the influence of kulak relatives. Morozov informed the chairman of the party raikom organization that the elder
Morozov had secretly sold false documents to exiled kulaks. At the subsequent trial Pavlik branded his father as a traitor. When the kulaks encouraged the peasants not to give up their grain to the authorities, the Encyclopaedia continues, Pavlik urged the villagers not to comply and along with poor peasants took part in the seizure of the kulaks' grain. He and his organization of Pioneers helped the communists with their political work among the villagers. The kulaks sought revenge and on 3 September killed Pavlik along with his younger brothers in the forest. The murderers were captured, the entry concludes, and shot. A martyr's death for Pavlik, the Soviet boy-saint and Soviet justice for his killers.

The Nazis, with whom the Bolsheviks are often compared, also have a child-hero. Herbert Norkus was twelve years old when as a Hitler Youth member he was sent on 26 January 1932 with other members to post advertisements. Confronted by a group of Communists, Norkus was the only one unable to make his escape. Stabbed repeatedly and his face badly mutilated he was dragged into an alley and left to die. Norkus became, like Morozov, an example for other dedicated children within his respective youth movement - though, in comparing the two heroes, it is interesting to note that Norkus' fame rests on dying at the hands of his political enemies, while Morozov's, on dying at the hands of his fellow Soviet villagers who were led, in some accounts, by either
his own uncle or grandfather. Hitler, like Stalin, made a deliberative attempt to destroy family ties and to destroy the notion of the existence of a private life. H. W. Koch, meeting the possible objection that ideological training was beyond the intellectual capacity of a child, quoted as an example the answer his four-year-old daughter had given when asked who was the bravest man: "You and Hitler." He concludes: "This answer characterizes the inner life of the coming generation even in its most tender age. It is no longer limited to the family and close environment. Of course, the father still occupies the foreground, but behind him and the family, to this young eye, the community of the Volk becomes visible, and the mighty figure of the Führer stands out. And with this early glimpse of Führer and Volk comes equally early the will for the social virtues, which determine the value of the human being for the national community." 19

An attachment to the Führer and the Volk would have been the dominant factor in the shaping of a Norkus as an attachment to Stalin and the Party was in the shaping of a Morozov.

In Stalinist times a huge campaign was waged to turn children into spies and denunciators. 20 Molot of 28 August 1933 reported on the efforts of a teacher to teach her students to unmask "wreckers" (i.e. saboteurs):

"What would you do to discover the stealers of wheat?"
"I would keep my eye on everyone. . . . Even if it were my father or my mother whom I saw stealing wheat, I should immediately denounce them to the
political section."

Pronia Kobilina was held up for emulation by *Pravda*, 20 May 1934, after denouncing her mother as a "stealer of Socialist goods":

> You are a cruel wrecker of the kolkhoze;  
> Mother, you are a bitter enemy.  
> And since you do not love the kolkhoze  
> I can no longer live with you.

Mania Nomiatova, a Young Pioneer, was another prodigy of Soviet virtue. First she denounced her brother for slaughtering a calf, then her mother for having whipped her for denouncing her brother. Though she was held up as a model at school for the emulation of her fellow pupils, they expressed indignation rather than enthusiasm for her actions. *Antireligioznik*, October 1934, declared: "This and other facts equally opprobrious show how necessary it is to explain to children the difference between Communist morality and bourgeois morality." *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, 18 September 1935 praised the Young Communist Maksimov who was instrumental in sending his father to prison for five years for embezzlement. Returning home the young man found his mother in tears instead of rejoicing; the newspaper attacks those who feel a repugnance at spying and denunciation. William Henry Chamberlin, a journalist with long experience in Stalin's Russia, reported: "Cases when children denounce their own parents are common and are always mentioned with approbation in the Soviet press. Thus in the spring of 1934 a Tartar
schoolgirl named Olya Balikina informed the local authorities that her father and some other peasants were taking for their own use grain which belonged to the collective farm. This offense, under the notorious Law of August 7, exposed those who were guilty of it to the death penalty. Olya was held up as example of young Soviet virtue and, as a reward, was transferred at state expense from her village school to a model school in the city of Kazan."²¹

Not all children were Morozovs nor Kobilinas nor Nomiatovs nor Maksimovs nor Balikinas. Just as there are degrees of sin in Dante's Hell, there were degrees of child-denunciators in Stalin's Russia. A step away from the children who denounced on their own initiative — denunciations that led to a parent's arrest — were the children who denounced and repudiated once the arrest was made by the authorities. Eugene Lyons, a journalist who was an intelligent witness to many events in Stalinist Russia, gives an instance of this sort of repudiation:

The revolution and its chaotic aftermath had loosened the bonds of family loyalties, yet even to Russians there must have been something obscene in the performance [Shakhtyi sabotage trial]. The obscenity was raised to a pitch of horror when, immediately after being betrayed by a brother, Andrei Kolodoob heard his own son demanding his death. A letter from the twelve- or thirteen-year-old Kyril, published in that morning's Pravda, was read into the record:

I denounce my father as a whole-hearted traitor and an enemy of the working class. I demand for him the
severest penalty. I reject him and the name he bears. Hereafter, I shall no longer call myself Kolodoob but Shakhtin.

In later years the Kremlin came to alter its views on family relations. [Witness the change in the tone of the article on Morozov in the third edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia.] It was to preach once more the importance of blood ties and the beauty of domestic loyalties.22

Children in other trials similarly urged death for their fathers. Two years later in 1930 at the "Industrial Party" trial, Lyons witnessed another denunciation: "Sitnin [one of the accused], fat-faced and oily, was the one whose young son had demanded his death before the trial. This was by now a standardized piece of business in important show trials. 'My father is to me a class enemy, nothing more,' young Sitnin told the press and his words were published as an example to Soviet youth."23

In 1952, at the time of the so-called "Doctors' Plot," Stalin called for a tightening of Party discipline. "As always on the eve of intensified repression," Ronald Hingley writes, "there were yet more strident demands for vigilance. . . . Even the closest family ties must not be permitted to impede watchfulness, Pravda dinned into its readers, adding that everyone must learn to prevent his nearest and dearest from falling into political errors and crimes. A similar claim - that loyalty to Stalin must transcend love of wife, husband, children and parents - had been made repeatedly in the late 1930s."24
Lesha Bukashev did not spy on his father nor report him to the Soviet authorities nor denounce him after his arrest. Lesha did accept, however, his father's guilt as declared by the Soviet state. He describes it as "the stain of shame" which only honour on the battlefield might wash away. Lesha is a young officer who, by Stalinist rule, should not have attained that position. As he writes to his mother: "Mummy dear, perhaps you will condemn me for concealing the truth about my father when entering officers' training school. I know I acted cowardly, but I didn't see any other way out. I wanted to defend the motherland along with my people and was afraid I would not be permitted to . . ." (p. 292).

Lesha's ruse recalls a real-life son of a famous man who also concealed his name in order to enter the armed forces. Vsevolod Bliukher was the son of the Far Eastern Army Marshal, V. K. Bliukher, who had been arrested and shot in 1938. Vsevolod was sixteen when his father was arrested. The boy was sent to an isolated camp and released only in 1941 when the war broke out. At that time he was drafted, concealing his infamous name. He did well. Bukashev only hopes to do as well.

Voinovich gives his reader a scene in which the narrator's description of the events of the elder Bukashev's arrest should lead to the conclusion that he was innocent of the charge of "wrecking" or sabotage. At the same time Voinovich also presents a character flying in the face of
the reader's conclusions by accepting his father's guilt. The situation is ironic and Lesha Bukashev emerges from it, at best as a sympathetic character, at worst as a fool. Voinovich described his character as a young man with a romantic vision of life. He would eventually have changed, perhaps even becoming a dissident.27

Previous to the letter-writing scene Bukashev is involved in a slapstick, comic scene with Captain Miliaga during which they both think they have contacted the German enemy and behave accordingly. Lesha is also preparing for his "first battle" at dawn the next morning. The dramatic irony of the situation - he goes to battle, as the reader is well aware, not the Germans, but Chonkin, Niura, and their prisoners who are the local secret police - lacks the grimness of the description of the arrest of the elder Bukashev. Lesha's unformed, schoolboyish script, his childish epistolary salutations ("Moia milaia, slavnaia, dorogaia mamul'ka," "Mamochka dorogaia," "Mamochka," and "moia dorogaia mamulia") and his youth and naivety also make him an appealing, as well as comic, character. His goodness is stressed in his decision not to rebuke the sentry he sees smoking on duty: "What moral right do I have to rebuke a man twice as old as me?" (p. 293) The morality of a situation concerning a stranger seems more apparent to Lesha than the intimate situation concerning his own father.

The satire in the scene revolves around Lesha's
relationship with his parents. He believes the state's fiction that there are "wreckers and saboteurs." He also believes that his father was one of them. As just mentioned, Lesha can see the morality in a situation concerning a stranger far better than in the one concerning his own father. The satire here also arises from the juxtaposition of duty (in other context, beyond reproach) and human nature (mother love). Lesha has swallowed the rhetoric of war propaganda and writes to his "mummy" in tones made even more ridiculous by the reader's knowledge of who the "enemy" is: "'Take comfort in the thought that your son, Junior Lieutenant Bukashev, gave his young life for the motherland, for the Party, for the great Stalin.'" (p. 290).

Bravery and courage were demanded of the Soviet people, specially its young, during the war. Child-heroes inspired such post-war works as Aleksandr Fadeev's Molodaia gvardiia. Real child-heroes, such as Shura Tsekalin and Zoia Kosmodemianskaia, who died at the hands of the Nazis, were held up as worthy examples. Lesha is eager to be a hero, even to die for the Fatherland, the Party, and the Great Stalin. He wants to go into battle like the real Soviet soldiers shouting: "For the Fatherland, for Stalin!" The would-be hero wants to enter one fantasy having just left another. Lesha wants to die for Stalin having learned to believe that his father also had to die for Stalin. Lesha is a victim of a fantasy but the next chapter will highlight a
trickster for whom everyone and anyone might be a victim.
NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1 Pedagogy was written by two Soviet educators, B. P. Yesipov and N. K. Goncharov and published in 1946 by the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR. See George S. Counts, intro. and trans., I want to be like Stalin (New York: John Day Co., 1947), p. 41.


3 Counts, p. 25.


5 Quoted in Labin, pp. 296-97.


8 Labin, p. 296.


10 Counts, p. 74.


12 The elder Bukashev was arrested when his son was in the eighth grade, i.e. about thirteen-years-old. He has attended high school (i.e. completed the tenth grade) and officers' training school. His script is still childish. Lesha, therefore, is between seventeen and twenty years old. Lesha is writing at the war's beginning, i.e. 1941. Thus the arrest took place some time between 1934 and 1937.


14 Conquest, p. 222.

15 Conquest, p. 222.

16 Conquest, p. 378.
Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 2nd ed. (Moskva: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1954), XXVIII, 310. The text of the Morozov article in this edition is 269 words long and is accompanied by a photo. Twenty years later, in the third edition, the text of the Morozov entry has been shortened to 73 words and the photo has been omitted. Considering the fact that form is often as much an indicator of Soviet attitudes as is content, the obvious conclusion is that the Morozov ethic has been abandoned, or at least softened, in post-Stalinist Russia.


Koch, p. 41.

The following examples are found in Labin, pp. 362-63.


Lyons, p. 373.

Hingley, p. 416. My italics.

The elder Bukashev confesses his guilt. Confessions, as Robert Conquest's The Great Terror describes, were obtained through the use of beatings, starvation, deprivation of sleep, as well as psychological pressures, such as family denunciations and blackmail.

Conquest, p. 620n.

Personal interview with Vladimir Voinovich, 29 May 1981.

Counts, p. 129.
CHAPTER THREE

THE JEWS: MOISEI STALIN

In "V krugu druzei" (Circle of Friends), the chapter of Chonkin Voinovich withheld from publication, the reader encounters the two characters representing Kaganovich and Voroshilov engaged in fisticuffs. The cause: Voroshilov has called Kaganovich a "zhid" ("kike"). Stalin stops the fight and orders Voroshilov to rid himself of his Russian chauvinism by reading all Stalin's works on the nationalities question. He warns Kaganovich, however, "'... you didn't behave right either. You Jews do nothing but furnish anti-Semitism with ammunition by your appearance and provocative behaviour. I'm getting tired of struggling with anti-Semitism; at some point I'll get fed up." 1

The official state fiction declares that the Jews have been completely assimilated into Soviet life. As a result Jews are depicted as ethnically neuter. They have no problems or aspirations that result from their Jewishness. 2 Anti-Semitism does not concern official Soviet literature. As Maurice Friedberg has pointed out:

Because the prerevolutionary period is the only one in Russian history during which the existence of anti-Semitism is, while minimized, at least acknowledged, Soviet literature can treat the subject with some degree of truth. Things change abruptly as we move from Russia of the Tsars to the Soviet era. From now on the problem's
existence is not only minimized, often it is simply denied. Unless the carriers of anti-Semitism can be shown as being clearly beyond the Soviet authorities control - e.g. members of enemy armed forces - the problem's presence is merely wished away or passed over in premeditated silence.3

The Jew as a literary character has had an uneven reception in Soviet literature. Early Soviet literature produced Jewish characters who were frightened, passive, usually elderly, and often sympathetic or active Communist supporters.4 Full-bodied Jewish characters appear only in the works of Isaac Babel.5 Jewish villains reappear with the introduction in 1922 of the New Economic Policy. In the "industrial" novels of the early 1930's there were positive Jewish heroes, but they were Jews in origin only and their names or a discreet reference to their parents' "Jewish" occupation or address only could identify them as Jews.6 The literature of the war years depicted Jews who fought and died for the Motherland, but portrayed them first and foremost as Soviet citizens and Communists.7

Post-Stalin Soviet writing offers both more "realistic" portrayals of Jewish characters, as well as a variety of Jewish villains.8 Despite the call for greater sincerity in literature since Stalin's death, post-Stalin literature's portrait of the Jew during the war period is inconsistent.9 A "thaw" would see some candor, while a "freeze" would see a reversion to the Stalinist model. A few writers, however, have mentioned the hitherto taboo subject of wartime Soviet
anti-Semitism. Chonkin offers a Jewish hero and an anti-Semitic official just after war was declared in 1941. What the reader encounters is not war-time anti-Semitism but typical Russian anti-Semitism.

With every evidence of sincerity, a Soviet diplomat once explained to an American historian that the word "anti-Semitism" means in Russian only the killing, beating, jailing, and ghettoization of Jews, not the milder forms of public and private discrimination and contempt that word now includes in English. Therefore, the diplomat continued, there is no anti-Semitism in the USSR. The official attitude to anti-Semitism is also reflected in an episode in Ilf and Petrov's novel, The Golden Calf, wherein one of the characters tells a foreign reporter that in the Soviet state there are Jews, but no Jewish problem. There is a problem and a serious one.

The Harvard University's Russian Research Centre interviewed Soviet refugees in 1950-1951 and found a high frequency of stereotyping of Jews. Approximately three-quarters of the respondents believed Jews to have distinctive personal group-traits:

1. Jews occupy a privileged and favored position in Soviet society.
2. Jews are business- and money-minded.
3. Jews are clannish and help each other.
4. Jews are aggressive and "pushy."
5. Jews are sly, calculating, and manipulative, and know how "to use a situation."
6. Jews are deceitful, dishonest, unprincipled, insolent, and impudent.

7. Jews don't like to work hard.

8. Jews are cowards and serve only in the rear of the armed forces.

9. Jews have a distinctive physiognomy and accent.

10. Jews don't drink and don't fight.

11. Jews are smart and intellectually oriented.

12. Jews are devoted to their families and take a special interest in their children.


14. Jews are religious (some called them religious "fanatics").

Hedrick Smith, writing twenty-five years later, noted these same attitudes in present-day Soviet Russia.\textsuperscript{13}

Anti-Semitism was a common feature of Tsarist Russia, especially in Jewish Pale of Settlement, that area in western Russia where most Jews were compelled to live. Pogroms, whether officially sponsored or spontaneous local outbursts, were frequent. The year 1881 saw a series of pogroms that evoked an indifferent or even approving attitude on the part of some Russian revolutionaries. They saw the pogroms as an authentic mass protest and the prelude to a broader movement, hopefully the revolution itself. A commentator on the subject wrote in \textit{Narodnaia volia}: "The Party cannot take an indifferent, let alone negative, attitude towards a genuinely popular movement. The French Revolution had its excesses, but its leaders did not therefore repudiate it."\textsuperscript{14} The revolutionaries
also published protests against the violence and upbraided the rioters, but the censure was mild. Avraham Yarmolinsky contends that during the second half of the nineteenth century extreme radicalism was sometimes tinged with anti-Semitism.15

On 30 August 1881 the executive committee of Narodnaia volia issued to the Ukrainians a proclamation which justified and praised the pogroms (The Ukrainians, especially in the villages, have a reputation for being the most anti-Semitic of any of the national groups in the Soviet Union, a reputation that dates from well before the Revolution):

Good people, honest Ukrainian people! Life has become hard in the Ukraine, and it keeps getting harder. The damned police beat you, the landowners devour you, the kikes, the dirty Judases, rob you. People in the Ukraine suffer most of all from the kikes. Who has seized the land, the woodlands, the taverns? The kikes. Whom does the peasant beg with tears in his eyes to let him near his own land? The kike. Wherever you look, whatever you touch, everywhere the kikes. The kike curses the peasant, cheats him, drinks his blood. The kikes make life unbearable.16

Though some of the group's followers disagreed with the leaflet, Narodnaia volia, in October 1881, issued a statement declaring that the proclamation represented the official position of the executive committee: "We have no right to respond hostilely or even indifferently to a truly popular movement i.e. the pogroms."17 The leaflet was implicitly disavowed in the leading article in Narodnaia volia in February 1882. A year later, however, the Ukrainians were urged by the Party to recall their glorious ancestors who
had driven the Jews and the gentry out of the Ukraine with fire and sword. In the summer of 1883, the Party's executive committee issued a proclamation that blamed the Jews for the pogroms and condemned the authorities for putting them down by force. Another publication declared: "We do not think that the disorders will achieve their end but we rejoice in the educational effects of such occurrences. . . . Let us remind ourselves that the French Revolution, too, began with massacres of Jews (Taine). It is a sad fate, which is apparently unavoidable." Lev Deutsch, writing to Peter Lavrov, summarized the issue: revolutionaries must fight for racial equality, but the peasants would say that the socialists had not only killed the Tsar but sided with the Jews. Though he personally found the situation distasteful he felt his obligations were first to the Party and its interests, rather than to his fellow Jews.

Jewish radicals were, in many cases, disillusioned by the anti-Semitism they found in the revolutionary movement. Many lost their belief in socialism as a solution to the Jewish question and, instead, discovered a new solidarity with fellow Jews. Plekhanov's wife recalled that "Deep down in the soul of each one of us there was a sense of hurt pride and infinite pity for our own, and many of us were strongly tempted to devote ourselves to serving our injured, humiliated and persecuted people." Pavel Akselrod summed up the lessons of the pogroms for Jewish socialists in an
unfinished and unpublished pamphlet he had started to write for Chernyi peredel's press:

Long accustomed to the idea that there was really no such thing as a Jewish people, that Jews were merely a group of Russian subjects who would later become a group of Russian citizens, that Jews could not be segregated socially or culturally from the "native" population, the Jewish socialist intelligentsia suddenly realized that the majority of this Russian society did, as a matter of fact, regard the Jews as a separate nation and that they considered all Jews — a pious Jewish worker, a petit bourgeois, a moneylender, an assimilated lawyer, a socialist prepared for prison or deportation — as kikes, harmful to Russia, whom Russia should get rid of by any and all means.23

After one hundred years Akselrod's verdict still holds true.

The revolution officially decried anti-Semitism, following the example set by Lenin — but the tradition continued. In November 1926, Mikhail Kalinin, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, made a frank admission that "... Russian intelligentsia perhaps [is] more anti-Semitic today that it was under Tsarism."24 Pravda, in February 1929, reported frequent instances of anti-Semitic incidents. In Dagestan, for example, in the twenties, the ancient accusation that Jews use the blood of children (in this instance, Moslem children) for ritual purposes provoked a local pogrom and then a public investigation.25

Merle Fainsod found considerable evidence in the Smolensk archives of popular anti-Semitism in the twenties.26 The "Jewish bourgeoisie" was the Smolensk peasants' label for Soviet rule.27 The archives give a number of examples where
the local population linked the Jews with the Communists in their denunciations of the Soviet regime. These peasants were searching for someone to hold responsible for the difficult times that had befallen Smolensk.

Rampant anti-Semitism developed in the 1930s, growing ever more vicious as the decade progressed, interrupted only by a few years of national unity during and immediately after the war. From the late thirties and early forties discrimination against Jews became an integral part of official state policy in practice, despite official pronouncements.

During the three years of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (1939-1941) Jews were dismissed from their positions. According to Hitler, Stalin told the German Foreign Minister in the fall of 1939 that Soviet Jews would be ousted from leading positions the moment sufficient qualified non-Jews could be found. The comment bears the marks of both diplomatic gesture and inherent anti-Semitism.

William Korey argued that official anti-Semitism "must clearly be seen as a function of internal developments beginning in the late thirties and continuing into the forties." He offers two internal developments as reasons: first, a deepening Russian nationalism, bordering on xenophobia, accompanied by an unleashed Russian chauvinism; second, the erection of a totalitarian structure that could not tolerate genuinely autonomous or corporate social units – especially the Jews whose religious, cultural, emotional, and
often family ties transcended national boundaries. Korey believed that Hannah Arendt's theory— that totalitarianism requires an "objective enemy" who is the "carrier of subversive tendencies"— is applicable in the Soviet instance. In the Soviet system in which only plots and conspiracies may defeat "scientifically planned programmes," the Jew is conveniently cast in the role of scapegoat.

During World War II, reinforced to some degree by Nazi propaganda, anti-Semitism found numerous expressions. These have been described in Anatolyi Kuznetsov's *Babyi Jar*, Il'ia Erenburg's memoirs, and in the accounts of Soviet partisan units. Nazi attempts to incite local pogroms met with little success in the Soviet Union and only in the Ukraine, a traditional hotbed of anti-Semitism, were some collaborators found.

Returning Jewish army veterans and refugees found in the post-war Soviet Union a distinctly hostile popular opinion in many places. This attitude was intensified no doubt by the official anti-cosmopolitan campaign which was directed against the Jews from 1949. Latent popular sentiment was revealed during the "Doctors' Plot" in 1953 when a group of doctors, mainly Jews, were accused of poisoning or killing prominent Soviet leaders. An American journalist, Harrison Salisbury, visited Moscow in April 1953, shortly after Stalin's death when the "Plot" was revealed to be a hoax fabricated by the secret police. He found many Muscovites who believed the
"Plot" and who would provide instances of other untrustworthy Jewish doctors. The depth of popular anti-Jewish feeling that burst forth in the first three months of that year led Salisbury to conclude that the Russian people have a "terrible, terrible need . . . for a scapegoat, for some one or some people on whom to pile the blame and the guilt for the horrors of the Stalin epoch." 

Despite official denials few outsiders still doubt that anti-Semitism continues to play a great role in the post-Stalin era. The Jew, for example, became the villain during the campaign against economic crimes during 1961-1964. The State was concerned about the extensive black market activities, bribery, currency speculation, and stealing of public property and in May 1961 decreed an extension of the definition of economic offences and reintroduced the death penalty for such offences. The campaign was conducted on the propaganda level with a furious intensity. The International Commission of Jurists found that the number of Jews sentenced to long prison terms or executed was "greatly disproportionate to their number as a minority group" and that "an insidious and sometimes subtle propaganda campaign" against Jews characterized the press coverage. The Commission demonstrated that anti-Semitism was closely intertwined with the economic offences campaign.

During the campaign, in October 1963, the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev published Judaism Without
Embellishment  Trofim Kichko. Complete with cartoons of Jews with hooked noses, the book depicted Judaism as a belief which promoted hypocrisy, bribery, greed, and usury. After international protest the Central Committee in April 1964 published a censure of the Kichko work stating that the book "might be" interpreted in the spirit of anti-Semitism. Yet other anti-Semitic works appeared. In 1963 A. Osipov published *Catechism Without Embellishment* which stated that God recommends to Jews to practise real racial discrimination against other faiths. In Moldavia Soviet authorities published *Contemporary Judaism and Zionism* by F. S. Maiatskii in 1964 (just after the Kichko censure appeared) using as sources materials prepared during the Doctors' Plot of 1953 to suggest links between Zionism, Jewish bankers, and Western intelligence agencies. Written in Ukrainian and Moldavian (and not Russian or Yiddish, the language of the local Jews) these books cannot be dismissed as examples of ongoing Soviet anti-religious propaganda. The propaganda clearly was aimed at the general population of these two republics and could only stimulate or reinforce strong traditional currents of anti-Semitism.

In 1956 Nikita Khrushchev admitted to a group of French Socialist parliamentarians that anti-Semitism still existed in the Soviet Union, a remark later repeated by Politburo member, Anastas Mikoian. Premier Kosygin, in July 1965, criticized the existence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.
and the party newspaper Pravda recognized the extent of anti-Semitic prejudices in a rare editorial on 5 September 1965 in which Lenin's demand for an unceasing struggle against anti-Semitism was recalled.\textsuperscript{44}

Soviet social scientists were aware of the character of the problem. In the September 1966 issue of Novyi mir the sociologist I. Kron published an article entitled "Psikhologiia predrassudka" (The Psychology of Prejudice).\textsuperscript{45} It discussed the "socio-psychological roots of ethnic bias" in the United States. At the article's end, however, the author suggested that the Soviet Union also had a nationality problem. Prejudices had not disappeared entirely, Kron warned, and when difficulties arose these prejudices would again make themselves known and influence backward sections of the population.\textsuperscript{46}

Kron's forecasts were proven true by the official Soviet reaction to the Six Day War between Israel and Egypt in June 1967. The Soviet authorities unleashed a violent anti-Israel and anti-Zionist campaign in the media, climaxed by the trials of Jews during 1970-1971.\textsuperscript{47} The Israelis were equated with the Nazis and the attacks against the Zionists had anti-Semitic undertones. During the seventies this virulent official campaign continued with support from the neo-nationalist (or "New Right") circles. One of its results was an increase in the number of Jews who applied to emigrate to the West.
Academician Andrei Sakharov in 1968 used the phrase "zoological kind of anti-Semitism" to characterize the thinking of Stalinist bureaucrats, the NKVD, and Stalin himself. This especially primitive and virulent form of Jew-baiting, maintains the famous physicist, has not been dispelled.\(^{48}\) The historian, Andrei Amalrik, has described a feature of current Soviet thought that expresses "extreme scorn and hostility toward everything non-Russian." The integral elements of this new Great Russian nationalism, he adds, are "national enemies," of which Amalrik lists two: the Chinese and the Jews.\(^ {49}\) Albert Einstein once observed that "a people, a nation, is like a tree which is born with its own shadow." The "shadow" of the Russians, he points out, is anti-Semitism.\(^ {50}\)

The State often attempts to profit from popular anti-Semitic sentiments. Just prior to his expulsion from the Soviet Writers' Union in 1969 Solzhenitsyn was the subject of a campaign of slander. Zhores Medvedev has described one approach: "At an ideological lecture given in a Moscow publishing house, the speaker criticized Solzhenitsyn and referred to him continually as 'Solzhenitser.' A note was passed to him from the audience pointing out that he was mispronouncing the writer's surname. The lecturer replied to the note by saying: 'No, it's not a mistake. The person known to you as Solzhenitsyn is really Solzhenitser and he's a Jew.'"\(^ {51}\) Had the speaker convinced his audience that
Solzhenitsyn was a Jew, he would have been discredited.

Overt and covert Soviet anti-Semitism concerns many of Russia's intellectuals and has resulted in a philo-Semitism that identifies the cause of the intellectuals with that of the Jews. Consider, for example, the theme of Evgenii Evtushenko's poem, "Babyi Iar" or Andrei Siniavskii's choice of a Jewish pseudonym, Abram Terts. Anti-Semitism is also a popular subject in samizdat or dissident Soviet literature, in the writings of both Jewish and non-Jewish authors.

Vladimir Voinovich has himself suffered discrimination because of his supposedly Jewish surname. He discussed the incident in an interview reported in Russkaia mysli (Paris), 27 February 1975. Describing to the interviewers the two refusals for his admission into the Literature Institute in Moscow (once in 1956, then in 1957), he said: "'They did not accept me because of my suspicious surname: was it not Jewish?' The interviewers ask: 'So, you and your father's surname is not in the least Jewish?' 'My mother is a Jew, but according to my passport I am a Russian. And the surname is indeed not Jewish [but Serbian]. But it resembles a Jewish name: Voinovich . . . Rabinovich [a name usually used in anti-Semitic Soviet anecdotes] . . .' Of course this was not told him outright. Only after some time did Voinovich discover that ten holders of 'suspicious' surnames, that number including him, were withdrawn from the number of past competitions."52
Voinovich made brief reference to anti-Semitism in his short story, "Khochu byt' chestnym." The hero, Zhenia Samokhin, keeps on his night-table a picture of Rosa, his one true love. No woman has been the equal of the eighteen-year-old girl he met in Kiev at the beginning of 1941 when they were both young students. He fell in love with her because, as he remembers, she was young, beautiful, smart, good, and unusually sensitive and tender. When the Germans invaded Kiev, for some reason Rosa did not leave the city. The reader can guess the result; the narrator has identified her as a Jew (her "elongated face", her name). The narrator confirms the reader's suspicions in the next sentence: "The mass grave [of Jews] at Babyi Jar is probably hers as well".

In a long scene in Chonkin Voinovich confronts Soviet anti-Semitism. He presents his reader with a Jewish trickster figure who is capable of reversing the usual discrimination to create an instance of anti-Gentilism (or "anti-goyism," if you wish) that is both funny and cruel.

The episode is built on a simple plot: Moisei (Moisha) Stalin, an old Jewish shoemaker, attempts to sell boot-tops one Sunday morning at the market in Dolgov. He is stopped and questioned by Svintsov, a subordinate member of "The Right Place" (Kuda nado), also known as "The Institute" – both pleasant enough euphemisms for the Soviet secret police. Moisei's answers provoke Svintsov to arrest him while the crowds shout that a spy has been found. Moisei spends the
night in prison and meets the Captain of "The Right Place," Afanasii Miliaga, the next morning. The reader learns the details of the arrest when Miliaga attempts to interrogate Moisei. What ensues, however, is not an interrogation but a verbal jousting match.

Consider the opponents by their "talking" names. Miliaga is a surname from the "prostorechie" (popular speech, common parlance) "miliaga" ("sweet, nice, sympathetic fellow; sweet being"). The suffix "-iaga" (or "-aga") appears in a number of Russian words categorized as "prostorechie" or "razgovornoe slovo" (colloquial word): for example, "pobrodiaga," "serdiaga," "trudiaga," "deliaga," "koniaga," "parniaga," "khitriaga," "simpatiaga," "prostiaga," "stiliaga," "bedniaga." In reference to people, the "-iaga" suffix gives a familiar tone that is slightly pejorative as well as slightly affectionate. The suffix also contradicts the lexical meaning of the stem so that a "prostorechie" that refers to a person is itself a one-word oxymoron. Miliaga is a good example, wherein the "-iaga," in itself contradictory, disparages the "milyi." Miliaga is assisted from time to time by Sergeant Klim Svintsov ("swinish").

Standing opposed to these two characters is Moisei Solomonovich Stalin. The old shoemaker calls to mind the biblical and historical figures whose names he carries: Moses, the Biblical leader who brought the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, received the Ten Commandments from
God, and gave laws to the people; Solomon, the son of David and king of Israel in the tenth century, B.C. who built the first Temple and was noted for his wisdom; and Stalin, the cruel Soviet tsar. Moisei Stalin represents power, strength, and purpose. Even before the sparring begins, the contestants appear not to be equally matched and the best bet is not the young captain from The Institute.

In the above-mentioned interview in Russkaia mysl' Voinovich dismissed the notion that he was a Jew. The episode between Miliaga and Moisei Stalin, however, calls to mind typical "Jewish" humour. Robert Alter pointed out "that Jewish humour deflates the awesomeness of suffering: it not only shrinks inevitable pain to the dimensions of a 'world of homey practical realities' but conceives of it as 'incongruous with dignity'; the result is that an 'aura of ridicule' succeeds in relieving sad hearts and overburdened shoulders."55 James Feibleman described the archetypical Wandering Jew: "The alternation of impudence and cringing is exactly that of the Wandering Jew, whose differences have caused him to be so unjustly kicked about and whose abilities have been so extravagantly praised that the speedy change from an impudent to a cringing attitude has come to be of necessity a part of his equipment. He lives either in the Ghetto or in a palace; he is either a second-class citizen or the master of history. Thus he constitutes a sort of living satire on his own times, their habits, customs and
institutions." Alter and Feibleman bring forward insights into Jewish humour that are important to keep in mind in a discussion of the Miliaga-Moisei episode in Voinovich's novel: Jewish humour "deflates the awesomeness of suffering," provides an "aura of ridicule," and gives the reader a hero capable of making "the speedy change from an impudent to a cringing attitude [that] has come to be of necessity a part of his equipment." Moisei manages to maintain dignity throughout the episode. Voinovich succeeds in providing an aura of ridicule to a deplorable historical situation (Soviet anti-Semitism) by juxtaposing it to a humorous literary situation: anti-Gentilism. Moisei is, moreover, a novel kind of Wandering Jew. Rather than cringing he is an entirely impudent, if not arrogant, hero. The cringing is left to Moisei's opponent.

Above I described this episode as a verbal joust between Miliaga and Moisei. As in a joust or almost any game, the issue between the captain and the shoemaker is control, i.e. who will control the match and eventually topple his opponent and be master. As in a chess-game, their match proceeds in moves and countermoves, each move precipitated by that of the opponent.

The episode, the actual meeting between Captain Miliaga and Moisei Stalin, begins with an unexpected and apparently anti-Semitic remark on the part of the narrator: "The door flew open. Nudged by Svintsov, a poorly dressed elderly old
man whose nationality could be told at a single glance entered the office." (p. 199). Continuing in this key - and recalling the Harvard Study that showed respondents believed Jews to have distinctive personal group-traits - the old man, having been described as a physical type, is then characterized as a linguistic type, his mispronunciation identifying him as a Jew:

-Zdgavstuite, nachal'nik! - skazal on, ne vygovarivaia, bykvy "r."
-Zdgavstuite, zdgavstuite! -ubrav ruki za spinu, poshutil nachal'nik. (p. 181)

Moisei, who had approached the captain with his hand extended in an affable gesture had by that gesture and by speaking first indicated that he regarded himself as an equal to the captain. The attitude is somewhat unusual for a man who the day before had been assaulted by the captain's subordinate and who had spent the night in prison. The linguistic mimicry mocks Moisei who neutralizes and returns the offense by asking the captain if he belongs to the same national minority as does Moisei. The captain is not offended and answers in the negative. Moisei, however, has the last word: '"You can't mean it!" The prisoner threw up his hands. 'And such an intelligent look to your face!" (p. 199).

The entire episode itself is broken into a number of similar scenes. In each Miliaga expects to be in control but loses it to Moisei who always has the final word, usually a derogatory one. The initial scene also is a synopsis of the
entire episode, at the end of which a victorious Moisei will be escorted through the door by a frightened and humiliated Miliaga.

The opening mutual teasing takes a more serious tone when Miliaga introduces the Institute into the conversation. In an attempt to gain control in their match, Miliaga tries to frighten Moisei: "'That means that you think ending up here is even worse than falling in front of a car. I can see that you are a very intelligent man and I like how you evaluate your situation so accurately!'" (p. 200). Moisei's reply is that of an equal recognizing his opponent's move and his motive: "'I understand you... I understand you very well!'" (p. 200).

Moisei then takes the initiative and demands that Svintsov be dismissed, referring to the sergeant as "etot idiot." Then he instructs Miliaga to ask Svintsov why he started pestering the old man at the market. When Svintsov refuses to answer, Moisei willingly offers to tell his story and "almost flattered" sees that Miliaga will write his story down on forms.

The attack on Svintsov and the drawn-out story are merely tactics used by Moisei to delay the climactic point: the revelation of his surname. Moisei spins out his tale before he admits Svintsov arrested him in reaction to the former's surname. Even this admission is drawn out for all its shock value:
... 'And if he doesn't like my last name...' 'What is your last name?' interrupted Miliaga, his pen poised above the document. 'My last name is Stalin.' (p. 202)

His name, however, in Miliaga's estimation is an indication of the old shoemaker's madness and earns Moisei a blow from Svintsov that lands the old man on the floor, bleeding from the nose.

Moisei is neither cowed nor silenced by the blow. He knows that he has the trump card and that the game will eventually be his. He forecasts Miliaga's final humiliation: "'Why are you talking so harshly to me? You can't even begin to imagine what's going to happen when you look at my papers. You'll lick my blood off the floor with your tongue, you and your idiot too. Then I'll walk over to you, pull down my pants, and you and your idiot will kiss my rear end.'" (p. 203).

In an unexpected and untypical move, the old Jewish shoemaker counters physical abuse with verbal abuse. As for Miliaga, at this point in his joust with Moisei, he is ahead and winning. At this point he has achieved heights all the better to fall from when the old man's trump card is played.

The immediate reaction to Moisei's reply is another blow from Svintsov that knocks the old man off his feet and knocks his dentures out of his mouth to break into two pieces against the doorjamb. Only then do Svintsov and Miliaga begin the search for Moisei's documents. Terror, as Moisei had predicted, catches Miliaga when he opens the passport:
Faintly disgusted, the captain opened the passport and could not believe his eyes. Perhaps for the first time in his life the smile slipped from the captain's face. It suddenly seemed dark in the office, and he switched on his desk lamp. The letters, painstakingly traced out in the India ink of the bureaucracy, were dancing about in front of Milyaga's eyes and he was totally unable to order them. Slatin, Satlin, Saltin... No, there was no way around it, Stalin. Stalin, Moisei Solomonovich. Could he really be a relative? The captain shivered. He could already see himself up against the wall. Oh, my God, what's going on here! Of course, and wasn't Stalin's father a shoemaker! (p. 204)

With terror also comes a temporary madness ("For a short time Miliaga simply went out of his mind . . . ") and then a fall to the depths of servility.

Miliaga admits Moisei's advantage when he hesitantly asks "'You . . . he said swallowing his saliva, 'you . . . he licked his lips . . . 'You are Stalin's papa?'" (p. 205). With this question out in the open Miliaga has forfeited the game, one he never had a chance of winning. Moisei will always win because he is a Stalin and in Stalin's Russia to hold Stalin's name even beats holding all the aces.

Moisei has his opponent down and savours his moment of victory. He can only express his delight in coarse and vulgar terms:

He struggled to his feet, sat down across from the captain, and looked him in the eye. "So, scared now, you bastard?" he asked with malicious joy. "Sit down, you bastard, a hundred sores on your head. Now where am I going to get teeth like these?" (p. 205)

Miliaga is saved from complete humiliation by a
"life-saving" flash of memory. Though Moisei has not in fact said that he is Joseph Stalin's father and only that his son made his dentures, he understands that Miliaga fears that he is father to their Leader — and lets him flounder in his fears. But Miliaga realizes that:

If this was Stalin's father, that meant that Stalin himself should be named Joseph Moiseyevich. But, after all, Stalin's name was . . . his name was . . . Miliaga found himself totally unable to recall the beloved leader's patronymic.

"I'm sorry," he began indecisively, "but it seems to me that Stalin's papa's last name wasn't Stalin. And Solomon wasn't his first name either."
The captain was gradually regaining control of his faculties. "And so just why are you trying to pass yourself off as Comrade Stalin's papa?"

Miliaga thinks he has regained control over the situation because he has exposed the old shoemaker's ruse, but it is too late in the game and Miliaga will never best his opponent now.

The last part of the episode between Miliaga and Moisei describes the old man's final victory over the young captain, exposing Moisei's talents as a very capable confidence man. Because he realizes he has triumphed, Moisei has the temerity to expose his "con" and to continue to play it out to its full advantage.

Moisei quite readily admits that his son is Zinovii Stalin, a dental technician in Gomel, Belorussia. In answer to this Miliaga becomes playful again and calls in Svintsov. Moisei, growing worried, realizes he must explain
to Miliaga what should have been apparent to the captain:

"You're not going to call that idiot back in here?" said Stalin, beginning to get worried.
"You know, I don't advise you to do it. You're still a young man, you've got everything ahead of you. Why should you ruin your career? Listen to an old man's advice."

"I've already listened to you." The captain smiled.

"So listen some more. I won't charge for my advice. I only want to tell you that if anyone finds out you arrested Stalin and beat him up, even if it wasn't that Stalin, or even his father, but just plain Stalin, my God, you couldn't begin to imagine what'll happen to you!" (p. 206)

The captain realizes that the old man might be right and dismisses Svintsov as soon as he appears. Moisei explains that he comes by his name rightfully, being the grandson of a steel factory owner. The gist of the entire episode is then reviewed when Miliaga says of the name: "'But all the same, it's an awkward coincidence.'" to which Moisei answers: "'Awkward for you, but quite comfortable for me!'" (p. 207).

The captain knows he has been bested. He tears up the minutes of the interrogation and throws them in the wastebasket. He extends his hand to Moisei and announces his pleasure on making his guest's acquaintance. Miliaga has admitted final defeat. Moisei, in return, presses his advantage and asks for the return of his boot-tops and a permit for the repair of his dentures at the district polyclinic.

Moisei's victory is immediately reflected in Miliaga's
behaviour during the former's brief repartee with Kapa, the Institute's secretary. When she contemptuously suggests that perhaps the Institute should send Moisei to a health resort, Moisei answers that he particularly likes the resorts in the Crimea but fears the Germans will be there soon. Baring her anti-Semitic feelings Kapa notes that "The Germans would cure you all right." Moisei, secure in his name, returns derisive remark for derisive remark, with appropriate sighs and moans, ending by saying:

... bitterly that if she didn't change her convictions she too would have to kiss his "rear end." However, before beginning the ceremony, she would have to wipe her lips. "Because of my wife, Tsilia," he explained. "She's very jealous. And if she catches sight of any lipstick, there'll be hell to pay, such trouble in the family." (p. 208)

Miliaga only smiles and urges a bewildered Kapa to complete the necessary forms. Several minutes later the captain accompanies the old man to the gate of the Institute "kak samogo pochetnogo gostia." (p. 191).

At the gate the two men meet Moisei's wife, Tsilia, and she has the final word in a final gesture of "anti-Gentilism." The narrator tells the reader that Tsilia is accustomed to waiting and fills the time reciting names "of the great men her people had given the world. ... '... Marx, Spinoza, Lincoln, Trotsky, Sverdlov, Rothschild ...'" (p. 209). Tsilia is not interested in Moisei's "interesting young man," i.e. Miliaga, when she discovers that he is not
Jewish. Not only is she not interested, she scolds her husband for his "bad habits":

"Where did you get that bad habit of yours? As soon as we come to a new place, right away you start up with the goyim. Can't you find yourself any other kind of company?" (pp. 209-10)

The last scene with Tsilia exposes Moisei's confidence game. Tsilia, surprisingly enough, knows where her husband is (much to the captain's surprise when he is told this by Moisei). The narrator tells the reader that she was sitting on the bench by the Institute's gate holding her purse and staring straight ahead: "You could tell at once that waiting was her normal condition". (p. 209). Scolding her husband she discloses two facts: first, that Moisei often sought out non-Jews rather than Jews like himself; second, that Moisei and Tsilia are continually on the move ("'As soon as we come to a new place . . .'"'). The picture so far is of a travelling "confidence man" who seeks out non-Jews as victims, who is often arrested, but always freed. Moisei sums up his profession (while paying tribute to Miliaga's cleverness):

"Tsilia, what you're saying is wrong. This is a very fine young man. He's even a little bit better than the one in Gomel. The one in Gomel kept me in jail for three full days, and for three full days I explained to him why he shouldn't keep me in jail. But this one understood everything right away." (p. 210)

Ostap Bender would have been pleased with Moisei Stalin.

Voinovich provides Moisei with a suitable lexicon.
Moisei's language is characterized by three features: Ukrainianisms, colloquialisms, and Hebraisms. The Ukrainianisms are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Ukrainian</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>paniker</td>
<td>paniker</td>
<td>panikër</td>
<td>&quot;panic-monger&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prichepilsia</td>
<td>prychepylsia</td>
<td>pritsepilsia</td>
<td>&quot;to stick (to), to tie (to), to importune, to cavil, to nag&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The colloquialisms include "shivorot" for "collar," "taktaki" for "tak," "ikhniaia" for "ikh"; the diminutive "nemnozhko" and the interjection "oi"; the misplaced stress in "dokument" for "dokumént." The Hebraisms include phonetic distortion, used as a racial characteristic: "zdgaevstuite," which, as the narrator points out, Moisei articulates "ne vygoverivaia bukvy 'r'." Both Moisei and Tsilia also use "goi," for "non-Jew, gentile," interestingly enough in both a feminine form - "goisha" ("-Ia uzhe ne tak molod, chtoby Tsilia dumala, chto ia nochuiu u kakoi-nibud' goishi.") and a masculine form - "goi" ("Kak tol'ko priezzhaem na novoe mesto ty srazu idesh' k etim goiam."). Vulgarisms also are generously sprinkled through Moisei's language. These include "idiot" (five times), "bandit" ("thug"), "svoloch'" ("riff-raff, scum, swine"), "sto boliachek" ("hundred sores"), "durak" ("fool"), as well as Moisei's favourite phrase "tselovat' menia v zadnee mesto" ("to kiss me in my rear-end").
Moisei and Tsilia reappear in a brief postscript later in the novel. Tsilia returns from the market with news linking Chonkin to rumours about Miliaga's disappearance. True to her interests, Tsilia asks emotionally ("vzvolnovanno") if Chonkin might be Jewish. To Moisei's answer that the name sounds like one of "their" names, Tsilia asserts her pro-Semitism: "'Chonkin?' Tsilia looked at her husband as if he were a fool. 'Ha! Listen to you! So what about Rivkin and Zuskin?' Returning to her kerosene stove, she kept repeating the name Chonkin in various ways, shaking her gray head in doubt." (p. 240).60

The Miliaga-Moisei episode is about words. In his novel Voinovich shows how many words lost their meaning in Stalinist times. In this episode words have become talismans, imbued with magic, mystery, and power. The magic word in this episode is Stalin, no longer a name because it is the surname of the most powerful man in the Soviet Union at that time. Consider its effects on Miliaga. He shudders when Moisei first pronounces it as his last name. The room becomes dark, letters dance before his eyes, terror grips his heart, and Miliaga is mad for a short period of time - all in reaction to seeing the name in print on Moisei's passport. He allows Moisei to offend Kapa, he ceremoniously walks the old man to the gate - all because of that name. Like the name of a god so holy a believer must never say it aloud, so Miliaga treats his Leader's name: "... you dared use that name so
very dear to us all, that name only one man in our country
can use, and you know who I'm talking about." (p. 203) The
one word name is so complete in itself that later Miliaga
will find himself unable to remember his beloved Leader's
patronymic. At one point Miliaga even appears to have
confused his deities when he convinces himself that "Of course,
wasn't Stalin's father a shoemaker." Shoemaker's son or
carpenter's son - Miliaga is unsure. Every deity needs holy
relics and Miliaga, still believing Moisei to be his Leader's
father, admires the dentures Moisei says his son made for him
and makes a complete fool of himself when he asks "'These
teeth were made personally by Comrade Stalin? ... May I
touch them?" (p. 205). Bloodied, broken dentures, if touched
by the deity are themselves all-holy, magical, and powerful,
and to be revered by the believer. To the reader the dentures
are a part of Miliaga's fall to humiliation before Moisei.
Miliaga knows, as does Moisei, that to be another Stalin is
to have the original force of the name conferred on
oneself. Moisei depends on that transfer, on its protection,
for as he tells Miliaga:

"... Because if my last name was Shpulman
[a Jewish name] or, let's say, Ivanov [a Russian
version of John Doe], then your idiot could knock
my teeth out whenever he pleased. The chief over
in Gomel suggested many times that I change my
last name, but I always answered him in one word -
no. By the way, he looked a lot like you. He
couldn't be your brother, by any chance?" (p. 207)

Moisei has learned that to dangle the magic name of Stalin
opens prison doors, finds proffered favours, earns obeisance - in short, makes life more comfortable. If one is going to go about masquerading as the father of a deity, one should at least go about unmolested and in comfort.

The Soviet state maintains the fiction that the Jews have been completely assimilated. They do not exist nor do they view themselves as a separate social or national group. The fiction has built into it a self-fulfilling prophecy: the illusion will be maintained until it becomes a reality. Rarely does official Soviet literature suggest that anti-Semitism has been a feature of Soviet life since the Revolution. Moisei Stalin is the trickster who declares it does exist and can be beaten. He is a perfect device to deflate and ridicule what was (and still is) a deplorable aspect of Stalinist Russia.
NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


3. Friedburg, p. 20.


5. Friedburg, p. 6.


10. Ivan Samiakin, "The Bridge," _Polymia_, No. 7 (1965), in Belorussian; E. Iarmagaev, "The Time of Our Maturity"; _Zvezda_, No. 3 (1962), in Russian; Leonid Pervomaiskii's major novel "Wild Honey," _Oktiabr\',_ No. 2 (1963), in Ukrainian. See also Il'ia Erenburg's memoirs, _People, Years, Life_ (1961-1965). In 1978, Anatolii Rybakov, one-time Stalin Prize winner, published a novel about Jews during World War II. _Heavy Sand_, published in Nos. 7, 8, 9 of the monthly _Oktiabr\_, became a sensation of the Soviet literary scene that year because it demonstrated clearly that Jews were the primary victims of the Nazi occupation forces - a fact played down in most Soviet literature written about that period.


15 Yarmolinsky, p. 308.
18 Yarmolinsky, p. 308.
19 Yarmolinsky, p. 309.
20 Yarmolinsky, p. 309.
21 Yarmolinsky, p. 310.
22 Yarmolinsky, p. 310.
23 Yarmolinsky, p. 410.
25 Schwartz, pp. 254-56. In 1960 Dagestan would see a repeat of the entire event.
27 Fainsod, p. 43. The peasants believed communism was a Jewish plot and that Lenin was a Jew (ideas popular in some contemporary Russian neo-nationalist groups). Marietta Shaginian, researching a biography of Lenin, discovered that his mother, Mariia, was the daughter of a Jewish physician and merchant named Alexander Blank and that she had converted to Russian Orthodoxy shortly before her marriage to Ulianov. See Marcin Wyziemblo, "Was Lenin's Mother Jewish?" Dissent, XVIII (April 1971): 141-44.
29 Korey, p. 67.
31 Korey, p. 68.
32 Korey, pp. 69-70.
33 Korey, p. 70.
35 Korey, p. 15. Just before his death Stalin was rumoured to be considering sending Russia's remaining Jews to Siberia.
38 Korey, pp. 78-79.
40 Korey, p. 81.
41 Korey, p. 81.
42 Korey, p. 81.
43 In Realities, No. 136 (May 1957): 104.
47 Korey, p. 18. See also Brumberg, pp. 179-92.
Quoted in Korey, p. 19.


Gomel is a town in south-eastern Belorussia with a sizable proportion of its population Jewish, in both Tsarist and Soviet times. Perhaps Gomel could make a claim to fame as the birthplace of Lazar Moiseievich Kaganovich. Kaganovich rose from the poor Jewish community of Gomel to the Politburo. He was Stalin's close associate and one of the few who managed to outlive Stalin. The town was under German occupation from 1941 to 1943.

Tsilia is not a typical nor common Russian name. It however, does suggest 'tselka' ('a virgin,' a derogatory name for a person who pretends to be honest'); see Meyer Galler and Harlan E. Marquess, comp., Soviet Prison Camp Speech: A Survivor's Glossary (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), p. 203. The incident in the novel, however, indicates that Moisei, not Tsilia, is the 'tselka.'

Of the men listed, Lincoln is the only non-Jew. Perhaps Tsilia considers him a Jew because his first name is Abraham.

Boris Unbegaun listed Chonkin as Russian surname of Jewish origin, derived from a Hebrew name (from Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel). When I questioned Voinovich about this possibility he disagreed saying Chonkin was strictly a Russian name. See Boris O. Unbegaun, Russian Surnames (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 342.
CHAPTER FOUR

FORCED LABOUR: LESHA ZHAROV, THE INSTITUTE

The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin end as Chonkin is arrested on a charge of treason and is led away by the secret police. The reader expects his simple hero to find his way to Stalin's prisons and labour camps where Voinovich would introduce Chonkin to Solzhenitsyn's zeks.

The camps are Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's theme. Robert Conquest summed up the importance of *The Gulag Archipelago* in the introduction to his own book on Kolyma: "Since the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago*, the existence and nature of the Soviet camp system in general has penetrated the world's consciousness."

The camps are the subject of a major part of the work Solzhenitsyn does on behalf of "all those who did not live to tell it." He writes because "only those can understand us who ate from the same bowl with us."

Solzhenitsyn has dramatically opened and spectacularly developed a previously taboo subject. The only writer who comes close to sharing his fame as a writer on the camp subject is Varlam Shalamov who also writes as a result of time he spent in the camps of Kolyma.

Solzhenitsyn's literary-historical investigations are as well-known as his literary treatment of the camps. The
three-volume *Gulag Archipelago* covered the camps from every aspect and, in the first part, destroyed the Lenin myth by showing how the camp system began under Lenin's regime within months of the October revolution. The camp system had been described before in other first-hand accounts. Professor Cherniavin's *I Speak for the Silent Prisoners of the Soviets* was one of the few accounts of the camps written in the early thirties. His account differed little from later ones. As Robert Conquest noted, however, "on the whole those who suffered in the first half of the thirties were mainly peasantry, who were less inclined to write books about their experiences - even though an equivalent proportion of them ended up in Western Europe as a result of the captures and migration of the war." More accounts of the Soviet camps appeared in the West after the release of Polish officers in 1941.

Western intellectuals disbelieved these accounts. Their admiration for the "Russian experiment," the general sympathies of the "Red Thirties," and the admiration for the Soviet role in the Second World War (with the convenient loss of memory regarding the Stalin-Hitler Pact) tended to shift intellectual opinion to a pro-Soviet position. When Victor Kravchenko published his memoirs, *I Chose Freedom*, the newspaper, *Les Lettres Françaises*, declared the book a fake. Kravchenko sued the paper and supported his petition with affidavits from refugees in the West whose experiences in the
camps may otherwise not have been told. David Caute, surveying the attitudes of various Western intellectuals to the Soviet Union, found that the "fellow travellers," with the single major exception of André Gide, "were not found wanting:"

With the best of intentions they began by lauding humanitarian prison reform and ended by ignoring or condoning the creation of a new hell on earth. They rejoiced over the abolition of capital punishment in a country where a human life was often not worth a death certificate. So absorbed were they by the renunciation of the old, vengeful, bourgeois "hang a sheep-stealer" principle of justice, so charmed by the Soviet recognition that the common criminal is more often than not the victim of an underprivileged environment, and is therefore potentially an honest, productive citizen, that they failed to recognize the emergence of a penal system characterized by vindictive brutality.  

Many knew what was going on in the Soviet Union at the time - ignorance is not their excuse - yet chose to ignore it. As Caute says, "On the subject of slave labour the fellow-travellers of the 1930s maintained an almost unanimous silence."  

The issue of the Soviet labour camps may have vexed Western intellectuals but many agreed with Sartre when he told Camus: "Yes, Camus, like you I found these camps inadmissible, but equally inadmissible is the use which the so-called bourgeois press makes of them every day. . . . I am saying that you cannot utilize the sufferings inflicted upon the Turkestani to justify those to which we subject the Malagasy. I have seen these anti-communists rejoice in the
existence of these prisons." In another example Alexander Werth, a favoured Western reporter in the Soviet Union, defended the Soviet Union after the publication of David Dallin and Boris Nicolaevsky's *Forced Labour in Soviet Russia* in 1947. Many years later Leopold Labedz challenged Werth's defense, that is his minimizing the number of inmates. Werth replied that "My estimate was lower than most, I admit. But there was a very good reason for this. In 1948 the Cold War was at its height, and there were no end of people in Britain and especially in the US who were advocating a preventive war against Russia: and the 'slave labour' (the more the better) was their pet argument. . . . Yes, I had every reason to pull my punches. . . . And I don't regret it."

Forced labour is an economic as well as a moral question. Dallin and Nicolaevsky have argued that it is cheap, requires little capital investment, has a low cost of production, and is strictly disciplined. This question of the economic rationale of forced labour is a controversial one. Swianiewicz, for his part, did not believe that the extension of the forced labour system in the second half of the 1930s brought any net gain. Any profit from the camps would have been offset by the low productivity of the inmates and the cost of maintaining what Swianiewicz termed "the machinery of coercion."

Was the prisoners' labour profitable to the state? Solzhenitsyn gives his answer in the last chapter of Part III
of *The Gulag Archipelago* where he wrote:

> But no matter how they huffed and puffed and broke all their nails on the crags, no matter how they corrected the plan fulfillment sheets twenty times over, and wore them down to holes in the paper, the Archipelago did not pay its own way, and it never will! The income from it would never equal the expenses, and our young workers' and peasants' state (subsequently the elderly state of all the people) is forced to haul this filthy bloody bag along on its back.¹³

He finished with a long list of projects completed by prisoners in the period from the first Five-Year Plan to the time of Khrushchev. The list is incomplete: "it is indeed much easier to enumerate the occupations the prisoners never did have: the manufacture of sausages and confectionary goods."¹¹

A search through the main reference works published in the Soviet Union will offer the diligent researcher the impression that only one concentration (forced labour) camp existed in the Soviet Union. In the first edition of the *Small Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1934) under the entry "Solovetskii monastery" is the telling last sentence: "Now – a concentration camp."¹² This edition described the concentration camp as a place of isolation for those socially destructive elements of society – their isolation was a measure of social defense.¹³ By the next edition, published in 1940, the entry under Solovetsky monastery, not surprisingly, had changed. The reference to a concentration camp was moved back in time to refer to pre-revolutionary times. The entry describing concentration camps in general is couched in terms
of "capitalist" and "fascist." A search through the three editions of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia will offer similar results. Here the reader will find no concentration, forced-labour, or corrective-labour camps in the USSR. He will learn only that such camps were created by the fascists in Germany, Austria, Poland, and elsewhere (1st edition, 1937), or were found in fascist-capitalist countries, i.e. Germany before and during the Second World War and the United States after World War II, as well as South Korea and fascist Spain (2nd edition, 1953), or exist in German-fascist occupied countries (3rd edition, 1973). The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, however, does give excellent descriptions of concentration camps – descriptions which ironically well fit the Soviet instance:

Concentration camps – in capitalist countries places of deprivation of freedom with a particularly hard regime for prisoners of war, convicts, and citizens, seized under suspicion.

Concentration camps – a system of bloody terror.

Political prisoners in concentration camps placed in conditions not immeasurably worse than convicts.

Belles-lettres written during Tsarist times described its own prison camps. Dostoyevsky's House of the Dead is set, for example, in Tsarist forced labour camps. The official Soviet attitude to the Tsarist prisons and camps has been damning. Soviet literature, however, has only two works written in Stalin's time that mentions its own, i.e. Soviet,
prison camps: M. Chumandrin's story Vozvrashchenie (The Return, 1934) and N. Pogodin's play, Aristokratiy (The Aristocrats, 1935). Nikolai Pogodin's comedy-play is the better known of the two works. He wrote it after he had visited the construction site of the Belomor-Baltic Canal. The initial result was a screenplay, "Zakliuchennye" (Convicts), but on the advice of director, N. Okhlopkov, Pogodin used the same material to write the play, The Aristocrats.

Aristocrats belong to the genre, if it may be called that, of the socialist-realist-fairy-tale begun by Maksim Gorky's Mat'. In a combination of wishful thinking and black and white, poorly motivated characters, Pogodin creates the story of a group of criminals, kulaks, and engineers who are reformed and become good Soviet citizens through the efforts of the understanding and kind Chekists running the camp and through their own participation in building the Belomor-Baltic Canal. Gromov, the camp Chief, is a paragon of patience and goodness, a stern but kind Chekist who, for example, reforms the hardened criminal Sonia. At the play's end she is informed that she will be awarded a government decoration for her work on the canal. The last scene assembles all the reformed criminals and their Chekist Chief. A holiday has been declared and a meeting has been called. The Chief, in the last speech of the play, describes how work on the canal made men and women who were once outcasts and enemies
of society into valued members of Soviet society.

In the third part of The Gulag Archipelago Solzhenitsyn commented on Pogodin's play. Pogodin "didn't see through the thieves, didn't understand them and told lies about everything." Solzhenitsyn felt obliged to discuss the play because "Since in our literature nothing has been written about the camps for forty years except Pogodin's play - and the subsequent film - we have to comment on it." Solzhenitsyn wrote:

The wretchedness of the KR [counter-revolutionary, i.e. political prisoners] engineers who stared into the mouths of their instructors and thereby learned how to live does not even require comment. But his aristocrats, his thieves, do. Pogodin even contrived not to notice in them their simple characteristic of robbing by the right of the strong, not secretly like a pickpocket. He portrayed them all to a man as petty pickpockets, and more than a dozen times he points this up in the play to the point of nausea, and he has the thieves steal from the thieves (utter nonsense! they steal only from the suckers and turn everything over to their ringleader). Neither did Pogodin understand (or he did not wish to understand) the real stimuli of camp work - hunger, beatings, and the collective responsibility of the brigade. He did not even distinguish between the camp inmate who was a "comrade" and the one who was a "citizen." He latched on to only one thing: the "socially friendly" character of the thieves. (Which he was prompted to by the canal administration in Medvezhyegorsk, and even before that by Gorky in Moscow.) And he rushed to show the "reforging" of the thieves. And what came out was such an outrageous libel of the thieves that even I want to defend them against it. . . .

In 1967 an optimistic Marc Slonim wrote about the "wide-ranging and various" changes in post-Stalinist Soviet
literature. He felt that "by 1955 a large part of Soviet literature was breaking away from the official mold." He continued:

There was a greater diversity of style, more inventiveness in plot, more freedom in the unfolding of a story. Such dangerous subjects as personal tragedies brought on by Stalinist terror were now treated. Since 1955-56 Soviet novels became populated by innocently condemned Communists, by non-Party convicts returning from exile, and by daughters and sons whose parents one night had been taken away for ever by the secret police. From The Running Battle by Galina Nikolayeva and Not by Bread Alone by Vladimir Dudintsev, to the novels of the 'sixties, such as The Silence by Yury Bondarev, Kira Georgievna by Víctor Nekrassov, The Living and the Dead by Konstantín Simonov, The Wild Honey by Leoníd Pervomaysky - to mention only a few - the figure of the former inmate of a concentration camp or retrospective scenes of unjust, iniquitous arrests became part and parcel of Soviet fiction.25

Perhaps more suspect, difficult, and dangerous a topic than the camps was the man or woman who had returned from serving time in the camps. Unlike the camps which refer to a world outside the life of an ordinary citizen (and an ordinary Soviet reader), the ex-prisoner brings the camps back into the lives of every person he or she meets. The camps are there while the ex-zek is here and now.

The ex-zek has been treated in various works. In Dudintsev's novel, "Ne khlebom edinym" (Not by Bread Alone),26 it is the hero himself, the young inventor Lopatkin, who spends some time in the camps during the course of the novel. In Erenburg's "Vesna" (Spring)27 the ex-zek is stepfather to one of the main characters. A professor of agronomy at the
time of his arrest he has spent seventeen years in the camps. Kira Georgievna's first husband, in Nekrasov's story of the same name, returns from the camps to visit Kira. In Maksimov's long story, "Zhiv chelovek" (A Man Survives), an escapee-zek is saved from death by freezing by a group of villagers. The story tells of his three states of consciousness—present, far past, and near past. At the story's end the zek confesses who he is. Just before the publication of Solzhenitsyn's "Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha" (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich) in the November issue of Novyi mir, the daily newspaper, Pravda, published a short half-page story by Valeriia Gerasimova. Entitled "Dobraia pamiat" (A Good Memory) it depicts a scene in which a woman communist, arrested and exiled during Stalin's time, returns to see her family. Never disclosing her identity, instead posing as a reporter, she encounters her daughter who has been raised by relatives. Solzhenitsyn's hero, Kostoglotov, in Rakovyi korpus (Cancer Ward), tells his nurse how he came to spend time in the camps for anti-Soviet agitation. After serving in the war, Kostoglotov had returned to school where he and his friends often met to flirt with girls, dance, and talk politics: "And sometimes we talked about ... about him! [i.e. Stalin]" Voicing their dissatisfactions led to their arrests. Like Gerasimova's short story, Aksenov's "The Queer One" concerns a nostalgic visit. An old man, an Old Bolshevik who had spent eighteen years in the camps in Vorkuta
and exile in Siberia, returns to visit his native village. In 1949-57 Lydiia Chukovskaia wrote *Spusk pod vodu* (Going Under); published in New York in 1972 the novel describes a woman writer who goes to a writers' rest-home.\(^{34}\) There she thinks constantly about her husband who was arrested in 1937 "without right to correspond." Another writer, an ex-zek, tells her about camp life, explains that her husband had been shot ("without right to correspond" only being a euphemism); and describes the story he is writing, dedicated to a friend he had had in the camps. Disappointment and outrage attend the woman when she discovers that the story is a whitewash and she decides to break with this man with whom she has fallen in love. Another novel written much earlier but published much later in the West is Vasilii Grossman's *Vse techet* (Forever Flowing).\(^{35}\) Written in 1955-63 and published in Frankfurt in 1970, the hero is an ex-zek. The novel has little plot or character development and consists mainly of the hero's thoughts on the camps, Stalin, and so forth.

These ex-zeks have many things in common. First and foremost they are Article 58-ers, that is, they are political prisoners, not criminals. They also all come from the professional and educated sections of Soviet society; at the time of arrest they were engineers (Dudintsev), a professor of agronomy (Erenburg), a poet-film director (Nekrasov), a "specialistka" (Gerasimova), a student (Solzhenitsyn), a party activist (Aksenov), a writer (Chukovskaia), and a student
(Grossman). All were victims of what has been termed "the cult of personality," that is, the fault lay with Stalin rather than with the man or woman arrested. All are loyal citizens, both before their arrests and after.

The ex-zeks divide themselves into two groups over whether their stay in the camps is described in the novel or story in which they appear. A line from Erenburg's "Vesna" best describes the hero's attitude towards camp life in works published in the Soviet Union: "He never spoke of what he had been through."36 Aksenov's hero, Zbaikov, dwells on his prison interrogation: "When they took me back to my cell after the interrogations at which I had been subjected to 'methods of active investigation,' introduced by the People's Commissar Yezhov, I often kept seeing toy ponies and elephants flashing by in circles."37 Zbaikov only names Vorkuta as the camp to which he had been sent and the Siberian region of Krasnoiarsk as his place of exile, never describing either. On the other hand, the second group of ex-zek stories describes life in the camps. Not surprisingly these are the novels published only in the West: Solzhenitsyn's Cancer Ward, Chukovskaia's Going Under, and Grossman's Forever Flowing. Solzhenitsyn and Grossman, in particular, show glimpses of camp lives witnessed by many camp memoirists. They also reflect in their novels the opinion of Deming Brown who, writing a decade after Marc Slonim and with less optimism, said of post-Stalinist literature and the camp
During these two decades the range and variety of literary topics increased markedly. The most important of these for the moral welfare of the nation were the prison camps - the essence and end-product of the police state and the most prominent single symbol of Stalinism. In published literature, unfortunately, the topic had an extremely short life but, as we have seen, the camps became the outstanding theme in underground literature.38

Voinovich's ex-zek, Lesha Zharov, is not a main character in *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*. He appears early in the First Part of the novel just after a scene between the kolkhoz chairman, Golubev, and the novel's hero, Chonkin. Golubev at this point in the novel still suspects that Chonkin has been sent to spy on the kolkhoz and its chairman. Drunk and very excited Golubev demands: "'And what are your orders? You want my Party Card? Here it is. Prison? All right, I'm ready. Better prison than living like this.'" (p. 74)39 He immediately thinks that he has done the wrong thing and that "this time he was really going to catch it." But he excuses himself: "Whatever happens, he thought irritably, unhitching his horse, better it happens now than to sit trembling, waiting for it to happen. Whatever happens, happens." (p. 75).40

Arrest, interrogation, and the camps await Golubev should he be denounced. His irritation settles, however, as he sorts papers in his office. At this point he overhears a conversation between Lesha Zharov and Nikolai Kurzov. Though a Party man Golubev is a suspicious and superstitious man.
He pays close attention to the conversation: "... And he took it [the conversation] right to heart. It even occurred to him that maybe it was no accident that he was overhearing it, maybe all this information would be coming in handy in the not-too-distant future." (p. 76).

Lesha Zharov, the reader discovers as the scene proceeds, is a native of the area. Three years earlier he had been sentenced to eight years for stealing a sack of flour from the mill. With his visorless cap, ragged boots, and stubble-covered shaved head, Zharov looks the part of an ex-prisoner. Appropriately enough Voinovich places him initially beneath a wall-newspaper for Lesha has come to tell Golubev things the like of which the Chairman will never read in a Soviet newspaper of any sort.

Previous to meeting Golubev Zharov has been describing life in a prison cell to Kurzov. He spins a farce about clean towels, honey-pots, initiations, the fifth corner, and a parachute jump. How should the reader understand Zharov's nonsense stories? Are they just nonsense? Are they meaningless? Do they give a full "pod-tekst" parallel to the given text? or a partial one? To what do these various terms, like the parachute jump, refer? Many of Zharov's references are to real prison dialect: "vor v zakone" ("v zakone" - "lawfully"), "parasha" ("latrine pail; rumour, gossip, scuttlebutt"), "piaty ugol" ("fifth corner [is cornered]"), "parashiutnyi desant" (parachute: "Prison slang for a means
of transmitting messages by lowering, hoisting or swinging them with the use of cotton thread or wool; "parashiutist" - "a prisoner who sleeps next to the latrine pail, parasha, in a crowded prison cell", "starosta" ("barrack representative (appointed or elected prisoner); lit. elder"), "samodeiatel'nost'" ("samodeiatel'nyi vecher" - "amateurs' show").

Zharov, the reader will note, was sentenced for theft. Most of the camp memoirists were political prisoners, sentenced under Article 58. Even before the revolution, in Tsarist times, politica
tals saw themselves as a breed apart from the common prisoner who might be sentenced for theft, prostitution, or murder. Politica
tals had certain privileges, were treated with respect by their guards and the prison authorities, held and practised their political creed and, in particular, helped one another in any difficulty faced during a prison term. After the revolution this tradition was maintained, both by the prisoners and, to some extent, by their guards. Roy Medvedev writes of this period:

No contemporary state, including a Socialist one, can do without prisons. As early as the beginning of the twenties some jails for political prisoners were created in the Soviet Union. "Politica
tals" then referred to S-R's, Mensheviks, and anarchists, that is, members of the "Socialists" parties. The members of other parties - Cadets, Musawatists, and White-Guardists in general - were called counterrevolutionaries and imprisoned together with criminals. The regimen of the political prisoners in the twenties was relatively lenient. They received extra food, were exempt
from forced labor, and were not subjected to humiliating inspections. In political jails self-government was allowed; the politicals elected "elders," who dealt with the prison administration. They kept their clothes, books, pocket knives; they could subscribe to newspapers and magazines.49

In Stalinist times the notion of a political prisoner was abandoned. The politicals were declared common prisoners and the criminal prisoners were set against them. Many a memoirist writes of the ways in which the criminals terrorized the politicals, stealing their food and clothing, acting as informers, humiliating them, and so on.

Most memoirists of the Stalinist camps were politicals: Communist Party members, foreign communists, Social Revolutionaries, believers, or nationalists. In the literature of the "thaw" and in the samizdat literature most ex-zeks are former political prisoners. The reader must look to a story Vladimir Maksimov's "Zhiv chelovek," to find another depiction of a thief and the camps. Sergei Zarev, however, is also a victim of "the cult of personality," like many of the literary hero-zeks above. His father, he recalls as he lies half-conscious, was arrested. His school-friends are not allowed to associate with him any longer. He feels nobody really likes him. He runs away from home and drifts into a life of petty, and then more serious, crime. The hero is basically a good man and his goodness shows itself in the last scene in the story when Zarev, realizing that the villagers who saved him from freezing (in a storm during his escape
attempt) still do not know who he is and in what danger he has put them after all their kindness — a young man died while going through the storm to find a doctor at the next village — confesses who and what he is.

Voinovich's Zharov differs from both Maksimov's thief-hero and the other zek-heroes mentioned. In their treatment of the camp-and returned-zek-themes the above writers, other than Voinovich, have approached their material with a seriousness it no doubt deserves. They have provided their readers with a realistic — be it critical or socialist — portrayal of an issue that should join the ranks as the twentieth century's contribution to the "prokliatyevoprosy" that plagued nineteenth century authors. Voinovich's attitude to the Soviet "accursed questions" is irreverent. Though a comic writer is basically serious about his topic, unlike his colleagues Voinovich uses a much lighter touch. Secondly, Zharov, like Zarev, was originally sentenced as a thief not as a political. Zharov, however, is not a thief in the same sense as those described above by Solzhenitsyn. Voinovich's hero is a peasant whose only crime was to steal some flour from the kolkhoz mill. Chonkin is not peopled with intellectuals and their attempts to understand the world around themselves. A returned political would create havoc in the world of Krasnoe and destroy the lunacy that is its saving grace, as well as the kind of satirical conceit that Voinovich has created to this point in the novel. Zharov is
not presented as a fool. He has, as the reader discovers in other village characters throughout the novel, a good amount of native _khitrost'_ ("craftiness, cunning"), an ability to survive, and, perhaps most importantly, an ability to laugh at what goes on around him.

His conversation is divided into two parts. The first is with Nikolai Kurzov, another kolkhoz member, and the second is with Golubev. The first part is concerned with prison cells and the second part is concerned with prison camps.

Zharov's conversation with Kurzov is sheer fantasy on the former's part. Two details from real life are mentioned. Zharov repeats a phrase found time and time again in the memoirs of ex-zeks. Whenever they would dare to complain about conditions some interrogator or guard would answer "Tam tebe ne sanatorii." (p. 71). Evgeniia Ginzburg, a dedicated Party member who spent time in the camps during Stalin's time, tells the story in her memoirs, _Journey Into the Whirlwind_, of one of her overseers who supervised her lumbering team in Elgen: "'This isn't a seaside resort!' he began in terms only too familiar to us. 'You've got your norm to fulfil, and you'll be fed according to your output. For sabotage you'll go to the punishment cell.'"^50^ Irena, a fifteen-year-old Pole, also tells of interrogators in the prison in Polotsk who repeatedly told her: "'Vam tut nie kurort.'"^51^ Zharov also describes a cell election for cell leader:
"In there they elect a leader. One man sits with slips of paper with last names on them between his knees. All the rest are blindfolded and have their hands tied and they take turns walking up to him and pulling out the slips of paper with their teeth."

"Not so bad," said Kurzov with satisfaction.
"Nothing so terrible about that."
"Of course it's nothing so terrible. Except when your turn comes, you don't get the knees, you get the guy's bare ass." (pp. 76-77)

Zharov's description is an answer to Kurzov's question: "Do they have elections in there?" When Zharov answers, "Just like out here" and then proceeds with the explanation quoted above, he suggests that in both elections all the voter, whose hands have been tied and eyes closed, can do is "kiss the ass" of the man who controls the election, i.e. Stalin. The only difference between elections is that "na vole" the voter does it figuratively and in Zharov's description of prison life he does it literally.

The conversation with Golubev starts in a different way. Zharov springs to his feet as soon as he sees the Chairman; he speaks in a tone of voice people use when meeting someone they have not seen for a long time (as opposed to Golubev's familiar tone and familiar "ty" form of address); he wipes his boots carefully before he enters Golubev's office ("kak budto boialsia kogo-nibud' razbudit'.") he waits till the chairman sits first; he sits on the edge of the stool; he asks for work respectfully, all the while nervously pulling at his cap; in effect, Zharov behaves like a recently released prisoner facing a figure of authority. He behaves
appropriately. Golubev brings up Zharov's past and insists that he had warned him to behave. Only then does Zharov rebel against having his past brought forward. He sighs deeply and begins to fantasize his camp-life again, begins to have a little fun at the chairman's expense, to repay Golubev his too excellent memory.

In Zharov's description camp life consists of good bosses and bad bosses. Good bosses, if they want to fulfill the plan, feed you - even compote with dinner - and dress you warmly, while bad bosses will starve you to death. Prisoners get movies, amateur shows, and a bath every ten days, as well as the company of a group of educated fellow prisoners.  

Golubev is surprised and fascinated by what he hears. "'So, in other words, there are good bosses?!'" he asks with the unspoken comment that he expected to hear only about bad bosses. His naivety about the camps - in the form of the lack of any real knowledge most Communist party members had during Stalin's reign - shows itself in the question about "massovykh meropriiatii" ("recreation") and deserves Zharov's reply: "'Much as you like'" (p. 79). Zharov's Peoples' Artists, Honoured Artists, and "regular" artists give "amateur" shows better than any found in the city.

Golubev, however, cannot believe that a Member of the Academy would try to foul up the chimes on the Kremlin so that they would give the whole country the wrong time or that the Member would receive ten years in the camps as punishment.
Accusations as absurd as these did appear in actual trials in the thirties. Voinovich continues to ridicule "wrecking" charges by following the Academy Member's crimes with the chimes with an example of wrecking and sabotage in Golubev's office. Zharov informs Golubev that his cigarettes' brand name, Deli, is itself sabotage. Deli, is not a city in India, according to Zharov, but an acronym for the slogan "Down with the Entire Leninist International." As a good Stalinist-Communist Golubev should concern himself with treason wherever he finds it. Instead he insists that the slogan is not his and Zharov's affair and that he would rather hear about life "in there."

The Deli episode, like the Kremlin chimes' one, is comical because the effect is totally out of proportion to the cause. The cause in itself is suspect. Golubev cannot believe that anyone would foul up the Kremlin chimes so as to put the country on the wrong time or get ten years in the camps as a result. Nor does he care about any sabotage linked to the name of the cigarettes he smokes. On the other hand, as in other instances in the novel, Voinovich has created an instance of gallows humour here. When the reader recalls that such nonsense filled the camps in Stalin's days the episode is not as funny nor ludicrous. Elinor Lipper, a Dutch communist jailed in the Soviet Union during the late 1930s, writes that there circulated "... a popular joke that the Soviet Union is made up of three classes: prisoners, former
prisoners, and future prisoners. That is not so funny; there is scarcely a family in the country which hasn't some relative, whether close or distant, in prison or camp."

Fascinated by what he hears Golubev summarily dismisses Kurzov when he asks about his logging duties. (Nor has he noticed that Zharov has slipped into the familiar "ty" when addressing him and is treating him as an equal.) Golubev grilled Zharov about life in the camps till, as Granny Dunia saw, one o'clock in the morning. Finally Golubev was satisfied "life in there wasn't so bad." Perhaps life in there was better than out of the camps: there one had a ten hour work day compared to a dawn-till-dusk work day on the kolkhoz; three meals a day compared to two (if lucky); regular movies as compared to none. Golubev was satisfied and in a rare good frame of mind when he went home. As he lies in his bed he recalls what Zharov had told him and falls asleep believing that "Even in there people live." (p. 81).

Golubev believes that in the camps people could live. But how did they really live? Had Golubev been sent to the camps for the mismanagement of the kolkhoz he would have gone sentenced under Article 58 for "wrecking" or "sabotaging" the kolkhoz. The charge would have placed him in the category of politicals and no doubt once in the camps he would have found himself pitted against the criminals, where he might have found Zharov (who is not a "hardened" criminal but certainly a "repeater"). Lipper describes relations between the two
groups: "Nothing contributed so much to the wretchedness of our camp life as the criminals." The camp administration played them off against the political prisoners. The criminals were told that they had broken the law and were paying the penalty in the camps. The politicals, on the other hand, were "enemies of the people," "counterrevolutionaries." They were responsible for everything that had gone wrong in the country and must be annihilated. This propaganda gave the criminals free rein to commit various crimes against the politicals for which the criminals were never punished: physical abuse, theft, false accusations, and rape.

Varlam Shalamov described the prisoners' bath, those same ones that fascinated Golubev. He explained why prisoners who are dirty, sweaty, and covered with lice would not want to take a bath:

... On bath days there's no spare time allotted. You go before or after work. After long hours in the cold (and the summer is no better) one wants only to plod to the barrack, swallow something and sleep. The baths delay the moment: it's unbearable. ...

The bath and the disinfection don't take more than an hour. But there's the waiting. ... When the cold is particularly intense, to save the prisoners too long a wait, they are allowed to go into the changing room designed for ten or fifteen people, where a hundred or so fully clothed men now cram themselves. ... Profiting from the noise and the confusion, the thieves steal their comrades' property, and as there are several brigades there, the stolen objects are never recovered. ...

The second, or rather the third, "but" is that on bath days a special gang, in the absence of the prisoners, carries out the cleaning of the barracks.
They scrub, they wash, they mercilessly throw away everything superfluous. Now the least rag is precious when one thinks of the energy needed to acquire it: a pair of gloves or spare slippers, to say nothing of food or other objects, all disappear without trace and almost by regulation while the prisoners are at the baths.56

The bath itself, as Shalamov describes it, consists of "a cup of lukewarm water and ice ad lib." The bath-house is usually cold; the disinfection rarely kills the lice; underclothing is usually returned damp, except for the few who are lucky enough to have had their clothing placed closest to the stove.

Lipper described food in the camps. She begins: "It is impossible to live on the camp ration for prisoners, for more than two years, at any rate. By the third year whoever tries it is a physical wreck; by the fourth he has become incapable of work; and by the fifth year he bites the dust, or more often the snow."57 The daily bread ration for prisoners is scaled to their fulfillment of the labour quota, with higher rations in all categories for men. Lipper listed food for all prisoners for each day: "3.5 ounces of salted fish; 2.1 ounces of cereals - barley, barley-groats, millet, or oats - 0.17 ounce of meal or starch; 0.5 ounce of vegetable oil; 0.34 ounce of sugar; 0.106 ounce of herb tea; 10.5 ounces of cabbage leaves, brined."58 Lipper pointed out that "In evaluating the prison rations it must be kept in mind that these rations are for people who perform the heaviest kind of physical labor twelve, fourteen, and sixteen hours a day in a country which during the eight months of winter has the lowest
temperatures of any inhabited country on the face of the earth. One of the most frequent causes of death in prisoners is polyavitaminosis, i.e. lack of vitamins; the other frequent cause of death is dystrophia alimentaris, i.e. starvation. Prisoners sometimes suffered such hunger that they ate almost anything on which they could lay their hands: "Prisoners were so hungry that at Zarosshy Spring they ate, in July, the carcass of a horse which had been lying for more than a week and which stank and was crawling with flies and worms. At the Utinyi prisoners ate half a barrel of grease which had been brought to oil the wheelbarrows. At Mylga they fed on moss, like reindeer."

A prisoner's problems did not end once he or she was released from the camps. Lipper described the kinds of difficulties faced by ex-prisoners. They received an internal passport marked with a rubber stamp called the "minus 135." This meant that a prisoner was not allowed to settle in any of the 135 largest cities in the Soviet Union, within sixty miles of them, or in any borderer areas or administrative centres. They were also forbidden to return to their former place of residence. No matter where they went, however, they were immediately recognized as former convicts.

Because of Zharov's fabrications, Golubev believes that life in the camps is better – or at least no worse – than life outside. Zharov has built his fantasies on half-truths posing as whole-truths. While the reader may believe that
prisoners in the camps had baths, meals, and bosses, the well-read reader will recognize that Zharov has purposefully not mentioned, for example, that the food was not sufficient to keep a worker alive; that it was often made of rotten vegetables; that there was never any meat, little edible fish, and no fats, that fruit - like the compote - was never served, and so on. Zharov simply suggests the bare outlines and Golubev, naively and optimistically, fills in the incorrect details. Fooled by Chonkin whom he believes has been sent to spy on him and fooled by Zharov who he believes has told him of a not too unpleasant life in the camps, Golubev mellows. He is unusually tender to his wife when he returns home and he comforts himself with the thought that "in there" people can live. Ignorance, they say, is bliss.

The second mention of prisoners in the novel concerns Golubev and Chonkin once more. In the latter half of Part II the entire Institute (i.e. local secret police) goes to Krasnoe to arrest Chonkin - after he has been denounced as a deserter, debaucher, drunk, hooligan, and saboteur. Chonkin manages to capture the entire lot: "It had not been an especially complicated matter for Chonkin to arrest the entire staff of the district Institution. The real difficulties arose afterwards." (p. 246). Chonkin encounters three problems with his prisoners: how to guard them continually yet sleep himself; how to guard them while they went to the
outhouse; and, how to feed them. Chonkin had expected that soon after the disappearance of the Institute from Dolgov someone would come looking for them. To forget about one private (i.e. himself) was somehow understandable to Chonkin but he could not understand "ni gu-gu" about a whole district organization. Chonkin could only conclude "people notice what is right in front of their eyes, but what's not there doesn't get noticed." (p. 250).

To add to Chonkin's problems Lieutenant Filippov continually pesters Chonkin about the Geneva Convention which, the lieutenant declares, provides for the humane treatment of prisoners of war. The lieutenant insists that according to this convention prisoners were to be supplied with ample food, drink, and clothing as well as courteous treatment. Chonkin, like Golubev who was so impressed with Zharov's description of life in the camps, decides that he "would have been happy to live like that himself, but he didn't know how to go about getting Geneva-type treatment." (p. 249).

Are the members of the Institute, while they are being held by Chonkin, prisoners of war? Consider what has happened: on an anonymous letter of denunciation the Institute (i.e. the secret police) has sent a group of its own men to arrest Chonkin. Chonkin refuses to be arrested by a non-military officer (he knows that the regulations do not allow the removal of a sentry from his post except by a warrant; that these men are not from his unit; and, that they
are not wearing the right kind of uniform). Chonkin then captures his would-be captors. All this occurs while the Soviet Union is at war with Germany. Germany, not the inhabitants of the Soviet Union, are the enemy of the Soviet Union at this time. If the inhabitants are not the enemy, moreover, neither is a member of the armed forces who is standing sentry duty to prevent the capture of a downed airplane by the Germans. In other words, Chonkin is not an enemy power. Following the "General Provisions" of the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war - referred to repeatedly by Filippov - the Institute is not a prisoner of war. Filippov's insistence on treatment as a prisoner of war may indicate, however, that Filippov, as an officer in the Secret Police, regards other Soviet citizens as the enemy with whom the Police constantly wage war. Solzhenitsyn and others might agree.

Much of what Filippov says about the Geneva Convention is correct. Within its ninety-seven articles there are those that deal with food, clothing, and treatment. Article 11 provided that prisoners of war receive sufficient food and water. Disciplinary measures affecting food were prohibited. Under Article 12 the detaining power was obliged to provide prisoners with clothing, underwear, and footwear and to keep these items in repair. In all camps canteens were to be installed where various items could be purchased at local
prices. Profits from canteen sales were to be used for the benefit of the prisoners. Article 2 demanded that at all times prisoners of war were to be protected and humanely treated. Measures of violence against them was forbidden.

Lieutenant Filippov, however, though he was ever pestering Chonkin about these rules like a "bol'shoi zakonnik" ("great lawyer"), is demanding rights under false pretenses. The Soviet Union was not a signatory of the 1929 Agreement nor had it signed the Geneva Convention during the Second World War, the period during which Filippov is held "prisoner" by Chonkin.

Chonkin did realize that his prisoners, as well as he and Niura, needed food. He sets out for Granny Dunia's with an empty flask. When it is full he places it on Golubev's desk and the two, despite Golubev's recent promise to himself to quit drinking, sit down to empty the flask. When Golubev complains drunkenly to Chonkin that there are no men left to work on the kolkhoz fields, Chonkin offers to alleviate the situation. He offers his prisoners as field workers. Golubev, "as a Communist," is afraid of the Institute. Chonkin, exasperated, declares: "'... If you don't want them, I can go to any other kolkhoz with them. Anybody'd take us on now and thank me for it too.'" (p. 255). Golubev was torn between his responsibilities as a party-member and as a kolkhoz chairman: "'The classics of Marxism', he said uncertainly, 'teach us that there is no great profit to be..."
gained from slave labour. But to tell you the truth, Vania, we're in no position to turn up our noses at even a little profit.'" (p. 255). The two keep on drinking and eventually Chonkin walks away with notes from Golubev instructing the kolkhoz brigade leader to take on Chonkin's "team" as volunteers and to issue them a week's provisions in advance. The next day a sobered Golubev is so frightened by what he has done that he cannot go to work. Finally he goes to the fields. Chonkin's team, he discovers, is working full strength on a large potato field with Chonkin sitting guard.

The Marxist notion that no profit can be gained from slave-labour is shown to be false. Chonkin's team picks a record potato harvest and does so ahead of schedule. The District and Regional Committees are so impressed that they send in glowing reports and want to report the success to Stalin personally. If the fictional Stalin in any way resembles the real Stalin, the notion that prisoners would set records in labour would in no way astound him. He would agree with those Western commentators who argued that not only can profit be gained from slave-labour - and Stalin had an entire archipelago as proof - but it also can be self-justifying. The camp system in Siberia provided Stalin's economy with a source of cheap, compliant, easily replaceable work force. It required little capital wasted on food, clothing, and housing. It worked in parts of the north, central, and eastern Soviet Union where most workers could not be induced to go.
The camp work force received no real wage, for the pretense of a wage was destroyed by the pretense of state maintenance. The camps turned a profit. Their workers did not complain and when they did those complaints could be ignored and those complaining could be punished for the instruction of others. No one asked about this labour force, neither in the Soviet Union nor without. Like the famine of 1932-33, the camps were a rousing success story for state-capitalism and for Stalin.

The next chapter in this episode begins with the narrator musing on the nature of work. "Work ennobles a man" he begins, repeating a Soviet cliché and then editorializes: "But it depends on who." (p. 257). Some of Chonkin's prisoners were indifferent and some were happy to be outdoors and busy. Lieutenant Filippov, on the other hand, fought against Chonkin's violation of international law concerning the treatment of prisoners of war wherein commanding officers were never to be used for manual labour. Captain Miliaga all the while planned his escape, worrying why no one from Dolgov had been sent to look for the Institute and its indispensable captain. Svintsov, a peasant by birth and outlook, fell on the work with "neiz'iasnimoe naslazhdenie."

Before Chonkin sends his "team" of prisoners out to work in the fields Svintsov had experienced "some sort of disturbing feeling, that oppressed and alarmed him." Back again in the village with time to sit and think - though
Svintsov no doubt was unaware that he was thinking - his conscience re-awoke. Previously he had thought of people as trees: "if he were told to cut them down he cut them down; if he were not told to, he wouldn't touch them." (p. 248). Now he thought about people, that is, he thought about his victims, differently: "Good Lord, how did it ever come to pass that he, Svintsov, a simple, gentle muzhik, had become a murderer?" (p. 248). The narrator comments ironically that had Svintsov been better educated he would have been prepared to accept certain ideas, like historical expediency. He would have learned that when expediency is applied to the individual it has connotations of self-interest, selfishness or personal advantage; however, when expediency is applied to history it suggests a force outside human control and demands certain behaviour. Applied to history expediency also suggests amorality. History, Svintsov would have learned, with its own determinism, rather than the government or the Party with its own self-interest, demanded he behave as he did. History demanded he become a murderer. Education would have comforted Svintsov as he lay in Niura's hut. It would have provided ready-made answers; it would have helped Svintsov not face the truth. But Svintsov was not an educated man; therefore "his conscience, once awakened, would not go back to sleep. It gnawed at him and gave him no peace." (p. 249). Working in the kolkhoz fields he experiences "an inexplicable delight" (p. 257). He drives himself to the
point of exhaustion, the reader suspects, to avoid thinking. In effect he works physically to avoid the mental work that if continued might indeed have ennobled him.

The narrator again comments at the beginning of the fourth chapter of this episode on the nature of work. Once more Marxist scientific thought is shown to be wrong: "Although science contends that slave labour is not self-justifying, the practice of using the Institution's workers at the Red Sheaf kolkhoz proved the contrary." (p. 258). The potato harvest, because of Chonkin's team, is a great success. The District Committee sends a representative to Krasnoe and he confirms the reports. He accepts the "full utilization of reserve labour force" unquestioningly as the cause. The local newspaper runs an article on the kolkhoz's success and reports are sent to the provincial capital as well as to Moscow. Golubev also hears that at the District level there was talk of sending a report to Comrade Stalin. Golubev is frightened by the publicity he is getting. He and the reader know that his fame is built on lies, as are his regular reports to the District Committee on harvests, and that if the truth were known he would be in serious trouble. After a few drinks Chonkin, however, convinces Golubev not to worry and the Chairman reassigns the team to a new sector.

Voinovich presents the reader with two sets of prisoners, those described by Zharov and those who make up Chonkin's team. The prisoner or ex-prisoner as he appears
Voinovich offers the prisoner as seen through the eyes of two of his peasants characters, Zharov and Chonkin. Lesha Zharov's description is fantasy built on the lie of omission. For example, Zharov never describes what work he did in the camp, though he does provide the minimal information about the existence of bosses and plans - synonymous with life on the outside - and leaves Golubev to fill in whatever details he liked. The reader laughs at how Golubev wills himself to believe Zharov's tales.

Chonkin's episode with the Institute, on the other hand, is a parody of camp life. First of all, he and Niura arrest those who themselves usually do the arresting (i.e. NKVD). The Institute members are easily frightened and give up with little resistance; here the reader sees little of the bravado of the men who beat up old Moisha Stalin. Chonkin immediately puts the men to work helping Golubev who is short of manpower due to the draft for the war. Other men have been drafted but the Institute has remained behind; other men who usually did field work have gone to fight the war and the Institute, thanks to this turn of events, finally has the chance to do a real day's work. As prisoners the Institute members, like real camp prisoners, work. The Institute also eats, but not Zharov's dinner with compote, nor the barely adequate, barely palatable meals described by camp memoirists; the Institute, at Chonkin's insistence, gets
"kormezhku tri raza v den'" ("three squares a day"). The reader would do well to remember the camp memoirists. The Institute sleeps under guard, not in barracks nor tents nor trenches but in Niura's house. Rather than guards who have been encouraged to pull the trigger at the slightest false move, Chonkin sits alone to guard his team and nods his head to stay awake. Chonkin calls his prisoners his "team," unlike real prisoners who were called various names, the mildest of which might be "bastard." The work the Institute does is not as strenuous as the work done in the gold mines or lumber camps that were peopled by prisoners in Siberia where poor food, long hours, inadequate clothing coupled with high work norms killed many worker-prisoners within two or three years. Chonkin's team, on the whole, are pleased to be out of doors and busy, especially Svintsov who delights in the familiar peasant's work. Lieutenant Filippov complains that international law forbids using officers for manual labour but he meets an equality of treatment reminiscent of real Siberian camps wherein peasant and general worked side by side. Chonkin's prisoners fare well in comparison with real prisoners.

Within Voinovich's parody of camp life he punctures another Soviet state myth. Communist doctrine, the myth holds, is a scientific truth and therefore irrefutable. Voinovich takes three propositions from "Marxist and scientific thought" and disproves them. He creates comic situations to show his
reader that profit is to be gained from slave labour, that work does not necessarily ennoble man, and that slave-labour is self-justifying. His refutation is all the more ironic because the episode involves secret police agents. His comedy is all the more grim when the reader recalls the Siberian labour camps that prompted it. The next chapter discusses the source of a large percentage of the camps' victims: the Communist Party.
NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR


4 Caute, p. 102.

5 Quoted in Caute, p. 104.

6 Quoted in Caute, p. 103.


8 Dallin and Nicolaevsky, pp. 87-106.

9 Swianiewicz, pp. 189-207.


11 Solzhenitsyn, p. 594.

12 Malaiia sovetskaiia entsiklopediia, 1st ed. (Moskva: Sovetskaiia entsiklopediia, 1934), VIII, 17; hereafter cited as MSE.

13 MSE, 3rd ed., IV, 190.

14 Bol'shia sovetskaiia entsiklopediia, 2nd ed. (Moskva: Sovetskaiia entsiklopediia, 1937), XXXIV, 1976; hereafter cited as BSE.

15 BSE, 2nd ed., XXII, 499.

17 BSE, 2nd ed., XXII, 499.

18 BSE, 2nd ed., XXII, 499.

19 BSE, 1st ed., XXXIV, 176.

20 M. Chumandrin, "Vozvrashchenie," Zvezda, No. 6 (1934).


22 Solzhenitsyn, p. 443.

23 Solzhenitsyn, p. 443.

24 Solzhenitsyn, pp. 443-44.


27 II'ia Erenburg, "Vesna," Znamia (1956).


Elizabeth Lermolo, who spent time in Stalin's prisons and camps, has related a conversation she once had with a guard. This guard, whom she describes as a simple, kind muzhik, agreed with Golubev. When she lamented that she wanted to leave prison and be free, he answered:

"Oh, so-o-o that's it. You want to be free? You're certainly a queer one. You ought to live in the free world these days and it would serve you right. You think it's a picnic to be free. A lot you know."

He snapped shut the window. A moment later, he opened it again. "You think it's bad here? You get your food, you get your lodging, everything is served to you, no fuss, no bother. In the free world, you'd have to work for it. And in addition, all sorts of party demands: volunteer for this, volunteer for that. . . . A lot you understand about freedom.


The kind of fear that Golubev is suffering has been portrayed earlier in Soviet literature. See A. Afinogenov's two plays, *Strax* (Fear, 1931), *Lozh'* (The Lie, 1933), and N. Erdman's *Samoubiitsa* (The Suicide, 1932).


Carpovich, p. 252.

Galler and Marquess, p. 149.

Carpovich, p. 289.

Carpovich, p. 270.


When Ginzburg was in the Krasin Street Prison in Kazan (April 1937) the nurse who searched the new women prisoners said to her with compassion in her voice: "Its so different from the old days. We used to get thieves, prostitutes. Now its such educated ladies, you really feel sorry for them." (Ginzburg, p. 102).

Article 119 of the Constitution of the USSR declares: "The citizens of the USSR have the right to recreation."


Lipper, pp. 147-48.

Quoted in Conquest, Kolyma, pp. 137-38.

Lipper, p. 197.

Lipper, p. 198.

Lipper, p. 199. Camp prison rations may be compared to those of prisoner-of-war camps. Robert Conquest compares Kolyma with the infamous Japanese camps on the River Kwai:

There [i.e. camps on the River Kwai] the daily ration norm was 700 grams of rice, 600 of vegetables, 100 of meat, 20 of sugar, 20 of salt and 5 of oil. This, notably superior to the Kolyma ration in spite of the latter area's
added disadvantage of extreme cold, was also
the ration actually delivered and not merely
the official figure. Like the Soviet ration,
it was, however, greatly deficient in vitamins.
It gave a calorie total of about 3400. The
Soviet diet in strict-regime camps is, even
in 1977, only 2600 calories, punishment diet
is still 2100 calories, and prisoners in the
strict-punishment cells get 1300. The
international standard for a man working "very
actively" for 8 hours a day is 3100 to 3900
calories. The calories deficit alone, to say
nothing of vitamins and fats, is thus something
like 1000 calories a day at a minimum.
See Conquest, Kolyma, p. 127.

Conquest quotes General Karpunich's account of what
happened in a large-scale dislocation of food: food was
delivered to the camps late or in a totally inedible state.
See Conquest, Kolyma, p. 130.

International Convention relative to the Treatment
of Prisoners of War, Geneva, July 27, 1929. (London: His
Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931), p. 50; hereafter referred
to as International Convention.

International Convention, p. 50.

International Convention, p. 48.

The standard literary term for "murderer" is
"ubiitsa." Svintsov uses the colloquial form, "dushegub"
(also found as "dushegubets" or "dushegubnik"). The
colloquial form is more descriptive and, perhaps, more
literal, composed as it is of "dusha" ("soul") and "gubit"
("ruin, spoil, destroy"). Svintsov, indeed imagines
himself a "soul-destroyer," including his very own.
Communist Party cadres are staple characters in Soviet literature. Military commissars were the heroes of such early Soviet classics as Furmanov's *Chapaev* (1923) and Fadeev's *The Rout* (1927). In the twenties the party representative was not always heroic. For example, Kataev satirized the new Soviet bureaucrat in *The Embezzlers* (1927) as did Olesha in *Envy* (1927). Libedinskii described the growth of a complacent and comfortable bourgeois attitude amongst his fellow Communists in *The Birth of a Hero* (1930). A composite description, however, of a typical "communist hero" would include terms like loyal, brave, stalwart, level-headed, iron-willed, stern, charismatic, and dedicated. He would solve problems, give sage advice, inspire by example, and perform the role of *deus ex machina*. The Communist Party stopped dominating the fiction of the best writers after Stalin's death as literature became more concerned with private lives. An entirely different attitude to a party member was shown in Maksimov's *The Seven Days of Creation* (1971), published only in the West. Maksimov's principal hero, Lashkov, in the party cadre from the regime's earliest years, looks back on his life to discover he and the Party had been wrong. Voinovich's party officials are not as philosophical. Rather they are
party representatives whose ideas and behaviour puncture the fiction of the invincible Communist Party and its leaders.

In March 1939 the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had 1,589,000 full members. When Stalin took firm control of the Party in 1933 its membership stood at three and a half million. Kirov's assassination on 1 December 1934 changed the character of the party purges. Stalin and the secret police transformed the party into Stalin's chosen elite. The party in the thirties had evolved away from being a party of the proletariat and had become a party of the Soviet intelligentsia and bureaucracy.

The Party diligently cultivated an image for itself. In this fiction the CPSU was a democratic organization representing the masses, humane, just, peace-loving, progressive. Reality showed the opposite to be true: that the Party was authoritarian, requiring unconditional obedience from its members, that it tolerated no political view other than the Leader's, and that it accepted and even condoned violence, specially in regards to its own members. The Party also used the secret police as its special force to keep Party members and the general public believing, or at least behaving as if they believed, the Party's latest demands and declarations.

Voinovich offers his readers five Party representatives: Revkin, First Secretary of the District Committee; Kilin, the kolkhoz Party Organiser (partorg); Borisov, Secretary of
the District Commission Machine and Tractor Station; Iartsev, Senior Political Leader (politruk) in Chonkin's troop; and the Party's foremost representative, Joseph Stalin.

Andrei Revkin makes his appearance in the novel after the secret police (the Institution) disappear from Dolgov. Despite its reputation and prominence (or because of it) no one in Dolgov "gave a hoot" ("ne oiknul"). No one, that is, except the First Secretary:

No one knows how long this disgraceful state of affairs might have continued had not the First Secretary of the District Committee, Comrade Revkin, gradually begun to sense that somehow something was missing in the world around him. This odd sensation grew gradually stronger; it stuck in him like a splinter and, wherever he was, Revkin thought about it - at his office at the District Committee, at a conference of outstanding workers, at a session of the District Soviet, even at home. Having failed to come to any understanding of his condition, he lost his appetite, grew distracted, and once he even went so far as to put his long johns on over his riding breeches and was about to go to work like that, but Motia, his personal chauffeur, tactfully restrained him. (p. 235)

He is the only one in Dolgov to raise a fuss because in Stalinist Russia the Party functioned only through the backing of the secret police. In effect Revkin's vital prop is missing.

Revkin is appropriately named for a Party worker. His surname is derived from "rev" ("bellowing, roaring, screaming") or "revet" ("to howl, bellow, roar, low"). But Revkin does not scream or roar out his concerns and finally
voices them to his wife only because she persists in finding out what has brought about the change in her husband's behaviour. The cause, she discovers to her horror, are "nezdorovye nastroeniia" ("unwholesome thoughts"). Revkin's wife is a stereotypical communist and she advises Revkin to make a clean breast of his "unwholesome thoughts" to the Party. Consequently he starts out the next morning for the secret police to make a confession.

Revkin's chauffeur drives him to police headquarters. The state fiction held that the Party was the representative of the working classes with whom it had close ties. The reality was that many Party members had soon disassociated themselves from the typical Soviet citizen and lived in a privileged "bourgeois" style. Revkin, the reader learns, has a chauffeur whom he orders to drive him "because he had grown unused to walking and could not have found his way there by foot."

Revkin is greatly surprised to find no one at the Institution and a massive lock hanging on the gate. Revkin's thinking on the matter is that of a typical Communist Party member: the Institution had been liquidated (why had he not been informed?). The Institution's liquidation was due "... to the intrigues of those very [internal] enemies [from whom the Institution protected the state] who had obviously now stepped up their activities." (p. 237). An investigation would have to be launched Revkin decides
specially after he phones a number of neighbouring districts and discovers that their Institutions were still functioning. Who would investigate, however, if the Institution was missing? Resolutions would have to be submitted to the party.

Revkin's attitude would stem from his experience with the very Institution he now seeks to recover. The Institution was essentially the party's watchdog whereby members of the party (like Captain Miliaga) could watch over other non-Institution party members (like Revkin). This kind of experience leads naturally to the resolution Revkin ponders:

A resolution should be submitted, thought the Secretary, that there be two Institutions in each district. The first would carry out its usual functions and the second would keep an eye on the first so that it wouldn't disappear.

Revkin had no sooner noted down this idea on his desk calendar than another idea occurred to him: But who's going to keep their eye on the second Institution? That means a third will have to be created, and a fourth for the third and so on, ad infinitum, and then who would be left to do anything else? It had turned into a vicious circle. (p. 238)

Whatever sophisticated approaches Revkin may want to take to discover why the Institution has disappeared, in the end he is forced to resort to the oldest technique of information gathering. He sends his chauffeur, Motia, to the market-place "to find out what the old women were saying. Motia returned shortly and informed him that the women were saying that apparently, the entire personnel of the Institution had driven off to the village of Krasnoe to arrest some deserter. A thread had been found." (p. 238).
With this information, this "thread," Revkin abandons his "nezdorovye nastroeniia." "Once again Revkin felt right with the world," the narrator observes, "and the strange feeling, that splinter in his side, vanished as if it had been extracted by tweezers." (p. 238). He calls Krasnoe and speaks to Golubev, asking the kolkhoz chairman the whereabouts of the Institution. A comic misunderstanding over words develops. Golubev tells Revkin that "A ikh Chonkin arestoval so svoei baboi" ("Chonkin arrested them with his woman."). The narrator observes that the telephone connection was, needless to say, rotten: "Moreover it was difficult to imagine that some Chonkin and some woman could have arrested all of them and all at once. That simply could not be." (p. 239). Revkin decides that Golubev must have said "s bandoi" ("with a band) not "s baboi" (with a woman"). When he asks how big the band is, Golubev understands that Revkin is asking how big the woman is and proceeds to describe Niura: "'Now let me see ...' Golubev hesitated, summoning up Niura's image in his mind. ' ... A pretty good size on the whole.'" (p. 239).

The telephone call is the catalyst for the rest of the action in the novel. No sooner has he hung up the phone than the district was "crawling" with "chernye slukhi":

People were saying that Chonkin's gang was active in their area and that it was numerous and well armed. As regards the person of Chonkin himself, there were the most contrary opinions.
Some people said that Chonkin was a criminal who had escaped from prison with his gang. Others contended that Chonkin was a White general who had been living in China until recently and who now planned to attack the Soviet Union; he was assembling countless troops and all people with a grudge against Soviet power were flocking to his side from every corner of the land.

A third group refuted the two preceding versions, claiming that, having fled from the Germans, Stalin had gone into hiding under the name Chonkin. They said that his guard consisted exclusively of persons of Georgian nationality, but that his woman was Russian, from the common folk. They went on to say that Stalin had grown extremely indignant upon observing what was going on in the district and that he was summoning all the different chiefs and punishing them severely for wrecking and sabotage. In particular, he had arrested the entire personnel of the Institution with Captain Miliaga at their head and ordered them shot on the spot. (pp. 239-40)

The local district leaders reviewed the more probable stories and they came to the conclusion that in all likelihood Chonkin was the commander of German paratroops who had landed in the district in order to disrupt work in the rear and prepare for a troop attack in that sector. The district authorities did not know how to proceed. They appealed to the provincial authorities who in turn appealed to the military authorities. They took an infantry unit away from an echelon due for the front "... na likvidatsiiu bandy Chonkina (tak nazyvaemogo Chonkina - govorilos' v sekretnykh dokumentakh) ..." (p. 224). When the infantry unit sets up its battalion in Krasnoe two scouts are sent on reconnaissance. Thus begins the fatal story of the arrest and capture of the captain of the Dolgov N.K.V.D. whom Revkin so sorely missed.

Revkin reappears in the group that interviews Captain
Miliaga after his interrogation by Lieutenant Bukashev. Miliaga, of course, knows Revkin. Previously Miliaga had attempted to gain the good graces of his "German" captors by betraying the secretary of the local district committee to them. Revkin explains who Miliaga is to the General, but Miliaga, so thoroughly confused at this point as to who his captors are and what language he should speak, shouts out the fatal "'Da zdravstvuet tovarishch Hitler!'" that earns him his death.

Revkin makes his final appearance after the army has captured Chonkin. When the Institution's staff is brought out of Niura's hut they are presented as "the gang." Revkin, who the reader will recall began the entire "bandoi/baboi" confusion pops into the picture: "What do you mean, gang? . . . Those are our comrades." The General demands to know where the gang is. Revkin turns to Golubev who finally clears the confusion: "'Ia ne govoril s 'bandoi' . . . Ia skazal 's baboi.' S nei vot. S Niuroi.'" ("'I didn't say with a gang. . . . I said with a woman. With that one over there. With Niura.'").

Kilin, kolkhoz Party Organizer (partorg), appropriately appears during various meetings of the kolkhozniki in the early chapters of the second Part of the novel. The first meeting is a spontaneous gathering whose purpose is to seek out information about the Soviet Union's entry into war with
Nazi Germany. Kilin berates the men and women:

'What's the matter with you!' Kilin threw up his hands. 'So there was a bulletin [announcing the declaration of war]. And you mean to tell me that bulletin said people didn't have to work any more but were supposed to assemble and form a crowd. Is that what it said? Shikalov hung his head in silence.

What kind of people are these!' lamented Kilin from the height of his position. 'You have no consciousness. I can see even a war's all right with you, if it can get you off work. Everybody disperse, and I don't want to see a single person here in five minutes. Is that clear? I'm placing the responsibility on brigade leaders Shikalov and Taldikin.' (p. 132)

Having learned that the partorg does not believe in freedom of assembly nor in the theory that being determines consciousness, the crowd disperses at the urgings of the two brigade leaders.

The narrator begins the next section teasingly as if he intends to explain the partorg's behaviour: "The partorg's instructions seemed surprising to many people. They would have seemed surprising to him too, had not ... But everything in its proper order." (p. 134). What follows is a description of what had taken place three hours before the spontaneous meeting and its hasty dispersal. Kilin and Golubev, the kolkhoz chairman, had been attempting to reach Kilin's superior, a certain Sergei Nikanorich Borisov. All sorts of interference have plagued the phone-call, a repeat of the efforts of the previous day. Kilin finally contacts Borisov and explains his problem:
'Sergei Nikanorich,' began the partorg hastily, 'Kilin here, from Krasnoye. Golubev and I have been trying to reach you, couldn't get through, the people are waiting, work's stopped, it's touchy here, we don't know what to do.'

'I don't understand,' said Borisov in a tone of surprise. 'I don't understand what it is you don't know. Have you held a meeting?'

'Of course not.'

'Why?'

'Why?' repeated Kilin. 'We didn't know what to do. You know yourself this is a national matter, and there've been no instructions ...' (pp. 136)

Borisov himself had not a moment before been phoning various people, in the hope of receiving the same sort of saving instructions. Borisov, however, is less than sympathetic to Kilin's plight: "Now I understand." Borisov's voice began to vibrate with irony. "And when you piss, do you unbutton your fly yourself or do you wait for instructions?" (p. 136). Mercy soon replaces the mixture of scatology, irony and anger and Borisov gives Kilin the long-awaited instructions: "'You are to hold a spontaneous meeting, using Molotov's speech as your guide. As soon as possible. Assemble the people ...'" (p. 136).

Kilin is pleased to be able to report that the people assembled a long time ago. He is surprised that his answer evokes Borisov's displeasure. Borisov leaves the phone for a short while - during the time Kilin assures Golubev that Borisov has gone to hear what his superior, Revkin, had to say. With a voice no longer angry but now insinuating, Borisov asks if Kilin, "old friend," has his party card.
Prolonging the conversation Borisov eventually tells Kilin that he must hand in his card for "unleashing anarchy." The two party organizers disagree on what to call the phenomenon of "people assembling all by themselves, without any control on the part of the leadership." To Borisov this is anarchy while to Kilin it is a spontaneous meeting. Borisov, correcting his comrade, raps out: "'Spontaneity, Comrade Kilin, must be controlled!'" and hangs up the phone at his end. Kilin decides that Borisov must be correct:

Spontaneity must be controlled. Even if it's moving in the desired direction, it's got to be led, otherwise it might decide it can do just what it likes. That's the whole thing right there. Anyhow, it's good that Borisov called me a comrade. He could have said 'citizen.' Political errors are easy to make and hard to correct. Like they say, we have corrective labour camps for correcting mistakes like that. (p. 139)

Borisov shows himself to be a true follower of Lenin in a "correct" attitude to spontaneity. Lenin, for example, did not believe in the spontaneous revolution that would have been the result of the historical determinism that supposedly guided his thinking. His teacher, Marx, professed great faith in the ability of the working class to overthrow capitalism and establish a new order. Lenin, on the other hand, believed in a "vanguard" of the revolution. This would be an élite of intellectuals who would be organized into the Party. With its "superior consciousness" it would lead the proletariat along the proper path to the revolution. The Party was the
most advanced segment of society; only it had insight into "historical truth." In effect it knew best what the working class needed.

Lenin's "vanguard" theory was an example of the authoritarian tendency in his thought. It can be seen, for example as early as the 1890s in his fight with those Russian Marxists known as the "Economists." The issue at hand was trade-unionism in Russia. Unlike the Economists, Lenin distrusted the spontaneous tendencies of the proletariat, doubting that on its own it would bring about a revolution. Left on their own workers would never develop the proper political consciousness. Lenin's statements caused much controversy among Russian Marxists. George Plekhanov for example, wrote subsequently that Lenin's views were not Marxist but a new version of the hero and the crowd. Lenin saw himself, Plekhanov continued, as the only active element in history and the masses as strong but obedient tools.

The narrator takes up the story line after the dispersal of the spontaneous gathering before the kolkhoz office. Having been successful at their assigned task the two brigade leaders, Shikalov and Taldikin, are called back into the kolkhoz office: where they find "the partorg had begun pencilling out the speaking order for the meeting, determining there and then which points should be interrupted by applause and what type of applause it should be (stormy, prolonged, or just regular)." (p. 142).
Kilin questions Shikalov alone as to whether every last person had been dispersed from the spontaneous gathering. Assured they had Kilin then orders Shikalov to re-assemble the group before the kolkhoz office within the half hour. He adds: "'Make a list of anybody who doesn't come. . . . Anybody who doesn't come had better be ill in bed, or else the fine's twenty-five workdays and not one second less. You understand me, Shikalov?'" (p. 143).

Not until he leaves the office does Shikalov consider his assignment. Taldikin asks him: "'So why'd we chase them off in the first place?'" (p. 125) and the question stops Shikalov, the strong and obedient tool, in his tracks:

At that point Shikalov stopped and looked at Taldikin. Back in the office, he had not been in the least surprised, since, on the whole, he had no capacity for surprise. They told him to disperse the crowd, he dispersed it. They told him chase them back, he chased them back. But his comrade's question forced him to think, perhaps for the first time in his life. Just why had they chased them off then? (pp. 143-44)

Trying to think like a good Soviet, Shikalov instructs the reader in a new meaning for the word "osvobodit'" ("to free, liberate, emancipate"):

"I know why. To liberate the area."
"Liberate it for who? [asks Taldikin]"
"Who do you mean, for you? For the people. So there'd be some place to chase them back to." (p. 144)

Taldikin is not gullible: "That was more than Taldikin could bear and he grew exasperated. 'There!' He twirled a finger
by his temple. 'I may be stupid, but there's nothing cooking in your kettle.'" (p. 125). Taldikin searches for some human answer and declares that they were told to chase away the people to amuse the "nachal'stva." The "bosses," according to Taldikin's view of life are as capricious as women:

'It's fun for the bosses,' said Taldikin. 'You see, for them, it's like with a woman. If you ask her and she agrees right off, well, that's not too interesting. But if she puts up a fight at first, kicks up a little fuss, then after that you take her. Now that's what you call true pleasure.' (p. 144)

The narrator, much to the sorrow of the woman-reader, agrees with Taldikin's theory, specially in view of the success he and Shikalov have in re-gathering the kolkhozniki:

And truly, this time people did put up a little resistance (Taldikin was right) and each one had to be influenced personally (some got it in the neck, some in the seat of their pants). But that's the way it was supposed to be (Taldikin was right again): without some resistance the victor has no pleasure in his victory. (pp. 144-45)

The narrator begins the next section with a jaundiced definition of a meeting: "A meeting is an arrangement whereby a large number of people gather together, some to say what they really do not think, some not to say what they really do." (p. 145). In the Stalinist world where words have lost their generally accepted semantic hold, this re-definition no doubt has a good claim to validity.

After his less than auspicious definition the narrator
goes on to describe the *commedia dell'arte* that passes for the typical procedure of the kolkhoz's meeting:

The chairman and the partorg came out onto the porch and the usual procedure began. The partorg declared the meeting open, then gave the chairman the floor. The chairman proposed that an honourable praesidium be elected, and gave the floor to the partorg. They changed places like this several times, and while one spoke, the other clapped his hands, exhorting the others to do likewise. The people clapped politely, but hurriedly, in the hope something of substance might soon be said. (p. 145)

Sobbing from the audience unsettles Kilin and he is unable to speak. When he looks into the audience he is again unsettled. Kilin's pathos seems to reveal itself in the long description of his feelings of inadequacy:

... it was only at that moment that he was struck by the full force of everything that had occurred, the grief that had come down on them all, himself included. Seen against this grief, his recent fears and cunning tricks seemed of no significance to him. And now the text he had written out also seemed insignificant, empty, stupid. What could he say to those people who, at this very moment, were waiting for words which he did not have in him? (p. 145)

This pathos, however, is undercut by the second last line of the paragraph: "Just a moment before, he had not thought of himself like everyone else - him, a representative of a higher power that knows and understands when, what, and how to move. Now he knew nothing."

But after three ill-fated beginnings Kilin is able to revert back to all those things that seemed insignificant, stupid, and empty, back to cunning tricks and empty words,
back to considering himself "a representative of a higher power that knows and understands when, what, and how to move." Kilin is lulled and dulled by "familiar word patterns." Over and over again in this novel Voinovich has shown how words empty of any real meaning are pronounced like magical formulae to ward off anticipated evil. Kilin begins his speech with the set Soviet phrase: "'The treacherous attack by Fascist Germany ...'" Note his behaviour:

He experienced some relief in pronouncing the first phrase. Gradually he took possession of his text and the text took possession of him. The familiar word patterns dulled his sense of grief, distracted his mind, and soon Kilin's tongue was babbling away all by itself, like a separate and independent part of his body. We shall stand our ground, we shall return blow for blow, with heroic labour we shall meet ... (p. 147) [my italics]

Kilin's speech is divided into three parts. There is an introductory section about the Fascist attack (a summary of Molotov's speech), a positive section concerning "new and unprecedented successes" on their own kolkhoz, and a final section on "individual shortcomings" of various kolkhozniki. The language of each part is different, one might almost say ironically appropriate so that it is part of the message conveyed.

The first part is phrased in party language: "verolomnoe napadenie fashistskoj Germanii," "otstoim, otvetim udarom na udar, vstretim geroicheskim trudom." The successful impact of these phrases on Kilin and his audience may be seen
when the phrases are analysed as poetry:

... otstoim,

tonetim udarom na udar,

vstretim geroicheskim trudom,

verolomnoe napadenie

fashistkoi Germanii

The almost regular meter in the first example, the word-final rhyming scheme ("otvetim"/vstretim"), the regular repetition of one sound ("im"/"am") and, perhaps of lesser significance, "ot"/"st" with "ud," ("t" a de-voiced complement to "d") - these explain the narrator's descriptions of the speech's somewhat "magical" effect on Kilin. The narrator uses terms like "He experienced some relief in pronouncing the first phrase"; Gradually he took possession of the text and the text took possession of him"; "... and soon Kilin's tongue was babbling away by itself, like a separate and independent part of his body." The regular meter, word-initial, and word-final rhymes would provide the same kind of relief that would for example, a lullaby.

The second part has a language appropriate to agricultural successes. The narrator conveys the style: "V szhatye sroki, s primenieniem peredovykh metodov agrotekhniyi byl proizveden sev zernovykh i bobovykh kul'tur." (p. 135). "Peredovoi" translates as "foremost, headmost, forward, advanced, up-to-date, progressive" and reminds the
reader of the slogan: "Kommunisticheskaja partiia - peredovoi otriad rabochego klassa." ("The Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class."). "Agrotekhniki" would be a calque to the villagers of Krasnoe; a Soviet neologism, "agrotekhnika" is made up from the prefix "agro" ("agricultural") and "tekhnika" ("technique") and belongs to the large family of Soviet acronyms that have been introduced into the Russian language since 1917: "agrobiologiia" ("agrobiology"), "agrometeorologiia" ("agrometerology"), "agrominimum" ("a minimum of agricultural knowledge"), "agronom" ("agronomist"), "agropropaganda" ("agricultural improvement propaganda"), and so on. "Agrotekhnika" ("agrotechnics") has also spawned "agrotekhnik" ("agrotechnician") and "agrotekhnicheskii" ("agrotechnical"). "Zernovaia kul'tura" ("cereal crops") and "bobovaia kul'tura" ("leguminous crops") have replaced the more straight-forward and popular "zerno" and "bob". In fact, the agronom-ese of this sentence would be replaced by the very kolkhozniki to whom Kilin is speaking by: "Bistro i sovremennymi metodamu zaseiami serno i bobovye" (with, perhaps, "effektivnymi" instead of "sovremennymi" and "sernovye" for "serno"). Whereas in the first part the narrator noted that Kilin's tongue babbled away "all by itself" (magic incantation), in the second part the narrator notes that "Glancing down at his sheet of paper Kilin spouted figures like an adding machine." The partorg-as-Soviet-shaman has become the partorg-as-Soviet-machine.
As an indication of the system's failure to incorporate Chonkin into the Soviet machine age, the narrator introduces Chonkin's musing on a horse before continuing on with a description of the third and last part of Kilin's speech.

The fiction of criticism and self-criticism monitored life in Stalinist Russia. The third and last part of Kilin's speech contains criticism of the personal work habits of various kolkhozniki. He finishes his criticisms by berating the kolkhozniki for failing to work the minimum number of workdays: "Unfortunately, there are still certain people among us who divide things up - this is mine, and that's the kolkhoz's - and there are people who don't want to work, and flaunt their age and their illnesses." (p. 149) While the problem of the kolkhoz will be discussed in a future chapter, Kilin himself still concerns us here.

His language in the final part differs from the earlier part of his speech. A few colloquialisms are found: "zadnitsa". ("rear-end"), "potixon'ku" (dim., "silently"), as well as conversational phrasing: "khot' khvataisia za golovu i krichi ne svoim golosom" ("as if we feel like tearing our hair and screaming unnaturally, i.e. not with one's own voice") or "I nichego sovat' nam v litso svoi nogi, kotorykhnet." ("It's no use sticking those missing legs of his in our faces."). Obviously the turn of phrase and the topic are more popular with the kolkhoz audience. Earlier the first section the narrator had commented that "Kilin's
words had shaken their eardrums but not reached through to their souls. People's thoughts were returning to their ordinary concerns." (p. 146). In this last part, however, Taldikin's escapade with his wife is punctuated by animation and laughter from the crowd, as is the description of kolkhoznik Zhikin's seventy-five percent workday.

A literary reference appears in this section of Kilin's speech. He tells his audience that he has recently read Nikolai Ostrovskii's novel *Kak zakalialas' stal'* (How the Steel was Tempered). Kilin's description of the novel sounds like a citation from the book cover or from a Soviet literary encyclopedia:

> This is a very good book and I recommend it to anyone who can read. It tells the story of a man who went through the fire and water of the Revolution and the Civil War, and ended up not only without arms and legs but blinded in both eyes as well, and who, chained to his bed by pain, found the strength and courage in himself to serve his people and write that book. No one demands this of you. You're not about to write any books. (pp. 149-50)

Voinovich, of course, undercuts the main tenor of the thought with the final statements: "No one demands this of you", a statement that demands the rebuttal: "Then, why are you telling us this? To make us feel guilty?" Ostrovsky's heroic crippled and blind communist hero stands in contrast to what Kilin says about the kolkhozniki. Ostrovsky's hero also stands in direct contrast to Voinovich's hero, Chonkin.

The conclusion of Kilin's speech sees him reading from
his typed sheets again. Kilin hopes to make a triumphant conclusion and "it wouldn't do to make any mistakes." (p. 150). However, Kilin's speech loses the audience's interest. In fact, this time the speech loses the audience itself so that "when approaching the end he raised his head to greet the inevitable burst of applause, all that greeted his eyes were the backs of his listeners as they sauntered amiably away." (p. 151). There is no inevitable, stormy, or prolonged applause (as he had pencilled into the text). His speech, like those of most politicians, is of little use or interest to its audience. The kolkhozniki are just more honest than most, having had their fill they walk away.

Partorg Kilin makes his last appearance in the novel shortly afterwards at another spontaneous gathering of the kolkhozniki. He and the chairman arrive on the scene of the melee over Granny Dunia's purchases from Raisa's store. Kilin and Golubev attempt to pull apart the human hydra. They succeed and Kilin collects the various provisions into a sack and declares: "'Now it's a different story. Now you will all reassemble by the office and we'll put an end to this meeting. Anybody who thinks otherwise gets nothing from this sack.'" (p. 162).

The arrival of Liusha Miakisheva re-directs Kilin's second meeting. She brings with her an entourage of reporters. Kilin addresses his kolkhozniki like a teacher whose class is being inspected by the school principal. The outward
appearances of his charges now concern Kilin because like a good Stalinist citizen he worries about accountability. He fears he will be denounced for having done something wrong. So he berates the kolkhozniki:

'What are we going to do with you!' the partorg addressed the crowd in irritation. 'So now you're standing here assembled. And you think you're standing in an organized manner. But from where I'm standing up here, I don't notice any organization. All I see is everyone trying to stand at the back so they can be the first to run off to the store. None of you has any shame. Even Liushka being here doesn't make you ashamed. Our legendary Liushka. Who has often met with Comrade Stalin personally. Who's got reporters with her. Who can write about all this in the papers, you know. Comrade reporters' - Kilin turned to one of the reporters - 'I personally request that you write about all of this and print it throughout the whole Soviet Union. Write that in our kolkhoz the people have no consciousness. People are conscious everywhere but here. Let them learn some shame. I swear they sprawl and straggle like a herd of cattle. All right now, bring it in closer together. And if you don't know how to stand properly, then I'll tell you how - all you men join hands, women in the middle. That's how you should stand. But that's no good either. How are you going to clap? Join arms. Now, that's a different story.'

(pp. 167-68) [my italics]

Perhaps Kilin now would agree with Borisov and Lenin: the working class does not have the proper political consciousness. It cannot be trusted to do what it is told to do.

An analogous figure to the village partorg is the army politruk. In the early chapters of the First Part of The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin the
reader meets briefly an army politruk or Political Leader. Like Kilin he has no apparent first name and is known only as Iartsev. He is the senior politruk in Chonkin's troop.

Political training ("politzaniatiia") was an universal obligation in the Soviet Army. Iartsev choses the topic "The Moral Character of the Red Army Soldier" for a session of political training in Chonkin's troop. A comparison develops between Chonkin, Iartsev's worst student, and Balashov, his favourite.

Iartsev's teaching method consists of reviewing material (past lessons) already covered, then asking one of his students to summarize the day's lesson, and finally asking for questions. Chonkin is asked to do the summary only because he has raised his hand and he only has raised his hand because another soldier has dropped a beetle down Chonkin's shirt. When the beetle is brought to Iartsev's attention malice enters his voice and in agitation he begins to pace the grass. Choosing his words carefully Iartsev declares:

'We are here,' . . . 'to study a very important subject - the moral character of the Red Army soldier. In political training, you, Comrade Chonkin, are lagging far behind most of the rest of the men, who pay attention to their instructor in class. The check on political training is getting closer every day and what are you going to have to show when it comes? And while we're on the subject, Chonkin, your discipline leaves much to be desired. The last time I was duty officer you failed to report for callisthenics. Here is a concrete
example of weak political training leading to a direct violation of military discipline. Sit down, Comrade Chonkin. Now who would like to speak first?" (pp. 25-26)

Note the two sentences: "The check on political training is getting closer every day and what are you going to have to show when it comes?" and "Here is a concrete example of weak political training leading to a direct violation of military discipline." [my italics]. Iartsev is speaking at a time when the Soviet army was suffering a massive purge of its officers.

Balashov, unlike Chonkin, is well-prepared for his class. He has made notes and offers to speak. Iartsev declares that "'And it is always a pleasure to hear what he has to say.'" (p. 26) and gazes on Balashov "with unconcealed affection." When Balashov speaks Iartsev "closed his eyes in anticipation of the genuine delight Balashov's correct, precise reply would bring him." (p. 26). When Balashov ends his summary and answers the few questions put to him by Iartsev, the politruk is well satisfied and tells his pupil that "'It has been a pleasure to listen to you.'" (p. 28). Balashov, for his part, speaks "modestly, but with a sense of his own worth." (p. 26). He answers the politruk's questions "without a moment's hesitation." (p. 28). For his performance he earns an "Excellent" and Iartsev's promise to request the battalion leader enter a note of appreciation into Balashov's service record. Even at this
point Balashov knows the proper answer; he softly demurs, "'I serve the working people.'" (p. 28).

What does Balashov say that evokes such love from the politruk? The narrator informs the reader "... [Balashov] began to read in a loud expressive voice without using a single word of his own." (p. 26). His lack of originality pleases Iartsev: "The senior politruk was only half listening, certain that conscientious Balashov had copied everything straight from the textbook and would not say anything the least bit surprising." (pp. 27-28). His correct summary and his correct answers lead Iartsev to comment: "'You think correctly and you draw the proper conclusions from the material we have covered.'" (p. 28).

Consider again that last statement: "'You think correctly and you draw the proper conclusions . . .'" Obviously Balashov did little thinking or concluding as he "copied straight from the textbook" or as he memorized set answers to set questions - much like a church catechism. Yet, Iartsev's statement does hold some truth. The thinking and concluding Balashov has done has been centered not on the textbook on political training but on the politics of political training. Balashov knows that to succeed he must do as he is told, learn what he is told and believe (or pretend to believe) what he is told. His comment that he serves the working people, for example, illustrates the point. As a properly trained communist in the armed services he
serves the working class the communists claim to represent. The Red Army is supposed to be the Army of Peasants and Workers. On the other hand, Balashov's political training has not trained him to serve as much as to answer that he serves the working people.

In comparison to Balashov, Chonkin's thoughts and conclusions serve neither the working class nor himself. While Balashov reads his summary his fellow soldiers pass the time, for example, by reading *Madame Bovary* or playing games. Chonkin, for his part, "abandoned himself to thought."

Chonkin's thoughts are nothing like Balashov's:

All sorts of thoughts would visit Chonkin. From his close observation of life and his fathoming of life's laws, Chonkin had understood that it is usually warm in the summer and cold in the winter. But if it was the other way around, he thought, cold in the summer and warm in the winter, then summer would be called winter and winter would be called summer. Then a second, even more serious and interesting thought came into Chonkin's head, but it slipped his mind immediately and he couldn't recall it for the life of him. To know that he had lost a thought grieved Chonkin sorely. (pp. 26-27)

Unlike Balashov Chonkin seems to have little "street sense" about his political training. When his nemesis Samushkin whispers in Chonkin's ear that he should ask the politruk if there was any truth to the rumour that Stalin had two wives at the same time, Chonkin sees no harm in asking such a potentially explosive question about the personal life of their leader. At first, Iartsev is amused
when he sees that Chonkin has a question: "Chonkin's question could at best be very simple, or it might be quite stupid, but nevertheless he, Iartsev, was duty-bound to descend to the level of any soldier and dispel his ignorance. Iartsev was mistaken. The question may indeed have been stupid, but it was not so simple." (p. 29). Not only is the question not simple, it arouses the politruk's fury: "Iartsev jumped to his feet as if propelled by a tack. "'What?!' he roared, quivering with fury and fear. 'What did you say? You're not getting me mixed up in this.' But Iartsev immediately realized that that was the wrong thing to have said and stopped talking altogether." (p. 29). When Chonkin refuses to say from whom he heard the rumour the politruk begins to shout:

Having started shouting, the senior politruk was unable to stop. He hauled Chonkin over the coals, saying that this was what political immaturity and loss of vigilance can lead to, that people like Chonkin were gold mines for our enemies, who were always on the lookout for the least little crack to worm their way through and start hatching their shameless plots; that people like Chonkin were a disgrace, not only to their unit and company, but to the entire Red Army as well. (pp. 29-30)

The scene and Iartsev's monologue end when an orderly appears with orders summoning Chonkin back to the barracks.

Iartsev, more politically aware than Chonkin (and he should be as the politruk), is terrified by Chonkin's question. Stalin's private life was a taboo subject during his lifetime.
Roy Medvedev has described the consequences of discussing "the person of Comrade Stalin" ("lichnost' tovarishcha Stalina") that was officially described as "inviolable":

Moreover, after 1934-35 the label "state and political criminal" was applied to any person, however devoted to socialism, who talked against Stalin personally, expressed disapproval of his actions, or spoke or acted in a way that could be interpreted even indirectly as belittling Stalin. In subsequent years this protection of the Chief's prestige assumed monstrous forms. It was enough to tell an anecdote about Stalin, to damage a picture of him accidentally, or to express doubt about one of his pronouncements on theory for a person to become an "enemy of the people". In Germany the Academy of Law declared love for the Führer to be a legal concept and therefore dislike for the Führer to be a crime. In the USSR, love of Stalin became obligatory for all Soviet people, and dislike of him or even the slightest criticism of his activities was a crime. In the course of time such "crimes" were considered even more serious than opposition to socialism and the Soviet regime.15

The taboo is broken again the second time Iartsev appears in the novel. He turns up in one of Chonkin's dreams:

... and then [Chonkin] noticed Senior Politruk Iartsev, who had come out from behind a mountain and was beckoning Chonkin with a crooked finger. ... Chonkin walked up to Iartsev, who bent close Chonkin's ear. ... Iartsev immediately turned into a beetle and crawled into Chonkin's ear. It tickled. Chonkin was about to shake Iartsev out when Iartsev said softly: 'Don't get excited, Comrade Chonkin, your person is inviolable. I can't do anything to you. I have been instructed to inform you that Comrade Stalin never had any wives because he himself is a woman.' (p. 54)
No Soviet or emigré writer before Voinovich has portrayed Stalin as a woman. But Chonkin's Stalin is still a familiar figure as he appears deus ex machina: "Just then Comrade Stalin descended slowly from the sky. He had a moustache, a pipe between his teeth, and was wearing a woman's dress. There was a rifle in his hands." (p. 54). Though his appearance may be odd, the Stalin in Chonkin's dream comes in a familiar role: "'Comrade Sergeant,' said Stalin. 'Private Chonkin has abandoned his post and lost his combat weapon as well. Our Red Army has no need for soldiers like this. I advise you to shoot Comrade Chonkin.'" (p. 55).

Iartsev reappears in another of Chonkin's dreams. In Krasnoe Chonkin had moved into Niura's house where they live as man and wife. One of the villagers, Plechevoi, suggests that she has had intimate relations with her pet pig, Borka. This charge leads Chonkin to dream about a porcine wedding at the end of which golden trays of "food" are passed amongst the pigs-guests. On one tray, naked and garnished with onions and green peas, lay Sergeant Peskov, on others lay Quartermaster Trofimovich, Private Samushkin, and Senior Politruk Iartsev. Earlier in the dream Chonkin had told a man with a notebook how old he was, how long he had been in the army, how the army fed him, what kind of clothing they issued, and for how long he got his puttees - and then Chonkin had realized that he had blurted out "classified military secrets." Iartsev, wiggling on his tray, confronts Chonkin
with his betrayal: "'Yes, Comrade, you gave away a military secret and betrayed us all . . . You betrayed your comrades, your motherland, and the person of Comrade Stalin.'" (p. 107). Almost as if to confirm Iartsev's accusation the next tray that appeared bore the "person of Comrade Stalin": "One hand hung from the tray holding the familiar pipe. Stalin grinned slyly to himself behind his moustache." (p. 107).

From the early 1930s the Communist Party increasingly resembled a sycophantic mass of jelly pounded and shaped by Stalin to reflect and glorify his superhuman image of himself. His appearances in novels and plays were as an omniscient, beneficent, humane and just figure. He was an object of fear, love, admiration, reverence.

Stalin is the most important party figure in the novel. Voinovich's Stalin breaks the taboo of Stalinist literary canons. He is given an official description by the village heroine of labour (simple, modest, sympathetic) but that view is undercut by Liushka's own portrayal as a cunning and manipulative woman. In Chonkin's dreams Stalin gets a new characterization: first as a woman, then as the main course at a pigs' wedding. A popular image of Stalin appears later in the novel during the public rumour-mongering over Chonkin's "banda." A group of Dolgov locals claims that "having fled the Germans, Stalin had gone into hiding
under the name Chonkin. They said that his guard consisted exclusively of persons of Georgian nationality, but that his woman was Russian, from the common folk." (p. 239). Another image of Stalin is conveyed by Captain Miliaga during his "capture" by a Red Army unit when, finally realizing that he is not in the hands of the Nazis he shouts out his loyalty: "'Da zdravstvuet tovarishch Gitler.'" (p. 270). Voinovich here manages to suggest that in the turmoil of the moment there is little difference between the two infamous dictators.

A well-known poster of Stalin from the 1930s appears in the novel. In the office of the captain of the secret police, appropriately enough, hung the well-known photograph of Stalin holding a little girl in his arms. She is smiling at him and he is smiling at her. Walter Krivitsky, before his defection (and murder), Head of Soviet Intelligence for Western Europe, has described the fate of some of Stalin's children in the thirties.16 In 7 April 1935 the death penalty was extended to children above the age of twelve for offenses ranging from petty larceny to treason. The secret police rounded up thousands of children and sent them to forced labour camps or, in some cases, to be shot. At the same time Stalin was posing for photographs with smiling little girls, the OGPU was arresting children on charges of being traitors, spies, Trotskyites, Fascists and so forth. The real face was hidden behind the image created by the
camera and relentlessly grandiose propaganda.

A historical Stalin also appears. Two weeks after the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 Stalin came out of hiding in the Kremlin and made a public speech. Chonkin, on his way to bring home Niura's cow, finds a group of villagers at the kolkhoz office listening to the loudspeakers: "... a voice with a distinct Georgian accent said softly: 'Comrades! Citizens! Brothers and sisters! Fighting men of our army and navy! I address you, my friends!'" (p. 182). Unlike the other listeners who stir and sniffle Chonkin listens intently as the voice describes the Soviet Union's losses to the enemy. But Chonkin has not been trained how to listen - he is no Balashov, the reader will recall - and so questions occur to him:

Chonkin listened to the words spoken with the noticeable Georgian accent and believed in them implicitly, but there still were certain things he could not understand. If the enemy's best divisions and the best units of his air force had been smashed, and had found their graves, what was there worth getting so upset about? It'd be even easier to mash his weaker units and divisions.

(p. 183)

Chonkin's child-like understanding of the lack of logic in the speech is coupled with his lack of understanding of its rhetoric. Chonkin could not understand the trope: "found their graves on the field of battle." He lays the metaphor bare as he reflects to himself: "Why there and not some
place else? And who dug those graves for them? Chonkin visualized a vast throng of people walking through unknown fields in search of their graves." (p. 184). The voice urges him to fight but the captain from the military commissariat had sent him back to his post.

Chonkin wants to do as Stalin orders. The captain had shouted at him, "but Stalin, he wouldn't have said that, he was clever, he would understand and see how things were for you. No wonder people loved him. And he sang well too." (p. 184). Chonkin loves his leader. To quote Roy Medvedev again: "It is an unavoidable fact that Stalin never relied on force alone. Throughout the period of his one-man rule he was popular. The longer this tyrant ruled the USSR, cold-bloodedly destroying millions of people, the greater seems to have been the dedication to him, even the love of the majority of people."

Chonkin, in his unaffected homespun way, even loves the way Stalin sings. But even awake Chonkin has problems with Stalin's gender: "But how come he sings in a woman's voice?" (p. 184). The herdsman, Taika, identifies the singer as Ruslanova. Despite Chonkin's stated love for Stalin this confusion, like Chonkin's inability to understand the logic or rhetoric in Stalin's speech, undercut the historical Stalin. Chonkin is Stalin's undoing.

A chapter removed from the novel and entitled "V krugu druzei" (A Circle of Friends) depicts Stalin on the
evening before Hitler's invasion.19 The reader meets a Stalin entirely different from his public image. Called Koba in the story, he lives in a safe rather than the room in the Kremlin where the famous window was lit twenty-four hours a day. The figure at the window turns about to be a life-like dummy built by the finest craftsmen. Stalin's moustache is the paste-on variety and he only smokes his well-known pipe when there are people around. He amuses himself by listening to records, cutting pictures out of magazines, and doing crosswords. When he cannot find the answer he phones an eminent biologist who, terrified and flattered, believes his Leader has called to consult on scientific matters. Stalin assembles his Politburo to keep him company through the night - they turn out to be a group of pitiable, fawning, disgusting, fear-ridden men. They are so afraid of Stalin that when they learn about the German invasion not one of them will wake Stalin to tell him.

Stalin plays a role for these people but when he is alone he faces himself in the mirror and tells himself the truth. The reflection is the real Stalin in the story: pitiable, moustacheless old man, with scrawny knees and his trousers at his ankles. The actor-Stalin tells Stalin-in-the-mirror the truth: that he is not the most cunning and craftiest man in the world, that the people hate him, that his comrade are flatterers and flunkeys, that everyone lies but he himself demanded lies, that the only man who will
tell Stalin the truth is Stalin himself. The truth is that Stalin is a parasite and a murderer. He has ruined agriculture in the country and decapitated its army. He has created a country of fear and he is the most frightened man in it. He ferrets out enemies of the people everywhere, but refuses to see that he is his people's biggest enemy. At the dialogue's (monologue's) end the actor-Stalin shoots the villain - he shoots Stalin-in-the-mirror.

Voinovich creates an episode in which Stalin admits all his historical errors, including trusting Hitler (called Adik in the story). The private, truth-telling Stalin confronts the public Stalin and strips him of his image to reveal an old, pock-marked, ulcerated, scrawny-kneed tyrant. Voinovich uses a mirror as a device not to distort but to reveal. Though Voinovich has said that his novel became "bolee ostraia" (more sharp) as he progressed the episode by its tone does not fit into the Second Part of the novel where by chronology it should belong. Stalin's suicide also would have complicated his re-introduction into the novel at a later point. The confession and suicide, I would venture to suggest, would be a literary catharsis for those readers who were Stalin's victims.

Voinovich's party representatives describe by their behaviour various aspects of the Communist Party in Stalin's time. The fiction of a democratic and humane Party is
destroyed as the reader learns that fear was the overriding factor in the lives of all Party members, a fear attested to by any honest autobiography or memoir of that period. The fiction of the simple, modest, sympathetic, wise Stalin is also shattered as Voinovich presents additional images: as a woman in Chonkin's dreams and as Koba in the novel's withheld chapter. Fear grips Koba just like any ordinary citizen. The next chapter discusses the agents of that fear.
NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE


2 Brown, pp. 285-86.


4 S. V. Utechin describes a "partorg" as a "party official in charge of a primary organization... which for one or another reason is considered particularly important (e.g. in large plants, major building sites, etc.). He is appointed by a superior party committee or the Central Committee itself." See S. V. Utechin, Everyman's Concise Encyclopaedia of Russia (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1961), p. 407.

5 A "politruk" is a "party official responsible for the political education and reliability of troops at company level; at this level he is the equivalent of the Military Commissar... Politruks were abolished by Marshal Zhukov in 1957, but reintroduced after his dismissal. See Z. Brzezinski (ed.), Political Controls in the Soviet Army, New York, 1954." See Utechin, p. 428.

6 "'How can you ask, Sergei Nikanorich,' Kilin assured him. 'As always, right where it belongs, in my left pocket.'" Later Chaptain Miliaga, during his "interrogation" recalls that "... as bad luck would have it, his party card had to be right there in his pocket." A good communist always carried her or his card on their person.


Iskra, 1 August 1904; quoted in Hammond, p. 147.

These are typical descriptions inserted into the published transcripts of speeches given by Soviet leaders.

The party uses public self-criticism and criticism as a method of control through public disgrace.

A cynic might consider Kilin's remark a telling comment on the entire Soviet philosophy by one who helped "hold the sack." In one sense the incident over the provisions represents the Soviet economic system in miniature: Dunia represents scheming capitalists/exploiters; the melee represents the revolution of the masses who want "land and bread"; Golubev and Kilin represent the order and stability forced on those same masses by Soviet power. In brief, he who has the sack calls the tune.

Voinovich chose Iartsev's name to suggest "iarit'" ("to irritate, provoke").

Balashov's name incorporates two ideas that well describe this character and his behaviour: "balovat'" ("to spoil, pet, indulge, humour, pamper; to give a treat") and "boltat'" ("to chatter nonsense").


Voinovich has Chonkin comment on the first few paragraphs of Stalin's speech:

Comrade! Citizens! Brothers and Sisters!
Men of our Army and Navy!
I am addressing you, my friends!
The perfidious military attack on our fatherland, begun on June 22 by Hitler's Germany, is continuing.
In spite of heroic resistance of the Red Army, and although the enemy's finest divisions and finest air-force units have already been smashed and have met their doom [have found their graves] on the field of battle, the enemy continues to push forward, hurling fresh forces into the attack.

Hitler's troops have succeeded in capturing Lithuania, a considerable part of Latvia, the western part of White Russia, and a part of the western Ukraine.

The Fascist air force is extending the range of operations to its bombers and is bombing Murmansk, Orsha, Mogilev, Smolensk, Kiev, Odessa, and Sevastopol.

A grave danger hangs over our country.


18 Medvedev, p. 362.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SECRET POLICE: MILIAGA, THE INSTITUTE, SMERSH

Those who have read the recent Soviet novels, Iurii German's *I am Responsible* and *The New Year's Eve Party*, Kozhevnikov's *The Shield and the Sword*, Bylinov's *The Streets of Wrath*, Zalynskii's *Pebbles in the Hand*, and, most recently, Iuliian Semenov's *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, would agree with Robert Conquest's statement that "There has recently been, indeed, a considerable effort to rehabilitate the N.K.V.D.: criticism is levelled at those who, basing themselves on the organization's role in the Purges, are 'not averse to putting practically all the officers of the Cheka under a cloud.' Since Khrushchev's fall, a whole series of novels and plays has appeared featuring Secret Police heroes."¹ In the summer of 1980 the Soviet army newspaper, the *Red Star*, for example, announced that the KGB was holding a contest in connection with its sixty-fifth anniversary in 1982. The contest would serve "to raise the artistic and ideological level of literary cinematographic and television works on Chekist themes."² Chonkin would not have won first prize. Voinovich takes the fiction of the invincible Chekist hero, reverses it, and gives his readers a motley crew of secret police agents whose captain is a posturing fool.

The secret police have not commonly been heroes in

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Soviet literature, but were in Stalin's time (as they are today) a prominent feature of Soviet life. "Security police" or "security organs" are innocuous terms that conjure up less terror than did the actual names - CHEKA, GPU, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, MVD, MGB, KGB - or the names of the police bosses: Dzerzhinskii (1917-26), Menzhinskii (1926-34), Iagoda (1934-36), and Beria (1938-53). Ezhov's reign of terror from 1936 to 1938 has its own name: the ezhovshchina. Of these various names ex-secret police officer, Peter Deriabin, wrote:

Through all this complicated window-dressing, the State Security officer has continued to be known by his old-fashioned name of Chekist. He is in a literal sense the arbiter and the orderer of Soviet society, and everyone knows it. The best description of the Chekist's relationship to the Soviet people remains the comment on the initials of the old OGPU which Deriabin first heard in the thirties. To most people they meant 0 Gospodi, Pomogi Ubezhat' - "0 Lord, help me escape." The Chekist read the initials backwards: Ubezhish', Poymayem, Golovu Otorvem - "You escape, we will catch you and cut off your head."3

The security police developed out of the "fighting teams" set up by the Bolsheviks during the 1905 revolution.4 After the October revolution in 1917 these "teams" were used to fight "counter-revolution" and, in general terms, this has been their role since. During Stalin's time "counter-revolution" became a loose term that might cover any deed against the state or Stalin himself. The midnight knock on the door; the Black raven (police van); Lubianka; the politisolators, the camps - all these terrifying symbols
represented the secret police to the common Soviet citizen.
Agents spied on party members, schools, factories, embassies
(foreign and Soviet), the army, the citizenry ... as well as
on each other. Defectors, like Walter Krivitsky, Head of
Soviet Intelligence for Western Europe, and General Orlov,
NKVD Head in Barcelona, wrote from personal experience about
NKVD "intelligence operations" in Western Europe.\(^5\)

E. A. Andreevich wrote after his defection from the
Soviet Union that the secret police had certain purposes:
surveillance over the people; physical compulsion; terro-
rization; guaranteeing the personal safety of members of the
Soviet government; exploitation of slave (i.e. prison) labour;
secret control of vassal countries (e.g. Eastern European
countries); and espionage, subversion, and terrorist activi-
ties in the free countries of the world.\(^6\) The police, he
continues, are guided by only three principles: political
expediency, inhumanity, and secrecy.\(^7\)

"I begin with a remarkable fact," wrote Vladimir
Petrov, another ex-secret police officer. He continued:

In all my twenty-one years as a professional
State Security Officer, I never came across one
authentic case of foreign espionage in the Soviet
Union in peace-time. Thousands were accused of
espionage and shot. Public scapegoats like Zinoviev,
Yagoda and Beria were invariably accused of being
agents of British, American or German Intelligence
without a shred of evidence being produced. During
the war there were certainly cases of Soviet citizens
captured by the Germans who were parachuted back
into Soviet territory as spies. But I never heard
of a case in Russia comparable to those of Fuchs
and Nunn May in Britain, Greenglass or
Golos in America, Andersson and Enbom in Sweden, or Richard Sorge in Japan.

Yet, according to the ceaseless warnings of the Soviet authorities, Russia is so riddled from top to bottom with the agents of foreign intelligence that only perpetual and relentless vigilance saves it from destruction.

What is the explanation of this paradox? The answer is simple. The vast machinery of State Security in the Soviet Union is chiefly employed not against foreign espionage (which would be extraordinarily difficult in face of the precautions maintained on Soviet territory) but against the Soviet people themselves. Its special tasks are to prevent Soviet citizens from developing sympathy or admiration for foreign countries and to suppress all criticism and protest against the Government.8

The personal memoirs of various ex-officers confirm Petrov's statement. Since World War II various studies have appeared in the West describing the structure and operations of the Soviet secret police.9 These scholarly works, like the memoirs, point to a vast operation at war with its own citizenry.

Voinovich presents his local Dolgov agents of the secret police just after the Soviet Union has entered World War II. The political police, Ronald Hingley argues, enhanced their role during the war.10 Superficial changes began in the official designations for the police. On 3 February 1941, before Barbarossa, the NKVD had been divided into a People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) under L. P. Beria and a People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) under V. N. Merkulov. After the German invasion a decree of 30 July 1941 re-established the NKVD as
the sole force under Beria. In April 1943 the NKVD again was subdivided into three Commissariats: NKVD under Beria, NKGB under Merkulov, and SMERSH under V. S. Abakumov. This revision lasted until 1946. For all the titular changes, divisions, and redivisions, the Soviet secret police pursued the same tasks during the war as they had done before it with the addition of two new tasks: first, they acted as "blocking detachments" posted in the immediate rear of forward army units in order to apprehend enemy paratroopers and spies and to detain and execute soldiers fleeing from forward positions; second, they organized the mass deportation of various Soviet nationalities, beginning with the Volga Germans in August 1941 and ending with the Crimean Tatars in June 1944. During the war the secret police directed harsh measures against political undesirables: those still at liberty were rounded up and put in prisons and concentration camps; those already in the camps were evacuated – however, if the Germans made this impossible, the police released the ordinary criminals and shot the politicals.

During the war the camps continued to play an important part in the Soviet economy. Inmates of the Gulag built strategic railroads, highways, aerodromes, and ammunition dumps, as well as the traditional lumbering and gold-mining. Food was rationed on an even less adequate level during the war. The continuing high mortality rate was offset, however, by the millions sent to the camps from areas in eastern
Europe that had fallen to the Red Army.

The Polish General Wladyslaw Anders, captured in September, 1939 and released twenty months later, saw the inner workings of the Soviet power structure during the first months of the war. "It soon became clear to me," he wrote, "that the military authorities had no say in anything, and that in all fields of civilian and military life the N.K.V.D. was omnipotent." 14

The secret police is represented in Voinovich's novel by the "Institution" also known as "Kuda Nado" ("Whither Necessary"). The narrator offers an observation on the Institution immediately after he introduces it into the novel. He knows that "to readers from a distant galaxy, unfamiliar with our earthly [i.e. Soviet] customs, a legitimate question might occur - what does Whither Necessary mean? Necessary for whom and for what?":

In this connection, the author offers the following explanation: in bygone times described here by the author, there existed everywhere a certain Institution, which was not so much military as militant. Over the years it waged a crippling war against its own citizens and waged it with unfailing success. Its enemy was numerous but unarmed - the constancy of these two factors made the Institution's victory both impressive and inevitable. The chastising sword of the Institution hung constantly over everyone, ready to come down whenever necessary or even without any reason at all. The Institution acquired the reputation of seeing everything, hearing everything, knowing everything, and, if something was out of line, the Institution would be there in a flash. For this reason people would say: If you're too clever, you'll end up Whither Necessary; if you chatter too much, you'll end up Whither
Necessary. Such a state of affairs was considered completely normal, . . . (pp. 193-94)

Whereas the description of the security forces in the Soviet Union has filled textbooks written by historians and political scientists, Voinovich's description does the same in a few well-chosen phrases. The Institution is omnipresent, omniscient, all-powerful, feared, capricious, and at war with its own citizens. The observations to "readers from a distant galaxy" that "such a state of affairs considered normal" suggests the narrator's ironical point of view.

The reader meets the Institution just after it has been reorganized for the war. Captain Miliaga, its head, has fulfilled his instructions in accordance with his Leader's dictates. Stalin had said: "'We must organize a merciless struggle against all disorganizers of the rear, panicmongers, rumour-mongers, we must wipe out spies, saboteurs, enemy paratroops and render all speedy assistance to our fighting men.'" (p. 168). Humour arises in this instance from the fact that Miliaga apparently has neither read nor heard this speech. The quotation hangs in his office in a colourfully designed poster. It hangs before him while behind him hangs a well-known photograph of Stalin holding a little girl in his arms. Stalin smiles at the girl, but at the same time, like the proper icon he is meant to be, "he was squinting one eye at the back of Miliaga's head as if trying to determine whether any unnecessary thoughts might be swarming
about in there." (p. 195).

The reader discovers that the novel's representative NKVD officer has one distinguishing trait: he always smiles. The smile was pleasant and appropriate to someone called Miliaga, the "milyi" or nice one. Miliaga "smiled when he said hello, he smiled while interrogating prisoners, he smiled when others were sobbing; in brief, he was constantly smiling." (p. 197). Here is a police officer well pleased with himself.

On the day the reader meets Miliaga he examines his mail and interrogates a spy. The spy turns out to have the fortunate surname "Stalin" and the interrogation, as we have seen, turns into a fiasco. Originally Miliaga had welcomed the idea of a spy ("A spy would come in very handy right now.")]. His poster commanded him to wipe out spies, saboteurs, enemy paratroopers and the like and he needed some physical proof that like a true Soviet officer he was fulfilling his plan.

Miliaga's mail is secret. Its description is also a description of his job:

The mail consisted of all manner of circulars, excerpts from the orders of higher government bodies, the decisions of executive committees and from the minutes of certain top-level meetings. The subjects were highly varied: tightening control over grain collection; the preparations of a new wartime bond plan; tightening control over the selection of personnel; the battle against rumours and the need to spread counter-rumours. (pp. 198-99)
His mail also contains an anonymous letter, a denunciation. The narrator indulges in an aside on these kinds of letters and the police's usual attitude towards them:

Probably an anonymous letter. The Institution's address had been written with the left hand and there was no return address. There was nothing out of the ordinary in this. Citizens almost always wrote letters to the Institution headed by Miliaga without a return address, and these letters were, with rare exceptions, written with the left hand. (The exceptions were the lefties, who used their right hand.) As a rule such letters contained petty denunciations. . . . It must be said, to the Institution's credit, that very few such letters ever caused it to take measures; otherwise there would not have been a single person left free in the country. (pp. 210-11)

The letter Miliaga has received denounces Chonkin as a deserter and a traitor. The author, apparent to both the reader and Miliaga, is Kuz'ma Gladyshev. Miliaga decides to send his men to arrest Chonkin and so precipitates the action in the rest of the novel.

The group sent to arrest Chonkin is led by Lieutenant Filippov and includes the previously introduced Sergeant Svintsov. In addition to these two men Miliaga has a staff of five. His men were always busy; too busy, for example, to even have time to drill. Only when WWII halted their conflict with their own citizens, did the staff find a free day to practise their parade drills. The narrator describes the men in their grey uniforms in single-file drill formation with Lieutenant Filippov at their side lifting his boots high into the air in order to "inspire his subordinates."
The second time the reader meets the staff of the Institution they are about a kilometre from the village of Krasnoe. Their tarpaulin-covered one-and-a-half-ton truck is stuck in the mud: "Several men were busy digging beside the truck. Drenched, covered with dirt from head to foot, they were clearing the road in front of the truck, some with shovels, some with their bare hands. One man with two small bars on his lapels, was standing a little off to the side and smoking, shielding his disintegrating cigarette from the rain with the palm of his hand. An enormous, gangly man came out from behind the truck, holding a piece of plywood which he used instead of a shovel." (p. 213).

The third encounter takes place just before the truck pulls up before the kolkhoz office. The scene is burlesque and reminiscent of a Keystone Cops silent movie:

At that moment a covered truck came over the hill. The driver accelerated and turned the wheel hard. Standing beside him on the running board, holding on to the door, the lieutenant, who was covered in mud, was issuing orders. The other men in grey uniform, smeared with mud from head to foot and lathered with sweat, were nudging the truck forward. The truck still kept skidding, its rear end swerving from side to side. (p. 217).

The truck and the muddy men in grey uniforms strike terror in the kolkhoz chairman as he watches two men in grey uniform mount the stairs to his office. Golubev at the novel's beginning was terror-struck at the appearance of an aeroplane and then at the appearance of Chonkin who had been sent to keep guard over the plane. Because his kolkhoz is
doing poorly, worsening from year to year, because Golubev is constantly sending in fraudulent reports, and because he had bribed various district inspectors, examiners, and instructors (with food and vodka) so that they signed fraudulent documents of certification - because of all these things, Golubev fears that eventually a day of reckoning would come. Someday someone from the Maximum Responsibility Committee of Inspection would suddenly appear and Golubev would finally be caught and punished. Though there had been some confusion over the pilot and then over Chonkin, there could be none, or so Golubev thinks, over the appearance of grey uniforms on his doorstep.

The arrest scene is another piece of burlesque. As Filippov ("the runty one") and Svintsov ("the one with the bestial face") enter Golubev's office, the chairman pops his just recently written fraudulent haymaking report into his mouth. With the "evidence" in his mouth but not yet swallowed Golubev cannot speak but replies in moo-like sounds. He moos as the officers enter and Filippov assumes the chairman is a deaf-mute and proceeds to talk to him in an improvised sign language. To indicate a deserter Filippov imitates a battle ("bang, bang") and then a man running away from the battlefield. To indicate the arrest he hopes to make Filippov "whipped his pistol from his holster and stuck it in the chairman's stomach. 'Hands up!'" (p. 220). Filippov's choice of gestures is unfortunate; Golubev panics:
"The chairman's jaw dropped open, the saliva-sovered ball of paper fell out of his mouth; he began to stagger, and then collapsed on the floor, hitting the back of his head on the way down." (p. 220). Filippov, who earlier had admitted a dislike for both animals and people, shows little sympathy. He slaps Golubev's cheeks, feels his wrist's pulse, and then attempts to hear his heartbeat by placing an ear to the chairman's chest. Svintsov, another misanthrope, also places his ear to Golubev's chest with unexpected and hilarious results:

... "Mice."
"What mice?" The lieutenant did not understand.
"Mice scraping around under the floor," explained Svintsov. "Could be rats too. The squeaking's too low for a mouse. I had something down in my cellar last year. At first I got it wrong, thought it was mice and like a fool I throw my cat down there. They just pounced right on her, ate off her tail. She barely got out alive."
"Svintsov, did I order you to listen for mice? Is his heart beating or isn't it?"
"Who knows," answered Svintsov. "I'm no doctor. . . ." (p. 221)

His subordinate's anecdote and his attitude lead Filippov into a fit of temper. In an understatement he declares: "'People's nerves are starting to go. Why are they so afraid of us? We just don't grab anyone we bump into, there's got to be a warrant.'" (p. 221).

Every arrest needs a witness. Volkov, the bookkeeper in the office next to Golubev, becomes Svintsov's choice. Volkov is no fool and shows by his behaviour that the camp
proverb "You croak today, me tomorrow!" is confined not just to the camps. Though he may have worked alongside Golubev for quite some time, though they may have been friends, in the presence of the secret police Volkov worries only about his own fate. Strangely enough (or, perhaps, strange only to those readers from a distant galaxy whom the narrator earlier addressed) neither Volkov nor Filippov seem amazed at the parts they have to play. When questioned Volkov first refuses to recognize Golubev and then only admits to seeing him on the job and insists they have never spoken. Volkov then admits to a possible understanding of the events in Golubev's office by denying knowledge of what has not been said but is understood: "'I'm not a Party member of course ... I didn't get much education. I don't understand anything about this sort of thing.'" [my italics] (p. 220). A denunciation, he feels, may save him: "'Though one time he [Golubev] did say to me that the works of Marx and Engels were hard for a worker to understand. He said you need special political training for them.'" (p. 220).

Svintsov's fist and Filippov's line of questioning thoroughly frighten the bookkeeper. Volkov's babbling to the police seems to be realizing for Golubev his fear that one day he would be discovered and denounced. Filippov, however, soon remembers that it was Chonkin (and not Volkov or Golubev) that the Institution had been sent to interrogate and arrest.

For a North American reader raised with the Hollywood
western the next scene would be familiar. The "bad guys" search for the "good guys"; the townfolk are frightened and hide in their houses; everyone in the audience and on the screen hopes that justice will prevail. In Krasnoe the difference between "good guys" and "bad guys" is somewhat confused. If the Institution's staff represent, in the reader's mind, law and order and Chonkin is a deserter, then the Institution is the "good guys." On the other hand, the reader must consider the behaviour of the various characters to date in the novel. Chonkin's guileless behaviour compares more favourably than does the Institute's initial treatment, say, of Moisei Stalin. Added to their fictional behaviour is the reputation for cruelty of the historical characters they represent in the novel, i.e. the real NKVD. No doubt, in the novel, Chonkin is the hero, the "good guy" and the Institution is the villain, the "bad guy."

The mud-drenched officers in grey terrorize the village by the simple act of walking down its main street:

As soon as the villagers caught sight of the men coming, they hid in their huts, peeking out cautiously from behind their curtains. The children stopped crying, even the dogs were not barking at the gates. There was a silence like that before dawn, when all those who go to bed late have already gone to bed and those who get up early have not yet got up. The people watching from behind their curtains would freeze in position when the line approached their hut and they would heave a sign of relief when it passed by. Once again they would hold their breath in fear and curiosity - where were they going? Whose house? (p. 223)
Like Volkov each villager worries only about himself.

The ensuing arrest of the entire Institution has already been discussed in a previous chapter. Miliaga, who un­ successfully attempts to send his secretary to find his staff, also rides into Krasnoe and also is arrested by Niura and Chonkin.

Before he arrives in Krasnoe, however, Miliaga takes time to reflect on the beauties of the countryside: "Ech, he thought. How beautiful nature is here! In what other country can you find such pines and birches?" (p. 232). His reflection leads the narrator to reflections of his own. He begins with a comment on Miliaga's ethnic chauvinism, one' shared by many of his countrymen, as well as one encouraged by the Stalinist regime especially during WWII: "Miliaga had never been in any other country, yet, because of his innate patriotism, he was convinced that there was no vegetation worthy of attention anywhere else." (p. 223). Miliaga's view that the oxygen content was higher in the country than in his office leads the narrator to his principal commentary.

Three ideas are discussed: Miliaga's striving for mediocrity, the triumph of [Soviet] legality, and Miliaga's ability to survive. As in various other instances within the novel the euphemism: "triumph of legality" (legality printed with a capital letter in the novel to indicate its usually-accepted universality and philosophical import), means what is contrary to its usually or accepted meaning. Just like the
Stakhanovite workers' movement that soon had no workers, this legality has in its own way nothing to do with things legal.

The dictionary defines legality as "the quality, condition, or instance of being legal or lawful; conformity with the law." When legality is considered as conformity with the law legality in the Soviet Union may be seen as dictionary correct rather than idealistic. Soviet legality is tied to the interests of the Communist Party. It is a system that can support such an un-Western notion as the loss of distinction between prosecutor and judge wherein the judge's (expected) impartiality is lost to the prosecutor's partiality. The Soviet legal system can also support a constitution that was proclaimed the most democratic in the world while sanctioning in its courts a facade of legality that tried to cover up one of the most vicious purges in the country's history.

When the narrator speaks of the two times in Miliaga's career when legality triumphed and "everyone from top to bottom had been sheared away" he refers to the purges of the secret police held each time the leadership of those security forces changed. At this point in the novel the date is sometime in the latter part of 1941. Five men had headed the variously-named security-organs by 1941. The removal of the leader usually meant the removal also of senior officials whose careers and, more importantly, loyalties were (or might be) linked with their superior. Miliaga had survived then
the "triumph of legality" during which Ezhov was removed in 1938 and Iagoda in 1936. Both men's names are linked in history to especially notorious police regimes. The removal of these men who had served Stalin so faithfully was necessitated in part by Stalin's need to find public scapegoats for the evil he himself had unleashed. The special severity of police rule during 1936–38 was initiated by Stalin himself and history might consider renaming the period the Stalinshchina.

To Stalin's credit many Russians and non-Russians alike blamed the police chiefs rather than Stalin for the terror. Many Russians repeated the remark made by Boris Pasternak that someone should tell Stalin what madness was happening in the country. Gregory Klimov, an ex-Red Army general, described the naivety that was common to all classes of Russians:

It is a serious mistake to attempt to justify the Soviet leaders' conduct by arguing that they are not acquainted with a particular problem, or lack information on it. At one time peasant representatives made a habit of travelling from remote villages on a pilgrimage to the Kremlin gates. They naively thought that behind the Kremlin walls Stalin did not see what was happening all around him, that they had only to tell him the truth and everything would be altered. The peasants' representatives sacrificed their lives, and everything continued as before. The Soviet leaders are fully informed, and are entirely responsible for anything that occurs.16

Vladimir Petrov was KGB chief in Australia at the time of his defection. During the "triumphs of legality" he was a cypher clerk in the secret police in Moscow. From that
experience he later wrote: "... The purges were a calculated policy which seemed to make sense on the basis that expediency is the only law. Reversing Western principles of justice, Stalin argued that the death of innocent thousands did not matter provided all possible threats to his own power were swept away in the holocaust. That is clearly how Stalin thought. Of course his announcements to the Soviet people were quite different."  

The narrator in the novel uses the official euphemism, "shock worker on the invisible front" - a typical Soviet phrase that conjures up the factory and the war, no matter how inappropriate the two metaphors may be within one image - to describe the security police operative. This euphemism is well joined to the previous one, "legality triumphs." Neither euphemism conveys any sense of what idea it has replaced, but then "murder and "senseless destruction of people's lives" would never have been attractive terms to Soviet officialdom to describe what even the Russian term, for example, "chistka" ("purge") only begins to suggest.  

The narrator concludes his aside about Captain Miliaga by mentioning that Miliaga not only had survived two "triumphs of legality" but also had advanced in the service and that "This allowed him to look on the future with guarded optimism and the hope he would survive the next triumph of legality." (p. 199), The captain was an example of mediocrity and cowardice rewarded within the Soviet police system.

Miliaga proves much easier to capture than his
staff. Because Niura's house was the first he encountered he stopped there. Finding Niura in the yard he begins to question her. Oddly enough (or to those readers from a distant galaxy) Miliaga assumes that she will know who he is and what it is he wants:

"Hey, girl," the captain called into the dark, "do you know where our workers are?"
"What workers?"
"You know," said Miliaga shyly. (p. 233)

She confesses that his workers are in the hut and lets him enter where he finds his staff under Chonkin's guard. When Miliaga attempts to grab his holster, Chonkin brings his bayonet to the captain's stomach. The captain joins his staff as a prisoner.

Chonkin, in order to feed his prisoners, lets them out to the kolkhoz as field workers. Miliaga is at first pleased for he believes that "... beyond a shadow of doubt this act had earned Chonkin the supreme penalty [NKVD euphemism for the death penalty]. In his fantasies, the captain would imagine how zestfully he would interrogate Chonkin; the very thought made Miliaga's thin lips curl into a vengeful smile."18 (pp. 257-58). After some days, however, Miliaga begins to worry. His sense of self-importance and self-worth is assailed by the fact that no one has been sent out to rescue him (note that his concern is with his own rescue and not that of his staff):

He experienced a feeling similar to the one Chonkin had felt on the first day of the war, when he became convinced that he was of no use to anyone. But Chonkin had never especially
believed himself one of the chosen few, which could hardly be said of the captain. The fact that no one had been sent to his rescue in so long a time greatly troubled Miliaga. What could be happening? Could the town of Dolgov have been taken by the Germans? Could the Institution have already been liquidated [read: destroyed]? Could the order to use the Institution on the labour front [read: at work] have been issued to Chonkin from higher up? Miliaga searched for answers to all his questions, but found none. (p. 258)

Finally he decides to escape no matter what. His desire to escape brings up an interesting quandary. Lieutenant Filippov has been arguing with Chonkin that his prisoners are prisoners of war and, thus, entitled to be treated as prescribed by the Geneva Conventions concerning treatment of prisoners of war. At no time does Filippov mention that the Soviet Union is not, during WWII, a signatory of the Conventions. The Soviet Union paid little attention to those of its soldiers captured by the Germans, a classic example was Joseph Stalin's own son. Captured Germans received as poor a treatment at the hands of the Soviets as did Soviet soldiers receive at the hands of the Nazis. The Soviet soldier who was captured was considered by his country to be a traitor. Death at the post, as a result, was preferred to capture. Traitors, therefore, deserved no heroes' welcome after the war. The majority of Soviets released from Nazi prison camps went straight from Germany into Soviet prison camps. The presence of army battalions in Krasnoe suggest that Chonkin is considered an enemy agent. Miliaga's capture by Chonkin means that Miliaga
has been captured by the enemy. He is, therefore, according to the military logic of the Soviets during WWII, a traitor and thus deserves a traitor's death. With this in mind the reader will realize that Miliaga's capture foretells his death. The later episodes will prove this suspicion correct.

Miliaga's escape is possible because of Chonkin's considerate treatment of his prisoners. Chonkin's prisoners "just like ordinary mortals, had to answer the call of nature several times a day." (p. 211). Had the situation been reversed the staff of the Institution would have given Chonkin a latrine bucket - the infamous "parasha" - that might be emptied once a week. Chonkin had a different method:

He found an old dog collar in the hayloft and fastened a strong rope to it. The problem had been conclusively and irrevocably solved. If someone had to go, first he had to put on the dog collar, and then he was free to move within the limits prescribed by the length of rope. The winter outhouse was located right in the main hut by a narrow little corridor. (p. 246-47)

The system provided Miliaga with a means of escape. When Chonkin comes back to the hut drunk one evening, Miliaga sees his advantage and asks to go to the outhouse. There he cuts the rope at his collar with a scythe he had found earlier in the day and reties the rope to the collar of Borka, Niura's pig. With the dog collar around his throat and then with the pig as his replacement Miliaga is presented to the reader in a short space as both canine and porcine, in short, an animal. When Chonkin finally rouses himself and tugs on the
rope he is surprised to hear short and quick steps that sound "... as if someone in hard shoes were mincing down the corridor." His suspicions are confirmed when the door to the hut opens and "smeared with dung from head to foot, a puzzled expression on his sleepy face, Borka the pig tumbled into the room." (p. 270).

So far the author has given the reader a NKVD captain who has been compared to a dog and a dung-covered pig. With his escape Miliaga still does not represent the picture of a brave and fearless security officer, the pride of the NKVD. He even doubts the wisdom of his act:

Having escaped to freedom, Captain Miliaga experienced both tremendous excitement and complete physical collapse. His heartbeat was a totally irregular flutter, his hands were trembling, his legs would not obey him at all. Escaping now made no sense to the captain. It had been warm and rather comfortable back in the hut but out here, there was the rain and the cold and it was pitch black and he did not know where to run or for what.

... Now here he was with no idea why he done it. It was dark, it was pouring, cold drops of rain were rolling off the roof, falling down his neck and sliding slowly down his back. But that was the furthest thing from his mind as he stood with the back of his head against the log wall, crying.

If someone had walked up to him and asked: "Hey, what are you crying for?" Miliaga could not have answered. From joy that he was free again? But there was no joy. From fury? From the desire for revenge? At that moment he felt neither one nor the other. All he felt was complete indifference to his fate, hopelessness, and the utter pointlessness of anything that he might do. For Captain Miliaga, this was an unfamiliar state. He did not budge from where he stood, even at the risk of being caught by Chonkin any second, and he continued crying without
knowing why. Perhaps it was simply a fit of hysterics coming in the wake of the captain's recent trying experiences. (pp. 270-71)

Miliaga's trying experiences do little to make him reconsider his own job or his prisoners and the treatment he meted out to them. What he does begin to reconsider is what he should do next. He decides not to return to Dolgov:

But what good would Dolgov do him if there was no one left from the Institution but Kapa the secretary? That meant he should go right to the province, to Luzhin, the head of the provincial office. And tell him what? That a single soldier with an 1891/1930 model rifle had arrested the entire staff of the district office. These days, that guaranteed a military tribunal and a firing squad. (p. 272)

With the proper lack of virtues necessary for a security officer Miliaga realizes that he need not fear the provincial chief. Miliaga could "wriggle his way out of it" because he knew something damaging about Luzhin:

In particular, a little something about the provincial chief's background. Maybe Luzhin himself had forgotten that before the Revolution his father had been chief of police in the neighbouring province but he, Miliaga, had not, and had been storing this information in his head, just in case. This enabled Miliaga to entertain the hope that Luzhin might not wish to go as far as a tribunal.19 (p. 272)

And if Luzhin did press the issue, Miliaga realized he could shift the blame onto his subordinate, Lieutenant Filippov: "What could he [Miliaga] do, it had to be good-bye Filippov, though of course he felt a little sorry for the fellow." (p. 272). A Russian proverb says that "Only your own skin touches you closely"; a Soviet one says that "You croak today,
Miliaga obviously believed in both adages. Miliaga believes in another saying, "'Vengeance is mine,' saith the agent" in a rewriting of the famous Biblical quotation. "Smiling" may be the most common epithet used to describe Miliaga, though "vengeful" has to be the next most common: "As far as Chonkin was concerned, he, Miliaga, would personally take care of that one." (p. 272).

Though he may have vengeance on his side, Miliaga certainly does not have luck with him. Having escaped from Chonkin and Niura once, then having managed not to be detected while in arm's reach when Chonkin and Niura step out of the hut after discovering their prisoner's disappearance, Miliaga meets new misfortune:

Looking back and seeing nothing suspicious, the captain hopped to his feet and jumped through the tangled wickets in a single bound. Then, as if from the dark earth itself, two dark figures in rain capes sprang up before him. The captain was about to cry out but he never had time. One of the figures brought the butt of his rifle around and the captain lost consciousness. (pp. 273-74)

The security forces are not the only representatives of Soviet might in Krasnoe. The Institution had come to arrest Chonkin, the army deserter. While Chonkin was arresting the entire Institution an infantry regiment had arrived in the village and surrounded it. The unit had been on its way to the front when it was re-routed after appeals from local district authorities in Dolgov had reached provincial authorities who, in turn, had appealed to the military
authorities. The appeals concerned Chonkin; the unit, as a result, was "flung into the campaign to liquidate the Chonkin gang." At dusk two battalions blocked off either end of the road into Krasnoe and a third entrenched itself along the vegetable patch. Two scouts were sent out on reconnaissance. The first person they meet is Captain Miliaga.

The two scouts are Private Filiukov and Sergeant Syrykh. A blow from Filiukov's rifle butt renders Miliaga unconscious. At headquarters Colonel Lapshin, their commander, is convinced that they have brought in a corpse rather than a prisoner. The assumption between the scouts is shared by the Colonel: the man is a spy and a German. Filiukov asserts that the prisoner will survive the blow that he has been given because he is a German.

"Have no doubt about it, you can cut off my head if he isn't alive. I'm from the Volga myself, Comrade Colonel. We had Germans by the wagonful living down there. I don't know about any other kind, but I know about the Germans all right. They got plenty of life in them. You hit another man like that, you'll kill him. You kill a cat. But a German'll come out alive. And why's that?" Filiukov did not answer his own question, but spread out his hands and pulled in his head, expressing the ultimate in bewilderment over this mystery of nature. (p. 276)

Filiukov tells the colonel that they had Germans in the Volga area of Russia because by late 1941 they had been deported to Central Asia on Stalin's orders. In Gulag III Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reminds his readers that in the summer of 1931 the Volga Germans were deported for the first time by
There, in the waterless and barren steppes, they were ordered to build earth houses. By the spring of 1932 the children and the old had died of dysentery and malnutrition. Ten years later in July 1941 the Volga Germans again faced deportation. Solzhenitsyn wrote:

... the autonomous and of course traitorous republic of the Volga Germans (with its twin capitals, Engels and Marxstadt) had to be expunged and its population hurled somewhere well to the East in a matter of days. Here for the first time the dynamic method of exiling whole peoples was applied in all its purity, and how much easier, how much more rewarding it proved to use a single criterion — that of nationality — rather than all those individual interrogations, and decrees each naming a single person. As for the Germans seized in other parts of Russia (and every last one was gathered in), local NKVD officers had no need of higher education to determine whether a man was an enemy or not. If the name's German grab him. ... The system had been proved and perfected, and henceforward would fasten its pitiless talons on any nation pointed out to it, designated and doomed as treacherous — and more adroitly every time: the Chechens; the Ingush; the Karachai; the Balkars; the Kalmyks; the Kurds; the Crimean Tatars; and finally, the Caucasian Greeks.

The Volga Germans were deported quickly and efficiently. Armed divisions entered their villages by night and occupied key positions. The Germans awoke to find themselves surrounded. They were given twelve hours to ready whatever each one of them could carry and then herded into trucks that brought them to awaiting prison trains. As Solzhenitsyn wrote: "Neatness and uniformity! That is the advantage of exiling whole nations at once! No special cases! No exceptions, no individual protests! They all go quietly,
because ... they're all in it together."  

Robert Conquest, in his book *The Nation Killers*, refers to Wolfgang Leonhard's description of the settlement area. Though himself a German, Leonhard was a Communist working as a propagandist for the Russians. In 1941 he paid a brief visit to an area some seventy-five miles north of Karaganda, an area once used to resettle "kulaks." The Germans had been billeted with these outcasts from the thirties in windowless mud huts. The new deportees were getting less than the official ration and living in huts and outhouses that the kulaks had found uninhabitable. Yet Conquest argues that because the Volga Germans were the first deported nationality their treatment was throughout better than that of later deportees. They had been deported more as a precaution than a punishment. The later deportees were treated in the same manner as the original kulak deportees. They were marched into empty stretches of country, given agricultural implements, and told to produce. Those who survived built themselves holes in the ground and mud huts. Solzhenitsyn reports that the Germans "were good husbandmen and indefatigable, they did not fall into despondency, and even in this place [i.e. exile in Siberia] set to work as methodically and sensibly as ever." The Germans proved the old Russian proverb true: "a German is like a willow tree - stick it in anywhere and it will take."

One of the chapters of *The Nation Killers* is entitled
"The Memory Hole." In it Conquest examines Soviet publication of the time for information about the deportations and the deported nations, including the Volga Germans. He concluded:

The results are extraordinary, not to say sinister, by the standards prevailing in the non-Communist world. Direct information about anything involved – even the past existence of these peoples – was, in fact, almost totally suppressed. Inspection of Soviet documents rapidly becomes a piece of detective work, a search for indirect clues, rather than normal reference activity.

With very few exceptions, which we will deal with, nothing was said about the nations concerned for a period of about ten years. Apart from the Chechen-Ingush and Crimean decree published in Izvestia in June 1946, they seem simply to have disappeared from the category of admitted entities. They are ignored almost as if they had never been – in some cases, exactly as if they had never been. There are precedents for this occurring in the case of individuals in the USSR: men like Kossior and Eikhe, or Myerhold and Babel, were for decades what George Orwell christened "unpersons." The "unnation" was a new phenomenon.29

After the scouts leave Colonel Lapshin observes the prisoner.30 Still assuming his prisoner to be a German soldier Lapshin finds a German-speaking interrogator in his junior lieutenant, Bukashev. Bukashev's German consists of a few phrases and a few individual words, but rather than admit this to the commander, Bukashev offers to "give it a try."

Bukashev's first try is his greeting, "Guten Morgen," to Miliaga as he slowly regains consciousness. After opening his eyes the captain had taken some time to understand where he was and why. The German greeting awakened in him a
memory, however, the last time he had heard those same German words had been in 1918. He and his mother lived in a Ukrainian clay-walled cottage. A red-haired German who wore eye-glasses had been billeted in their cottage. Every morning he would come in from the next room in his undershirt and greet Miliaga's mother with "Guten Morgen, Frau Milleg."

A brief review of Ukrainian history in the crucial years 1917-18 will tell why the German was billeted in Bukashev's home. In March 1917 a Ukrainian Central Council ("Rada") was formed in Kiev. The Provisional Government in Petrograd recognized the Rada as the representative of an autonomous Ukraine. The Rada, in its turn recognized the Bolsheviks when they seized power in November 1917, but the Ukrainian government refused to consider the Soviets as more than the government of ethnic Russia. In November 1917 the Rada proclaimed a Ukrainian People's Republic and almost immediately (in December) a Bolshevik-controlled Soviet Ukrainian government was proclaimed in Kharkiv. When the Rada proclaimed Ukraine's independence of Russia on 22 January 1918, the Russian Bolsheviks provided military support to their Ukrainian counterparts. On 18 January 1918 military units from Kharkiv, detachments from Moscow, Minsk, the Baltic fleet, and the first and the second air squadrons of the Moscow revolutionary aviation detachment were sent to Kiev to overthrow the Rada. With a few weeks the city was under Soviet control and an Ukrainian Soviet government established with Kiev as its capital.
The Russian success at establishing a Soviet Ukrainian government was only temporary. In 1918 the German Army was still the dominant military force in Eastern Europe and the Germans were unwilling to allow the Russian Bolsheviks to extend their control over the former Russian empire. Despite Russian objections the Germans insisted on recognizing delegates from the Rada as the official representatives of Ukraine at the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations. As a basic condition of the armistice, furthermore, the Germans insisted that the Russian Bolsheviks recognize the authority and independence of the Rada government. At first very reluctant they finally agreed to Article Six of the Treaty:

Russia undertakes to conclude peace at once with the Ukrainian people's republic and to recognize the treaty of peace between that state and the powers of the Quadruple Alliance. The territory of the Ukraine must be, at once, cleared of Russian troops and of the Russian Red Guard. Russia ceases all agitation against the government or the public institutions of the Ukrainian People's Republic.32

The Rada was thus re-established in Ukraine with the support of the German Army. The Soviet Ukrainian government was forced to retreat to Kharkiv and the protection of Russian troops.

Despite strong opposition from Communists like Bukharin, Lenin urged acceptance of the situation. No Bolshevik, however, considered the German occupation more than a temporary one. As it continued it became clear that the Rada was dependent completely on the German Army. As the Germans
suffered military reverses in the west it seemed doubtful the occupation would continue for long. The Russian leaders soon also lost their early willingness to accept the Ukrainian government.\(^{33}\)

In November 1918 German troops were withdrawn from Ukraine. The Hetmanate under General Skoropadskii, a more conservative government that had replaced the more socialist Rada, was forced to flee from Kiev. With the German evacuation the Russians once again were given the opportunity to extend their hold over Ukraine.

The narrator had noted once before that Miliaga was the possessor of a keen sense of observation. When he had heard Niura scolding someone called Borka and then heard grunting in response the captain "with his penchant for analyzing and comparing facts of every sort, surmised that Borka was not human." (p. 233). Here again the narrator ironically notes that "During his years of service in the Institution Captain Miliaga had learned to think logically." (p. 283). Miliaga recalled that the red-haired man was German; therefore he must have spoken German. If his blond captor spoke German, then he must be a German. At the end of this apparently difficult thought process Miliaga finally concluded that he must have been captured by the Germans: "You could wish it weren't so, but the truth had to be looked in the eye (Miliaga's eyes were closed right at this particular moment)." (p. 283).
Again luck seems to have deserted Miliaga. From the Soviet newspapers he had read he "knew the Germans showed no mercy to members of the Institution or to Communists. Miliaga happened to be both. And, as bad luck would have it, his party card had to be right there in his pocket. True, his membership dues hadn't been paid since April, but he didn't think the Germans would start splitting hairs." (p. 283). Elizabeth Lermolo writes about how the secret police at her prison faced the Germans: "The city of N. fell into the hands of the Nazis a week ahead of schedule. . . . The prison was thrown into a panic. Most frightened of all were the Chekists. Their hysterical voices shouting commands mingled with the panting of men carrying heavy loads and with the groaning of automobile motors in the courtyard. Meanwhile the shells were exploding closer and closer." In 1941 the Germans came near to capturing Moscow. Government offices and diplomatic missions were evacuated to Kuybyshev, while the capital panicked. Aware of the German practice of shooting captured Communists, Party members destroyed party cards.

Bukashev's interrogation of Miliaga is a comedy of errors. First, Miliaga thinks he has been captured by the Germans, while Bukashev thinks he has a captured German spy before him. Neither speaks German yet they manage to carry on a conversation because of Miliaga's experience at interrogations and his anticipation of Bukashev's questions. For
example, "The next question 'Namen?' made no sense to the
captain, but, calculating what the first question in an
interrogation had to be, he realized it would concern the
prisoner's name." (p. 284). Later:

He [Bukashev] raised his eyes to the prisoner,
without the slightest idea how to ask what
branch of the service he was in.
But the prisoner anticipated him and
hastened to supply the testimony.
"Ich bin ist arbeiten ... arbeiten,
fershten?" (p. 285)

Miliaga's experience with interrogations also make him
consider his chances of hiding his true identity:

It was impossible to hide the fact that he
belonged to the security forces and the Party;
his uniform gave the former away and the first
superficial frisk would reveal the latter.
Then Miliaga remembered the sentence he had
always used to begin his own interrogations:
"A sincere confession can improve your fate."
Though he knew from his own experience that a
sincere confession had never improved anyone's
fate, he now had no other hope; he also enten-
tained the faint hope that the Germans were a
civilized people and might do things differently.
(p. 284)

From Miliaga the reader thus learns that the secret police
are given to prevarication and a lack of civilization.

The most amusing and possibly most historically accurate
part of the interrogation is contained in Miliaga's description
of his branch of the service. When his German proves
incomprehensible to his interrogator, Miliaga tries mime:
"Using his hands, the captain pretended to be doing some kind
of work, digging a garden or filing something down." (p. 285).
The reader and the Soviet citizen may readily agree on these
apt descriptions of a security officer: grave-digger and lock-smith. But sure agreement would have to come with Miliaga's unexpected analogy: "'Ich bin arbeiten in Russisch Gestapo.'" (p. 285). Miliaga then provides a description, historically correct, of what the Russian Gestapo does. To Bukashev's question as to whether Miliaga has shot any Communists, he readily replies: "'Ja, ja . . . Und Kommunisten und nonpartyten, all shootirt, bang bang.'" (p. 285). Moreover, "Miliaga wished to inform his interrogator that he had considerable experience in fighting Communists and that he, Captain Miliaga, could be of service to the German Institution, but he didn't know how to express so complex a thought." (p. 285). The junior lieutenant, proving that in this comedy of errors the truth sometimes surfaces, notes in his report: "'While serving in the Gestapo [i.e. Russian Gestapo, NKVD], Captain Millec executed Communists and non-Party members ...'" (p. 285). Bukashev barely manages to restrain himself from shooting this officer who has killed so many Russians.

Bukashev then attempts to discover the location of Miliaga's "ferband." Miliaga does not understand the questions but sensing his interrogator's anger tries a new tactic. He proclaims his new loyalty: "'Es liebe Genosse Hitler!' He introduced a new word into a familiar construction. 'Heil Hitler! Stalin kaput!'" (p. 286). Bukashev admires his prisoner's courage and compares it to his own imagined
courage were he taken prisoner by the Nazis:

The junior lieutenant sighed. This Fascist was an outright fanatic. But you couldn't deny him courage. Praises his leader on the way to certain death. Bukashev would have liked to behave like that if he were ever taken prisoner. How many times had Bukashev pictured it, them torturing him, driving needles under his fingernails, burning him, carving a five-pointed star in his back, but he tells them nothing, he just keeps shouting: "Long live Stalin!" (p. 286)

But Bukashev is not the fictional counterpart of Zoia Kosmodemianskaia. His last thought destroys the image he had built up for himself: "But Bukashev was not entirely convinced he would find enough courage in himself and so instead dreamed of perishing on the battlefield with the same cry on his lips." (p. 286). In the end he prefers a quick death for Stalin rather than slow torture.

Miliaga continues with a description of where his Institution is located. He points his hand and says: "'1st Haus, nach Haus ist Chonkin. Fershten?'" (p. 286). Chonkin's name catches Bukashov's attention while Miliaga continues: "'1st Chonkin und ein, zwei, drei ... seven ... seben Russisch Gestapo ... tied up mit a Strippe, mit a Ropen ... Fershten?' By means of gestures, the captain tried to depict a number of people tied up together. 'Und ein Flug, Airplanen.' He waved his arms like a bird." (p. 287). In Bukashov's final report this animated description becomes:

At the same time, the prisoner also testified that the headquarters of the so-called Chonkin are located in the farthermost hut, which belonged to the postmistress Beliashova before the occupation
and is now defended by a reinforced detachment of Gestapo men, joined together by the tightest of bonds. There is a landing field and an aeroplane beside the house, apparently used to maintain contact with the regular units of the Nazi Army. (p. 289)

That Bukashev understood even this much is surprising. Both interrogator and prisoner, however, speak a German liberally interspersed with Russian. As the narrator comments: "The junior lieutenant did not react to the German's meaningless outcries and went on with the interrogation, asking his questions in broken German, mixed with Russian. Fortunately the prisoner understood some Russian and somehow Bukashev managed to squeeze a little something out of him." (p. 286).

The little German they both know is helped along with "Germanized" Russian words: "strelirt" [B], "bespartiinen" [M], "kommunisten" [B, M], "rasstrelirt" [M], "shtripp" [M], "verevken" [M], "samoleten" [M], "bolen" [M], "khochen" [M]. Both Miliaga and Bukashev also resort to Russian ("fortunately the prisoner understood some Russian"): "... und bespartiinen vsekh rasstrelirt, paf-paf." [M]; "Vot ist vash verband dislotsirt?" [B]; "Tam ... is khauz, ..." [M]; "Ist Chonkin und ain, tsvei, drai... sem'... ziben russish gestapo..." [M]; "... Golova, main kopf bum-bum." [M].

Just before Miliaga loses consciousness he hears the army telephone operator in the next room shout in good colloquial Russian: "Chto zhe ty, mat' tvoiu, ne otvechaesh'."

"Mat' tvoiu" is a shortened version for the Russian obscenity:
"Eb toviu mat'" ("You mother-fucker!"), also sometimes shortened to "mat'-peremat'" or replaced with "mat' tvoiu za nogu". On hearing this genuinely Russian obscenity Miliaga is amazed: "He had never suspected that the German language had so much in common with Russian. Or else ... But Miliaga did not think this thought through." (p. 287). Loss of consciousness prevents Miliaga from engaging in comparative linguistics.

The last scene with Miliaga and his captors is also a comedy of errors. This comedy, however, has disastrous results for Miliaga. When he regains consciousness Miliaga sees five men enter the barn where he is being held prisoner. When he recognizes First Secretary Revkin, Miliaga sees his path to salvation. He decides that his "German" captors are unaware that they have an important local Communist in their midst and Miliaga hopes that by revealing Revkin to the "Germans" he will do them so great a service they will not shoot him: "'Please, bitte, hear my statement, this Schwein is Secretary of die Districten Committen, Revkin, Districten Führer, Fershten?'" (p. 296). Revkin is bewildered.

The general exclaims his surprise using the same familiar phrase used by the radio operator: "Chto za tak tvoiu mat'!" (p. 296). Miliaga is now bewildered. The answer begins to form in his head, especially when he sees the uniforms and helmets of the soldiers who enter the barn. The large stars on their helmets also look familiar. Revkin
explains who Captain Miliaga is, even though Bukashev repeats Miliaga's claim to have shot party and non-party members. Miliaga was lost, stunned, crushed, unable to understand who was who or who was he:

"Ich bin..."
"There, you see." The general turned to Revkin. "I told you he was a German."
"Nein, Nein!" Miliaga began to shout in terror, mixing up all the words he knew from every language. "I'm nyet German, I'm nichts German. Me russky, Comrade General." (p. 297)

In order to convince the general of what he is Miliaga shouts out his loyalty:

"What the hell kind of Russian are you when you can't even speak the language?"
"I can," said Miliaga, laying his hand on his heart and beginning a fervent attempt to convince them. "I can. I even can very." And in order to convince the general, he shouted out: "Long live Comrade Hitler!" (p. 297)

Immediately Miliaga realizes that he would not be forgiven this fatal mistake. The last the reader hears of the captain is while he is being dragged from the barn by two soldiers of the general's escort on his way to be shot. As he is taken away he continues to shout a hodge-podge of Russian and German. The narrator adds in parentheses that German turned out to be a foreign language Miliaga knew "a little too well."

The narrator ends the chapter with the comment that Miliaga, "recently the terror of the district," perished like a fool because of a misunderstanding. The narrator, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, defends the captain:
After all, had he got his bearings while being questioned and realized that he was among friends, would he have actually started talking about a Russian Gestapo? Would he have actually started shouting "heil Hitler!" "Stalin kaput!" and other such anti-Soviet slogans? Not on his life! He had always considered himself a first-class patriot. (p. 298)

Yet, this "first-class patriot" had jumped eagerly at the chance to play traitor to his Soviet Motherland and to offer his services to the Nazi enemy. The narrator suggests how Miliaga would have ended his career:

It was entirely possible that, having reached the rank of general, he would have retired on a good pension, taken his well-deserved rest, and played dominoes with his fellow pensioners. In all likelihood he would have given lectures in meeting halls, instructing youth in patriotism, civilized behaviour in daily life, and intolerance for every manifestation of foreign ideology. (p. 298)

The narrator's suggestion, of course, is that Miliaga's life would have ended in the same hypocritical way that it had been led. The irony in this suggestion is that thousands of Miliagas did retire on a good pension and did spend their old age playing dominoes and writing letters to newspapers criticizing the behaviour of non-conformists like Vladimir Voinovich.

Miliaga has a professional colleague in the novel who appears as the nameless agent of SMERSH. He is described as "a small plain-looking man." (p. 238). He appears three times in the novel: at the regimental meeting when the announcement is made that the scouts have captured a German spy [II.32]; when Bukashev's sentry is discovered smoking at
his post [II.37]; and, when Miliaga is sentenced to be shot [II.38]. Each of these occasions has a punitive aspect to it. In the first instance, General Drynov sentences Filiukov to be shot; in the second Bukashov is chastised severely by Colonel Lapshin; and, in the third General Drynov sentences Miliaga to be shot. The SMERSH officer attends these misfortunes like a Soviet Grim Reaper. They amuse him; his smile is a reflection of Miliaga's ever-present smile. When Filiukov is ordered shot Lapshin attempts to save his scout by pointing out that Filiukov has two children. The general counters that he ordered Filiukov shot and not his children: "The official from SMERSH smiled. He valued a good sense of humour." (p. 280). When Miliaga is dragged off the SMERSH official's eyes accompanied his colleague in his final moments, thinking: "'You're a fool, Captain! Ech, what a fool!''' (p. 298).

The acronym SMERSH stands for "Smert' shpionam" ("Death to Spies"), a special division of the internal security forces of the Soviet Union that existed from 1942 to 1946. SMERSH was headed by Victor Abakumov and Ivan Serov, both long-time security officers. Serov's police career ended in 1954 when he was accused of complicity with the then out-of-favour Beria, was tried, and shot. Serov outlasted both Beria and Stalin. After Stalin's death Beria attempted to use his position as chief of a vast army of policemen to seize control of the country as Stalin's successor. Beria's failure was followed
by a curtailment of the powers of the security organs that had become a most powerful, privileged, and irresponsible group. The security police were placed under party control and Serov was placed in command.

SMERSH was established to supersede the old Special Branches that had been responsible for political security within the army. The armed forces of the Soviet Union are supervised by "Glavnoe voennoe upravlenie, osoboie upravlenie, 00" ("Main Military (Special) Administration"). It has the following tasks: to supervise all military personnel, civilian employees of the armed forces, and secret police troops; to supervise every aspect of life in the armed forces; to carry out other secret police work; to conduct counterintelligence work within the armed forces; to control all military warehouses and stockpiles; and, in war, to control all reconnaissance operations of the Soviet armed forces. All military secret police agents are entirely independent of the military command and the political officer. They form "special sections" (osobyi otdel) in every large military formation. Each battalion or detachment has at least one police officer ("osobist") who operates a network of informers recruited from among the soldiers.

SMERSH was an expanded and re-organized system created because of the special circumstances of the Second World War. It had all the tasks of the military police force as well as special additional responsibilities. On Soviet territories
SMERSH agents were to intercept enemy paratroopers, intercept deserters, investigate and, if necessary, execute spies. In newly-occupied areas of the Soviet Union SMERSH was to search out Gestapo agents left behind by retreating Germans and to discover leaders of anti-Communist groups or any potential enemies of the Soviet regime. After Germany's surrender SMERSH agents hunted down Nazi officers and officials in that part of Germany occupied by the Soviet Union, searched for ex-Soviet citizens who had fought in military detachments against the Soviet Union or who had collaborated with the Germans. SMERSH also kept surveillance over Soviet occupation personnel and arrested or abducted German experts.

Vladimir Petrov, who had colleagues in SMERSH, made these observations on its role during WWII:

During the war the N.K.V.D. kept a strict watch over all the armed forces through the organization known as 'Smersh.' Its name is made up of two Russian words, Smert Shpionam, meaning 'Death to Spies.' But its real task was not the apprehension and punishment of foreign spies; it was the detection of the slightest sign of disaffection, or even the expression of discontent, among the Soviet soldiers, sailors and airmen.

It was effective. In the war Smersh was a potent, ever-present reality. It meant that in the last resort waverers had to fear more certain retribution from the bullets of their countrymen than from the guns of the enemy. Smersh was just another province of the empire of fear.40

Unlike the secret police there is only one autobiographical account of life as an agent of SMERSH: Nicholai Sinevirskii's Smersh: god v stane vraga ("Smersh: a year in
Sinevirskii was a native of Transcarpathian Rus', until 1939 a part of eastern Czechoslovakia, and a militant anti-Communist, a fact he hid well from his employers. He spent seven months in SMERSH as an interpreter with the rank of Junior Lieutenant between December 1944 and August 1945 attached to the Fourth Ukrainian Front. He served in the Second or Operative Department which was concerned with the local population, while Departments Three, Four and Five were concerned with liaison with Moscow, investigation and trial respectively. Sinevirskii was present as interpreter during many interrogations and describes the combination of brutality and fantasy that was directed at prisoners. He also shed light on the extra-curricular activities of his fellow officers, women and alcohol. Here and there in his account he made observations on the organization in which he worked; for example: "Lzhivye obeshchaniia, nedoverie, ugrozy, donosy, doprosy, pytky, mucheniia i smert' - stixiia smershevtsev." ("Lying promises, mistrust, threats, denunciations, interrogations, tortures, torments, and death - the elements of the SMERSH agents."). Sinevirsky stayed in SMERSH only seven months. By the end of that time he felt that his opposition to their methods and to the Communists in general was beginning to show. He went home, made his peace with his parents who knew that their son was leaving them forever, and fled to the West. The SMERSH agent in The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin, briefly
though the reader may see him, never would have repeated Sinevirskii's observations. The nameless SMERSH agent would have kept on smiling.

In Stalin's time the secret police were agents of terror. They inspired terror in the general populace. Their literary counterparts were leather-jacketed commissars and Chekists who stood firm to protect the Revolution. Voinovich breaks with tradition. His police agents are closer to being Keystone Cops than men of iron. He deflates the image of the state's police by making its members appear as fools. Captain Miliaga is so confused that he shouts out the wrong cliché and causes his own death. Voinovich gloriously topples a Soviet holy cow. The next chapter will look at a Soviet institution that may not need toppling. It totters under its own weight.
NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX.


13 Hingley, pp. 196-97.


15 Voinovich repeatedly describes the Institution staff with the dehumanizing synecdoche "grey uniforms."


17 Petrov, p. 72.

18 The usual physiognomy of heroes and villains suggests thin lips for a villain; Miliaga could never be anything but the villain in this novel.

19 Like most characters in the novel Luzhin has been appropriately named. A "luzha" is a "puddle or pool," while "sest' v luzh" conveys the idea "to get into a mess."

20 Again Voinovich has chosen appropriate names for his characters. "Liuk" may be defined in various ways as "opening" or "aperture." The older meaning, however, seems to better describe Filiukov's behaviour: "illuminator" ("V raskrytyi liuk potokla vidno bylo nebo." Bunin, More bogov). Syrykh's name comes directly from "syroi" ("damp, raw, uncooked; green"), an apt description for a recruit.

21 Lapshin may be derived from "lapsha" ("noodles") or "lapshevnik" ("noodle pudding"). Colonel Lapshin would translate, therefore, as Colonel Noodles.


23 Solzhenitsyn, p. 361.

24 Solzhenitsyn, p. 388. After the war, Solzhenitsyn goes on to point out, other larger national groups suffered too:

But for the Baltic States in 1940, it was not exile, but the camps - or for some people, death by shooting in stone-walled prison yards. In 1941, again, as the Soviet armies retreated, they seized as many well-to-do, influential, and prominent people as they could, and carried or drove them off like precious trophies, and then
tipped them like dung onto the frostbound soil of the Archipelago. . . . When they returned in 1944 the victors carried out their threats, and imprisoned people in droves. But even this was not deportation of whole nations.

The main epidemics of banishment hit the Baltic States in 1948 (the recalcitrant Lithuanians again). In these same years the Western Ukraine, too, was being scraped clean, and there, too, the last deportations took place in 1951. (p. 391)

25 Solzhenitsyn, pp. 388-89.
28 Solzhenitsyn, p. 400.
30 Lapshin's comment, "'Of course they had to drag him through the mud, so I can't make out his uniform or insignia,'" explains why the grey uniform that had previously worked so efficiently at creating terror did not do its job in this instance. Peter Deriabin writes in The Secret World that during WWII one of his jobs as an officer was to keep an eye on Soviet soldiers guarding German POWs. If not closely supervised the Soviet soldiers would strip the Germans of their personal effects and their uniforms. Soviet officers objected to the practice on the ground that a stripped military man is difficult to identify. See Deriabin, p. 52.
32 Quoted in Sullivant, p. 38.
33 Sullivant, p. 39.
35 Hingley, p. 191.
36 Miliaga may be compared with real-life victims of Stalin's terror who died of a willed misunderstanding. Feliks
Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the CHEKA, described the secret police as the "avenging sword of the proletarian leadership." He said: "The Cheka is not a court. The Cheka is the defense of the Revolution as the Red Army is; as in the civil war the Red Army cannot stop to ask whether it may harm particular individuals, but must take into account only one thing, the victory of the Revolution over the bourgeoisie, so the Cheka must defend the Revolution and conquer the enemy even if its sword falls occasionally on the heads of the innocent." (Quoted in Deriabin, p. 58). The reader can only wonder if Dzherzhinsky's words would have given solace to the scores of police officers who fell during the purges from defenders of the Revolution to enemies of the Revolution and ended their days in the labour camps.

37 For their biographies see Utechin, p. 1 (Abakumov) and p. 483 (Serov).

38 Andreevich, pp. 126-31.


40 Petrov, pp. 98-99.


42 Sinevirskii, p. 57.
The village is a common theme in Russian literature. The countryside appears in the nineteenth century in the works of among others, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Nekrasov, Kol'tsov, Nikitin, Chekhov, and Bunin. The two best known "village poets" after the Revolution were Kliuev and Esenin. In the years after the Revolution the village theme appeared in the prose works of such writers as Klyuchkov, Neverov, Zamoiskii, Seifulina, Pil'niak, Prishvin, and Leonov. The Party's view of the village is presented in Panferov's novel Bruski (And Then The Harvest, 1928-37) and Sholokhov's novel about collectivization, Podniataia tselina (Virgin Soil Upturned, 1931. Second volume: 1960).

Stalin's death saw somewhat of a "thaw" in official literature's attitude to the village. In general the "thaw" may be said to have begun with a sensational article that appeared in the December 1953 issue of Novyi mir. Vladimir Pomerantsev's essay, "On Sincerity in Literature," criticized the artificiality, didacticism, and schematicism that characterized most Soviet literature. He gave specific examples of discrepancies between Soviet reality and life as it was portrayed in literature. He asked that sincerity be the first standard for judging a work of literature.
Pomerantsev's article was followed by Fedor Abramov's "The People of the Kolkhoz Village in Post-War Prose." A recent party decision to initiate reforms in the countryside and Pomerantsev's article demanding sincerity in literature may have led Abramov to his criticism of many works that embellished kolkhoz life and did not portray the difficulties most kolkhozes and their members faced after the war. Abramov rejected the romanticized view of the countryside presented, for example, in the Stalin Prize-winning novel Kavaler zolotoi zvezdy (Cavalier of the Golden Star, 1948) by Semen Babaevskii. Pomerantsev had also criticized Babaevskii's novel, preferring instead Valentin Ovechkin's Raionnye budni (District Weekdays, 1952), in which a reader could learn more about real life and problems on the kolkhoz.

Ovechkin's work opened the door to a number of writers who have become known as the "village writers" or "derevenshchiki." These include Gavril Troepolskii (Zapiski agronoma, Notes of an Agronomist, 1953) Efim Dorosh (Derevenskii dnevnik, A Village Diary, 1954-70), Fedor Abramov ("Vokrug da okolo," Around and About, 1963), Vladimir Soloukhin (Vladimirskie proselki, Vladimir Country Roads, 1957), Vasilii Belov (Privychnoe delo, A Common Affair, 1966), Viktor Likhonosov ("Brianskie," Folks from Briansk, 1963), and Sergei Zalygin (Na Irtyshe, On the Irtysh, 1964).

In a chapter on the village writers in his most recent study of post-Stalinist Soviet literature, Deming Brown
concluded by stating that this school presented two major and closely related preoccupations. He wrote:

The first of these is a concern for the economic and social welfare of the village, as shown in detailed accounts of the organizations and day-to-day operations of farming, close study of the psychology and aspirations of the peasantry, and protest, either implied or direct, against the conditions under which the agrarian sector has been forced to exist. The second general area of concern has been cultural and broadly historical, involving an intensive examination, and usually a celebration, of folk traditions, values, and customs, and of Russian antiquity and cultural monuments.4

Both preoccupations indicate a disaffection with present-day life. The latter, represented by the nationalistic (some might even say, chauvinistic), Russite group - for example, Dorosh and Soloukhin - may be seen, Brown continued, as a search for a set of values to replace the official Marxist-Leninist ideology that does not satisfy many fundamental spiritual needs.

The derevenshchiki's portrayal of life in the villages and on the kolkhozes was a disturbing one. By the early sixties the Party tightened its controls over it. Some writers were disciplined while some, like Dorosh, had to wait for permission to publish. Mozhaev's bitterly critical story, "The Life of Fedor Kuzkin," may have been printed in the late sixties only because it had been set in the Stalinist era, the past whose difficulties presumably had been overcome. By the early seventies the village prose school had lost its vigour and its significance as a literary trend.
Voinovich in his own life has had experience of a wide spectrum of Soviet society. He is at home describing the life of city bureaucrats (Ivan'kiada) as well as describing life on a kolkhoz (Chonkin). Before Chonkin Voinovich set three of his stories in village/kolkhoz settings. "My zdes' zhivem" (We Live Here, 1961), "Rasstoianie v polkilometra" (A Distance of Half a Kilometre, 1961), and "Putem vzaimnoi perepiski" (By Mutual Correspondence, 1968). These stories are concerned not with the welfare of the kolkhoz or the search for traditional values but rather with a search for meaning by his less-than-positive heroes. The conservative critic, Grigorii Brovman, as mentioned in the Introduction, censured Voinovich's portrayal of a contemporary Russian village. He demanded a presentation of the "new Soviet" village rather than the gloomy one in "A Distance of Half a Kilometer." Voinovich's readers become aware that Chonkin too is set in a village bearing a somewhat closer resemblance to reality than Brovman's state fiction of a vigorous, efficient "Soviet" village.

The Russian peasant has been characterized in the final report of the "Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System." The authors reported on interviews and questionnaires administered to thousands of refugees from the Soviet Union in 1950 and 1951 and the results provided one of the first systematic and comprehensive pictures "from inside." One of the groups who participated were peasants. Their reports gave the interviewers a look at life in the village and on the
kolkhoz before World War II.\textsuperscript{7} The results of the Harvard Project might surprise those unfamiliar with the Soviet system. The section on the peasantry\textsuperscript{8} begins with a grim self-depiction: "As he reports his own experience, the peasant is outstandingly the most oppressed, exploited, and disadvantaged man of the Soviet era. This is true not only when he compares his lot to that of the better-off groups such as the intelligentsia, but equally in terms of the absolute level of deprivation which he feels."\textsuperscript{9} The interviewers also discovered that the peasant:

1) is deprived also in terms of material conditions and limited in chances for upward social, educational, or economic mobility;

2) feels the Soviet system destroyed his family ties;

3) if he is young and male, seeks work in the towns and cities, leaving kolkhoz work to the women;

4) sees his difficulties as being the fault of the intelligentsia and the regime as linked;

5) feels hostile sentiments towards the regime (about 75% advocated violent death for the top leaders and about 80% were willing to drop an atomic bomb on Moscow);

6) is least prone to acknowledge any accomplishments or achievements on the part of the Soviet system (the authors suggest the attitude may stem from the fact that there was little accomplished for the average peasant);

7) is not militantly anti-Bolshevik and believes that certain
institutional features of the system (like nationalized industry, transport, and communication) were acceptable; 8) was not much concerned with civil liberties: the government might be authoritarian as long as it was just, non-exploitative (of the peasant), and avoided the worst excesses of secret police control.

Peasant morale was low and the peasantry was considered by the authors as the most alienated segment of the populace. The reason: the collective farm system. The peasant held it to be the cause of his lost independence, his autonomy, and his lost integrity. The regime created the system and is responsible for it. Only the dissolution of the collective farm system would satisfy the peasant who saw it as the means by which he was made a serf of the state. Though the Harvard Project interviewers found their respondents were willing retain some co-operative farming on a voluntary basis, in general they favoured a return to private peasant holdings. Overwhelmingly the peasants wanted the present system done away with because it had enslaved them.

The collective farm, or kolkhoz, is the main form of agricultural organization in the USSR. In theory it is a voluntary co-operative undertaking of a number of peasants in one village or a few small villages who pool their land, equipment, and livestock together. Payment is made to the peasants in money or kind (foodstuffs) according to the number of work-days each peasant contributes. Ostensibly
the kolkhoz elects a chairman to manage its affairs, though in practice the chairman is appointed and functions as the intermediary for the demands of the Party and the government. Until 1958 the kolkhoz would not normally own its own farm machinery. A Machine and Tractor Station (MTS) would service a number of kolkhozes in a given region. The MTS were an inefficient and irregular source and after 1958 were re-organized as Technical Repair Stations that carried out repairs and sold machinery, fuel, and fertilizers to local kolkhozes. The number of kolkhozes is decreasing, gradually being replaced by state farms (sovkhozes) that are run like industrial enterprises with hired labour paid regular wages. The collective farm system has been exported to the Eastern Bloc countries where its lack of success has led to its gradual abandonment. The kolkhoz, however, seems to be an ideological mainstay of the USSR.

The Soviet Union's agricultural policy has reflected its curious combination of dependence on and hostility towards the peasant. In 1917-18, with Soviet approval, peasants expropriated landlords' estates and divided them among independent peasant households. The rich peasant ("kulak") became the major enemy while the Bolsheviks based their support on so-called "Committees of Poor Peasants." During the Civil War Soviet authorities seized grain from all "classes" of peasants. Peasants refused to plant more than they needed for personal use; food shortages developed,
specially in the cities. The resulting peasant uprisings in 1920-21 in Tambov, for example, and other provinces were ruthlessly suppressed. The New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1921, changed government policy. These changes gave the peasant an incentive to produce and output increased as did rural living standards.

The policy of concessions to the peasants ended with the regime's decision to embark on a programme of rapid industrialization. Emphasis was placed on heavy industry with the result that there were fewer consumer goods to entice peasants to place a large share of foodstuffs at the government's disposal. The government needed a large supply of grain at low prices to feed its expanding industrial population and to export in exchange for foreign industrial technology. NEP was abandoned, therefore, and the government returned to the practice of compulsory requisitions used during the Civil War.

The first victims were the so-called kulaks, the more prosperous, ambitious, and successful peasants who had supplied the government under NEP. Low prices had caused them to withhold grain until Stalin declared that force was to be used to seize their grain. The kulaks fought back; in 1929 the state declared its policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class. Millions were deprived of their homes and sent into exile or the camps.

In 1929 Stalin announced the rapid acceleration of the
collectivization programme. Behind this move was the realization that most peasants were opposed to the collective farm system. By March 1930 58.1% of peasant households were enrolled in kolkhozes. The victory was a hollow one for the state: peasants would destroy livestock and draft-animals rather than turn them over to the kolkhoz. Peasants would join collective farms on paper but would refuse to contribute their labour. On 2 March 1930 Stalin reversed policy in an article, "Dizzy with Success," in which he blamed local Party officials for the excesses of the collectivization drive. Peasants took his article as permission to withdraw from the kolkhozes and a mass exodus resulted.

In the fall of 1930 the collectivization campaign began again. The government insisted this time in using force and threats to enroll peasants in kolkhozes. By mid-1931 more than half of all peasant households belonged to collective farms. By 1940 96.9% belonged.

One of the most devastating results of the collectivization drive of the early thirties was the famine of 1932-33. Created artificially by the government, the famine served as a means to break the resistance of peasants to collectivization. The harvest of those years was sufficient to feed industrial centres and to export, but grain was seized in the countryside by armed detachments. An estimated six to ten million peasants died of starvation in Ukraine and the Caucasus area. Stalin is reported to have told Churchill that...
more casualties resulted from forced collectivization than from WWII. The last famine, in 1946–47, was caused in part by drought but also by peasant resistance to the reintroduction of the collective farm system that had been relaxed during the war.

By the mid-1930s the kolkhoz system had been consolidated. In return for a steady supply of foodstuffs at low prices the individual collective farmer was allowed a private garden plot and a few animals. The kolkhoz as a whole was allowed to distribute any surplus among its members by work-days. Self-interest was served and output was improved substantially. In general, however, the peasant still retained his negative attitude to the collective-farm system. The work he did was done without enthusiasm and most of his energies were devoted to his own garden plot.

For the regime, on the other hand, collectivization was a triumphant step forward. It provided a greatly improved system for ensuring urban food supply. Twenty-five million peasant households had been reduced to two hundred and fifty thousand kolkhozes – a vast improvement and simplification for their administration. The MTS also provided a local intelligence service to keep check on the farms they served.

On 27 May 1939 the Party published a resolution: "On Measures Towards Safeguarding the Collectivized Land From Being Squandered." It was designed to put an end to abuses of the kolkhoz system: more than two and a half million hectares
had been unlawfully diverted from kolkhozes to private garden plots and many farmers were spending a minimal amount of time on the kolkhoz, devoting most of their energies to their own private plots. Severe penalties were declared for kolkhozniki in possession of illegal lands. A minimum number of work-days was prescribed for each kolkhoznik regardless of sex. Nonfulfillment of the work-day quota would mean expulsion from the kolkhoz and the loss of a garden plot. Kolkhozes were ordered to increase the length of the work-day. Incentive was provided by a decree that allowed part of the surplus of a kolkhoz brigade to be returned to its members in kind or cash.\textsuperscript{14}

The regime made further demands on the peasantry just before the outbreak of WWII, just at the point where the reader meets the "Krasnyi Kolos" collective farm in \textit{The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin}. In 1940 the basis for computing the kolkhoz's crop delivery to the government was changed.\textsuperscript{15} Previously fixed deliveries were based on an acreage planted or intended for planting. Now deliveries were based on the amount of tillable land available within the kolkhoz. The amount each kolkhoz was expected to produce was also increased. The two changes may have been influenced by pressures to accumulate reserve foodstuffs against the outbreak of war.\textsuperscript{16} Whatever the reason, the effect on the collective farmer was onerous and no doubt sharpened feelings of resentment towards the system and the government.
The similarity between the usual co-operative and the Soviet collective farm is only the name. The usual co-operative pays its taxes and other obligations from its gross profits and then distributes the remainder amongst its members. Legally the kolkhoz does similarly, but with one practical difference. Whereas taxes in the usual co-operative would constitute a minor drain on profit, the kolkhozes are obliged to make burdensome deliveries at low prices in kind, declared by law to be equivalent to taxes. This obligation means that the kolkhoz does not exist to serve the needs of its members - the purpose of any Western co-operative venture. Stalin recognized the situation in his speech at the Second All-Union Congress of shockworkers-kolkhozniki in 1935:

It is better to proceed on the assumption that there is a kolkhoz economy, social, large, and decisive, needed for the satisfaction of social needs, and there exists along with this a small individual economy, needed for the satisfaction of the personal needs of the kolkhozniki.

The kolkhoz exists to provide food for an urban population, goods for export, and raw materials for industry, all in larger quantities and at lower prices than the individual farm system could and would provide.

Pre-1917 agriculture was based on the peasant household. The Soviets took the individual over the age of sixteen as the basic unit for membership in a kolkhoz, decrying the household system as a remnant of tsarist times. The individual members may participate in the assembly of members, work in the
kolkhoz, receive a share of its dividends. The household, however, still exists in practice: kolkhoz membership is often counted by households; livestock and garden plots are allotted by households; and obligatory deliveries and taxes are assessed by household.

The peasant who tries to withdraw voluntarily from the kolkhoz may lose a great deal. Those who quit or are expelled lose their claim for a share in the land, their entrance fee, and any claim to accumulations made by the kolkhoz during the peasant's membership. Legally members may only be expelled by an assembly of kolkhoz members; in practice expulsion takes place on the initiative of the chairman, the Party, or the government.

According to the "Model Charter of an Agricultural Artel" of 1935 (also known as the "Stalin Charter") a kolkhoz is managed by the assembly of its members. Between assemblies the members elect a board for a period of two years, a chairman, and a board of controllers (an inspection committee). The board appoints an assistant chairman, a bookkeeper, field brigadiers, and managers of the kolkhoz farms. Article Six of the Charter pledges the kolkhoz to fulfill the plans and obligations as dictated by the government - herein is the real purpose of the kolkhoz. Various government and Party organizations see to these plans and obligations being carried out. In this scheme the kolkhoz chairman and the kolkhoz board are the lowest rungs of the administrative
ladder whose first rung is Moscow. In Moscow plans are made as to what and how the kolkhoz produces and instructions are passed down the administrative ladder to the chairman.

The chairman is, despite the paper rights of the kolkhoz assemblies, the real boss. He works independently from the assembly. On orders from above the chairmen are repeatedly shifted from one kolkhoz to another. The turn-over on a kolkhoz of its chairmen leads to a less efficient farm operation. During 1938 54% of all kolkhoz chairmen changed their positions. On 1 January 1939 roughly one-half of the kolkhoz chairmen had been on their current jobs for less than one year. Fedor Belov, recalling his own experiences in the kolkhoz in Ukraine, notes that before the war in only seven of the forty-six collective farms in the "raion" ("province") did a chairman stay for four or more years. In all the others the chairman was replaced within the first or second year. The principal reason for the rapid turnover, as Belov reports "...was that many of the chairmen enriched themselves at the expense of the collectives. They drank heavily and bribed the raion officials with kolkhoz property."

Belov's chairmen could well have provided the model for the chairman of Voinovich's "Krasnyi kolos" kolkhoz, the usually-drunk Golubev. In his descriptions of his own tenure as kolkhoz chairman Belov parallels Golubev's problems. For example:
He [Golubev] lived in constant expectation of the arrival of some committee of inspection - then he'd pay for everything and in full. So far, though, they'd managed to get by. From time to time, various district inspectors, examiners, instructors would drive down and drink vodka with him while munching on lard and eggs, then they'd sign the documents of certification and drive off, everything still in one piece. (p. 10-11)

[Belov describing the pre-war situation:] To obtain space on railroad cars for the transportation of the produce to districts where the selling price was high was almost impossible by ordinary means and required considerable ingenuity - a knowledge of what strings to pull and whose palm to grease - on the part of the kolkhoz chairman. 'If you don't grease, you don't travel,' says a Soviet proverb; and indeed it was constantly necessary to 'grease.'

[p. 10-11]

It was no accident that Borisov, the Secretary of the District Commission Machine and Tractor Station, would sometimes say to Golubev: 'Get rid of your doubts. Its time for work, not doubts.' And sometimes he would also say: 'Remember you are under constant surveillance.' (p. 57)

[post-war situation:] To be able to function effectively and obtain the minimum necessary supplies, legally or illegally, the kolkhozes had to remain on good terms with the raion officials, that is to say, in practice they had to bribe them rather liberally with farm products.

The MVD [i.e. secret police] had a deputy in every village, who worked closely with the MGB and passed on to it any relevant information he came across.

Special checks were made on all persons who occupied responsible positions in the raion, including all members of the raion Party and executive committees, chairmen of kolkhozes, managers of industrial enterprises, and teachers. If incriminating evidence was found about
anyone, he was promptly dismissed from his job or was prevented from holding a responsible job. 28

[Golubev speaks:] 'The orders come from above, but the kolkhoznik's got to answer for everything. Not to mention the chairman.' (p. 74)

Every year the kolkhoz received from the raion agricultural department plans for the acreage and yield of each individual crop and the development of animal husbandry. 29

On the long bench beneath the wall-newspaper sat Nikolai Kurzov and Lesha Zharov, who, three years ago, had been given eight years for stealing a sack of flour from the mill. (p. 77)

Stealing was a common occurrence, not only among the rank and file but among the managerial personnel also. It reached such proportions on some kolkhozes that almost one-third of the harvest was stolen by the members. The farmers stole singly and in groups; they stole grain, beets, potatoes, hay, and even straw. Seeing that the kolkhozes surrendered almost all their produce to the state, some kolkhoz members made stealing their main source of existence. 30

Ivan Timofeyevich Golubev was sitting in his office toiling over the composition of a report concerning haymaking in the last ten-day period. Needless to say, the report was a fraud, since there had been practically no haymaking at all during the last ten-day period. (pp. 217-18)

Summaries reporting on the progress of work on the kolkhoz had to be sent to the raion agricultural department every five days. They frequently bore no relationship to reality, either because the plans had been unrealistic to start with or because some unforeseen circumstance had made it impossible to follow them. The falsification of the reports.
Ivan Golubev is one of the more endearing characters in Voinovich's novel. The kolkhoz chairman, like the pigeon his name suggests, is a nervous and agitated man. His main preoccupation throughout the novel, reminiscent of the characters in Gogol's *Revizor* (The Inspector-General), is the "Maximum Responsibility Committee of Inspection." His biggest fear is that with their arrival the sorry state of his kolkhoz will be discovered, he will be held responsible and inevitably arrested. Golubev's fear shapes his relations with the other characters in the novel.

The reader meets Golubev in rather inauspicious circumstances in the first scene of the novel. After all the other villagers have gathered to inspect the airplane that has unexpectedly landed in their village, Golubev arrives, drunk. In the narrator's description there is a suicidal edge to the chairman's drinking: "Recently the chairman had been drinking frequently and heavily, on a par with the chairman who had hung himself over in Old Kliukvino." (pp. 9-10). The narrator first explains that some people thought Golubev drank because he was a drunkard while others thought he drank because he had a large family. Finally the narrator reveals Golubev's real concern: "... things at the kolkhoz were going poorly. Not what you would call very poorly, you
could even say things were going well, except they were getting worse and worse every year." (p. 10). The problems on the kolkhoz are Golubev's one concern throughout the novel.

Voinovich has an amazing ability to describe various Soviet phenomena in a few, short, descriptive, and simple phrases. The creation of a kolkhoz and the role of its chairman are reduced to the following:

In the beginning, when everyone had dragged out all their belongings and piled them up in one great heap, it had been an inspiring sight, and to be in charge of it all seemed a pleasant-enough idea; but later on, somebody had had second thoughts and had gone to get his things back, even though you weren't supposed to. From then on, the chairman felt like the old woman they had stationed on top of the pile to guard it: people surrounded her from all sides; if she grabbed one by the hand, right away another one would start pulling something out from under her - she goes for him, and the first one gets away. What can you do? (p. 10)

The kolkhoz chairman is responsible for the organization and the output of his kolkhoz. The narrator sympathizes with Golubev's singular lack of success: "It was a trying experience for the chairman since he did not understand that the fault was not his alone." (p. 10). His fear: "He lived in constant expectation of the arrival of some committee of inspection - then he'd pay for everything and in full." (p. 10). Golubev had managed to bribe various minor inspectors with vodka, lard, and eggs, but still he awaited the "Maximum Responsibility Committee of Inspection," his day of reckoning.
Golubev's fears are little allayed by the Secretary of the District Commission Machine and Tractor Station, Sergei Nikanorich Borisov, who would warn Golubev that he was under "constant surveillance." The narrator locates Golubev's problems in his "irrepressible tendency to have second thoughts about everything." (p. 56). Golubev also has doubts, dangerous ones: "Truly a great deal had been done in Russia over the last twenty-odd years so that Golubev would have no reason to doubt, but all the same the doubts remained and sometimes they even extended to things which at that time were not to be doubted." (p. 57)

The historical MTS Secretary would be a Party representative, senior to the local kolkhoz chairman and his possible scourge. Voinovich follows Borisov's general comments about constant surveillance with a specific example which, true to the novel, undercuts or destroys the good Communist Borisov's menacing posture. The example centres on an argument between Golubev and Borisov on whether the kolkhoz should spend money on propaganda campaigns or on cow-sheds. During a District Committee conference for kolkhoz chairmen Borisov questions Golubev as to why he has not provided the kolkhoz party organizer with monies to buy an industrial production growth chart. Golubev refuses to consider the purchase because "' . . . It's just that I can't spare the money. The kolkhoz has so little, we don't even know how we're going to plug up the holes. But of course, its all got to come out of
my hide because I'm the chairman.'" (p. 58). Borisov charges that Golubev is a Communist first and then a chairman and the MTS threatens: "'But if you stick to that position, we'll have to take a good hard look right into your very heart, goddamnit!'" The gesture that follows changes the entire direction and tone of the argument: "In his anger Borisov whacked Stalin on the head, then shook his hand in pain. Instantly, the expression of pain on his face changed into one of mortal fear." (p. 58).

In an earlier chapter Stalin's name was shown to be not just a name but a magic Soviet talisman. Moisei Stalin, for example, though not related to Stalin, had Stalin's power conferred on him because he had Joseph Stalin's name. The narrator indicates a similar projection here by referring to what Borisov strikes as "Stalin" rather than as "the bust of Stalin" (previously Borisov is described as mechanically stroking the bust of Stalin). Borisov, for all intents and purposes, has struck Stalin. Memoirists have left examples from Soviet life wherein the NKVD treated the desecration (intentional or not) of some image of Stalin as attempts against the person of Leader. The narrator provides his own example that will sound familiar to any reader familiar with Stalinist life:

Both Borisov and Golubev had in mind the story of the school-boy who aimed his slingshot at his teacher and hit instead a Portrait, breaking the glass. If he had merely knocked the teacher's eye out, they might have let him off as a juvenile,
but hitting the Portrait was no more and no less than an attempted assassination. The whereabouts of that schoolboy were presently unknown. (pp. 58-59)

The two fictional characters face another problem: denunciation. As mentioned in a previous chapter, "revolutionary vigilance" demanded that loyal Soviet citizens denounce any politically-suspect act or thought they witnessed. Though Borisov committed "treason" by striking the image of Stalin both Borisov and Golubev might be held responsible by the authorities:

Borisov's mouth went dry. He opened his mouth and stared at Golubev as if hypnotized. Golubev, meanwhile, was scared to death himself. He hadn't wanted to see it, but he had seen it, he had! And now what was there to do? Pretend he hadn't noticed? But what if Borisov ran and confessed, then Borisov would be out of trouble and he, Golubev, would catch it for not reporting Borisov in the first place. And if he did report it, they'd be glad to lock him up just because he'd seen what he'd seen. (p. 59)

Borisov's reputation as a "good" Communist is destroyed by his subsequent actions. He offers Golubev a cigarette, pretends nothing has happened, and continues their conversation. His tone of voice changes and he addresses Golubev "as a friend" to take care of matters. In the end, however, despite the reprieve, perhaps to re-establish control, Borisov once more warns Golubev that he is under constant surveillance.

The theme of constant surveillance and Golubev's fear of an investigation continues when Plechevoi, whose main role
in the novel appears to be malicious gossip-mongering, meets Golubev in the village tearoom. Knowing how much Golubev fear inspectors, Plechevoi lets drop the warning that Chonkin has arrived "as part of an investigation." The local villagers, Plechevoi adds, also believe that "they" are going to break up the kolkhozes. Added to Borisov's warning Plechevoi's gossip torments Golubev who decides to confront the soldier.

When next the reader meets Golubev he is about to enter Niura's hut and speak to Chonkin. The chapter is so structured that Golubev first meets Chonkin, then returns to his office where he meets Lesha Zharov, the ex-convict. In both instances the topic is Golubev's fear of arrest and punishment. The narrator (and the reader) have a bit of fun at Golubev's expense. In both meetings Golubev fantasizes: in the first because he imagines Chonkin as a sly inspector and in the second because Zharov teases Golubev with stories about the labour camps that set Golubev to believe "even there people live." What Golubev does not know (is Chonkin an inspector?), he fears; what Golubev thinks he knows (he thinks he knows about life in the camps), he no longer fears. Ironically what he no longer fears is based on fantasy. Voinovich neatly arranges all these conflicting ideas in one chapter.

Initially Golubev had refused to believe that someone like Chonkin could be an inspector. When Plechevoi warns him
that the villagers themselves suspect Chonkin, Golubev's musing reveals the possible nature of the relationship between kolkhoz chairmen and the authorities: "True he [Chonkin] didn't look like the sort they'd send, but those who did the sending were no dummies ["duraki"] - they wouldn't send somebody you could tell right off had been especially sent. If you could only know for sure. But how could you find out?" (p. 62). Golubev's first view of Chonkin in Niura's hut also confirms his suspicions: Chonkin is embroidering.

The conversation between the two men proceeds in a comic series of misunderstandings. Both suspect the other of some ulterior motive. Chonkin, for example, asks Golubev what he wants because he senses "something fishy ["kakoi-to podvokh"] about the chairman's odd behaviour." Golubev, for his part, is convinced Chonkin's vague answers are a result of his clever strategy: "You try him from one side, you try him from another but he just answers like he doesn't understand anything. . . ." (p. 73). Golubev is so convinced that Chonkin is clever that he decides the soldier probably can speak French. "Kes kese" is the only French Golubev knows and the phrase frightens and further confuses Chonkin. When Chonkin tells Golubev not to talk strangely, the kolkhoz chairman takes the offensive to tell the "inspector" that he, Golubev, is no fool and knows that "surveillance" is being conducted.

In one of the many coincidences in the novel Golubev
spots Chonkin's letter (written by Gladyshev) to his battalion commander. Golubev immediately assumes it to be a report on the kolkhoz. The problems of the kolkhoz, in Golubev's outburst, result from one thing: "... The orders come from above, but the kolkhoznik's got to answer for everything. Not to mention the chairman." (p. 74). Throughout the village prose of the sixties kolkhoz chairmen repeated Golubev's complaint about orders from above. Belov and any text-book description of Soviet collective farming evidence the flow of orders from senior levels down to the individual kolkhoz.

When Chonkin protests that he only does what he is ordered to do, Golubev accepts the statement as an admission of guilt. The only orders in Golubev's world are orders to inspect his kolkhoz. He wants to know what are Chonkin's exact orders: to confiscate Golubev's Party card or to arrest him. He stops being afraid for a moment and offers up his card and declares himself ready for prison. Slamming the door as he leaves, he suspects that he has made more problems for himself: "Whatever happens, he thought, irritably, unhitching his horse, better it happens than to sit around trembling, waiting for it to happen. Whatever happens, happens." (p. 75)

Golubev's fear of prison returns almost immediately in the same chapter because of another structured coincidence. Just after returning to the kolkhoz office after his scene with Chonkin, Golubev overhears a conversation being held in
the corridor outside his office about camp life. One of the
discussants is a former inmate, Lesha Zharov. Though the
reader may view Zharov's appearance right at this point in
the novel as a handy device of coincidence, the character
Golubev views the conversation he overhears as an omen:

Golubev found this conversation terribly interesting. And he took it right to heart. It
even occurred to him that maybe it was no accident that he was overhearing it, that maybe
all this information would be coming in handy in the not-too-distant future. (p. 76)

As discussed earlier Zharov has a bit of fun at
Golubev's expense during the ex-convict's description of life
in a labour camp. In the end Golubev decides that "life
wasn't so terrible in there" and that "even in there people
live." Golubev's belief that life might even be better "in
there" is a telling comment on the kolkhoz life he leads:

In there you worked ten hours, where here Golubev
had to run around from dawn till dusk. In there
they fed you three times a day, where here it
wasn't every day he managed to eat twice. And
he hadn't been to the cinema in over six months.
(p. 80)

So relieved is he at the stories of camp life that Golubev
returns home in a good frame of mind. His rare good temper
leads him even to say "a tender word to his wife who was so
unused to affection from her husband that she went into the
passageway and shed a few tears." (p. 81).

The Second World War appears to save Golubev from the
arrest he so fears. Early in the Second Part of the novel the
reader finds Golubev and the village partorg, Kilin,
attempting to contact Borisov for orders. The sudden invasion by the Germans has left the two village leaders without proper instructions as to what to do or say. The partorg appears more concerned than Golubev who, as earlier in the novel, still seems worried about his record as kolkhoz chairman. As the partorg cranks the telephone Golubev examines the safe where secret and financial documents were kept. Under the partorg's censorious gaze Golubev replaces the record book,

To hell with it, he thought indifferently, it doesn't make any difference now. The war will write everything off. The main thing's to get to the front as fast as possible; there either you get a chest full of medals or a head full of bullets, but either way, at least you can live like an honest man. Unfortunately, due to his flat feet, Ivan Timofeyevich was unfit for military service, although he was hoping to conceal this defect from the examining board.

(p. 135)

Despite the last sentence, in which the narrator destroys Golubev's chance for freedom at the front, Golubev's musings about the war reveal that he expects the front to be somewhere he "can live like an honest man." Earlier he had believed that the labour camps were a place where "people can live." In comparison the kolkhoz seems like a place where a man cannot live or be honest.

Golubev disappears as a character until mid-way through the Second Part of the novel. The war apparently has not stopped those impossible orders from above (those orders which caused Golubev to rage early in Part One). The reader finds Golubev composing a report concerning haymaking in the last
ten-day period. The narrator comments: "Needless to say the report was a fraud." (p. 217). Borisov had cursed Golubev and demanded the plan be fulfilled just as someone over Borisov had cursed him and made a similar demand. The paper signifying work done was more important than the work itself. Fraudulent kolkhoz reports would become fraudulent provincial ("raion") reports and so on all the way to the top. Golubev participates in the fraud, cursing Borisov, and yet at the report's completion: "The figures looked impressive and the chairman caught himself starting to half-believe them." (p. 218). There is a fine line between creating a fiction and beginning to believe it.

The war also does not seem to save Golubev from his much-feared arrest. Golubev's biggest fear is that the poor output of his kolkhoz (hidden to some extent by false reports) will eventually lead to his arrest. The fact that these reports, as pointed out above, are sometimes dictated by the demands of his superiors give Golubev no sense of security. The fault, he believes (and probably with some justification, history proves) will be assessed as his and he will pay the penalty. Voinovich structures Chapter 20 of Part II much like Chapter 12 of the first part of the novel. Both concern Golubev and his fear of arrest. In Part I the chapter is structured so that Golubev blurts out his readiness to be arrested and then immediately afterwards meets the ex-convict Zharov who describes the life of an arrested man. In Part II
Golubev is first seen fabricating a hay report, i.e. committing the crime. As soon as he finishes he gazes out his office window and sees a truck and a group of men in the easily recognizable uniforms of the secret police.

The coincidence of the fraudulent hay report and the appearance of the secret police is obvious to the reader. From the previous few chapters the reader knows that the police are searching for the "deserter" Chonkin (recently denounced by Gladyshev). Golubev, however, is thrown into a panic:

No matter how much he had prepared himself for his fate, the sudden appearance of the men in grey had caught him off guard. All the more so, since he had requested to be sent to the front and it looked like his request was going to be granted. Now it was all over. (p. 219)

The ensuing scene between the secret police and the kolkhoz chairman is a burlesque. It climaxes the fear that has plagued Golubev throughout his previous scenes in the novel. Voinovich takes aim herein not so much at the pathetic figure of the thoroughly frightened Golubev as at the secret police who emerge as clowns. The historically much-feared NKVD become at the hands of the author a kind of Laurel and Hardy as Lieutenant Filippov and Sergeant Svintsov attempt to question Golubev.

Realizing that he cannot escape Golubev attempts to destroy the fraudulent hay report. With no time to burn it, afraid that if he ripped it up they would paste it back
together again, he decides to swallow it. Golubev just manages to pop the paper in his mouth — but not to swallow it — when, in the narrator's words, a "runty-faced" officer and a "bestial-faced" officer enter the kolkhoz office. The paper in Golubev's mouth makes it impossible for him to answer the police officers' questions with other than "moo-like" sounds. Filippov assumes that the chairman is deaf and dumb and resorts to mime to question Golubev about the deserter. When the Lieutenant whips his pistol from his holster and sticks it into the chairman's stomach to show Golubev how Filippov handles deserters, Golubev panics and faints. He just manages to avoid arrest for his strange behaviour when the Lieutenant recalls that he has been sent to arrest a deserter not the kolkhoz chairman.

Chonkin, as the reader discovers, arrests his would-be captors. When he learns that they had appetites "as any other social group" he goes to Golubev for help and finds him in his office "in his usual state of depression." He had tried to enlist but when the examining doctor had discovered his liver to be twice the normal size Golubev had promised to give up drinking. Golubev, desperate to enlist, decides to stay sober for two weeks until the next time he will be allowed another chance to enlist.

In every previous scene Golubev had been described as drunk. In an early part of the novel, in a scene between Golubev and Chonkin, the chairman, believing Chonkin to be
the much-feared inspector, had admitted that he was a drunkard.

Consistent with the theme of the novel - that nothing is as it is named - the moment Golubev declares that he has the will power to stop drinking (said only after a day and a half's abstinence) he loses that very same will power:

In the last day and a half he hadn't had a drop to drink. Yes, he thought with some satisfaction, gazing out the window, I've still got my will power left. At that very moment Chonkin appeared in the chairman's field of vision. He was walking across the square towards the office, carrying a certain streamlined object which Ivan Timofeyevich's experienced eyes recognized immediately. A flask. Ivan Timofeyevich swallowed his saliva and held his breath. (pp. 251-52)

Golubev's fall is apparent.

Golubev's problems on the kolkhoz are presented during his drinking. Having drunk almost the entire flask Chonkin and Golubev sit, "bosom pals," smoking, while Golubev complains about his lot:

'Before, Vania, it was tough,' he said. 'But now it's worse than ever. They took the men to the front. There's only the women left. Of course women are a great force too, especially in a system like ours, but they took my hammer man to the front and what woman can lift a big hammer like that? I'm talking about healthy women now, but there aren't any healthy women in a village. One's pregnant, another one's nursing, another one, rain or shine, she grabs the small of her back and tells me, 'This weather's murder on my back.' The higher-ups have no idea what we go through. Everything for the front, everything for the victory, that's what they're demanding now. They come, they curse me, they call me on the phone, they curse me, Borisov curses me, Revkin curses me, my mother this, my mother that. The Regional Committee calls me up and they can't say a word without swearing their heads off either. (pp. 253-54)
The only solution is to enlist or be arrested, anything, Golubev declares, "'to get free of this kolkhoz. Let somebody else take it over. I've had it.'" (p. 254).

Chonkin is willing to offer a solution to some of Golubev's problems. Chonkin offers to use his "prisoners" as workers in the kolkhoz fields in exchange for food for them.

From the various times he has referred to his Party card (usually in offers to relinquish it) the reader knows that Golubev is a Communist. The fear in his voice, as he responds to Chonkin's offer, is a comment on the Party member's view of the secret police. As a Communist, he tells Chonkin, "'I'm afraid of them.'" (p. 255). When Chonkin points out how easy either guarding his prisoners would be or hiring them out to other kolkhozes, Golubev realizes how tempting a proposition Chonkin has made. Still a good Communist Golubev tries to resist temptation by referring to the classics of Marxism. Communist battles with chairman as Golubev weighs his Party training against the realities of his kolkhoz. After a bout of drinking with Chonkin, he accepts Chonkin's prisoners as workmen.

The Chairman who is a Communist is also a coward. The morning after the drinking spree, at the end of which he had accepted Chonkin's offer, Golubev is terrified at what he has done. He sends his wife to the kolkhoz office to say he is ill and to find out what had happened. His worst fears are
confirmed when his wife returns to tell him that Chonkin's "team" had been sent out, according to the chairman's instructions, to "the front line of work."

The reports of Golubev's successful potato harvest make the kolkhoz famous. The district paper runs an article entitled: "Why is it Golubev can and you can't?" The harvest becomes news in the provincial capital and an official report in Moscow. When questioned on how he managed to achieve such productivity Golubev would answer "by fully utilizing the reserve labour force."

News that a report on the successful potato harvest might be sent to Stalin makes Golubev believe his doom was sealed. Chonkin again finds a solution to Golubev's problems: send the team to another labour front. The agreement is sealed with another bout of drinking. A long scene follows that describes the two men drunk, unable to stand up or to find their way home. In the midst of their revelry they discover they cannot walk upright. Unlike Gladyshev whose concern is evolution away from the apes, Golubev and Chonkin decide to return to walking on all fours:

'This is how you should walk,' said Ivan Timofeyevich, getting back up on all fours. Chonkin assumed the same position and the two friends set off for parts unknown.

'Well, how do you like it this way?' asked the chairman after a little while.

'Fine,' said Chonkin.

'This way of walking's even better than normal,' said the chairman with conviction. 'If you fall you don't get hurt. Jean Jacques Rousseau said man should walk on all fours and go back to
'Who's this Zhan Zhak?' asked Chonkin, who found the strange name hard to pronounce.

'Who the hell knows,' said the chairman.

'Some Frenchman.' (pp. 261-62)

When Golubev is drunk he loses his fear. When Chonkin asks his drinking mate if he is scared of the prisoners, Golubev replied: "' - A chego mne ikh boiat'sia? . . . - Ia vse ravno na front ukhozhu. Ia ikh . . .'" (p. 240). The narrator, "making strange," observes that "Here Ivan Timofeyevich employed a verb which might cause a foreigner unfamiliar with the subtleties of our language to conclude that Golubev's relations with the employees of the Institution were of an intimate nature." (p. 263). The verb missing is "ebat'" ("to fuck"). Russian, like English colloquial speech, uses the verb in a number of colorful phrases. The student of Russian, however, will not find these phrases or words in approved Soviet literature nor in the Academy of Sciences dictionaries. In general Voinovich's characters speak a racier Russian that closer corresponds to common speech than does the antiseptic language of any Stalin Prize winning novelist.

Within Chonkin Voinovich's treatment of the kolkhoz theme is diffuse and inconclusive. This is consonant with the timorous Golubev's never-ending anxieties. Only when he is drunk is he free from fear. There is no resolution to the problems of the kolkhoz: Golubev's need for sufficient workers is met with new problems when the workers turn out to be secret
police agents whose prodigious efforts attract national attention. Golubev is a sympathetic character in the novel. His experience corresponds to the experience of collective farm chairmen badgered by authorities on all sides to perform wonders with materials (animate and inanimate) that are usually inadequate. The following chapter describes one of the Stalinist fantasies that tormented kolkhoz chairmen.
NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN


7. "Although we have valuable information on later periods, the conservative baseline for many of the quantitative data which we gathered from Soviet refugees is 1940. . . . However, we have tried wherever possible to correct our basic information for the changes of the past fifteen years." (Bauer et al., p. 5).


11. Fainsod, p. 531.

12. Fainsod, p. 531.
13 Fainsod, p. 533.
14 Fainsod, p. 534.
15 Fainsod, p. 534.
16 Fainsod, p. 534.
18 Jasny, p. 325.
19 Quoted in Jasny, p. 32. Jasny's translation.
21Jasny, p. 332.

22Figures are quoted in Jasny, p. 334.


25Belov, p. 15.


27Belov, p. 68.

28Belov, p. 69.

29Belov, p. 84.

30Belov, p. 112.

31Belov, pp. 91-92.

32The possible etymology of Golubev's name is suggestive of "dove" or "pigeon" ("golub"); "little dove; deary, darling, ducky" ("golubchik"); "minced meat wrapped in cabbage leaves" ("golubets"); or, "to caress, fondle" ("golubit'").

33Cf. the description of the secret police that begins Chapter 18, Part II.

34In Russian the last phrase in the sentence reads "v kotorykh voobshche somnevatsia v to vremia bylo ne prinato." [my italics]. Considering the novel was begun in the early 1960s the reference to what then could not be doubted suggests something that in the 1960s could be doubted, i.e. the so-called "cult of personality", a phrase used to cover the Stalinist era, debunked by Khrushchev in his speech to the XXth Party Congress in 1956.
CHAPTER EIGHT
LYSENKO: GLADYSHEV

Scientists seldom appear as the main protagonists in Soviet literature. Leonid Leonov, in his novel *Skutarevsky* (1932), described the psychological problems of a scientist who develops from a sceptic into an enthusiastic supporter of the state. Voinovich presents a scientist of sorts in *Chonkin* who needs no conversion. Kuz'ma Gladyshev is a loyal supporter of the Soviet state and of Stalinist science. He is clearly modelled on Trofim Lysenko. Gladyshev is, one might argue, like his model, the natural result of Stalinist times. Gladyshev believes all the myths and fictions of the period. Voinovich makes a telling comment about that period by providing this particular character as its loyal representative.

Already five years have passed since Lysenko died and even more since his great fame or notoriety has faded. Outside the older generation of those whose concern it is to follow the vagaries of Soviet ideological straightjacketing and procrustean bedding his name is probably redolent of very little. Therefore it may be worthwhile to look at his extraordinary career.

In 1948 Western Communist intellectuals faced the greatest test of faith since the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression...
Pact of 1939-41. In the summer of that year genetics as it was known in the West was caused to disappear as a discipline in the Soviet Union mainly through the efforts of a plant-breeder, Trofim Denisovich Lysenko. Mendelian genetics was declared abstract, idealist, fascist, racist, bourgeois, clerical, and incompatible with Marxist dialectics. Russian biologists were forced publicly to renounce their belief in genes and chromosomes, laboratories were closed, books burned, and jobs lost. Western Communists reacted in various ways. Some, like, J. D. Bernal, said nothing. Some, like J. B. S. Haldane, broke with the Party over the Lysenko scandal. The French geneticist, Dr. Jacques Monod, left the Communist party because "the victory of Lysenko has no scientific character whatever."¹ Lysenko's victory, Monod claimed was essentially ideological and dogmatic. Later in a conversation with Horace Judson, author of a study of modern biology, Monod recounted his reaction to Lysenko's rise to power:

> In fact, this whole business was very important to me . . . Because the phenomenon was so extraordinary. There were absolutely no roots to it. I mean, no material roots, no experiments, absolutely nothing. Nothing but ideology. There wasn't even the beginning of some sort of conspiracy . . . or even of entente between some dissidents, against which this would have been used. The scientists who were condemned were just as good Communists as the others, there's no question about that. It was a purely theological affair.²

Born in 1898 in Ukraine near the city of Poltava, Trofim Lysenko grew up in a peasant family. He received training as
a practical agronomist at the Horticultural Institute of Poltava. In 1925 he began to study the influence of planting dates on the length of the vegetative period of plants. In August 1927 the first feature story on Lysenko appeared in Pravda. The story described Lysenko's success at the Gandzha Plant-Breeding Station in Azerbaidzhan in experiments with the winter planting of peas. The peas were needed as fodder and green manure but they required considerable amounts of water for growth. Rainfall in Azerbaidzhan is minimal in summer and irrigation is used only for the main crop, cotton. Sufficient water, however, is present from late fall to early spring, a period, moreover, when Azerbaidzhan enjoys a mild climate. Lysenko planted early ripeners in the fall with the hope that they would mature before the coldest days of winter. The performance of the peas in Azerbaidzhan was compared to their known performance in Ukraine. Lysenko maintained that those that had been "early ripeners" in Ukraine became "late ripeners" in Azerbaidzhan. The reason, he decided, for the change in the vegetative period was the unsuitability of the environment that had "slowed down" the maturation process. "Slowing down" also explained, according the Lysenko, the difference between winter and summer varieties of wheat. A winter wheat that is planted in spring finds itself in "unfamiliar conditions", grows slowly, and fails to reach maturity. For Lysenko the conditions under which a plant is cultivated - rather than its genetic make-up - were of
primary importance.

When Lysenko attempted to determine the causes of the varying lengths in the vegetative period, he decided that the critical factor was the temperature immediately after sowing. Winter wheat, in his reasoning, could not mature when sown in the spring because the temperature immediately after sowing was too high. The heat prevented the seed from passing through the "first phase" of its development. Not even Lysenko hoped to discover a method of controlling the temperature of fields in which seeds had been planted. He, instead, proposed to control the temperature of seeds before planting. In 1929 he "tested" his theory on his father's farm in Ukraine. Lysenko had workers bury sacks of germinating winter wheat in snow-banks for a few days in spring before planting. The process of applying coolness and moisture to grain to shorten the vegetative phase Lysenko called "vernalization" ("iarovizatsiia"). Later in the same year Lysenko announced his experiment's success. By 1935 he would announce that the vernalization of spring cereals had been carried out on forty thousand collective and state farms on a total area of 2,100,000 hectares.

Lysenko went on to use the term "vernalization" to describe any treatment of seeds before planting. During his career he would widen his area of interest to other areas of agriculture: vernalization, new varieties, "renewal" of varieties, intervarietal crossing, summer planting of potatoes,
winter wheat in Siberia, sugar beets in Central Asia, tuber-
top planting of potatoes, cluster-planting, transformation of
species, agricultural chemistry, vegetative hybridization,
branched wheat, abolition of plant and animal hormones, spring-
winter wheat ... and so on.\(^3\) Lysenko cannot be considered
the original developer of vernalization. Conditioning seeds
before planting had been known in the U.S.A. as early as
1857\(^4\) and previous to the end of World War I was the subject
of research in Germany by G. Gassner.\(^5\) Lysenko's experiments,
moreover, were performed with no proper control groups and
with samples of only one or two. How then did he manage to
become a virtual dictator in biology and why did the govern­
ment support him? The answer, Loren Graham argues, lies "not
in theoretical biology, not in Marxist philosophy, nor even in
practical agronomy, but in the political, economic, and
cultural environment of the Soviet Union in the late 1920's
and early 1930's."\(^6\)

In 1929 collectivization began on a massive scale.\(^7\)
Many peasants resisted the regime's attempts to deprive them
of control over their land-holdings and to organize them into
state or collective farms. In retaliation they withheld
produce and then destroyed their crops and their animals when
all other opposition failed. Members of the intelligentsia
and of the professional classes were exhorted to work for the
success of collectivization and industrialization programmes.
One of its most important needs at this time was politically committed agricultural specialists. Professional biologists in the universities and research institutes at this time were involved in theoretical research, ill-suited to provide immediate solutions to pressing day-to-day problems of farming. These professionals, moreover, like many leading Soviet scientists and specialists of the time, were held in suspicion by the government. They were often from bourgeois families, educated abroad, with contacts among their foreign colleagues. These were the type of people constantly under suspicion for anti-Soviet sympathies.

Another important characteristic of the time was utility. The Soviet Union was faced with the task of rapid modernization. To this end theoretical science had little immediate to offer; applied sciences could offer answers to help speed industrialization. Many scientists who had been trained in the theoretical sciences found themselves serving as industrial consultants in the thirties as well as researchers.

The 1930s was also a period of increasing nationalism and xenophobia. Stalin was building "socialism in one country" and was calling for the development of Soviet technology, Soviet science, and so on in order to make the Soviet Union the equal or better of the capitalist West. Science, accordingly, saw a growth in nationalism.

Lysenko was unlike any of the professional biologists.
He had a peasant family background, was committed to the Soviet regime, and was willing to place whatever abilities he had at the disposal of any agricultural programme the government decreed. Eric Ashby, an English scientist and Communist sympathizer, described Lysenko's value to the regime thus:

... For her optimistic faith Russia has chosen dialectical materialism, and her problem is to make it an everyday religion. For this she needs prophets. Lysenko is an excellent prophet. He is full of the unquenchable optimism, the impatience with activity, the scorn of the word "impossible", which Russia must have to complete her social experiment. He is a peasant who understands peasants. He is a shrewd and clever practical agriculturist. He is the peasants' demagogue. What he says to them, goes. And he epitomises dialectical materialism in action; he provides the practical philosophy for the collective farm. If the Bolsheviks had not believed that man can remake his crops, his beasts, and even himself, they would not be where they are today. The missionaries of this faith have to be less sophisticated than the average polished and well-educated Academician. That, in my opinion, is one reason why Lysenko and his school are quietly tolerated.

Lysenko's attitudes and beliefs echoed Stalin's declaration that there are no fortresses that the Bolsheviks cannot take by storm. New Russia needed "hard-headed" insistence on practical results and Lysenko promised to make Soviet science and agriculture utilitarian.

Lysenko's fortunes increased when he met I. I. Prezent. By 1934 the Communist Party member and Leningrad University graduate had become Lysenko's collaborator; they worked together closely and co-authored several publications. Variousy referred to as a charlatan, a villain, and an
ideologue, Prezent is credited with systematically formulating Lysenko's views and integrating them with orthodox Marxist ideas. With Prezent's help Lysenko moved beyond agricultural techniques to theoretical discussions of, for example, plant breeding as a science, criticism of classical genetics, or the polarity between socialist and bourgeois sciences.

By 1935 Lysenko had Stalin's support. Pro-Lysenko propaganda filled the popular press and began to appear in the journals. A conference on Soviet biology held in October 1939 and organized by the editorial board of the journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* showed to what extent Lysenko had achieved power. Some speakers were ready to agree that Lysenko's attitude to classical genetics was correct. Though opposition was still strong, Lysenko's supporters were aggressive, demanding changes in school curricula and research programmes to reflect Michurinist-Lysenkoite biology rather than classical Mendelian genetics. In 1940 Lysenko's main critic, the most prominent of all Soviet geneticists of the time, Nikolai Vavilov, was arrested and subsequently died in a prison camp. The controversy culminated in the 1948 session of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences when genetics was prohibited as a field of study in the Soviet Union. Lysenko, in his final remarks at the session, stated that the Central Committee of the Communist Party had examined and approved his report. The entire conference rose to give an ovation in honour of their Leader. The conference participants
sent Stalin a letter of gratitude for his support of "progressive" biological science, the "most advanced agricultural science in the world." After the conference research, publishing, and teaching in standard genetics virtually disappeared in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{14} Stalin's death in 1953 did not signal its immediate recovery. Lysenko found in Nikita Khrushchev a fellow agricultural eccentric and after some initial criticism Khrushchev became Lysenko's patron. Both Lysenko and Khrushchev fell from power in 1964; only then did standard genetics begin its slow recovery from Lysenko's destruction.

Lysenko came to power in the thirties and virtually controlled Soviet biology and its related fields until the mid-sixties. How did it happen? Writing in the 1960s while still in the Soviet Union, the Russian scientist, Zhores Medvedev, offers various causes but in the end blames Stalin's "cult of personality without which Lysenko may have remained only an eccentric plant breeder like his predecessor, Michurin.

Stalin's "cult of personality" cannot be held fully responsible, however, for Lysenko. Needless to say, without it he may not have achieved the power that he did. The primary cause is suggested in Medvedev's discussion of the division of sciences into bourgeois and socialist camps.\textsuperscript{15} This tendency began in philosophy, political economy, and sociology in the late twenties and then spread into the sciences. The tendency was "decreed from above" and had two peaks: in 1929-31 in
the campaign against bourgeois sciences and the old specialists that resulted in the show-trials of experts and in 1946-48 in
the campaign against "cosmopolitanism" and the "admiration of
the West." During the latter campaign Lysenko, who had become
President of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences in
1938, claimed the authority of the Party for his view and
became virtual dictator in the whole field of biology. The
division of science into opposing camps was a main tenet in
Lysenko's doctrine. It stems from the demand that science
exhibit "partyness" (partiinost'). Medvedev fails to attribute
these views to their original source: Lenin, not Stalin, was
the first party leader to demand "partyness" in philosophy and
science.

The Soviet concept of "partyness" in literature is well
known in the West. The extension of that concept to philosophy
and science may amaze some Westerners. A recent edition of
Marxist-Leninist Philosophy states that by its very nature
"In any class society philosophy is always partisan."16 In
Stalin's time the Short Philosophic Dictionary described
philosophy thus: "Dialectical materialism teaches that philos-
ophy, as all of science, is to be class and party in nature."17

David Joravsky traces the demand for "partyness" in
philosophy to Stalin (as did Medvedev). In late 1929 Stalin
denounced the lagging of "theory" behind "practice."18
Stalin's followers in philosophy demanded that philosophy be
refashioned to be of immediate service to the chiefs of
revolutionary practice. The chief criterion would be "party-ness" which no longer would mean only that philosophical views are determined by class interests or that philosophers should discover and support views that correspond to those of the lower classes. The term would now mean that the Central Committee would be the judge of class interests and philosophical views and that the philosophers' duty would be to work for the Central Committee. Stalin let it be known that he supported these ideas and the Central Committee legalized them and so destroyed philosophy's autonomy.

The Soviet notion of the "partyness" of philosophy, however, may be traced to Lenin. Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism is, in general, his argument that philosophy must be divided into two distinct and opposing camps: idealism (empirio-criticism) and materialism (historical-dialectical materialism). In the "epistemological scholasticism of empirio-criticism," Lenin wrote in the conclusion, "one must not fail to see the struggle of parties in philosophy, a struggle of parties which in the last analysis reflects the tendencies and ideologies of the antagonistic classes in modern society." Lenin agrees with the German dialectical materialist, Joseph Dietzgen, from whom he takes the following quote: "Of all parties ... the middle party is the most repulsive. ... Just as parties in politics are more and more becoming divided into two camps ... so science too is being divided into two general classes (Generalklassen) metaphysicians on the one
hand and physicists, or materialists, on the other. . . .
If we compare the two parties respectively to solid and liquid, between there is a mush." In Lenin's view of philosophy he created two distinct and irreconcilable parties: the idealists who are the villains (bourgeois, professors, theologians, philosophers) and the materialists who are the heroes (the progressives: that is, Marx, Engels, Lenin and his party).

Lysenko's rise to power must be traced to the philosopher of the revolution, to Lenin himself. When Lenin in his agitational and pamphleteering pose set up the dichotomy of two hostile parties in philosophy and science he paved the way for Lysenko. Lysenko's views on "bourgeois" biology versus "socialist" biology are Lenin's views taken to their conclusion. Lenin's contribution on the partisanship of philosophy and science was neither original nor profound, but its impact on shaping the attitudes of his successors was enormous. Lysenko (and Prezent) may never have fully understood the content of dialectical materialism but they understood its forms. Lysenko understood Lenin's strategy of dividing ideas and thinkers into hostile camps, placing "truth" in his own camp and heaping abuse on the "enemy." Lenin's contribution to Lysenko must be admitted as much as Lenin's contribution to the so-called "Stalinist" gulag archipelago.

Lysenko appears in Voinovich's The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin in the form of the
village scientist, Kuz'ma Gladyshev, in order that Voinovich may take satirical aim at the most famous scientist, or pseudo-scientist, of the Stalinist era.

The reader first meets Gladyshev during a conversation in the first scene of the novel. All the villagers have crowded around the airplane that has just been forced to land in a kolkhoz field. They are discussing whether a plane made only of metal could fly. Here Gladyshev steps in to explain that lift force, not the motor, allows a plane to leave the ground. The narrator explains that the speaker is the warehouseman Gladyshev, "well known for his learning." (p. 8). The narrator also teases the reader by announcing that everyone usually respected the warehouseman for his erudition, but gives no indication what kind of erudition Gladyshev possesses.

Gladyshev's second appearance takes place a week and a half after Chonkin arrives in Krasnoe. Fearing that the army had forgotten about him and not knowing what to do next, Chonkin decides to turn to "an intelligent neighbour for advice. Niura's neighbour, Kuz'ma Matveevich Gladyshev, was just such a man." (p. 63).

The narrator had announced so far that Gladyshev was "uchenyi," "obrazovannyi" and now he is described as "umnyi." The proposition that Gladyshev has all these qualities is undercut by the proof the narrator offers: "One of the many proofs of his erudition was the wooden outhouse in his garden, on which was written in large black letters, in English, WATER
Recall that Gladyshev has been introduced as the kolkhoz warehouseman. The narrator goes on to explain that the position gave his hero lots of free time in which to supplement his knowledge. Gladyshev's "mind held such diverse information from such fields that people who knew him could only sigh with envy and respect." There were those in the village who maintained that even if awakened at midnight "... he would give a very detailed reply [to any question posed] and would explain any natural phenomenon from the point of view of modern science without bringing in any other-worldly, divine forces." (pp. 63-64). But, again, the narrator undercuts his seemingly glowing account of Gladyshev. His information-packed head is described as "malen'kaia" - the diminutive of "malaia", i.e., "very small" head. His midnight answers would be given "ne zadumyvaias'" ("without stopping to think") and his fans who exclaim in admiration ("vot eto, mol, da!") are his fellow peasants who, being as little educated as Gladyshev, find even a little learning a wondrous thing.

The narrator also takes an ironic view of Gladyshev's education. His formal education consisted of two years at a parish school. These years the narrator dismisses in order to describe Gladyshev as a self-made man. Having presented Gladyshev as a man of limited learning, the narrator goes on to point a finger at what has given purpose to Gladyshev's learning so to make it a dangerous thing: "The knowledge
Gladyshev had accumulated might have made its way into his head without making any sense at all, if it hadn't been for the October Revolution . . . " (p. 64). Repeating a common Soviet description the narrator describes the Revolution as one " . . . which liberated the people from every form of slavery and permitted any citizen to clamber up the shining, stony heights of science." (p. 64). Gladyshev is an example of "any citizen." As a scientist, therefore, Gladyshev is presented as a product of the Revolution. He believes in the Revolution and in the Party as he tries to prove throughout the novel. The juxtaposition of his belief in the teachings of Michurin-Lysenko and the teachings of the Revolution places the Revolution in a poor light. Gladyshev is a fool, Lysenko's teachings are a scientific fraud; therefore, the reader may surmise, the Revolution too is dishonest. In his review of the novel for the Times Literary Supplement Geoffrey Hosking points up the element of illusion present in Voinovich's creation of Gladyshev:

These coprophilous fantasies [dung's ability to produce nutrition] are paralleled by his political attitudes: Gladyshev is the only person in the village who not only accepts the existing authority structure, but also accords it genuine devotion, out of belief in its progressive and scientific nature. The capacity people have for building their whole life out of illusion is necessary to any totalitarian structure, and it is a capacity which fascinates Voinovich and which he has investigated in other works.26

As the narrator finishes his exposé of Gladyshev as an "intelligent" the reader sees what a charlatan and fraud the
Revolution has created:

It should be mentioned that many original scientific ideas had arisen in Gladyshev's liberated mind before the time of our story. Nothing in life passed him by without suggesting all sorts of ideas to him. Say, for instance, Kuz'ma spots some cockroaches on the stove, his mind goes right to work: Why couldn't you hitch them up together, he thinks, and have them all go in the same direction? The energy thus collected could be put to profitable use in our agriculture. Kuz'ma spots a cloud and thinks: Why not enclose it in some sort of casing and use it as a balloon? Though this would be difficult to verify now, it is said that it was actually Gladyshev who, long before Professor Shklovsky, was the first to propound the theory that the satellites of Mars are artificial in origin. (p. 64)

With these ridiculous schemes laid before the reader the narrator proceeds at last to Gladyshev's life work in science. The narrator undercuts what follows by beginning with the phrase: "inspired by the progressive teachings of Michurin and Lysenko . . ." The phrase discredits both the historical figures as well as Gladyshev. For any reader unfamiliar with Lysenko he is nonetheless discredited because the reader has seen what a fraudulent scientist Gladyshev is. Any efforts Gladyshev may make under the inspiration of Lysenko's teaching are discredited by historical hindsight. 27 Gladyshev's experiments recall those Lysenko proposed: an attempt to create a hybrid from two dissimilar plants. Krasnoe's local scientist wants to create a hybrid of the potato and the tomato, a plant with the tubers of a potato growing below the soil and tomatoes above the soil. 28

Though not in itself a particularly novel plant
experiment, Gladyshev has given it a peculiarly Soviet cast. Gladyshev's hybrid-to-be has a particularly Soviet name, "Put' k socializmu" (Path to Socialism). Its acronym, on the other hand - PUKS - falls like a rude noise on the Russian ear and conjurs up such vulgar sound-associations as "pukat' - puknut'" (in plain English, "to fart"). Again note how Voinovich has destroyed two Soviet creations, i.e. the self-made Lysenkoite scientist and the Soviet hybrid-to-be, by a subtle manipulation of the language, denigrating both Soviet creations to the level of a less-than-pleasant body function.

The narrator makes two final observations on his kolkhoz Lysenko. The collective farm, i.e. Gladyshev's fellow villagers, would not allow him to spread his experiments throughout the kolkhoz and instead limited him to his own garden plot. Secondly, for that very reason he sometimes was forced to buy both tomatoes and potatoes from his neighbours. An analogy to Lysenko presents itself here: Lysenko's experiments (for example, vernalization of wheat) were spread over hundreds of collective farms on government order and met with little success. Voinovich's kolkhozniki show themselves to be shrewder than the real government when they refuse Gladyshev the kolkhoz for his experiment.

Gladyshev had so far had no real success with his hybrid, though the narrator ironically points out that "certain characteristics of the PUKS had started to appear: the leaves and stems were potato-like, while the roots were letter-perfect
Gladyshev's success, like Lysenko's, is with the media. "Those who knew about his experiments didn't put much stock in them," the narrator begins. Only those who knew little about his experiments put stock in them and from this group he received notice and support. The narrator adds that this "could not ever have happened in the days of the tsars"—in other words, Gladyshev's success with the media is a Soviet phenomenon.

_Bolshevik Tempos_, the district newspaper, is the first to give Gladyshev and his work publicity. The newspaper prints a long feature about him, headed first "People of the New Village" and sub-headed "A Born Breeder." The narrator adds (ironically) that there was even "a photograph of him bending over his hybrids as if he could discern there the faint outline of our plant's beautiful future." (p. 65) The local article is followed by one in an all-union newspaper dealing with the problem of "The Scientific Creativity of the Masses," wherein Gladyshev is named among others. This second article draws a response from a certain agricultural academic who pointed out in a letter that Gladyshev's experiments were anti-scientific as well as hopeless. An analogy with Lysenko and Nikolai Vavilov suggests itself here: Vavilov in the early 1930s knew of Lysenko's experiments, thought poorly of them, but nonetheless urged the government to support them. Gladyshev's reaction to his letter is typically semi-literate; despite its total rejection of his work "... this letter
made a strong impression on Gladyshev, especially since it had been typed on the official stationery of a respectable institution, had addressed Glaydshev as 'Esteemed Comrade Gladyshev' and had been signed by the academician in his own hand. The letter produced the same impression on everyone who read it." (p. 66).32

The villagers of Krasnoe, however, were soon bored by Gladyshev's constant discussion about PUKS. Chonkin, on the other hand, would stand and listen. He would come out of the house and would find Gladyshev in his "costume": cavalry jodhpurs, tucked into worn calfskin boots, an old ragged vest, and a wide-brimmed straw hat that looked like a sombrero. When shown examples of Gladyshev's plant experiments, unfortunately, Chonkin offends Gladyshev with his honesty:

"But have a look for yourself. We're getting a stem like a potato and shape of the leaf is just like a tomato. You see?"
"Yes, but who knows," said Chonkin dubiously.
"Right now you can't tell one from the other." (p. 67)

Chonkin even has his own contribution to make to PUKS:
"'Listen, couldn't you work it so the tomatoes were on the bottom and the potatoes on the top?'" (p. 67). The narrator notes that "Perhaps Chonkin's questions did seem stupid to Gladyshev, but the stupider the question the more intelligently it can be answered." (p. 67). Their daily conversations gave them great pleasure and strengthened their growing friendship.
During the course of the novel Chonkin comes to Gladyshev only once to ask a favour. Chonkin, fearing that the army has forgotten about him, wants to write a letter to his commander requesting further orders, rations, and a new uniform. He needs Gladyshev's help to write the letter because Chonkin has forgotten his ABCs: "'I had it down all right in school, but then came the kolkhoz and the army; if you're not sleeping you're on a horse pulling reins left and right and you got no use for all that school stuff then.'" (p. 70).

Chonkin feels a need to write to his commander because a lack of rations might force him to take food from Niura. Gladyshev agrees that "'You're right, it's not good.'" He offends Chonkin's male pride, however, by adding that "'Now your name is Alfonse.'" The French name suggests an effeminate or a gigolo and sorely wounds Chonkin.

Gladyshev agrees to act as village scribe and to write Chonkin's letter. The letter, Gladyshev stresses, is an important matter and must be politically correct. The reader discovers that political correctness, for Gladyshev at least, means a convoluted syntax combined with admiration for the Party and Stalin. Instead of simply stating that Chonkin wished to report that nothing happened while he was guarding the grounded airplane, Gladyshev produces the following garbled phrase: "Request permission to report that during your absence and my presence on my post, specifically, while
guarding the military equipment of the aeroplane, no incidents occurred about which I am now reporting in written form." (p. 71). The request for rations and a new uniform is hidden at the end of a long sentence, the main body of which is a long statement of political devotion: "Also request permission to report that, raised in the spirit of wholehearted devotion to our Party, People, and to the person of the Great Genius Comrade Stalin, J.V., I am ready unquestioningly to serve further in the defence of our Socialist Motherland and the Protection of her Borders, for which purpose I request you issue me rations for an unlimited period of time and also my new uniform not as yet received by me." (p. 71). Two chapters after this letter-writing scene the reader learns that Niura, wanting Chonkin's superiors to forget about him and leave him to her, burns his letter. Other than underlining Gladyshev's politics, Chonkin's letter has no impact on the novel.

Chonkin's next long scene with Gladyshev provides the reader with a look at Gladyshev's married life. Gladyshev's wife has been mentioned earlier in regards to her curiously un-Russian name: "... his wife Aphrodite (that's what Gladyshev called her and other people took their cue from him, even though at birth his wife had been given the name Efrosinia)." (p. 67). Chonkin, when he had objected to Gladyshev calling him Alfonse, had said, "'Listen, you call your own wife what you want, sticks and stones will break your bones, but you call me Vania just like always.'" (p. 70).
Gladyshev had preferred not to call his wife the Russian name Efrosinia, but instead called her the classical Greek name, Aphrodite. The Greek name recalls the WATER CLOSET sign Gladyshev had placed on his outhouse in the sense that both were named so as to show their author's erudition.

Aphrodite Gladysheva is herself a comment on her husband's erudition. Despite her name she little resembles a goddess of love. The narrator's first description of her is as "... a dirty woman with a sleepy face and uncombed hair... peering at her husband with unconcealed disgust." (pp. 109-10). The narrator puts aside Chonkin's visit to tell "the cautionary tale of this ill-matched couple."

Gladyshev had married Aphrodite two years previous to the story. Till his mid-thirties he had lived with his mother. When she died he decided that married life was not conducive to his scientific efforts. As he approached forty he changed his mind. The village had a surplus of girls of marriageable age and a typical attitude that demanded girls be married rather than old, alone, and unwed. The girls, for their part, "would put up with his discourses on his remarkable hybrid and would even agree to work hand in hand with him and share the burden of his scientific crusade, meanwhile hoping that given time this foolishness would pass from Gladyshev by itself." (p. 110). Not one girl, however, would consent to marry Gladyshev after a visit to his home. Herein the reader discovers the second big experimental "theory"
Gladyshev held:

But just when things would be looking perfect, Gladyshev's fiancee would cross the threshold of her future home. It was a rare thing for one of them to last more than half an hour there. They say one fainted dead away in less than two minutes' time. And here's the reason why. In his home Gladyshev kept fertilizers for his breeding experiments in special pots. These included both peat-compost pots and pots which contained cow and horse manure, as well as some with chicken droppings. Gladyshev ascribed great significance to fertilizers. He would mix them in varying combinations, placing them on the stove and windowsill to ferment at a specific temperature. This went on not only in the summer but in the winter as well - with all the windows closed! (pp. 110-11)

The future goddess of love, however, really wanted marriage and so accepted the fertilizers. She had no illusions about her charms and was, in the narrator's words, "of no use to anyone else." When Gladyshev offered her marriage she promised him complete dedication, both to him and to his science. With the birth of their child, however, she changed her tactic, until eventually "She would try to smash the pots and Gladyshev would give her a smash . . ." (p. 111). Aphrodite's attempt to take refuge in her parents' home failed because they always sent her back to her lawful husband. Finally she gave up and ceased taking care of herself, her only weapon against her husband. The narrator offers the observation: "Never known as a beauty, God only knew what she'd come to look like now." (p. 111).

Gladyshev's failure with his wife mirrors his failure with his science. Neither his PUKS nor his Aphrodite has
developed according to his plans. Each time the reader encounters Gladyshev in the novel the village scientist is presented as a failure. If Gladyshev represents Lysenko in the novel, the overall impression of the historical figure and his theories is devastating. Gladyshev's scatological view of genesis is a well-aimed attack on the equally ridiculous theories Lysenko proposed during his career.

Geoffrey Hosking referred to Gladyshev's dung-theory-of-life as "coprophilous fantasies." The long scene in the novel during which this theory is presented is also the scene in which the story of Gladyshev's married life is told. The narrator moves back and forth between these two subjects and in fact also introduces Chonkin's married life into his discussion. Chonkin visits with Gladyshev after spending the night near his airplane; the cause of his new sleeping quarters was a fight with Niura. Gladyshev, hearing his friend's woes, begins to commiserate with him. This commiseration takes the form of a spate of woman-hating.

The reader meets few misogynistic urges in Chonkin. His life with Niura is much more pleasant than Kuz'ma's life with Aphrodite. She refuses to speak with her husband and "looked at him with the same expression on her face and neither changed that expression nor reacted in the least to her husband's words." (p. 97). Gladyshev's abuse of women begins with comments on women in general: "If you want to know, I'll tell you something. Don't get yourself tied down to
these women, Vania. Get away while you're still young. You know, they're ...'' (p. 113). He turns to his wife: "'Just take a look at mine sitting there, the rattlesnake. Next time you're talking near her, notice her tongue, it's forked. Stings like a reptile!'" (p. 113). Gladyshev then links his supposed suffering at the hands of his wife with the suffering of all men at the hands of all women. Though his diatribe so far bears all the marks of an illiterate peasant's view of woman, like a good communist he describes his misery in the proper historical-materialist jargon: "'The opposite sex has brought men boundless suffering, whether you look at our contemporary epoch of development or at facts from the historical past...'' (p. 113). The Decembrists, good Soviet-approved heroes, are Gladyshev's example from this historical past. His comments on these heroes portray, however, an un-Party-like sensibility. First, Gladyshev is not sure to where the Decembrists were exiled. Second, he portrays their wives as shrews, rather than as the saintly and devoted women that Russian literature and Soviet mythology conceives them to be. They were so stupid that '"'... they had to pack up their rags and trudge on after them [their jailed husbands], even though there was no railway in those days. They rode the horses to death, they drove the drivers mad, and they almost kicked the bucket themselves, but finally they got where they wanted to get, you see how it is.'" (p. 113).

The narrator juxtaposes what Gladyshev has to say with
how he says it. His diatribe against women begins with an apprehensive glance at his wife. He whispers his comments to Chonkin. Before he describes the Decembrists and their wives he again looks over at his wife and "... started whispering even softer, as if communicating top-secret information." (p. 113). Gladyshev's behaviour is that of a coward and a bully - future episodes confirm this view.

The reader follows Gladyshev, in effect, from one domestic discussion to another. From a discussion of his marital squabbles the reader is led on a discovery of Gladyshev's living quarters. For anyone who may have forgotten the story of the pots of fertilizers, another hint of what lies ahead is provided in a brief conversation between Gladyshev and Aphrodite:

"You should at least put a piece of oilcloth under the baby," grumbled Gladyshev as he passed. "Otherwise he'll piddle and stink up your skirt."

Indifferently Aphrodite raised her eyes; indifferently she said: "Better you go and take a whiff in the house. And let your guest have a whiff too."

That said, she turned away. (p. 114)

Voinovich gives new meaning to the term "excremental vision" as he describes Gladyshev's house. Chonkin reaks in surprise when the smell hits his nose. He pinches his nose closed to keep from falling to the floor while Gladyshev explains: "You might think the smell is disgusting, but in fact it is healthful and beneficial to the organism and has all sorts of valuable properties. For example, the French
firm Coty manufactures the most subtle perfumes from shit.'" (p. 115).

The narrator takes time at this point to describe Gladyshev's front room, "in which there was something to look at." There are pots of fertilizer on the stove, on the windowsill, on and under the bench by the window, and behind the bedstead of the iron bed. To emphasize the coprophilia in Gladyshev's married life and the scatology in his science, the narrator continues his description of the room by mentioning that on one wall hung photographs of Kuz'ma and Aphrodite and on another wall hung framed letters and articles mentioning Gladyshev's research, including the previously-mentioned letter from an agricultural academician which was set in a frame apart.

A further comment is made about Gladyshev's research during the narrator's description of the back room. In it are found a cabinet, a candle, and an old lidless trunk. The trunk "... was crammed full of tattered books mostly scholarly in nature (for example, Myths of Ancient Greece, and the popular brochure "The Fly, an Active Spreader of Disease") and an incomplete set of the journal The Cornfield from the year 1912 as well." (p. 116). Gladyshev's possible credibility as a good Communist scientist is undermined by the last journal mentioned. The Cornfield (Niva) is described in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia as
... a Russian weekly illustrated family magazine published in St. Petersburg from 1870 to 1918 by the publishing house of A. F. Marks. Niva published many diverse writers, including P. D. Boborykin, I. A. Goncharov, N. S. Leskov, D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, D. S. Merezhkovskii, L. N. Tolstoi, A. P. Chekhov, I. A. Bunin, and A. A. Blok. Sociopolitical problems were presented from the point of view of those loyal to autocracy. From 1894 to 1916 monthly literary supplements were published. Beginning in 1891 the collected works of many Russian and foreign writers were issued in the form of free supplements to Niva, which gave the magazine a large circulation and popularity.

The supplements plus the low subscription rate (five rubles a year) made The Cornfield the most popular Russian magazine, especially in the provinces. In 1890 its circulation of 100,000 was unprecedented in Russia. Described as a "thin" illustrated magazine (as opposed to the "thick" journals of the "progressive" intelligentsia) The Cornfield is considered by the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia as an example of the bourgeois press' commercial orientation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when it abandoned socially significant problems and chose to supply its readers with light entertainment. Neither scientific nor progressive, The Cornfield hardly could provide Gladyshev with the knowledge appropriate to his pretensions. On the other hand, knowing as much about Gladyshev as the reader does, he should not be surprised to see this magazine in Gladyshev's essential library. A further devaluation of Gladyshev's trunk-library is achieved through the last line in the paragraph: "This trunk was the principal source from which Gladyshev drew his erudition." (p. 116).
Gladyshev invites Chonkin to eat omelette. To accompany the meal Gladyshev produces a partially-full bottle of home-brewed vodka and two dusty glasses which, in true village fashion, he cleans by spitting in them and wiping them dry on his vest (much as he had cleaned the forks). Before they either eat or drink, much to Chonkin's chagrin, Gladyshev continues his lecture on the values of "dermo" (despite his scientific pretensions, Gladyshev uses the colloquial and vulgar form, "shit"). In a turnabout on the usual "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" metaphor, Gladyshev offers his own (excremental) vision: ""... all life comes from shit and returns to shit."" (p. 117). The life cycle, in Gladyshev's view, becomes ""the circulation of shit in nature."" Shit fertilizes the ground; herbs, grains, and fruits grow out of this shit; humans and animals eat these products; humans take milk, meat, wool, etc. from the animals; humans, in using all these food products, produce shit. Meat, milk, and bread, in Gladyshev's theory, are shit in a processed form. Gladyshev proposes using it instead in its pure form as a kind of wonder drug.

In the middle of his scatological theorizing Gladyshev introduces a toast to Soviet science, Soviet power, and the person of Comrade Stalin. Voinovich, by placing this Soviet Trinity just at the end of Gladyshev's description of the value of shit, covers them with that very substance.

One of the novel's funniest scenes of burlesque follows
the toast to Stalin. The two friends down Gladyshev's home-brew. Chonkin, as a result, nearly falls off his chair, loses his breath, and is blinded for a moment. Both men are pleased with Chonkin's reaction to the "first rate stuff." Chonkin's reaction, however, changes when he is told that the brew is made from neither grain nor beet-root. When he hears that, obviously taking his theories into practice, Gladyshev has made the brew out of shit, "Knocking his stool over Chonkin dashed for the door. He almost knocked Aphrodite and the baby down on the porch. Two steps from the porch he braced his forehead against the log wall of the hut where he vomited himself inside out." (p. 119). Seeing Chonkin vomit a second time provokes a verbal discharge from Aphrodite who also spits on her husband for having "'given another one shit to drink.'" (p. 119). She refuses to bring the marinated apple Gladyshev demands because the apples stink of shit too: "'The whole house is stuffed with shit, you should fall in it, you should drown in it, you miserable idiot. I'm leaving you, you bone-head. I'll go begging with the child before I'll be buried in shit.'" (p. 119). The scene in the yard becomes chaotic as Aphrodite runs out of the yard screaming (first with anger and then with "frenzied delight"): "'I'm not your Aphrodite, I'm Froska, you get that, you lop-eared dunce. Froska! ... I'm Froska, people listen to me, I'm Froska!'" (p. 103). True to his peasant upbringing Gladyshev tries to stop his wife with the plea: "'Don't shame us in front of everybody.'" (p. 120).
The reader meets Gladyshev again in the Second Part of the novel. His scientific pretensions are again under fire. Hybrids of tomatoes and potatoes and home-brew made from excrement are replaced by an ongoing discussion between Gladyshev and Chonkin on the evolution of man. During this discussion Voinovich once more has great fun making mock of the Lysenko and Soviet science of the historical Stalinist period.

Lysenko wrote a great deal about Darwin. In his famous 1948 address Lysenko said: "The appearance of Darwin's teaching, expounded in his book, The Origin of the Species, marked the beginning of scientific biology."\(^37\) Darwinism, Lysenko goes on to point out, is not free of reactionary ideas as pointed out by the classics of Marxism.\(^38\) Darwin is faulted for accepting Thomas Malthus' theory that there is a constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it and its implication that a struggle constantly goes on within the species.\(^39\) This "error" in Darwin's theory, Lysenko argues, should not be presented as "the cornerstone of Darwinism."\(^40\) All in all, however, he continued, "Progressive thinking biologists, both in our country and abroad, saw in Darwinism the only right road to the further development of scientific biology."\(^41\)

Friedrich Engels had also commented on Darwin's writings. Indeed Lysenko, in the above mentioned address, cites Engels'
remarks about Darwin. The one essay by Engels that commented in particular on Darwin's theory of evolution was "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man." Labour, Engels wrote, is not only the source of all wealth, "It is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself." Apes took the first decisive step in the transition from ape to man when they began to disaccustom themselves to the aid of their hands when walking and to adopt a more erect gait. When the hand had become free it began to attain a greater dexterity, skill, and flexibility. The hand, Engels argued, is not only an organ of labour, it is also the product of labour. The development of the hand gave to our simian ancestors, as Engels calls them, a desire to gain mastery over nature. Man's horizons were advanced as he discovered new, hitherto unknown properties of natural objects. The development of labour also brought members of society together in mutual support and joint activity. Men arrived at a point when they had something to say to one another and under this stimulus the underdeveloped larynx of the ape was transformed along with the organs of the mouth until articulate speech was produced. Labour and speech, Engels continues, stimulated the brain so that it gradually changed from that of an ape to that of a man. As the brain developed so did the "attendant senses" as well as an increasing clarity of consciousness, power of abstraction and judgement. Engels
devotes the last two-thirds of his essay to the "new element which came into play with the appearance of full-fledged man, namely society." Labour, he argues, is the characteristic difference between the troupe of monkeys and human society. Engels' manuscript never was completed so that the reader never will know how he intended to finish his discussion of man and the apes. As it stands the essay ends with a typical Engelsian description of the "bourgeoisie," "the capitalist mode of production," and the prophesied "class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat which can end only in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the abolition of all class antagonism."

Gladyshev and Chonkin's discussion of mankind's genesis starts much more simply. It begins at the first kolkhoz meeting to discuss the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Their conversation proceeds from an amusing little juxtaposition of thought and deed wherein Gladyshev takes the last of Chonkin's "makorka" (cheap tobacco), his cigarette paper, and his matches and then berates the Germans for their greed: "'... They really must have some conscience - they ate our bacon fat and butter and now they play this dirty trick on us, by which I mean their treacherous attack.'" (p. 130). Gladyshev's further attempts at conversation with Chonkin are unsuccessful until he utters the following non-sequitur: "'... People shouldn't go to war, Vania, they ought to work for the good of future generations, because it was work and
nothing except work that changed the monkey into contemporary man." (p. 130).

The aim of Gladyshev's conversation is as always to demonstrate his erudition. Whereas during their discussions about Gladyshev's hybrids Chonkin had politely listened, this time he refuses to accept Gladyshev's views. When Gladyshev tells him that man is descended from the monkey, Chonkin counters with: "'Me, I'd say from the cow.'" (p. 130). He also refuses to ask Gladyshev to explain his view of evolution. When, nonetheless, Gladyshev explains that the monkey worked and the cow did not and so could not develop into man, Chonkin responds in an atypical hostile manner:

"Where?" asked Chonkin suddenly, staring hard at Gladyshev.
"What do you mean, where?" Gladyshev was taken aback.
"I'm asking you, where did your monkey work?" said Chonkin, growing increasingly irritated. "In a plant, a kolkhoz, a factory, where?" (p. 131)

Chonkin, in his usual innocence, has understood the word "to work" ("rabotat'") in the sense of "to be employed." He understands only that to work means to have a job. Amazed at his friend's lack of perception, Gladyshev launches into a brief exposition of the theory of evolution. His "lecture" ends abruptly when the partorg addresses the meeting.

At the second meeting called to discuss the German invasion the reader finds Chonkin with "his chin resting on the barrel of his rifle." (p. 151). Though he tries to concentrate on what the partorg says about the invasion and
the problems of the kolkhoz, Chonkin finds that "... some vague thought prevented him from concentrating on the figures and from comparing them." (p. 147). The appearance in the distance of a horse pulling a wagon finally defines the thought for Chonkin. He approaches Gladyshev who is so amazed at Chonkin's question that he makes a political mistake:

"Say, listen neighbour," said Chonkin, nudging Gladyshev's elbow. "What I want to ask you is, what about the horse?"
"What kind of horse?" Gladyshev turned to him, a bit bewildered.
"You know, a horse, a horse." Gladyshev's slow-wittedness angered Chonkin. "A four-legged animal. It does work too. So why didn't a horse turn into a man."
"Bah, you really are something!" Gladyshev even spat he was so annoyed, just at the wrong moment too, for the crowd now broke into applause. Catching hold of himself, the breeder quickly began to applaud as well, gazing in devotion at the speaker so that his spitting would not be construed as having to do with the speech. (pp. 147-48).

At the end of the speech Chonkin is the only one still standing in the square in front of the kolkhoz office, with his chin on his rifle, still "lost in unhappy thoughts about the origin of man." (p. 151).

Although Chonkin's innocent question about man's possible evolution from a horse is comical to both the Western and Soviet reader reared on Darwin's theories, the question also touches on the historical Lysenko's views on evolution and environmental influences. Because Chonkin puts the question to Gladyshev, Voinovich ties the fictitious debate in his novel with ideas current in the late thirties. In his
1948 address to the Agricultural Academy, Lysenko approvingly quoted Michurin to the effect that "It is possible, with man's intervention, to force any form of animal or plant to change more quickly and in a direction desirable to man. There opens before man a broad field of activity most useful to him." Lysenko declared Michurin the source of his view that heredity is dependent on the plants' or animals' conditions of life. "Heredity," Lysenko went on to say, "is the property of a living body to require definite conditions for life and the development and to respond in a definite way to various conditions [not my italics]." Lysenko's view of Darwin's teaching neatly fits into his own neo-Lamarckian views on the influence of external factors on an organism's development. He believed that a living organism had the ability to acquire characteristics from external stimuli and then to force these acquired characteristics to be passed on to the next generations. The primary idea in Darwin's theory, Lysenko wrote,

... is the teaching on natural and artificial selection. Selection of variations favorable to the organism has produced the purposefulness which we observe in living nature: in the structure of organisms and their adaption to their conditions of life. Darwin's theory of selection provided a rational explanation of the purposefulness observable in living nature. His idea of selection is scientific and true. In substance, the teaching on selection is a summation of the age-old practical experience of plant and animal breeders who, long before Darwin, produced strains of plants and breeds of animals by the empirical method.
Using the teaching of Michurin, Lysenko argued that he had created a new, Soviet Darwinism that had changed from a science which primarily explains the past history of the organic world to a science that was becoming a creative and effective means of systematically mastering nature and making it serve practical purposes. At first glance, a reader might assume that Lysenko's environmentalism could have an impact on the Communist Party. An analogy between the Lysenkoites (and their plants) and the Party leaders (and their citizenry) presents itself. The Lamarckian belief that external factors could have a real effect on evolution might appeal to the Party who could then believe that a Soviet environment could create a fully Soviet man who would acquire Soviet characteristics and produce Soviet children. Note that when Chonkin was irritated with Gladyshev and asked him where "his" monkey worked (in order to become a man), Chonkin offered work situations common within the Soviet Union: a plant, a factory, a kolkhoz. Why then could not sufficient work create a man from a horse? Could sufficient work as a "Soviet" horse create a "Soviet" man? Gladyshev's dream (Part II, chapter 15) provides the reader with an answer. Gladyshev could not fall asleep the night after the meeting. Chonkin's questions about man's possible equine genesis disturbed him. It had even, "it would seem, shaken his unshakable faith in science and scientific authorities. 'Why doesn't a horse turn into a man?' And indeed why doesn't
The original source for Gladyshev's belief that labour causes monkeys to evolve into men is the above mentioned essay by Friedrich Engels. Within "The Role Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man" is also the answer to Chonkin's question. Engels seems to agree with Gladyshev's teacher, Lysenko, when Engels writes: "Animals, as already indicated, change external nature by their activities just as man does, even if not to the same extent, and these changes made by them in their environment, as we have seen, in turn react upon and change their originators. For in nature nothing takes place in isolation." This reasoning, however, will not continue in order to explain man's possible evolution from a horse. Engels insisted on certain decisive steps that took place in man's evolution that would make equine predecessors impossible. The decisive step in man's transition from the ape was the abandonment of the half-erect posture for the fully erect. Next, in Engels' view, came the development of the hand, then speech, and finally, with the appearance of full-fledged man, society and labour. Engels had posited three more reasons for man's evolution from the apes: a meat diet, the increasing ability to live in any climate and tools. The third is not so much a reason as a further explanation. "Labour," Engels wrote, "begins with the making of tools." Gladyshev's knowledge of Engels' essay is fragmentary causing him so much difficulty in answering Chonkin's question.
Voinovich makes a telling comment on Gladyshev's dream by the way in which he sets the scene just before the dream. Sleep had just begun to overcome Gladyshev when his son, Hercules, woke up and began crying. Aphrodite takes the child from his bed, nurses him, changes his diaper, and sings to him. "Finally," the narrator says, "the child fell off to sleep, Aphrodite quieted down again and the master of the house was at the brink of sleep." (p. 171). Does Voinovich mean to suggest a confusion of Gladyshev and Hercules so that what follows is a childish fantasy? The narrator describes Gladyshev as being "at the brink of sleep" when he meets his gelding. The reader assumes that the meeting takes place in a dream so that Gladyshev is not just about to fall asleep but, like his son, has fallen off to sleep.51

The idea that a man might evolve from a horse was given a different twist in Elinor Lipper's reminiscences, Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps. Once, in a camp in Kolyma, a prisoner presented the camp commander with a petition. After five days in the lock-up the prisoner was called before the enraged commander to explain why the prisoner had written in the petition: "I request to transfer to the status of a horse":

The creature that had once been a man answered: "It's very simple to explain, Citizen Commander. If I were a horse, I would have at least one day off in every ten. Now I have no days off. "If I were a horse I could rest now and then while at work. As a prisoner I cannot.
"If I were a horse, I would be assigned to work equal to my strength. As a prisoner I am always hungry, and when I do not meet my labor quota I get less bread, so that I do still less work, and in the end I get so little bread that I can hardly stand on my feet.

"A horse has his stable and his blanket - I haven't had a new jacket for two years because my percentages are too low.

"A horse doesn't have to work more than fourteen hours a day. But I am kept in the mines fourteen and sixteen hours, especially when I haven't met my quota.

"If drivers beat a horse too hard, or drive him too much, they are punished. For a horse is precious in Kolyma. But who punishes the guards and brigadiers who beat and kick me because I've become too weak to work well?

"What is a prisoner in Kolyma? Nothing. But a horse - a horse is something!

"So you can see for yourself, Citizen Commander, how much better off I would be if I were a horse.52

Though the immediate result of his petition was ten more days in the lockup, the prisoner also was assigned one wadded jacket and one month's ration from the highest category. He never was allowed his transfer, however, to become a horse.

Gladyshev dreams that his gelding, Osoaviakhim, becomes a man and comes to visit his former master.53 Voinovich once more has chosen an appropriate name for a character in his novel. Osoaviakhim is the Russian acronym for the "Society for the Promotion of Defence and Aero-Chemical Development." The Society was established in 1927 in a merging of a number of government-sponsored organizations which supported the activities of various branches of the armed services. Its job was the defence-training of civilians. By 1939 Osoavikhim had twelve million members. It trained air-raid
wardens, drivers, parachutists, machine gunners, snipers, marksmen and technical specialists in all fields related to military defense. In essence, it constituted a form of total mobilization for total war and was a significant factor in making the Soviet population both machine-minded and war-minded.\(^5\)

In 1937 the Society was touched by scandal when the president of its central council, R. P. Eidman, was executed with six other prominent generals of the Red Army (Tukhachevskii, Iakir, Uborevich, Kork, Feldman, and Putna) for espionage and treason. The trials of the generals, the most important of whom was Tukhachevskii, was the prelude to a mass purge of the Red Army's commanding personnel. The purge in some part may be held responsible for the weak position of the Red Army during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

Gladyshev, despite the very Soviet name he has given his horse officially, calls him "Osia" in conversation. As a good Communist Gladyshev has given his horse a good communist name. Most good Communists in Stalin's time, however, would have given their children good communist names rather than classical ones. The reader expects Hercules to have been named, for example, "Revo" (from "revolucia"), "Vladlen" (from "Vladimir Lenin"), "Marklen" (from "Marks" and "Lenin"), "Gertrud" (from "geroi truda"), "Remira" (from "revolucia mira"), or "Lora" (from "Lenin" and "Oktiabry'skaia revoluciia").\(^5\)
The purpose of Osoaviakhim's night-time visit is to inform his master that, having evolved from a horse into a man, Osoaviakhim will no longer haul provisions to the warehouse. He speaks in a human voice and behaves in a very human manner. Although he addresses Gladyshev with the proper polite form, "Kuz'ma Matveevich," in all the other instances he uses the informal "ty" ("thee") and the second-person singular verbal form. The narrator describes Osoaviakhim's speeches in human terms: he describes his evolution "pensively" and his castration, grinning "bitterly"; he mimicks Gladyshev's voice; Osoaviakhim looks at Gladyshev "with sympathy" when his former master asks him a question; and, his final comment is said "angrily."

The conversation between the ex-horse and the ex-master proceeds through a series of questions Gladyshev poses to Osoaviakhim.

First, Gladyshev wants to know how Osoaviakhim managed to become a man. He repeats Gladyshev's own theory of how work causes a monkey to evolve into a man and manages to inject a certain self-satisfied piety into his description: "'I've been working a lot lately, you know that yourself - hauling provisions from the warehouse, not even turning up my nose at hauling manure, not to mention ploughing. I didn't say no to any of it and so, as a result of all my painstaking work, I finally turned into a human being.'" (p. 172). Both Gladyshev and Osoaviakhim accept that he has become a man
though the narrator describes him as a gelding and mentions that he banged his hooves and neighed. His evolution apparently has taken place not physiologically but psychologically, with the only human characteristics Osoaviakhim's ability to speak and reason.

Second, Gladyshev asks what Osoaviakhim intends to do now that he has become a man. The ex-horse feels that the kolkhoz has nothing left to offer him: "'With my talent there's nothing for me here now. I think I'll head for, say, Moscow and let the professors there have a look at me. Maybe I can do a lecture series. Ech, Kuz'ma Matveevich, life is just beginning for me, I'd like to get married and have children to aid the further progress of science and here I am, unable to.'" (p. 173).

The third question follows from the second. Gladyshev causes himself embarrassment and evokes a bitter response from his ex-horse when he asks why Osoaviakhim is unable to have children. Osoaviakhim reminds his ex-master that eight years back Gladyshev has deprived him "of those very parts of the body indispensable for the propagation of the species." (p. 150). Gladyshev had castrated the horse. To his protests that "a horse is a horse," Osoaviakhim answers, giving horses who have not evolved into men (as well as those who had) very human-like desires: "'And what is a horse? Not a living creature too? Someone whose last joy you can take away just like that? We don't go to the cinema, we don't read books,
only one pleasure is left us, and along you come with your knife..." (p. 174).

The fourth question comes as a result of Gladyshev's political "vigilance." Gladyshev poses "a question of the sort known as 'stumpers' [na zasypku]." "'If, for example, they send you to the front,'" he asks, "'who are you going to fight for, us or the Germans?'" (p. 174). Gladyshev's dream ends with the gelding angrily answering that he could never be sent to the front because "'I have nothing to pull a trigger with. I have no fingers!'" (p. 175).

Friedrich Engels would have been surprised to hear Osoaviakhim speak. In the above quoted essay Engels explained that labour brought members of a society together in mutual support and joint activity. Men, at this point, "had something to say to one another" and "the urge created its organ." The larynx of the ape developed along with the organs of the mouth until articulate speech was possible. Engels considered that nature upheld his thesis: animals and birds have little to say to one another and, therefore, speech has not developed among them. Dogs and horses, through close association with man may understand human speech and acquire the capacity for human feelings. These domestic animals, however, will never speak: "Anyone who has had much to do with such animals will hardly be able to escape the conviction that there are plenty of cases where they now feel their inability to speak as a defect, although unfortunately, it can no longer be remedied
owing to their vocal organs being too specialised in a
definite direction.\textsuperscript{57} Apparently in Engels' view evolution
takes place only in a limited time frame; the evolutionary
processes for all organisms shut down once man was created.
Engels' argument should be crucial to Gladyshev because, as
mentioned above, speech seems to be the only sign that
indicates Osoaviakhim's transformation or evolution into a
man.

Gladyshev also had forgotten that the second decisive
step in Engels' progression from ape to man was the develop­
ment of the simian hand by labour through hundreds of
thousands of years to the human hand.\textsuperscript{58} In this time period
only labour and ever more complex operations allowed man to
acquire the special development of first muscles, ligaments,
and then bones. Nonetheless Engels also appears to assume
that the predecessor of man was complete with the predecessor
of the human hand. Only after the gelding angrily declares
that he has no fingers does Gladyshev recall why Chonkin's
theory of man's descent from a horse is impossible. Unfortu­
nately Chonkin only answers: "'Oh you surprise me,' said
Chonkin, 'I knew since I was a little boy horses don't have
fingers.'" (p. 177). Gladyshev's display of his understanding
of a classical Marxian explanation of evolution meets the
stone wall of Chonkin's simple observations of life.

The two friends are about to quarrel when Aphrodite
calls her husband in for breakfast. When Gladyshev sits down
to breakfast he sits on a horseshoe Aphrodite found lying by the door. Both the reader and Gladyshev know that if Osoaviakhim had left the horseshoe then last night's conversation was not a dream. Further, if the horseshoe was proof their conversation took place then the gelding was by now on his way to Moscow. When Gladyshev runs to the stable to see if the horse is still there, the dream becomes reality for him when the group of men gathered in the stables tell him that Osoaviakhim had run off during the night. Miakishev, the stableman, suggests the possibility that the gypsies stole him. Gladyshev's readiness to agree suggests to the reader its opposite: he does not agree and at this point, all science aside, Gladyshev believes his gelding has become a man and has set off to Moscow to demonstrate his evolution to the professors.

Gladyshev's fall from science to "superstition" appears in the last chapter of the novel. At the sight of the battle ground between Chonkin and the Army Gladyshev finds a dead horse. He finally recognizes it as Osoaviakhim and is pleased to find the horse dead. He admits to himself and the reader:

Why hide it? He really had believed his strange dream. Not that he had believed it entirely, but he had given it some credence. Everything had happened so coincidently that it had been difficult for him not to waver in his anti-mystical convictions. If he were ever to tell anyone about it, the shame and the laughter, the shame ...

(p. 316)

Two discoveries, however, immediately change his mind. The
gelding had no shoe on its front hoof and it was holding a scrap of paper beneath its hoof on which was written: "'If I perish, I ask to be considered a Communist.'" (p. 316). The note dumbfounds Gladyshev who shrieks and then for the first time in many years crosses himself. His religious convictions return in this last line of the novel: not only does he again believe the horse became a man, he also crosses himself. So much for the Communist, so much for the scientist. The reader knows who wrote the letter: Junior Lieutenant Bukashev, expecting to go into battle and die for his Motherland, had written this note to his unit's Party organization. While waiting for the ink to dry he had left the barn that served as the army's headquarters to stretch his legs. When he returned the note was gone and he was unable to find it. With the final chapter does Voinovich tease the reader into believing that Osoaviakhim either took the letter or found it? Or is this another of the coincidences Gladyshev mentions himself that make fantasy so easy to mistake for reality?

Osoaviakhim is the logical conclusion of Gladyshev's shoddy thinking. His faulty understanding of Engels and Darwin had led him to a faulty conclusion. The result is his gelding-as-a-man. The episode ridicules the village scientist who is himself a ridicule of the historical character, Trofim Lysenko. Lysenko's theory of environmentalism, as suggested above, had applications in social and political fields. If external stimuli could force a plant to change its hereditary
make-up, was it possible to change man's nature? Could a Russian man, through proper Party stimuli, become a Soviet man?

Raymond Bauer, in The New Man in Soviet Psychology argues that Lysenko's "progressive Michurinist biology" never had any real impact on Soviet psychologists. As early as 1940 G. S. Kostiuk tentatively suggested that reinforcement of acquired characteristics may be possible under certain conditions of heredity (not exactly the inheritance of acquired characteristics Lysenko postulated). In a later article Kostiuk refused, Bauer reports, to accept the idea that a one-to-one correspondence existed between man's physical endowment and his psychological characteristics. Training played the determining role in human development rather than environment. The belief persists, however, that Lysenkoism posited "the thesis that the environment can produce physiological and mental changes in man which can be passed on to later generations . . . a happy device for hastening the achievement of a benevolent Communist society." James H. Billington in his massive study of Russian culture, The Icon and the Axe, argues that Stalin believed in physiological and environmental determinism and that his canonization of Pavlov and Lysenko is evidence. Billington also sees Stalin's belief in determinism as a throwback to and reflection of "the polemic prejudices of Pisarev more than the complex theories of Engels, let alone the thoughts of practising scientists."
David Joravsky, Lysenko's Western historian, refuses to believe that Lysenkoism meant to create a "new man." He credits the persistence of this view to the Frankenstein myth. Frankenstein personifies in the West a hope of power and the fear of domination through the mastery of social commentators. The Soviets are not creating Soviet Frankenstein's, Joravsky continues; their attention is focused on social (productive or political) relationships. Marx and Engels believed that natural selection explains the development of the organic world up to the human level. Social laws explain human development. Marx refused to agree with those who read social Darwinism into the class conflict to see it as a continuation of the biological "struggle for existence." In his eulogy at Marx's graveside Engels defined the relationship between Darwin and Marx: "Just as Darwin discovered the law of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of human history."

This simple formula, however, does not account for the point at which man left Darwin's evolution and entered Marx's sphere. It does not account for the transition from ape to man. Engels had read various speculations, some written even before Darwin, to pass them on to his followers. His essay, "The Role of Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man," discusses man as a tool-using animal and a social laborer but does not explain the how and why of the transition.

The biologist and the social scientist still had an
issue in common: how does a human society achieve the best size and quality of population? The early Marxist theorist, Karl Kautsky, warned that a population's size must be controlled. Under socialism a high level of health and education would make it necessary to plan for the reduction of poor hereditary types. With the increase of good hereditary types an especially beautiful race, like the ancient Greeks, might be bred. By the Revolution, however, Kautsky had broken with the Bolsheviks. Lenin left no thoughts on the issue, though he never objected to Kautsky's efforts to apply biological concepts in social analysis.

Two schools developed in Soviet eugenics in the 1920s: Mendelian and Lamarckian. The Mendelians believed that heredity is passed on through the cell; the Lamarckians believed that the environment produces specific responses in the hereditary mechanism. In general, however, discussions of human hereditary played a relatively minor role in Soviet biology in the twenties. With the rise of Nazi racism in the thirties all talk of genetics ended. Though the geneticists themselves began the campaign against Nazi racism, especially those doing research on human heredity, in 1936 any study of human heredity was declared to be associated with racism in the eyes of the government.

The Lysenkoites followed the Central Committee's lead. They declared any study of human heredity as racism and fascism and took the old formula to its extreme: biology is irrelevant
to the study of human society which is ruled by its own social
laws. No textbook on human heredity ever emerged from Lysenko
or any of his followers. Joravsky declares that "the
Lysenkoites made no effort to replace the scientific study of
human heredity with their own doctrine which they limited to
animals and plants."  

The scientific discussion of human genesis was inter­
rupted from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s. As their Western counterparts
Soviet researchers do not include a search for humanity's
ultimate purpose or justification in man's origins - a situ­a­tion Soviet ideologists decry in other societies. The
Soviets have been compared to the Victorians in the argument
that the social function of such an attitude is "to preserve
anti-intellectual rulers and churchmen against doubts about
their unique power to explain the human mystery."  

Gladyshev's dream takes accurate aim at Lysenko's theory
of environmental effect and Engels' theory of labour-induced
evolution. Horses, the reader discovers, do not become men.
Recall that the narrator never states that Osoaviakhim becomes
a man physically; the gelding simply declared himself a man,
spoke like a human, and Gladyshev believed him. Men, history
has shown, do not become "Soviet men." The Soviet Union is
not a higher form of evolutionary development - or a new
civilization, despite Beatrice and Sidney Webb's claims - but
simply a political system. A penetrating comment on this
system is given when Osoaviakhim assures Gladyshev that the
other horse, Tulip (Tul'pan) will not be turning into a man and leaving the kolkhoz: "'You'll have to find a replacement. You can even take Tulip, he won't be turning human for a long time. . . . He's lazy, that's why, he'll only work under the lash. Long as you don't hit him, he won't budge from his place. And do you know what you've got to run like to turn into a human being?'" (p. 173). The lash, apparently, might turn horses into men. By analogy Voinovich suggests that the lash has been used to try to turn man into Soviet man. Gladyshev himself worries into what kind of human being Osoaviakhim has changed: "the Soviet kind or the other kind?" (p. 174). His fears lead him to try to trick the gelding into admitting his loyalties. The question, however, tells Gladyshev more about Osoaviakhim's physical make-up ("'I have no fingers.'") than his political loyalties. The typically Soviet phrase, "Certain survivals of my past . . .", is used effectively in this episode. The phrase usually refers to a "bourgeois," "anti-revolutionary," or "pre-revolutionary" past. Herein Voinovich has Osoaviakhim use it to refer to his horse past. "Certain survivals of my past" suggests two periods: the present and a past, usually considered less acceptable than the present. The usual references would be to a pre- or anti-Soviet past and a Soviet, in particular orthodox and Party-line, present. In Osoaviakhim's case the past is his life as a horse, the survivals are his neighing, and the present is his life as a man. The gelding's past represents a period in which
he was a lower species and his present represents the period in which he has evolved into a higher species, man. The use of distinctly Soviet phraseology reinforces the view that Voinovich ridicules the evolution of a Soviet man, especially when he later causes Gladyshev to worry over the political overtones of his gelding's evolution.

Gladyshev's last important scene in the novel begins with a small dispute between Chonkin and Gladyshev that leads into the major action of the second part. Chonkin, listening to the broadcast of Stalin's speech on the Nazi invasion, had forgotten to take Niura's cow home from the field. The cow had found its way into Gladyshev's garden where it had eaten all the experimental PUKS plants. When Chonkin arrives at the garden a crowd had gathered to watch Niura and Gladyshev arguing over the fate of the cow, with the plant breeder threatening to cut its throat. Chonkin attempts to play the role of mediator but a shove from Gladyshev forces him to take a side. The cow, amidst their pushing and shoving, manages to eat the last PUKS plant, causing Gladyshev to run into the house for his rifle so to shoot the cow. The gun will not fire because he has used all the powder for his fertilizer experiments. Gladyshev becomes hysterical and Chonkin ends the scene feeling sorry for his friend. Gladyshev, on the other hand, focuses his hurt pride and anger onto Chonkin. The result: Gladyshev sends a letter of denunciation to the local secret police.
The denunciation was a common feature of Stalinist Russia for, as Robert Conquest writes, "Stalin required not only submission but complicity." Vigilance was required of every Soviet citizen. Any citizen who heard a comment that in any way deviated from the party line or that was in any way politically suspect and did not report it would also be held in suspicion. Like the Two Thinkers in the park even old friends suspected that a truly frank conversation might lead to one friend denouncing the other. Some denounced out of fear, while some denounced because the system allowed them to carry personal or professional feuds to the police. Il'ia Erenburg writes: "I have seen how in a progressive society people allegedly dedicated to moral ideas committed dishonourable acts for personal advantage, betrayed comrades and friends, how wives disavowed their husbands and resourceful sons heaped abuse upon hapless fathers." Denunciation was not left just to amateurs and volunteers. The secret police also organized a network of seksoty ("sekretnye sotrudniki" - "secret collaborators"), people from the general population who would be enlisted into the police's service. Conquest lists three kinds of secret collaborators: those out to injure their neighbours (voluntary), those who wanted sincerely to help the Party (idealists), and those who thought their efforts would help someone, especially from their own family (involuntary). Fear or promises usually motivated the last group. Once
enlisted, however, the collaborator had to produce information, even if he needed to fabricate it. Adam Ulam writes that "In a sense Russia in 1937 and 1938 presented the ultimate of egalitarianism: every citizen was endowed with the potential power of life and death over his neighbour; no man save one was above suspicion or immune to the nocturnal knock on the door."79

The denunciation was a powerful tool during Stalin's reign. It was used to break down every form of solidarity and comradeship outside personal loyalty to Stalin himself.80 Private citizens no longer trusted one another. Organizational and community loyalties were, therefore, easy to destroy: for example, the intelligentsia, the Army, the Party (especially the pre-Stalinist members like the Old Bolsheviks). Stalin, Conquest argues, proceeded in a perfectly logical way to achieve a complete "atomization" of society. His goal: perfect control and management of a docile citizenry.

Though Gladyshev sees himself as a good communist and couches his letter in those terms, he belongs to the group Conquest labelled as the "mean and malicious."81 The secret police immediately see in Gladyshev a kindred spirit. They recognize him as the letter's author and expect to be able to use him: "'And find out who this Gladyshev is. He might prove useful to us later on.'" (p. 212). The reader will find it appropriate that the Lysenkoite scientist is also a voluntary secret collaborator.
Gladyshev charges Chonkin with a number of crimes. He calls him a deserter and a betrayer of the Motherland. His crimes, according to Gladyshev, include: not flying the airplane into battle against the Germans; not being at the front; engaging in debauchery, drunkenness, and hooliganism; expressing "immature" ideas and a disbelief in the teaching of Marxism-Leninism; permitting Niura Belashova's cow to damage the garden of the well-known local breeder and naturalist, Kuz'ma Matveevich Gladyshev ("by these acts Chonkin has undoubtedly caused a great loss to our Soviet agricultural science in the virgin territory of hybridization."). Gladyshev asks that Chonkin be "repressed" with all the severity of Soviet law, i.e. be shot. The last crime on the list, as the reader realizes, is the cause of the denunciation. The charge of desertion, however, catches the police's attention and a group is sent to arrest Chonkin. The attempted arrest sets off a chain of events that ends in a battle between Chonkin and the Red Army.

Gladyshev represents Soviet science in the village of Krasnoe. He also represents the Soviet citizenry who accommodated themselves to the Stalinist regime. He is a fraud, a charlatan, a fool, and a quack. For the reader he is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the system in which Gladyshev so sincerely believes. Lysenko was an evil parody of a scientist; Gladyshev is an absurd parody of that parody.
1 The title of his article in the radical (but non-Communist) Paris daily, Combat. Monod's was the last in a series of articles entitled "Mendel or Lysenko." (15 September 1948).

2 Horace Freeland Judson, The Eighth Day of Creation: Makers of the Revolution in Biology (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 372. Monod traced Lysenko's rise to power to a trend in Western socialism that Monod considered began with Rousseau: the belief that man is good and society is bad. When man is defined as a species and as an individual in a biological rather than sociological term, this Rousseauistic belief is violated.


4 Medvedev, p. 152.


7 Graham calls this the time of the industrial, agricultural, and cultural revolutions. (Graham, p. 12).

8 Graham, p. 15.

9 Graham, p. 17.

10 Graham, p. 208.

11 Eric Ashby, Scientist in Russia (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1947), pp. 114-15. Ashby's view of Lysenko becomes suspect when Ashby describes the plant breeder, at one point, as "not a charlatan . . . not a showman . . . not personally ambitious . . . The ends may be justified; Lysenko may be doing a great job for Russia. But the bulk of his opinions on genetics may be dismissed as the products of a medieval mind using what is almost a medieval technique." (p. 117). Ashby's sympathies are clearly pro-Soviet: at one point in his book he describes the notorious NKVD as like "our Home Office." (p. 28). Either with extreme naivete or extreme cynicism he goes to say that "Even the notorious Ministry for Internal Affairs (NKVD) has numerous experimental farms.
in the east where persons who disapprove of the Soviet regime are constrained to do experiments on Soviet wheat and sugar." (p. 40)

12 At the 2nd All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers and Shock-Workers in February 1935 Lysenko read a paper, "Vernalization Means Millions of Pounds of Additional Harvest." He apologized for his lack of ability as a speaker, saying that he was a "vernalizer" not an orator. At this point Stalin is said to have shouted "Bravo, Comrade Lysenko, bravo!" James H. Billington suggests that Stalin's subsequent deification of Lysenko may be explained by Stalin's desire to believe that he had infinite power to control the vegetable as well as the human world. See James H. Billington, The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (1966; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 549.


18 Joravsky, p. 234.

19 Nikolai Vladislavovich Volskii met Lenin in 1904 in Geneva. Volsky had gone abroad to escape arrest. He had left Tsarist Russia as a convinced "Leninist" but after a year broke with both Lenin and the Bolsheviks. His account of his initially close relations with Lenin and their final
break are published in his Vstrechi s Leninym (English translation: Encounters with Lenin. London: Oxford University Press, 1968), under the pseudonym Nikolay Valentinov. Volskii had been a serious student of philosophy before his exile and he has left some very interesting comments and observations on Lenin as a philosopher. Lenin, at the time Volskii met him, was writing One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, as well as the notebooks to what was to become Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. Volskii championed the philosophy of Avenarius and Mach. Lenin argued with Volskii, telling him that this philosophy was worthless, confused, idealistic, and set against materialism. During their arguments Volskii came to realize that they were speaking "different languages," that Lenin had no sense that epistemology was at issue, and that Lenin had no philosophical tools, so to speak, to discuss philosophy.

Lenin's correspondence with Gorky reveals that Lenin's book was as concerned with party in-fighting as it was with philosophy. Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, with its abuse and sarcasm, was an attack on those Bolsheviks who followed the philosophical teachings of Bogdanov. In Lenin's words his pamphlet was a "declaration of war."

As a final comment on Lenin's one and only venture into philosophy, George Katkov points out that the work was based (though Lenin never credits her) on the ideas presented in a scholarly paper written at Lenin's request by Liubov Akselrod in 1904. Lenin had asked Akselrod to write a criticism of Bogdanov's ideas. Lenin himself was reticent to attack Bogdanov in print because of the necessity of maintaining at least the public appearance of an alliance with a man with whom Lenin shared influence over Bolshevik finances. See George Katkov, "Lenin as Philosopher" in Lenin: The Man, the Theorist, the Leader: A Reappraisal, ed. Leonard Schapiro and Peter Reddaway. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), pp. 71-86.


21Lenin, pp. 339-40.


23Mikulak, p. 176. Mikulak's article uses Lenin's Marxism and Revisionism, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism to
discover Lenin's views on the party nature of philosophy and science. Though he mentions Lysenko only briefly, Mikulak does state that "The application of the party principle was most evident in the field of Soviet genetics." (p. 175) and goes on to quote a speech by Lysenko that divides biologists into irreconcilable camps: materialist and idealist (i.e., non-Lysenko camp).

24 As Volskii reports his conversations with Lenin the reader will be struck by the amount of abuse Lenin heaps on his opponents. Volskii notes that Lenin took from Plekhanov the attitude: "First, let's stick the convict's badge on him, [the opponent], and then after that we'll examine his case." Lenin advocated this approach as sound "revolutionary" technique: destroy your opponent's credibility and then discuss his or her ideas. Volskii objected, especially since the "convicts" they were discussing were two philosophers (Avenarius and Mach) whom Lenin had not even read. The badge Lenin used was "bourgeois", a derogatory epithet in revolutionary circles. Volskii's objection was that there was no "bourgeois philosophy" just as there was no "bourgeois" or "proletarian" astronomy, algebra, physics, chemistry, or epistemology. He believed that there are only theories that are either true or untrue; Lenin, needless to say, disagreed with him. See Valentinov, p. 182.

25 Boris Unbegaun translates Gladyshev's surname as "Smooth" (Mr. Smooth); see Boris Unbegaun, Russian Surnames (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 157. The root, "gladysh," means (1) a smooth, round stone; (2) in colloquial and regional speech: a fat man or boy; (3) in botany: a native and botanical name of a plant from the umbel family, with smooth stipules and fine ("melkii") greenish-yellow flowers; (4) in zoology: a water-bug. See Slovár sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka (Moskva: AN SSSR, 1934), III, 122.


27 In the period 1963-1970 when Voinovich was writing Chonkin Lysenko had begun his fall from power. Various criticisms of him, including Medvedev's samizdat study, The Rise and Fall of T. D. Lysenko, had made their appearance in the Soviet Union.

28 Note that Gladyshev's PUKS resembles the work done by the Lysenkoite biologist, Artavadz Avakian: "Comrade A. A. Avakian has, by means of grafting, substituted for the usual pinnate leaves of a tomato plant of the variety 'Albino' the non-dissected leaves of another variety of tomatos which resemble those of the potato plant. Seeds were taken from a
fruit which developed on a branch of the 'Albino' variety. This variety has, according to its nature, pinnate leaves. The sowing of these seeds in the summer of 1941 at the Experimental Base of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences of V. I. Lenin at 'Gorky-Leninskiie' resulted in not a few plants not with pinnate leaves but with leaves resembling those of the potato plant." See T. D. Lysenko, Heredity and Its Variability, trans. Theodosius Dobzhansky (New York: King's Crown Pass, 1946), pp. 8-9.

29 Fazil Iskander's "goatibex" in The Goatibex Constellation (Sozvezdie kozlotura, 1966) is much more novel and clever a hybrid. A cross between an ordinary goat and an ibex, the goatibex is purported to be woollier, meatier, and to give more milk than either of its parents. Like Gladyshev's PUKS the goatibex is a satire of the Michurinist-Lysenkoite theories of Stalinist and post-Stalinist Russia. As in Chonkin, there is a letter from an important scientist ("our country's most renowned scientist"), but in Iskander's novel the letter comes from Lysenko himself who declares that the goatibex had been foreseen long ago "by the followers of the Michurin school of biology." In both novels, as might be expected, the hybrid never actually appears.

30 The kolkhoz, however, did practise the "grassland system" (I, 1). This system was the idea of Vasilii Robertovich Vil'iams (Williams), a soil specialist of American parentage who advanced a theory of a single soil-forming process and a system of crop rotation with grasses as universally applicable in the Soviet Union irrespective of local conditions. The government supported Vil'iams' ideas which did great damage to agriculture and were abandoned after Stalin's death. Lysenko claimed Vil'iams' theories as part of Michurinist agro-biology. See S. V. Utechin, Everyman's Concise Encyclopaedia of Russia (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1961), p. 590.

31 In the jargon of Soviet-ese the "radiant future" towards which the Communist Party leads the progressive forces of mankind is conveyed in metaphors like "beautiful future" ("prekrasnoe budushchee") or "shining heights" ("siiaiushchaia vershina"), both used in the above section describing Gladyshev's rise to fame as a scientist. An appropriate treatment of these empty metaphors has been provided by another satirist, Voinovich's contemporary, Aleksandr Zinov'ev, in his two novels, Zilaishchka vysoty ("Yawning Heights") and Svetloe budushchee ("The Radiant Future").

32 See Vasilii Grossman, No Beautiful Nights [no trans. given] (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1944): "Their father had been in charge of a farm laboratory and had received
letters from Academician Lysenko in Moscow". (p. 157).

33 Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love, later renamed Venus by the Romans. She was one of the twelve great Olympians and was the giver of beauty. While Hera was the goddess of love and the bonds of marriage Aphrodite represented love and sexual passion. As the goddess of love she had the power to make all the gods (except Athena, Artemis, and Hestia) fall in love or be overcome with desire. The Greeks saw her as cruel and often depicted her smiling sweetly in mockery. Because she often mocked the immortals Zeus punished her by making her fall in love with a mortal. The Romans changed her name to Venus, saw her as serious and benevolent, and celebrated her generative powers. Gladyshev had named their son Hercules. In Greek and Roman mythology Hercules is the son of Zeus and Alcmene and is renowned for his feats of strength. Alcmene was the wife of Amphitryon, a king of Thebes. In his re-namings Gladyshev makes his wife both the goddess of passionate love and the consort of a king and supreme deity. By association Gladyshev makes himself king and supreme deity and the consort of a goddess. The narrator simply calls Hercules "another victim of Gladyshev's erudition." (P. 94). See Michael Grant and John Hazel, Who's Who in Classical Mythology (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).


35 GSE, XV, 488.

36 GSE, IX, 342.


38 Lysenko, pp. 10-11.

39 Lysenko, p. 12.

40 Lysenko, p. 12.

41 Lysenko, p. 12.

43 Engels, p. 80.

44 Engels, p. 84.

45 Engels, pp. 90-91.

46 Lysenko, The Science of Biology Today, p. 32. Lysenko's emphasis.

47 Lysenko, The Science of Biology Today. Lysenko's emphasis.


50 Engels, p. 87.

51 "'Now I've got it!' Gladyshev whacked himself on the forehead and woke up." (p. 151).


53 The gelding's literary model is the dog who becomes human in Bulgakov's satire, The Heart of a Dog. Osoaviakhim's nineteenth century predecessor may be Strider, the equine hero of Leo Tolstoy's "Kholstomer" (Strider, The Story of a Horse) (written in 1863, published in 1885). Like Osoaviakhim Strider does not physiologically change into a human form but only takes on "human" sensibilities and a human voice.


56 Engels, p. 83.

57 Engels, p. 83.

58 Engels, pp. 81-82.
Bukashev's note is reminiscent of the last statement made by the Old Bolshevik, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko to his fellow cell-mates before he was called for execution. Iuri Tomskii writes that Antonov told them, "I beg him who gets to freedom to tell the people that Antonov-Ovseenko was a Bolshevik and remained a Bolshevik till his last day." (my translation) Antonov's death is given as late 1938 or early 1939. See "On bral zimnii," Novyi mir, No. 11 (1964): 212.


Billington, p. 535.

Joravsky, p. 253.

Joravsky, p. 254.


Joravsky, p. 255.

Joravsky, pp. 255-56.

Joravsky, p. 256.

Joravsky, p. 257.

Joravsky, p. 256.

Joravsky, pp. 266-67.

Joravsky, p. 267.

Joravsky, p. 269.

Joravsky, p. 270.


Conquest, p. 381.


Conquest, pp. 382-83.

Conquest writes: "Nevertheless, just as Nazism provided an institutionalized outlet for the sadist, so Stalinist totalitarianism on the whole automatically encouraged the mean and malicious. Even now, the Soviet press prints frequent stories of busy bodies who report people to the police for imaginary offences, and still succeed in getting them deported. In Stalin's time this was routine. The carriers of personal or office feuds, the poison-pen letter-writers, who are a minor nuisance in any society, flourished and increased." (p. 379).

Voinovich provides an example of a busybody: "One vigilant comrade requested that attention be paid to the work of the poet Isakovsky. 'The poet's words,' wrote the vigilant comrade, 'in the song "No World's Better than This One" are heard on records and are broadcast on the radio throughout the Soviet Union. Among other lines, there is the well-known one, "At dawn she glimpsed a cockatoo." But if you listen carefully, you'll hear something else: "At dawn she glimpsed a cock or two." That's what the line says if you listen closely.' (p. 180-81). [In the Russian original the "treasonable" line reads: Kak uvizhu, kak uslyshu," which the vigilant comrade hears as "Kaku vizhu, kaku slyshu." A literal translation would be "How I see, how I hear" which the comrade hears as "I see shit, I hear shit." ]
CHAPTER NINE

RED ARMY, WORLD WAR II, AND CHONKIN

The Soviet Union's entry into the Second World War occurred after Germany broke its Non-Aggression Pact with the USSR and invaded on the morning of 22 June 1941. Chonkin, a very untypical Soviet hero, greets the outbreak of war sitting in an outhouse:

"Come out quick!" said Niura. "It's war!"
"That's all that was missing!" said Chonkin, not so much in surprise as in sorrow.
"You mean with America?"
"With Germany!"

Puzzled, Chonkin whistled, and then began to button himself up. Something about it did not strike him as quite right and when he came out he asked Niura who'd been blabbing such nonsense to her. (p. 127)

So begins the Second and longer part of The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin as Voinovich makes his own contribution to the genre of the Soviet war novel.

After thirty-five years World War II has not been exhausted as a topic by Soviet writers. However its depiction has not been consistent. During the war itself writers depicted the suffering, courage, and endurance of patriotic Russian men and women defending the motherland in such works as Vasilii Grossman's Narod bessmerten (The People are Eternal, 1942) and Aleksandr Bek's Volokolamskii Shausee (Volokolamsk Chausee, 1944). After the war and until Stalin's death ideological considerations reasserted themselves so that war
prose was directed to demonstrate the important role of the Communist Party and Stalin in leading the Soviet people to victory. Mikhail Bubennov's *Belaia bereza* (The White Birch, 1947-52) satisfied that requirement, for example. In Khrushchev's time the war was examined anew. Writers criticized the conduct of the war and were allowed to show the Soviet Union's military unpreparedness and Stalin's shortcomings as a leader. Ethical problems faced by individual soldiers took the place of broad, epic canvases. As Deming Brown points out, "the emphasis on unadulterated heroism was replaced by the study of war as it is." The difference between war novels may be seen in two novels written in different post-war periods by the same author. Konstantin Simonov's *Dni i nochi* (Days and Nights, 1943-44) portrays the stubborn bravery of the soldiers defending Stalingrad. His novel, *Zhivye i mertvye* (The Living and the Dead), written and published fifteen years later, takes a less heroic pose and shows, for example, the lack of military readiness in a Red Army just purged of its best commanding officers.

Soviet anti-war novels have been rare. A few authors, like Bulat Okudzhava, Grigorii Baklanov, and Vasilii Bykov, have written novels that paint the war in such grim colours that there seems to be no aim or purpose to the experience of battle. These authors portray fear, cowardice, social injustice, selfishness, confusion, and pain as part of the soldier's experience in war. The anti-militaristic novel, like Jaroslav
Hasek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*, Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, Celine's *Journey Into the Night*, or Heller's *Catch-22*, with its irreverent attitude to the military as an institution is rare in Soviet writing. Soviet novels that re-examine the war may present officers as cruel, ill-prepared, cowardly - but rarely as comic fools. Voinovich's *Chonkin* is unique; it does portray the foolishness present in the Red Army as part of his satire of the idiocy of the times.

Voinovich's satirical treatment of the Red Army and the war deflates the official Soviet war myth. This myth may be summarized as follows: the Germans believed that crushing the Soviet state would be the most important step to world domination. The ruling circles of USA, Britain, and France believed in non-intervention and tolerance of Nazi aggression (until 1940) while American and British monopolies financially assisted the creation of a military and economic German fascist power. The Allies hoped a strong fascist Germany would direct its strength against the USSR. For their part the CPSU and the Soviet government foresaw the possibility of an armed struggle with the forces of imperialism and were economically and militarily prepared. The Soviet Union suffered the greatest material and human losses; it bore the brunt of the war on its shoulders. The people of the Soviet Union and their armed forces played the decisive role in the victory against Hitler. The Soviet forces "led to the collapse of Hitler's war and state machine." The spiritual weapon of the Soviet people
was its socialist ideology and the war showed its exceptional strength. The Communist Party was the experienced leader of the Soviet people; at the front, in the rear, in enemy-occupied territory, the Party was a united, fighting, mobilizing, and guiding force. The victory of the peoples of the USSR showed working people of the whole world the great and invincible might of the socialist state.²

Voinovich, like other post-Stalinist writers, points out that Stalin, the Party, and the military were unprepared for the German invasion. Moreover, Voinovich's Red Army is peopled with posturing, timorous, or cynical officers. His most unsuitable recruit is Ivan Chonkin. He is a bumbling and stupid soldier and only at his ease and grace back in his natural, village surroundings. Chonkin shows the reader better than any character in the novel how unnatural are the army and the war.

The war appears in The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin as the background for the events of the Second Part of the novel. Voinovich deflates the war by setting it in domestic settings; just before a description of Chonkin and Niura's intimate relations:

At that time events were occurring in the world which, as yet, bore no direct relation to Niura or Chonkin.

On 14 June, a conference was held at Hitler's headquarters to put the finishing touches on a plan called 'Barbarossa.'

Neither Chonkin nor Niura had the faintest inkling of this plan. They had their own concerns, which seemed more important to them. Niura, for example,
had been looking terrible the last few days; she was shedding hair like a cat, and could barely drag herself around. Although she and Chonkin went to bed early, he wouldn't let her sleep, waking her up at least several times each night to take his pleasure, which he wanted in the daytime as well. (p. 82)

just before a description of Chonkin's "call of nature":

On 21 June, Schulenburg, the German ambassador to the U.S.S.R., was handed a note which read that, according to Soviet information, German troops were massing at the western borders of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government requested the government of Germany to clarify the matter. This note was passed on to Hitler when only minutes remained until the beginning of the war.

At that moment Chonkin, who had made up with Niura the night before was still sleeping. Then he was awakened by a call of nature. (p. 120)

and again during another scatological description: "Chonkin did not learn about what had happened, [i.e. the German invasion] immediately because he was sitting in the outhouse, in no hurry to leave." (p. 125).

The Second Part begins with the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germans. This invasion is deflated, as shown above, because Chonkin hears of it while sitting in the outhouse. The chapter, however, begins with the war being considered a prediction-come-true of an old peasant woman:

The news that war had broken out caught everyone napping, because no one had been paying war the least bit of attention. It's true that about a week and a half earlier Granny Dunia had been spreading word about the dream she had in which her hen Klashka had given birth to a goat with four horns. The experts, however, had judged the vision to be harmless; the worst it could mean, in their opinion, was rain. Now everything took on a new significance. (p. 125)
The war in the novel does not lead to characters making great patriotic gestures, as they would in a standard Soviet war novel. True to his tendency to deflate the war by making it smaller-than-life (rather than bigger) Voinovich follows the villagers from a meeting about the war to a free-for-all. Raisa, the village storekeeper, returns with a supply of goods from the District Consumer's Union in Dolgov. Having been visiting her sister before she returned to Krasnoe she was unaware of the German invasion. She senses something odd, however, when Granny Dunia very furtively buys thirty-six bars of soap, a pood of salt, twenty boxes of matches, two kilos of dry yeast, as well as six packets of Georgian tea, two packages of tooth powder, and a doll. Dunia is followed by Ninka Kurzova, who tries to buy one hundred bars of soap (as Dunia had tried originally). Neither woman tells Raisa what has caused this sudden rush for provisions, but when Ninka hears that Dunia bought out everything she rushes out after the old woman. Ninka and Dunia fight over the provisions, joined first by one villager and then another. By the time Chairman Golubev and Partorg Kilin arrive "an incredible spectacle greeted their eyes. The citizens of Krasnoe were all tangled up in one immense ball, that looked like a many-headed, many-armed, and many-legged hydra, droning, breathing, and shaking its limbs as if trying to rip something from its own sides." (p. 158). Only orders from Golubev and Kilin stop the melee. The villagers are ordered to re-assemble in front of the
The battle in the novel is a comedy of errors. An entire Red Army regiment attacks and only just manages to capture the "enemy", Chonkin. There is:

1. unsuitable camouflage:

When they were being outfitted, there had not been enough overcoats at the depot and the soldiers had been issued winter camouflage cloaks, which they were now using because of the bad weather. (p. 302)

[After the soldiers had crawled in the dirt] Their cloaks were no longer so white, or, to put it more precisely, were no longer white at all, and thus were now entirely suitable for camouflage. (pp. 305-06)

2. badly-armed soldiers:

The problem of arms and ammunition was under discussion. It appeared that the regiment had only one 45-millimetre cannon and three shells for it, one Maxim-type machine gun and no cartridge belt, two battalion mortars and no mortar shells, two rifles and a limited supply of cartridges for each sub-unit, and one bottle of flammable liquid for every three men.

"It's perfectly clear," said the general, "that arms and ammunition are limited. The factor of surprise will be utilized to the maximum. Ammunition to be used sparingly." (p. 288).

3. unlit Molotov cocktails:

"They're throwing the bottles now," surmised the general.

But why wasn't there any flame?

The general was again connected with the battalion commander.

"Why aren't the bottles on fire?"

"I don't understand it myself, Comrade One."

"Aren't they lighting them with matches?"

asked the general, raising his voice.

The battalion commander's heavy breathing could be heard through the phone.

"I'm asking you," said Drynov, without waiting for a reply.
"Aren't they lighting the bottles or aren't they?"
"No, Comrade General."
"Why not?"
"I didn't know you were supposed to," the battalion commander confessed after a moment's silence. (p. 305)

(4) a retreat:

He [General Drynov] could see that the attack line had dropped flat while the soldiers of the strike force, having pressed themselves to the ground, were crawling back in retreat. (pp. 305-06)

(5) an enemy who wears a flower-print house-dress:

Some person, clearly of the female sex, wearing a flower-print dress, an unbuttoned quilted jacket and a kerchief that had fallen down onto her shoulders, was lugging the plane back and forth. (p. 306)

(6) a different kind of battle-carnage:

Junior Lieutenant Bukashev and his eagles were the first to jump over the fence and burst into the vegetable garden. What he saw there seemed beyond belief to him. He did not see heaps of enemy bodies, he did not see enemy soldiers surrendering in panic. He saw a smashed aeroplane, whose right upper wing had been cut by a shell fragment and was now dangling by thin cables, and whose tail lay scattered off to one side. (pp. 308-09)

(7) the "enemy":

"Listen, son," said the general, putting his sheepskin hat back on. "You mean to tell me you fought a whole regiment all by yourself?"
"I wasn't by myself, Comrade General."
Chonkin pulled in his stomach and threw out his chest.
"Ah, so then you weren't all by yourself," said the general, gladdened. "So who were you with then?"
"With Niura, Comrade General!" Chonkin bellowed out as he came back to his senses.
Laughter rang out from the soldiers. (p. 312)

The war and the revolution, specially within their respective myths, converge in the person of Joseph Stalin.
The myth of the revolution, as propagated during his regime, presented Stalin as Lenin's right-hand man, his heir-apparent. The myth of the war, at least till Stalin's death, spoke of the leading role Stalin played in guiding his country to victory. Voinovich joins and takes aim at both myths in a short paragraph about mid-way through Part II in a section that discusses the rumours that arose over Chonkin and "his gang" that begins: "A third group refuted the two preceding versions, claiming that, having fled from the Germans, Stalin had gone into hiding under the name Chonkin." (p. 205)

Russians view the revolution of 1917 as the major event of the twentieth century. Like the Great Patriotic War, the revolution has its own mythology, The Great October Socialist Revolution, to give it its proper Soviet appellation, overthrew the rule of the capitalists and landlords, established the dictatorship of the proletariat, liquidated capitalism in Russia, eliminated the exploitation of one man by another, abolished social and national oppression, and opened the way to the construction of socialism and communism. The inspirer and organizer of the revolution was the Communist Party headed by Lenin, which based its activity on knowledge of the laws of social development and skilfully united into one revolutionary movement such diverse revolutionary currents as the pandemocratic movement for peace, the peasant democratic movement for land, the national liberation movement of oppressed peoples for national equality, and the socialist movement of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the assessment of the Central Committee of the CPSU "The October Revolution opened the way for resolving the fundamental
problems presented by the entire preceding course of development of world history: the problems of a future society, of the nature of social progress, of war and peace, and of the fate of world civilization." Could one ask for more?

The second edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia links the myth of the revolution with the myth of the war. The second last paragraph of the entry on the October revolution (and just preceding the next entry on the war) begins:

The victory of the Great October socialist revolution appears in the determining condition of the victorious unfolding of socialist revolutions in all the countries of the world. The victory of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic war against fascist Germany and imperialistic Japan brought a new death blow to world capitalism, its victory deepened the universal crisis in the capitalist system. The victorious conclusion of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union irrefutably demonstrated that the USSR is the indestructible support of all peoples, struggling against capitalism for socialism.

As with most sacred cows, the "Great Patriotic War of 1941-45" and the "Great October Socialist Revolution" are treated seriously, if not panegyrically, in traditional Soviet literature. Stalin's death gave literature the opportunity to re-examine the past. Because of Khrushchev's exhortations to destroy the "cult of personality" writers were encouraged to provide their readers with new facts and new interpretations of the Stalin era. Like the war the October Revolution also suffered a re-examination:

Recent historical novels about the Revolution and Civil War, however, while affirming the heroic
cause, have featured characters and raised issues that cast doubt on the morality of revolutionary means. Often such characters and issues become a kind of critical metaphor in which the past can shed light on the present.⁶

Voinovich, as discussed above, has shunned the heavy touch of either traditionalists or recent writers in his presentation of WWII. Similarly he presents his own unique version of the October revolution in a scene between two brigade leaders, Shikalov and Taldykin.⁷ The analogy between the war and the revolution suggests itself by the novel's structure: the scene centered on a discussion of the revolution is situated between scenes that deal with the outbreak of war. Also the two characters involved are the same two responsible for dispersing and later reassembling the kolkhozniki for meetings to discuss the German invasion.

The war-as-seen-by-a-peasant in paralleled by the revolution-as-seen-by-a-peasant. As Taldykin and Shikalov argue about what Shikalov claims he saw in St. Petersburg in 1916 and 1917, the following version of the Great October Socialist Revolution appears:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHIKALOV'S VERSION</th>
<th>SOVIET VERSION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REVOLUTIONARIES IN 1916 IN ST. PETERSBURG</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(A) BEHAVIOUR</td>
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"I was still young, we'd chase off the likes of them with our rifles." He grew pensive and smiled, as he recalled a distant time in his life. "I remember, back in 1916, I was

On the 9 January 1916 in Petrograd 100,000 workers held a strike; in the Vyborg quarter they had a plan for an attempt of a demonstration. In February 35,000 workers held a strike. The radical
SHIKALOV'S VERSION | SOVIET VERSION
---|---
stationed in Peterburd, I was a sergeant major at the time. They had the kind of people there that didn't want to go to work, but first thing in the morning they grab rags with all this fooligan stuff written on them, then they fasten these rags onto their sticks and out they go parading to show everybody they know how to read and write. Sometimes you'd go out there and take all that junk away from them and you'd be so angry you'd say: You're a fooligan if ever there was one, what're you doing that for?" (p. 140) | crisis of the movement came in October 1916. In answer to the proclamation of the Petrograd soviet against the war, in mid-October about 70,000 held a strike at which workers fraternized with the soldiers of the 181st Infantry Regiment. A few days later on the 26 October (Old style) on the call of the Petrograd Soviet a strike was held to protest against the court martial of Baltic Sailors (more than 50,000 took part in the strike).  

(B) MOTIVES
- they did not want to work | - anti-war
- they fastened rags onto sticks and paraded to show everybody they knew how to read and write. | - pro-workers | - pro-party (Bolshevik)

(C) REALPOLITIK
"Then he goes: 'It's not me who's the fooligan,' he goes, 'but you who's the fooligan, I don't grab rags from you,' he goes. 'It's you who grabs them from me.' And I say to him: I'm no fooligan, it's you what's the fooligan, because I got the rifle and you don't got nothing." (p. 140) | workers fraternized with the soldiers

(D) SLOGANS
"And what kind of words did they write on those rags?" asked Taldykin, growing interested and hoping the words were dirty. | "Down with the war." and "Down with the tsarist government."
SHIKALOV'S VERSION

'The works?' repeated Shaikalov. 'I'll tell you, fooligan words. Stuff like "Down with Lenin", "Down with Stalin."' (p. 140)

SHIKALOV also has a confused recall of the prominent figures in the Revolution:

(A) LENIN AND STALIN

"Hold on," he stopped Shikalov. "Something's wrong with what you're saying. There wasn't any Lenin or Stalin in 1916. I mean, they were alive but they weren't running the government of workers and peasants yet." (p. 141)

The only government of workers and peasants is the Petrograd soviet. From 1913-1916 Stalin banished to exile in Turukhansk (Siberia). During WWI till 1917 Lenin lived in Switzerland the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in Petrograd re-established in the summer of 1916 by Aleksandr Shliapnikov; one of his lieutenants was Viacheslav Molotov.

(B) KERENSKY AND TSAR

"Everybody knows that," said Taldykin confidently. "In 1916 it was Tsar Nikolai Alexandrovich, Emperor and Autocrat."

"You're stupid, Taldyka," said Shikalov sympathetically. "You're a brigade leader and you don't have brains enough to realize that Nikolai, he came later. And Kerensky came before him, too."

"That's really disgusting," said Taldykin, beside himself. "So now Kerensky was a tsar?"

"So what was he then?"

Nicholas Aleksandrovich, tsar from 1894-1918.

Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky, elected to the 4th Duma in 1912 where he led labour group (Trudoviks) of socialist-peasants; later he joined Socialist Revolutionaries. At the beginning of February 1917 revolution he became deputy chairman of Petrograd soviet and Minister of Justice in the Provisional Government. In May 1917 he became Minister of War and
"Primed Minister."
"You've got it all twisted around," sighed Shikalov.
"What was Kerensky's name?"
"Aleksander Fedorovich."
"You see! And the tsar was Nikolai Alexandrovich. So, he had to be Kerensky's son."
(p. 141)

In a final sweep Shikalov wipes away the entire 1917 Revolution in Petersburg:

"So all right," he said. And when do you think the Revolution was?"
"Which revolution?"
"The October one," Taldykin stressed everything he was certain of. "It was in '17."
"I'm not sure of that." Shikalov shook his head decisively. "In '17 I was stationed in Peterburd too."
"That's where it happened, in Peterburd," said Taldykin, his spirits rising.
"No," said Shikalov with conviction. "Maybe it happened somewhere else, but not in Peterburd."
(pp. 141-42)

Voinovich's parody of the revolution is heightened by the language of the two peasants. The revolution's myth has a language of its own, one foreign to kolkhoz brigade leaders as is evidenced by their mangling of it: "fuliuganskie" and "fuliugan" for "khuligan"; "Peterburd" for "Peterburg"; "mamzolei" for "mavzolei". Shikalov and Taldykin incorporate the revolution's language into their own colloquial speech.

Taldykin's final historical note puts a different light on the revolution's development to 1941. He tells Shikalov "without much conviction":

"But now I heard they don't break up those demonstrations. My nephew happened to be in Moscow last year on May Day and he says a whole mass of people went cheering across the square and Stalin's right up there on the mamzoleum waving his hand." (p. 142)

Those demonstrations, in Taldykin's suggestion, are still being held by "the kind of people who didn't want to go to work," a telling comment by a peasant on the Soviet accession to power.

The Red Army appears in a number of chapters in The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin. The reader senses the anti-militaristic tone in the novel by the way Voinovich presents his soldier-characters. There are few positive characters; many are cruel petty tyrants. Most of them are, in one way or another, fools. The authorial intent, however, is obvious. Those who do good, like Lieutenant Colonel Lapshin, suffer less ridicule than those who do evil to their fellow officers or soldiers, like Sergeant Peskov or General Drynov.
The soldiers in Chonkin's unit are, in many ways, types for any anti-militaristic novel. Peskov, for example, is a typical bossy sergeant type. He appears in the novel at the same point at which the reader meets Chonkin. In comparison to the description of the bow-legged and big-eared Chonkin the narrator follows with a description of Company Master Sergeant Peskov: "well-fed, rosy-cheeked, and blond." (p. 14). He is disgusted with Chonkin because the latter cannot salute or march properly. As punishment he forces Chonkin to do exercises, an occupation Peskov seems loath to leave either for a phone-call or to attend to other duties. Tormenting Chonkin brings a sweat to the sergeant's forehead, as well as self-pity: "'They wear you out, Comrade Captain. You put in time with them, train them, ruin your nerves, and it's barely worth it.'" (p. 15).

Peskov has a simple and straightforward approach to the army. His attitude is summed up in a line: "... he was accustomed to carrying out orders unquestioningly and by the book." (p. 31). He had served an additional two years after his first term and wanted to re-enlist. His fiancée disapproved: she wanted her husband-to-be to work in a factory rather than serve in the army.

Peskov's letter to his fiancée gives the reader some insight into this army man who torments Chonkin for his unmilitary-like bearing. The letter begins with a number of Soviet clichés:
And Liuba, you keep on writing that civilian life is better than the service. Liuba, you have the wrong idea about it, because the chief thing for every soldier in the Red Army is to endure all the burdens and privations of military service. And also to train his subordinates. You know that our country is encircled on all four sides by a capitalist encirclement and our enemies have but a single aim - to strangle the land of the Soviets and drive our wives and children into slavery. For that reason, every year young soldiers, the sons of workers and the toiling peasantry, are called up to military service. And we veteran soldiers have to pass on to them our battle experience and our military skill. (p. 31)

Peskov considers himself a veteran because he has served two enlistments. His cause, he tells his fiancée, is training the young generation - laughable because he himself is only twenty-five years old. Peskov is typical of any army functionary who enjoys the power he wields over his subordinates:

Our cause is training the young generation. But this is a very important question - people need strictness on an everyday basis because you act decently to people and they turn around and act like swine to you. Let's take an ordinary family, for example. If you don't bring up a child strictly, using the strap on him, then he'll grow up to be sneak or a hooligan, and children, Liuba, are our purpose in life. And if you don't have a purpose in life, you can end up hanging yourself or shooting yourself (take Maiakovksy or Esenin, for example). (pp. 31-32)

Peskov enjoys making Chonkin leap up and down in the heat, marching back and forth to the post, repeating an about-face. Peskov's dealings with Chonkin evidence the satisfaction Peskov gets from his position and his ability to be strict. He writes:
So, Liuba, at the factory you have an engineer with a higher education, with some ten to twelve men under him. He can order them to do anything at work, but after work or on their days off they're not subordinate to him any more and they can do whatever they want - as the saying goes, you're your own boss and I'm mine. For us, in the army, such a situation is impossible. In my company I have ninety-seven privates and junior command personnel. I can issue them any order at any time and they carry it out unquestioningly, to the letter on time, and according to the regulations and according to military discipline, even though I have only a fifth-grade education. (p. 32)

Peskov, however, is also subordinate to those above him. His dealings with Lieutenant Colonel Pakhomov place him in the same ridiculous position Peskov placed Chonkin earlier. When Pakhomov demands that Peskov produce Chonkin and his rations immediately, he is enraged to hear that Peskov has not done as he was ordered. He is further enraged to hear that the quartermaster has been sent for the rations:

"He'll have a talk all right - with me. Go bring him and the rations here at once!"
"I'll send the orderly right away," said Peskov.
"Forget the orderly," said Pekhomov. "You go yourself and on the double! I'll give you five minutes. Twenty-four hours' arrest for every minute over. You understand? On the double!"

The lieutenant colonel spoke quite differently with Master Sergeant Peskov from how he had with the regimental commander an hour before. And the way Sergent Peskov had spoken to Chonkin bore little resemblance to the way he now spoke with Lieutenant Colonel Pakhomov. As for Chonkin, there was no one he could talk to that way except for a horse, because, in rank, a horse was even lower than Chonkin. And lower than a horse there was nothing.

Master Sergeant Peskov dashed outside, where he glanced at his pocket watch and noted the time; he was about to proceed at a walk but looked around and saw the lieutenant colonel watching him from the window. Peskov took off at a run. (p. 34)
Peskov manages to find a victim even during his own harassment:
"A minute later Lieutenant Colonel Pakhomov looked out the window and saw the following sight: Trofimovich leaping nimbly down the path to the barracks, the knapsack on his back, with Peskov running behind him, urging him on with his fist."
(pp. 36-37). Peskov's torments do not end with his run across the army camp. He ends up in solitary confinement where a consideration of his experience at the hands of the lieutenant colonel leads him to review his original estimate of army life:

Naturally, Liuba, all thing considered [he wrote], army life is no lump of sugar. There's a kind of person who doesn't use his position to strengthen military discipline but, just the other way around, uses it to lord it over his subordinates. And of course in civilian life such a situation is impossible because there, after a person's put in his eight hours at the factory, he can think of himself as a free man, and if some engineer of foreman orders him to do anything, he can just tell him where to go and he'd be right to do it. (p. 37)

Peskov's substitutes his fantasy of army life with a civilian fantasy.

The senior officer in Chonkin's unit is an unnamed Major, referred to as "major" or "nachal'nik shtaba" (shortened to "nachshtab"). The Major is not the usual Red Army chief of staff the reader would find in official Soviet literature. He is deaf; his junior officer is insubordinate ["But Zavgorodnii paid no attention to the major's words; he could not recall a case in which the chief of staff had ever granted anyone permission for anything." (p. 17) and later, "'Go take a ...' said the captain in an undertone, playfully looking the major
in the eye." (p. 17)]; he is incompetent ["But what should we do?" He glanced in confusion at Zavgorodnii, who just shrugged his shoulders." (p. 18)]; he is cowardly ["The major had never previously distinguished himself by great courage in dealing with his superiors and now, on account of his deafness, feared them all the more, knowing that any moment they could transfer him to the reserves." (p. 18)].

Battalion senior officers are represented by the regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Opalikov, and Lieutenant Colonel Pakhomov, battalional commander in charge of airfield maintenance. The two men have a typical Army relationship:

Although he was Opalikov's equal in rank, his senior in age, and not directly subordinate to him, Pakhomov felt Opalikov superior to him; he knew that Opalikov was closer to their superior officers and would become a full colonel ahead of him, which is why he treated him with more respect than he received. (p. 20)

As a result the narrator notes that when speaking to Opalikov, Pakhomov does so "timidly" (p. 20). It is Pakhomov's tendency to submit to Opalikov's wishes that causes Chonkin to be sent to guard the downed plane in Krasnoe:

"But he's ..." Pakhomov tried to object.
"He's what?"
"There won't be anybody to bring firewood to the kitchen."
"No one is indispensable," said the regimental commander.
His point met approval. Lieutenant Colonel Pakhomov did not dare object any further. (p. 20)

Opalikov is arrogant: he refers to the suggestions of his junior officers as "hogwash" ("khrenovina"); he orders his
equal, Pakhomov, about as if the latter is a subordinate
"'Take care of it'" said Opalikov, pointing at Pakhomov."
(p. 19)]; he is impatient ["He did not like any objections,
ever." (p. 19)]; and, he is conceited ["'Chonkin. Of course.
What a mind I have,' marvelled Opalikov, clapping the palm
of his hand against his forehead." (p. 20)].

However Opalikov has a less-than-heroic attitude towards
his profession. As he dons his parachute at one point later
in the novel he thinks:

In a few minutes he would have to take his regiment
into the air and direct them to the district of
Tiraspol as ordered. The route had been adjusted
and delineated, the instructions had been gone over
with the flight personnel. Squadron commanders had
reported their flight readiness. Tiraspol, all right
Tiraspol, thought Opalikov. What's the difference
where they shoot you down? And they've got to shoot
you down, there's no place to hide up there. The
donkeys we fly are no match for those Messerschmitts.
All right, he said to himself, that's not the point.
He'd lived thirty-four years, that was enough. Not
everybody got even that much. He'd seen a little bit
of the world.11 (p. 179)

The arrogant, impatient, and conceited Lieutenant Colonel,
as he had appeared in one of the earlier chapters of the novel,
now is portrayed as the regiment's cuckold. In official Soviet
literature officers who were separated from their wives left
behind devoted and distraught women. Voinovich offers the
reader a different kind of army wife:

But Nadka, Nadka ... 12 At the thought of his wife,
his mood went from bad to worse. "I will wait for
you," she had said. Of course, let's hear about it.
She'll wait all right, in some other fellow's bed.
Bitch! When other women heard it was war, they
started sobbing, that one barely managed to squeeze
out one little tear. The barren fig tree! It must have even made her happy. Her husband at the front and total freedom for her. Not that she didn't have enough freedom before. She'd drag anyone she could get her hands on down on top of her. Sometimes he'd walk through town and feel nothing but shame. It seemed as though everybody was pointing a finger at him. Here he comes, the regimental commander. He can command a regiment but he can't even keep his own wife in line. In the army everything's out in plain view. Worse than in a village. Everybody knows everything about everybody. Even about the time she and the quartermaster, at the warehouse, on a pile of old coats... How low can you get! That time, he was going to shoot her dead, he'd drawn his pistol from his holster... But his hand wouldn't obey him. Of course the whole thing was his own fault. As Kudlai said: "You have to look closely when you're buying..." Obviously, that was the way she was. An insatiable creature, all right to hell with her, thought Lieutenant Colonel Opalikov as Pakhomov drove up in a sidecar. (pp. 179-80)

When Pakhomov asks what to do with Chonkin now that war has broken out, Opalikov, thinking of himself and Nadka, is amazed to hear that the soldier has married while on sentry duty:

"Married?" gasped Opalikov. His brain simply could not accommodate such a thought - getting married at a time like this! What for? Here he was with a wife and he didn't know what to do with her. "Well, since he got himself married, let him be," Opalikov decided. "I've got no time to worry about him now. Kudlai!" he shouted out to the engineer, "tell each regiment to start their motors."

Chonkin's fate had been decided. (p. 181)

The reader also meets Samushkin, Chonkin's sworn enemy. He is the cause of many tricks Chonkin suffers:

This Samushkin would never let a chance go by to play a dirty trick on Chonkin: in the mess hall Samushkin would mix the salt and sugar together, at night in the barracks (on those rare occasions when Chonkin had to sleep there) Samushkin would tie Chonkin's pants to his field shirt to make him late for formation. Once he had even given Chonkin a 'bicycle ride' - between the sleeping Chonkin's toes Samushkin had
inserted strips of paper which he then set on fire. For this, Samushkin received two days of extra details, while Chonkin was crippled for three. (pp. 24-25)

During a political training session Samushkin convinces Chonkin to ask the senior politruk a heretical question: did Stalin once have two wives at the same time? At first Chonkin refuses to do as asked but "It was plain from Samushkin's face how very important it was that Chonkin do him this really very small favour. And kind-hearted Chonkin, who didn't know how to refuse anyone or anything, finally gave in." (p. 27). When he asks his seemingly innocent question, the politically naive Chonkin is confused and frightened by the fury and the fear it arouses in the politruk. He accuses Chonkin of political immaturity, loss of vigilance, and provocation. As for the instigator of this scandal:

Chonkin looked hopelessly over at Samushkin, who was serenely leafing throughout the pages of The Short History of the All-Union Communist Party as if the entire incident had nothing at all to do with him. Chonkin could see that Samushkin would deny any reference to himself without batting an eye. And although Chonkin still could not understand the politruk's unbelievable anger, it was clear to him that Samushkin had taken him for another ride, not for a 'bicycle ride' this time, but maybe for an even worse kind. (p. 29)

In the regiment that appears in the latter half of Part II the reader meets more Red Army soldiers. The regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Lapshin, appears in a brief scene as the one sympathetic officer. When General Drynov orders one of Lapshin's privates shot, he attempts to intercede by
telling the general that the private has two children. The attempt is to no avail, apparently, as the general answers, "'It seems to me, Comrade Colonel, that I ordered Filiukov shot and not his children.'" (p. 280). Lapshin salutes and obediently answers "'Yes, Comrade General, Filiukov to be shot'" thinking all the while: "Maybe we can get Filiukov through all this yet. The main thing is to say 'Yes sir!' when you're supposed to, then afterwards you can disregard the order." (p. 281).

The character of General Drynov stands in contrast to that of Lieutenant Colonel Lapshin. Drynov is unique among Voinovich's portrayal of officers because Voinovich provides him with a biography. The biography is summed in its introductory sentence: "The general had made a fabulous [lit., "golovokruzhitel'naia" - "giddy," "dizzy"] career for himself in a very short span of time." (p. 277). The narrator describes how Drynov rose from company commander to battalion commander:

Four years before, he still wore only a single stripe and commanded a company. But then he had one great piece of luck. His battalion commander told him in confidence that you could say anything you liked about Trotsky but still he had been the commander in chief during the Civil War. Perhaps the battalion commander with the long memory might have been swept away no matter what, even without making statements like these, but then it would have been difficult to tell what effect that would have had on the fate of the future general. But everything fell right into place in the best possible manner; Drynov made a report to the Right Place, and he replaced the battalion commander. (pp. 277-78)
Four years previous to the time of the story would be 1937. On 12 June 1937 Pravda announced that the following Red Army commanders had been charged with treason, tried, and executed or in the narrator's words, "swept away" ("zameli by svoim cheredom"): Marshal Tukhachevskii, Deputy People's Commissar of Defence; Army Commander Iakir, commanding the Kiev Military District; Army Commander Uborevich, commanding the Byelorussian Military District; Corps Commander Eidman, Head of Osoavikhim; Army Commander Kork, Head of the Military Academy; Corps Commander Putna, Military Attache in London; Corps Commander Feldman, Head of the Red Army Administration; and, Corps Commander Primakov, Deputy Commander of the Leningrad Military District. Ian Gamarnik, Head of the Political Administration of the Red Army and First Deputy Commissar of the Red Army, who had committed suicide earlier, was said to have been part of the conspiracy. Tukhachevskii was the most prominent of the group and considered by many to be the finest military mind in the Red Army. He had had a most distinguished career as a loyal soldier and had been a Bolshevik since 1917. The other commanders were men who with Tukhachevskii had pioneered military rethinking in the 1930s. They had turned the Red Army into an efficient modern army. On 15 June Pravda published Voroshilov's report to the Government and the Military Soviet of the People's Commissariat of Defence of the commanders' crimes. They were accused of being Trotskyites, planning the assassination of Party and government
leaders, wrecking, and espionage.¹⁶

Eleven months later Divisional Commander Dmitri Schmidt, commanding a tank unit in the Kiev Military District, was arrested by the NKVD as a Trotskyite planning to assassinate Voroshilov. On 25 September 1938 Divisional Commander Iurii Sablin was arrested. Generals were followed by the officer corps. Almost the whole command of the Kremlin Military School and the Frunze Military Academy was arrested. Political commissars were also purged. All seventeen Army Commissars as well as twenty-five Corps Commissars were arrested. Almost all heads of political administrations and most members of Soviets of military districts were arrested. Some 20,000 Army political workers disappeared during the purge.¹⁷ The Navy and Air Force suffered as much if not more.¹⁸ The purge, according to an unpublished Soviet report quoted by Robert Conquest, accounted for 3 of the 5 Marshals, 14 of the 16 Army Commanders (Class I and II), 8 of the 8 Admirals (Class I and II), 60 of the 67 Corps Commanders, 136 of the 199 Divisional Commanders, 221 of the 397 Brigade Commanders.¹⁹ All eleven Vice-Commissars of Defence and 75 of 80 members of the Supreme Military Soviet disappeared. Half the officer corps (about 35,000) were shot or imprisoned.²⁰

During his report to the XXth Party Congress on the "crimes of the Stalin era" Khrushchev described the Army purge and its consequences:
Very grievous consequences, especially in reference to the beginning of the war, followed Stalin's annihilation of many military commanders and political workers during 1937-41 because of his suspiciousness and through slanderous accusations. During these years repressions were instituted against certain parts of military cadres beginning literally at the company and battalion commander level and extending to the higher military centers; during this time the cadre of leaders who had gained military experience in Spain and in the Far East was almost completely liquidated.

The policy of large-scale repression against the military cadres led also to the undermined military discipline, because for several years officers of all ranks and even soldiers in the party and Komsomol cells were taught to "unmask" their superiors as hidden enemies. ... It is natural that this caused a negative influence on the state of military discipline in the first war period.

And, as you know, we had before the war excellent military cadres which were unquestionably loyal to the party and to the Fatherland. Suffice it to say that those of them who managed to survive, despite severe tortures to which they were subjected in the prisons, have from the first war days shown themselves real patriots and heroically fought for the glory of the Fatherland; ...

All this brought about the situation which existed at the beginning of the war and which was the great threat to our Fatherland.21

The military consequences of the purge were serious. As Khrushchev noted, it had "a negative influence on the state of military discipline in the first war period." Experienced commanders were superseded by inexperienced commanders, while key positions in the high command were filled with men totally unsuited or untrained with little capacity for strategic thinking.22 Tukhachevskii had demanded "nerve" in his officers; any independence of spirit was destroyed in the purge.23 Stalin promoted mediocre men to the level of Marshal: Mekhlis, Voroshilov, and Kulik. The only marshal who did not
date back to Stalin's Civil War entourage was Timoshenko, an old First Cavalry Officer (as was Zhukov who became General and then Chief of Staff in January 1941). Timoshenko introduced reforms designed to sharpen the professional qualities and raise the discipline of the Red Army, and to enhance the prestige, authority and social status of its commanders. His efforts, unfortunately, were stopped by the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-40. The disastrous results suffered by the Red Army in this brief war were the direct consequence of the army purge.

The army purge destroyed an important, if not vital, element in the balance of power between the Soviet and Nazi armies just at the outbreak of war between them. As Robert Conquest wrote:

And yet the Soviet Army was larger in numbers, stronger in material and at least as well equipped technically as the German invaders. There was only one element in which the armies were not comparable: the German Command, staff and officer corps in general were of immensely superior quality. Though Hitler had removed a number of higher officers, he had at least the sense to see that he could not fight a major war without a trained military cadre.

Voinovich's General Drynov was able to rise through the ranks during the army purge, helping the NKVD (and himself) by denouncing his own battalion commander as a Trotskyite. Trotsky's name rarely appears in official Soviet literature or history, except as villain and arch-enemy of the Soviet Union. None of his contributions to the Revolution are recognized nor the possibility that he might have become Lenin's successor.
He was Stalin's rival after Lenin's death. When Stalin acceded to power Trotsky was forced into exile and was eventually murdered. He became a convenient scapegoat during the great trials of the thirties when the charge of Trotskyism became cause for a Soviet citizen's arrest, trial, and jail sentence or death.

Drynov's battalion commander, of course, is correct: Trotsky was commander-in-chief of the Red Army during the Civil War. As Commissar from 1918 to 1925 Trotsky rebuilt the disintegrated and demoralized (tsarist) Army - with a rank and file of hostile peasants and a corps of anti-Bolshevik officers - into an efficient and disciplined Red Army. The Stalinist view of Trotsky's role at this time can be summed up by the following entry from the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1947):

In the years of the foreign military intervention and civil war (1918-20) Trotsky and the Trotskyites treacherously threw asunder the work in the Red Army attempting to weaken its battle strength, perniciously demolishing the battle successes of the Red Army, rendering direct assistance to the interventionists and to the bourgeois-landowner counter-revolution.

In the Stalinist revision of history Trotsky, the War Commissar, becomes Trotsky, the leader of a military opposition. William Henry Chamberlin, the historian of the early years of Soviet power, wrote "... it was Leon Trotsky who made by far the greatest individual contribution to the victory of the Red Army during the Civil War. The systematic campaign of defamation and ignoring which had been carried on against him in the decidedly coloured works about the civil war which were
written in Russia after his fall cannot obscure this fact."^{27}

Voinovich's narrator continues Drynov's biography:

From then on, things could not have gone better for him. Two years later, now wearing three stripes on his lapels, he found himself in the war against the White Finns.

There, his talents for commanding were revealed in all their brilliance. Drynov was distinguished by his ability to easily and quickly get his bearings in any, even the most complex, situation, though, on the other hand, of all possible decisions he invariably made the most stupid one. This did not, however, prevent him from always landing on his feet, and, by the end of the Finnish campaign, he was in Moscow, this time with four stripes on his lapel. In the Kremlin's Georgievsky Hall, Grandpa Kalinin himself shook Drynov's firm hand with both of his and said a few words as he presented him with the Combat Order of the Red Banner. (p. 278)

Drynov's "brilliant" talents for commanding are deflated in the narrator's ironical description of these talents. The first talent refers back to Drynov's original denunciation of his battalion commander so as to further his own career: "Drynov was distinguished by his ability to easily and quickly get his bearings in any, even the most complex situations, ..." Even without this reference this phrase deflates in the qualifying phrase that follows: " ... though, on the other hand, of all possible decisions he invariably made the most stupid one." Drynov, as the reader realizes, is one of those inexperienced commanders Conquest described who filled the positions vacated by the purged experienced commanders. Real talent, however, often being little necessary for success in Stalin's regime, Drynov ends the war as a decorated hero. Stupid decisions, the narrator notes, did not "prevent him
from always landing on his feet" ["Eto ne pomeshalo emu vyiti sukhim iz vody ..." (p. 253)].

Drynov's unsuitability for command does not prevent him from becoming a general, much as it did not stop others in Stalin's time. His contribution to military science that precipitates his rise to general is ridiculous:

Drynov had been made a general quite recently for his outstanding achievements in the field of military science, to wit - during field exercises he had ordered that the men of his own unit be fired upon with live fragmentation shells for a maximal approximation of battle conditions. Drynov maintained that during such training it was only the bad soldiers who got killed, those who did not know how to entrench themselves. On the whole, Drynov saw no use for soldiers who did not know how to entrench themselves. Drynov himself was very fond of being well entrenched. (p. 278)

This section of Drynov's biography is based on a play on the word "okapyvat'sia" ("to dig in, entrench oneself") whose secondary meaning is "to find oneself a soft spot, a comfortable hide-out."28 The figurative meaning gives a new twist to the last three sentences in the above-quoted paragraph. If a "bad" soldier does not know how to entrench himself then a "good" soldier does. Therefore, Drynov is a "good" soldier. Since the reader has seen what kind of soldier Drynov has been, he understands that Drynov is not a good soldier in the usually accepted definition. The narrator is being ironic. Drynov is a bad soldier and his inane military theory could kill good soldiers.

The following paragraph supports the view that "okapyvat'-sia" has two meanings. Herein the narrator describes the
While the regiment was taking up its attack positions, the soldiers of a separate field-engineer battalion had demolished someone's bathhouse and built a three-layer dugout from the logs. Colonel Lapshin arrived, and having presented his pass to the sentry by the entrance, the colonel went down the four wooden steps and then slammed the sodden doors behind him. (p. 279)

It is from this dug-out, "three floors down," that Drynov watches the ensuing battle.

Drynov's past attitude to his fellow soldiers - i.e., his willingness to denounce his commanding officer - is sustained in his behaviour with the soldiers in Lapshin's regiment. For example, he sentences Filiukov to be shot for striking the prisoner until he was unconscious; he berates Junior Lieutenant Bukashev because his sentry is smoking ["'Chto zh ty, mladshoi, tak tvoiu mat', ne smotrish', chto u tebia etot razdolbai kurit na postu, tuda ego v dushu?" (p. 268)]; he sentences Miliaga to be shot ["with a characteristic wave of the hand." (p. 297)]; he sentences a battalion commander to court-martial for not ordering his soldiers to ignite their Molotov cocktails before tossing them (p. 305).

Chonkin's order for arrest is more difficult an order for Drynov to issue. The problem is not the soldier involved, but the military protocol. For example, when Drynov reprimands Bukashev for his sentry who, smoking on duty, ruined military camouflage, his military criticism is mixed with political canniness:
"To blame, your mother's to blame. You'll atone for your guilt in battle. Comrade Revkin, secretary of the District Committee, is with us today." He pointed to the man standing behind the official from SMERSH. "He'll see all this and then he's going to say, 'Oh, the way they do things in the army.' One lout like this can ruin all our camouflage and get a whole division wiped out. So, junior, all quiet?" (pp. 294-95)

Before Drynov allows Chonkin to be arrested he makes the politically awkward move of decorating him: "'On behalf of the command, damn it, I declare our gratitude to you and present you with this decoration.'" (p. 266). Immediately after he pins the medal onto Chonkin's field shirt the NKVD lieutenant, Filippov, shows Drynov the warrant for Chonkin's arrest as a traitor to the Motherland. Chonkin's arrest confuses the soldiers who had just heard him lavishly praised: "A murmur passed through the ranks of soldiers. They had not understood any of it." (p. 267). Drynov, "remembering the commander's role as educator," explains:

"Comrade soldiers, my order that Chonkin be decorated has been rescinded. Private Chonkin has turned out to be a traitor to the motherland. He pretended to be a hero in order to worm his way into our confidence. Is that clear?"
"Clear!" shouted the soldiers without much conviction. (pp. 313-14)

Chonkin, to whom the general at first had spoken "fondly," on whose shirt the general had pinned one of his own medals, has within a few minutes been declared a traitor.

The reason for Drynov's command of the regiment sent to capture Chonkin is made clear by the narrator from the onset; it is a politically astute move on Drynov's part: "Although
a regiment had been assigned to liquidate Chonkin's gang, in view of its importance, Division Commander General Drynov had taken on the overall direction of this operation." (p. 277).

Drynov's political astuteness outweighs his military expertise. The reader sees this in his rise through the ranks and his inane military theory. His lack of "militaryness" is repeated in his behaviour during the battle to capture Chonkin. The reader finds the general "... sitting in his dugout, three floors down, following the action through a periscope." (p. 304). The narrator comments ironically: "It was not that he was cowardly (he had already proven his courage many times over), he simply considered that a general's rank gave him the privilege of sitting in dugouts and travelling exclusively in armoured carriers." (p. 304). The irony arises because the parenthetical explanation is without proof. The reader understands, therefore, that the negated first phrase is true, i.e. Drynov is a coward. His cowardice explains why he needs dugouts and armoured carriers. Note how Drynov appears on the scene after Chonkin has been knocked unconscious: "The armoured carrier rumbled up to the scene. The submachine gunners hopped out and began to jostle the soldiers aside, clearing a path for the general, who was struggling to get out of the carrier. They removed part of the fence so that the general would not have to lift his feet from the ground." (p. 309).
Chonkin is the general's undoing. Drynov decorates him with one of his own medals just as the NKVD steps forward to arrest Chonkin on a charge of treason. The general is momentarily confused but allows the arrest to proceed. The hero has turned out to be a traitor. Drynov had publicly commended him before a regiment of soldiers and now must publicly condemn him. How many Red Army marshals, generals, colonels, commissars and so forth were declared "traitors who had pretended to be heroes? Tukhachevskii, no doubt, would have offered his sympathies to Chonkin.

Private Ivan Chonkin is the novel's hero. The narrator addresses his reader just after he introduces Chonkin into the novel as a bumbling and foolish-looking private. The narrator writes:

Dear reader! Of course you have already noticed that Ivan Chonkin, the soldier with one year left to serve, was short of stature, bow-legged, and even had red ears. "What a sorry sight he makes!" you will say indignantly. "What kind of example is this for the younger generation? And just where has the author seen a quote unquote hero like this?" And I, the author, my back to the wall and caught, as they say, red-handed, will have to admit that I never saw him anywhere, that I thought him up with my own head, and not to use him as an example but simply to while away the time. "Let's suppose that's so," you'll say without really believing it, "but why think up characters at all? Couldn't the author have taken a military hero from real life, a tall, well-built, disciplined, crack student of military and political theory?" Of course I could have, but I was too late. All the crack students had already been grabbed up and I was left with Chonkin. At first I was upset, then I accepted it. After all, the hero of your book is like your own child, you get what you get, you just
don't fling him out the window. Maybe some other people's children are a little better, a little smarter, but still you love your own more just because he's your own.²⁹ (pp. 20-21)

Compare Chonkin to the military hero of Konstantin Simonov's *Days and Nights*:

He [Captain Saburov, commander of a regiment] was a very big man and seemed, in spite of his broad shoulders, almost too tall; his enormous, hunched figure and his plain dour face made him look, in some subtle way, like Gorky when he was young.³⁰

Voinovich has not created a typical Soviet literary hero, described by Rufus Mathewson as "a model whose example is expected to give rise to admiration and emulation. He stands in an authoritarian relationship to the reader. He is the representative of official virtue, and the certified model for behaviour."³¹ Chonkin is Voinovich's particular kind of positive hero.

Chonkin fares poorly in the eyes of the villagers of Krasnoe. Golubev offers these observations:

True he didn't look like the type they'd send, but those who did the sending were no dummies - they wouldn't send somebody you could tell right off had been specially sent. (p. 62)

"That's what you should have said in the first place, that you were ordered here, ... Instead of sitting there like a mouse, disguised as a woman." (p. 74)

later, when drunk, he adds:

"Vania, you're a very clever person, ... At first glance you look like a perfect ninny, but look a little closer, you see the mind of a statesman. You shouldn't be a private, you ought to be commanding a company." (p. 260)

a comment echoed later by General Drynov as he pins a medal
on Chonkin's shirt: "... And you, Chonkin, I'll tell you straight off, you may look like a fool but you're a hero."

(p. 312). Niura, perhaps, offers the most balanced description of her future husband after their first meeting:

Chonkin spat on his hands and set back to work. Every once in a while, as she followed behind him, Niura would steal a glance at her new acquaintance. Naturally, she had immediately noticed that he was anything but tall, that he wasn't one of the best-looking men she'd ever seen, but after all her long years alone, even someone like Chonkin looked good. She saw he was a handy fellow with a kind of a way about him and it was plain to see he'd be a big help. The more she thought about it, the more she liked him, and something like hope began to glimmer in her soul. (pp. 43-44)

In the genre of war novels with strong, brave, and serious heroes Chonkin stands out as an anomaly. In the second chapter of Part I the reader learns that Ivan Chonkin is "... a short, bow-legged private in the Red Army with one year left to serve ..." (p. 13). His military bearing ("vypravka") leaves a lot to be desired, as the company sergeant explains to his captain: "'This one, Comrade Captain, is a slob.'" (p. 15). When standing at attention before his sergeant "... his field shirt hanging out over his belt, his forage cap down over his big red ears, his puttees slipping [he] was standing to attention in front of Company Master Sergeant Peskov and glancing at him in fright, his eyes inflamed from the sun." (pp. 13-14). His puttees ("obmotka") are unwound so that any moment he could trip and fall over them. He does not salute properly and he does not march properly; the
sergeant complains: "... His term's almost up and he hasn't learned how to salute yet. As you were! Instead of saluting properly he spreads his fingers all the way to his ear. And he doesn't march, he shuffles along as if he was out for a walk.'" (p. 15). The sympathetic captain asks: "'What does the army need with a scarecrow like that anyway, eh, Sergeant?" (p. 16). "'This, '" the sergeant says, "'is no soldier; this is a bad joke.'" (p. 15).

The narrator provides his hero with a lengthy biography. He begins with an apology: "Before he joined the army, Chonkin's biography contained no pages that would dazzle and arrest your attention, yet it seems somehow fitting to take a few words to tell you where he came from, how life treated him, and what he had done before." (p. 21).

The actual biography begins in a fairly-tale like style. In Russian: "Itak, v odnoi privolzhskoi derevne zhila v svoe vremia nekaia Mar'iana Chonkina, obyknovennaia derevenskaia zhenshchina, vdova." (p. 22), reminiscent of the beginning lines of the novel itself:

   Bylo eto ne, bylo, teper' uzh tochno skazat' nel'zia, potomu chto sluchai, s kotorogo nachalas' (i tianet'sia pochti do nachikh dnei) vsia istoriia, proizoshel v derevne Krasnoe tak davno, chto i ochevidtsev s tekh por pochti ne ostalos'.
   Te, chto ostalis', rasskazyvaiut po-raznomu, a nekotorye i vovse ne pomniat. Da, po pravde skazat', i ne takoi eto sluchai, chtob derzhat' ego v pamiati stol'ko vremeni. (p. 5)

Compare the passages from Chonkin to the following Russian "skazki":

V nekotorom tsarstve v nekotorom gosudarstve zhil-byl Ivan-
tsarevich ... . ("Mar'ia Morevna")

Zhil-byl starik da starukha ... ("Baba-iaga i zamoryshek")

"Zhil-byl" or "V nekotorom tsarstve, v nekotorom gosudarstve" are common formulae for the commencement of a folk-story.

Voinovich substitutes in the biography: "v odnoi privolzhskoi derevne zhila v svoe vremia nekaia ... " and in the opening lines: "bylo eto ne bylo, teper' uzh tochno skazat' nel'zia ... "

The narrator continues the biography by setting the story in its historical circumstances:

Her husband, Vasilii Chonkin, perished in 1914 in the Imperialist War, which, as everybody knows, later turned into the Civil War and went on for a very long time. During the battle for Tsaritsyn, the village where Mariana lived became a military crossroads used alternately by the Reds and Whites, both of whom showed a liking for Mariana's spacious and empty house. (p. 21)

The historical World War I and the Civil War (1918-20) blend together in the narrator's naive account so that, except for their names, they are just both wars, a remarkable lack of distinction in Soviet literature, specially since the demarcation point, the October Revolution of 1917, is passed over in silence. The Reds and the Whites seem on an equal footing as opportunists, both ready to make use of Mar'iana's house.

The Battle of Tsaritsyn (Stalingrad after 1925, Volgograd after 1961) is a part of the mythology built up around Stalin by the Stalinist hagiographers. It took place
in the summer of 1918. A year later Ivan Chonkin was born, making the Chonkin of the novel's time-frame a man of twenty-one at the outbreak of war in 1941. Chonkin's conception, placed as it is during a major event in the Stalin hagiography, links the novel's hero to the Great Leader.

Chonkin's patrimony, however, is less than properly Soviet. The narrator writes:

At one point a certain Ensign [praporshchik] Golitsyn, who had some rather unclear relation to the illustrious family of Russian princes by the same name was quartered for an entire week in Mar'iana's home. Then he left the village and probably never gave it a second thought. But the village did not forget him. When, a year later or maybe more (no one kept track), Mar'iana gave birth to a son, the whole village had a good chuckle, saying it couldn't have happened without the aid of the prince. True, the local herdsman, Serega, was also suspected, but he vehemently denied everything.

Mar'iana named her son Ivan and gave him the patronymic Vasilevich, after her dead husband, Vasilii. (pp. 21-22)

Chonkin's first six years are spent in poverty. One day his mother drowns in the Volga as she is doing the wash. Ivan has no recollection of his first six years, but after his mother's death "Chonkin's memories of himself and the world around him began." (p. 22). Chonkin is adopted by childless neighbours: "... he was taken in by the neighbours, who might perhaps have been related to him, since their last name was the same as his." (p. 23). They trained him for farm-work and paid him for his work around their farm.

At this point in his biography the history of his
Motherland again crosses paths with Chonkin's life. The narrator assumes the reader will bring some historical knowledge to what follows for he begins: "V izvestnoe vremia ..." [my italics], similar to the description of the wars earlier in the biography: " ... vo vremia imperialisticheskoi voiny, kotoraia, kak izvestno, potom peresha v grazhdanskuiu i prodolzhalas' ochen' dolgo." The well-known time is 1929:

Then at a time known to all, a search for kulaks began in the village. Although not a single one could be found, it was mandatory to find some if only to set an example. So they hit on the Chonkins, who were exploiting labour, and child labour at that. The Chonkins were exiled and Ivan ended up in a Children's Home. (pp. 22-23)

"Kulak" is derived from the word for "fist." Before 1917 it was applied to miserly merchants who gained a hold over their fellows, e.g. village usurers. It was used in Communist propaganda after the 1917 revolution for all comparatively prosperous peasants, who were disenfranchised and subjected to heavy taxation. "Kulak" became a word of abuse during the collectivization of agriculture for those who declined to join the collective farms. The campaign of "liquidating the kulaks as a class" was used not so much to obliterate the kulaks as a class as to stampede them into collectives. The only way not to be labelled a kulak was to apply to join and be accepted into a collective. Over five million peasant households disappeared, the peasants being deported either to "corrective labour camps" or as "special settlers." Many were sent beyond the limits of their villages to make out as
best they could. Consistent with Voinovich's treatment of most Soviet phenomena he provides an example (echoed in history) wherein the Soviet naming does not correspond with the Russian reality.

The children whose parents were arrested as kulaks became the "besprizornye" ("children without guardians"). Official Soviet history credits economic changes, epidemics, famine, WWI, the Civil War, the foreign intervention and blockade as causes for the appearance of the bezprizornye; by the mid-1930s, it is said, these homeless children no longer existed. A new kind of bezprizornye appeared in 1929. Eugene Lyons, a witness to the events, wrote:

The plague of the bezprizornye, homeless waifs, from the civil war and famine years had almost been cured; now new thousands of boys and girls, mere infants some of them seemed, roamed through the land. They were the children of kulak parents who had died or who preferred to leave their children to shift for themselves rather than drag them into exile. 39

Unlike many of these children who had to beg for food, Chonkin was sent to a Children's home, "... where, for more than two years, they tormented him with arithmetic. In the beginning he endured it all obediently, but when it came to dividing whole numbers and fractions, he could stand it no longer and beat it out of his native village." (p. 23). In the village, because he was now strong enough to harness a horse, he was given one and sent to work on a dairy farm and "With his noble origins in mind, people would say to Chonkin: 'Prince, go
saddle up Roan and haul in some manure." (p. 23).

When Chonkin was called up for military service he ended up in the stables. There no one in the army called him Prince

... because none of them knew his nickname and there was nothing princely in his appearance to tip them off. The battalion commander, Pakhomov, took one look at Chonkin and said: 'To the stable.'

A perfect choice. The stable was the very place for Chonkin. From then on, he was always on horseback hauling firewood and potatoes to the mess. (p. 23)

Chonkin was perfectly satisfied with his life in the army. He "quickly mastered its fundamental rules, e.g.: 'The less you do the better,' 'Don't rush to carry out orders, they just might cancel them,' and so on." (p. 23) After an embarrassing question about Stalin's married life unleashes the fury of the political instructor, Chonkin adds another:

As he unhitched his horse, Chonkin cursed himself for letting a devil get hold of his tongue. The first question he asks since he's been in the service and what a hornet's nest he stirs up! Chonkin firmly resolved that from there on in he would never ask another question and that way keep himself from getting into a mess so bad there'd be no getting out. (p. 30)

Except for political training - the scene of the embarrassing question - Chonkin had a good life:

Chonkin was not sent on details, did not have to wash the barracks floors, and was relieved of parade drill. He was practically never even in the barracks; in the winter he usually slept in the kitchen and in the summer on a bed of hay in the stables. Since he was directly connected with the kitchen, he received No. 5 rations, that is, the same as flight personnel. (p. 23)
His usual day would consist of political training, hauling firewood, lunch, a nap, a bath, stable-work, hauling food-stuffs, and then a concert in the evening. (p. 37).

Chonkin had even found a trustworthy companion: his horse. Chonkin liked talking to his horse better than talking with people...

... because if you say the wrong thing to a person you can get yourself in hot water, but no matter what you say to a horse it'll accept it. Chonkin chatted with his horse, consulted with it, told it the story of his life, told it about the sergeant, complained about Samushkin and Shurka, the cook, and whether the horse understood or not, it would still wave its tail, nod its head - the horse would respond. (p. 38)

Chonkin's assignment to guard the downed plane in Krasnoe takes him away from a way of life to which he had accustomed himself. His first reaction is loneliness: "Why guard it? Guard it from whom, and for how long?" He'd been told nothing. Lieutenant Colonel Pakhomov had said maybe a week, maybe more. In a week you could die from loneliness." (p. 38). Unlike the horse his new companion, the aeroplane, was "a bunch of lifeless nuts and bolts."

In Chonkin's view his new posting has two sides to it. The positive military side:

Now he was not the Chonkin you could just walk up to, slap on the shoulder, and say, "Hey there, Chonkin," and now you couldn't spit in his ear either, to take another example. Now he was a sentry - his person was inviolable. (pp. 39-40)

and the negative, but human, side:
But if you looked at the whole thing from another angle ...

Chonkin stopped and, resting against the plane, put his mind to work. They had left him alone for a week with no one to relieve him. Then what? According to the regulations, a sentry was forbidden to eat, drink, smoke, laugh, sing, talk, or relieve himself. He was supposed to stand there a week! In a week, like it or not, you're going to break the rules! (p. 40)

He feels lonely and wants to talk with somebody about anything. The somebody he finds is Niura Beliashova, Krasnoe's post-mistress, with whom he settles. 41

Chonkin stands unique among literary Red Army heroes in his Rabelaisian attitude to his basic urges. Chonkin spends a goodly amount of time concerned with food. In the unit as the stable-boy connected to duties with the kitchen "he received No. 5 rations, that is, the same as flight personnel." (p. 23). His problems start once he is posted in Krasnoe; his rations are disappointing:

Ivan placed his knapsack on the wing of the plane and undid it to see what they'd packed for him. The knapsack contained two loaves of bread, a can of meat, a can of preserved fish, a can of food concentrate, a piece of sausage hard as wood, and a few lumps of sugar wrapped in newspaper. Not what you'd call generous for a week. If he'd known what was coming, he'd have swiped himself something in pilots' mess, but now what was the use ... (p. 39)

After a week and a half, when no further instructions from his unit are forthcoming, Chonkin begins to worry. One big concern is his lack of rations. Although "here in Krasnoe he had bread, milk, eggs, all fresh, onions right from the garden" Chonkin believed that
If they had decided to keep him on there, they should have somehow let him know, and some extra rations wouldn't have hurt either. It was a good thing he'd set himself up so well, otherwise his belt would be going around twice by now. (p. 63)

When he asks Gladyshev to write to Chonkin's Battalion Commander they ask for "rations for an unlimited period of time and also my new uniform not as yet received by me."

Chonkin's letter is prompted by his male pride and his need for food; as he tells Gladyshev:

"They sent me here for a week and gave me rations for a week, and a week and a half's gone by and no one's come to get me. And not a word about any rations for me either. So now I'm supposed to live off a woman?" (p. 70)

More compelling an urge and one less typical for a literary Red Army hero is Chonkin's interest in women and sex. When he first begins his sentry duty he sees a wagon full of women:

This sight brought Chonkin an indescribable excitement which grew greater the closer the wagon came. When it was fairly close, Chonkin straightened out his uniform, buttoned his collar, and dashed up the road.

"Hey, girls!" he shouted. "Over here!"

The girls began hollering and laughing, and the one driving the horses shouted back in reply: "All at once or one at a time?"

"All together and sort things out after," said Chonkin, waving at them.

The girls grew even more boisterous and motioned to Chonkin as if inviting him up on their wagon, but then the driver shouted out something that stopped even Chonkin in his tracks.

"Heeey, giirls," yelped Chonkin from an excess of emotion, but they could no longer hear him. The wagon had disappeared around the bend and all that remained was the white dust that hung a long time in the sweltering air.

All this had a most pleasant effect on Chonkin.
He leaned on his rifle and was overcome by thoughts of the opposite sex, thoughts by no means permitted by the regulations. (p. 41)

From the ten women on the wagon Chonkin's eye catches sight of Niura Beliashova working in her garden. He offers to help Niura and she, in turn, offers him supper. What follows is a seduction scene unusual in Soviet literature:

Chonkin sighed deeply and moved close to Niura. Niura sighed ever more deeply and moved away. Chonkin sighed again and moved closer. Niura sighed again and moved away. Soon she found herself at the very end of the bench. It wouldn't be safe to move any farther.

"Got cold in here, didn't it?" said Chonkin, placing his left hand on her shoulder.

"Not that cold," objected Niura, trying to shrug his head off her shoulder.

"I don't know, but my hands are freezing," said Chonkin, his right hand creeping into her breasts.

"Do you always go around flying in aeroplanes?" asked Niura, making a last desperate attempt to free herself.

"Always," said Chonkin, thrusting his hand under her arm and behind her back to unhook her bra.

(p. 52)

Voinovich also provides Soviet literature with a Red Army satyr. Niura begins to suffer physically from Chonkin's unleashed libido:

Niura, for example, had been looking terrible the last few days; she was shedding hair like a cat, and could barely drag herself around. Although she and Chonkin went to bed early, he wouldn't let her sleep, waking her at least several times each night to take his pleasure, which he wanted in the daytime as well. As soon as Niura would cross the threshold of her house, weary from work, Chonkin would pounce on her like a hungry beast and drag her to the bed, mail bag and all. Sometimes she'd hide from him in the hayloft of the hen house, but Chonkin would track her down. There was no escaping the man. She even complained about it to Ninka Kurzova, who just laughed at her,
envying Niura secretly since she had trouble
getting her own Nikolai going even once a week.
(p. 82)

Chonkin's desire is unquenchable:

"Listen, Niura, make it quick in there. I'll
be right in and we can roll around a little."
"Go on, you crazy devil." answered Niura,
swearing fondly. "How much can you do it?"
"Much as you like," Chonkin said. "If it
didn't make you so mad, I'd be at you all day
long." (p. 84)

Chonkin's male pride, however, suffers a jolt when one
of the villagers tells him that he is a replacement for Borka,
Niura's pet pig. Plechevoi begins by lauding Niura's virtues
and chaste ways but ends by alluding to Borka:

"That's what I'm telling you - get married.
Niura's a real good girl, no one'll tell you
anything bad about her. No matter how long she
lived alone, she never got mixed up with anybody,
ever had a man in all her born days. The only
one she had was Borka, that's right."
"Who's this Borka?" said Chonkin, his ears
pricking up.
"Who's this Borka? Her hog, of course,"
Plechevoi explained readily. (p. 85)

He explains in further detail:

"What did I tell you? Nothing bad's happened
here. Everybody knows a woman by herself, she's
got needs too, that's right. Judge for yourself -
he could have been dinner long ago, but she
doesn't want to slaughter him, and why? But how
can she slaughter him when he comes to her in bed?
They get under the covers and lie there like man
and wife. You ask anybody you want in the village,
and anybody'll tell you - you won't find anybody
better than Niurka." (pp. 85-86)

Chonkin believes Plechevoi and the inane story leads to a
confrontation between Chonkin and Niura - introducing the
subject of bestiality, perhaps, for the first time into a
Soviet war novel (or any Soviet novel for that matter):

'What went on with you and Borka?'

"What are you talking about? What Borka?"

"Everybody knows what Borka, Borka the hog. You been sleeping with him a long time or what?"

Niura attempted a smile. "Vania, you're just making a joke, aren't you?"

For some reason her question entirely deprived him of his composure.

"I'll show you who's joking!" Chonkin threatened her with the butt of his rifle. "Tell me, bitch, when you started carrying on with him!" (p. 87)

Chonkin argues that Borka should be shot. Niura's sarcastic reply enrages him:

She said bitterly: "And you think if you kill him, people are going to stop talking? Ech, Vania, you don't know the people around here. It'll make them jump for joy. Here's what they'll say ... 'I wonder why he shot the hog all of a sudden? It's clear why. 'Cause Niura lived with him.' On and on. One person says one thing, the next one adds a couple more, until you can't find a better story in a book. "One night this Niurka goes out to milk the cow, leaving Ivan in the house. He waits and waits but no Niurka. I'll go take a look he thinks, see if she fell asleep. He goes to the shed and there's Niurka -"

"Quiet, you!" Chonkin bellowed suddenly, shoving his mug away from him and splashing milk across the table. (pp. 89-90)

Chonkin decides Plechevoi was telling the truth about Niurka and offers her an ultimatum: him or the hog. Niura's defence of Borka gives the picture of her as a soft and nurturing woman. Though her words touch Chonkin, he has a classic male reaction: "... he wasn't about to back down, because he had a fixed opinion about women - give them an inch and they'll take a mile." (p. 91).

Chonkin moves out of Niura's cottage for the night and
as he lies beneath the aeroplane he expects her to come out any minute and start apologizing. She does not and he spends the night dreaming she has married Borka and that he has attended a wedding feast as the only human among a group of porcine guests. Niura and Chonkin make up and despite Chonkin's suspicions and his rampant libido, Niura does all she can to keep him in Krasnoe. She never posts his letter to his Battalion Commander, "hoping that his superiors would forget about Chonkin's existence, and not wishing to remind them of it even at the cost of losing his rations, ..." (pp. 81-82).

Chonkin's feelings for Niura are portrayed in one of the last chapters. Expecting trouble after Captain Miliaga's escape, Chonkin begins rummaging through his possessions because "In case anything happened, he wanted to leave Niura something to remember him by." (p. 299). Besides his underwear, footcloths, a needle and thread, and a stub of a pencil, Chonkin has six photographs of himself. The photograph is kitsch:

Quartermaster Trofimovich, who picked up a little money on the side taking pictures, had portrayed Chonkin with the aid of a special background which depicted tanks rolling downhill while planes zoomed into the sky. Hovering over Chonkin's head like a halo was the inscription: "Greetings from the Red Army." (p. 299)

Chonkin still had all six photos because, unlike the other soldiers, he had had no family members or girlfriends to whom he could send a photo. To the kitschy photo he adds an equally kitschy, cliched inscription the quartermaster had suggested
"May a tender gaze light your eyes as they touch on this replica of me. Perhaps in your mind shall rise a memory of the one you see. He thought a bit, then added: 'To Niura B. from Vania C., in their days of life together.'" (p. 300).

Chonkin considers his life with Niura:

He felt very sorry about waking Niura. He was feeling sorry anyway. All the time they'd been together, she'd gone through so much on account of him, even all the gossip that went around, and she never once complained. True, one time she did hint shyly that it wouldn't hurt to make it official but, without his commanding officer's permission, a soldier in the Red Army could not get married. Which was so, of course, but to be honest about it, it wasn't the permission, it was that, taking all the angles into account, Chonkin just couldn't make up his mind. (p. 300)

Ivan Chonkin is not a soldier as much as a peasant dressed in soldier's uniform. His most successful venture as a soldier takes place when he does what he does best as a peasant: stable-boy. Niura recognizes him immediately as a peasant during their first meeting when he offers to help her to mound potatoes. He worked easily and quickly and "you could tell it wasn't the first time he'd done that sort of thing." When they stop for a break she tells him

"You can tell you're from the country."
"It really shows?" asked Chonkin, surprised.
"Sure does," said Niura, her eyes dropping in embarrassment. "We've had city folk come here to help us. Made you ashamed just to watch them. Didn't even know how to hold a chopper in their hands. I wonder what they teach them there in the city."
"That's easy," announced Chonkin. "To live off the fat of the countryside."
"That's for sure," agreed Niura. (p. 43)
Chonkin adjusts to village life quite quickly. He does not miss reveille, taps, calisthenics, or political training. He has fresh food and he is useful:

To be out of her way, Chonkin had gone outside with his hatchet and set to work fixing the fence. He straightened out a post, then took a few steps back; his eyes narrowed; what he saw gave him great joy - what a master I am, thought Chonkin, whatever I try my hand at comes out just fine.

Niura glanced out the window by chance and also felt a sense of satisfaction. Since Ivan had appeared, her household had been gradually put in order. The stove wasn't smoking any more, the door closed, the scythe had been whetted and sharpened. Even a little nothing like a piece of iron to scrape the mud off your feet - would it have ever been there except for a man? (pp. 82-83)

Chonkin leads a quiet life with Niura. He is unusual amongst village men in his willingness to do housework. He is specially unusual among literary Red Army heroes who never would do what Chonkin does: he fetches water, chops firewood, feeds Borka, and cooks dinner. At the end of the day he would sometimes rest: "Or, sometimes, to make the time pass more quickly, he'd do his embroidery while he sat there. A soldier sitting by the window in a woman's apron, doing embroidery besides, is a laughable sight, but so what if Chonkin liked to embroider? He enjoyed watching the little cross-stitches form themselves into a picture of a rooster or a rose or some other such thing." (p. 68). Chonkin's embroidery and his life with Niura in general strike the other villagers as effeminate.
Though unusual as a literary type, Chonkin is a good Soviet citizen of his time. He loved Stalin "in his own way." He believes in him implicitly. Chonkin's meetings with Stalin are usually in his dreams. His one conscious meeting is during the 3 July 1941 broadcast of Stalin's first speech to the nation after the German invasion. Chonkin's innocence as a true force against Stalinist re-naming and prevarication shows itself immediately when he is unable to understand his beloved Stalin's clichéd language. Chonkin always brings the cliche to his own human level. For example, earlier in the novel he listens to a TASS communique:

"Germany," enunciated the announcer, "is observing the conditions of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact just as steadfastly as the Soviet Union is. In view of this, Soviet circles believe that rumours about German intentions of violating the pact and launching an attack on the Soviet Union are completely without ground ..."

Ground, thought Chonkin. Depends what kind. If the ground's loamy, then it's only good for grasses. But if it's dry and sandy, couldn't be better for potatoes. Though you can't compare it with black earth. That's good for grain, for everything ... The very thought of grain and bread got him right in the pit of the stomach. (p. 93)

In this instance the effect is more stunning. The subject order blends the serious and comical: Niura's supposed relations with Borka, Dunaevsky's songs (on the radio), the news, Chonkin's thoughts on demobilization and his inability to pronounce the word, the TASS communique, the metaphor laid bare, Chonkin's hunger, followed again by Chonkin's view on his fight with Niura and her supposed relations with her pig.
The Tass communique is situated in the midst of Chonkin's thoughts on sex and food.

Chonkin is not a traitor or a coward. Though he does not understand everything Stalin says in his radio speech, Chonkin believes everything. He wants to defend his country, but the Army had refused him when he asked to be sent for duty at the front, ordering him back instead to his sentry duty. Like many Soviet citizens Chonkin believes Stalin is all powerful. But Chonkin, in typical sincerity and political naiveté, deflates his worship for Stalin by making the Great Leader too human in his musings about him.

Chonkin tries to be a good soldier. Despite his negative view of sentry duty he takes it seriously. When he moves into Niura's cottage he unties the plane, takes down part of the fence around her cottage, and rolls the plane into her garden so that it can be close by. When, after a week and a half of sentry duty, he gets no new instructions or rations from his unit he has Gladyshev write a letter requesting the same. When the war is declared Chonkin needs to feel useful to his motherland. His first attempt to repel a German attack, however, begins seriously and ends in burlesque:

A minute later, his rifle on his shoulder, Chonkin was walking around the aeroplane, twisting his head from side to side in expectation of an attack, either by the Germans or by his commanding officers. His neck had started to hurt and his eyes were dazzled, when Chonkin's keen ears discerned a gradually increasing zee zee zee sound. "It's coming!" Chonkin became excited and craned his neck. A small speck had flashed in
front of his eyes and was now increasing in size, gradually assuming the shape of an aeroplane. But suddenly the speck disappeared and the sound broke off. Right at that very moment something pricked Chonkin; he whacked himself on the forehead and killed a mosquito. "That's not an aeroplane," he said to himself and wiped the mosquito off on his trousers. (pp. 127-28)

"Litso neprikosnovennoe" ("an inviolable person") was the original title of these two parts of the novel. When the NKVD come to arrest him as a deserter, Chonkin refuses to leave his post and refuses to admit that the secret police have the right to remove him. When they attempt to take him by force he handily captures the entire lot. When a whole regiment is sent to attack and capture him he holds them off with only Niura to help him.

Chonkin has a very human need: he wants to feel useful. Just after the German invasion he senses that his sentry duty is a waste of time and that no one will send for him:

Chonkin had never thought he was destined for anything special, but still, he had never doubted that some day he would be called upon. It would not have to be much, even for some foolish thing, or to give his life freely for something worthwhile, with no thought of reward. But now everything seemed to say that his life was of no use to anyone. (Of course, if looked at from the point of view of world-shaking events, a modest natural phenomenon like Chonkin's life was of the smallest possible worth; yet he had nothing more valuable that he could share with the land of his birth). (p. 128)

Voinovich has destined Chonkin for something. He has called upon him to be idiocy's undoing, to show the unnatural constraints a totalitarian and authorian regime can place on
a natural man. Chonkin is the nemesis of the Stalinist regime and of Stalin himself. The reader takes hope in Chonkin's last words in the novel: "Don't cry Niurka! I'll be back!"
NOTES TO CHAPTER NINE


3 GSE, IV, 331.

4 GSE, IV, 331.

5 Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 2nd ed. (Moskva: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1951), VII, 157 (my translation); hereafter referred to as BSE.

6 Brown, p. 259.

7 Once again Voinovich has provided his characters with very appropriate charactonyms. See Boris Unbegaun, Russian Surnames (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). He lists Taldykin as one of many Russian surnames derived from a nickname, in this case "Taldykin" from "taldyka" (which is what Shikalov calls his fellow brigade-leader during conversation with Partorg Revkin). Taldykin, following Unbegaun, would translate into English as Mr. Grumbler (p. 148). Shikalov's surname suggests the verb "shikat'", a colloquialism that means either "to pronounce the sound 'shsh'-to invoke silence" or "to express disapproval (usually to an actor, orator, and like)". See Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka (Moskva: AN SSR, 1965) XVII, 1392-93. Shikalov would become, in English, Mr. Shusher.


11 Tiraspol', town in the Moldavian Republic, is situated on the left bank of the Dniester River and the Odessa-Kishinev railway. Population made up of Russians, Ukrainians, Moldavians, and Jews. Tiraspol' is the centre of a market-gardening and wine-producing area. It was the capital of the Moldavian Autonomous Republic within Ukraine from 1929 to 1940.

Moldavia was a battleground from the first days of the USSR's entry into the Second World War. Inhabitants,
livestock, industrial and agricultural equipment were evacuated to the east. Kishinev was abandoned by Soviet troops on 16 July 1941. Opalikov and his regiment are being sent into a fierce battle area.

12. The use of the rude diminutive Nadka, rather than the intimate diminutive Nadia, indicates an attitude to his wife that the rest of paragraph supports.

13. The etymology of Samushkin's name: "sam" ("self"), "ushko" ("small ear"), consequently Mr. Hearall.


15. Conquest, p. 278.

16. Robert Conquest points out that – except for Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky's apologist – defectors who spoke to NKVD cell-mates, recent Soviet revelations, Nazi archives, and historians like Leonard Schapiro and John Erickson agree that there was no conspiracy. See Conquest, pp. 284-85.


20. Conquest, p. 646.


32 The most recent edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia defines military bearing as: (1) The element of outward appearance of a serviceman (clean and correctly arranged uniform, properly worn and adjusted equipment, manner of behavior in and out of formation) imparting a brisk military outward appearance to the individual and the entire detachment. (2) A part of individual drill instruction with the purpose of inculcating the soldier with the habits of behavior in and out of formation and the ability to execute the drill manuals quickly and dexterously. This instruction also serves the purpose of developing in the soldiers unity, uniformity, and coordination during actions in motion, with arms, and in machines. The soldier's bearing is achieved by a combination of drill, physical training, and sports. See GSE, V, 45.


34 Afanas'ev, p. 166.

35 "Kak izvestno" ("as everybody knows") is a standard Soviet rhetorical device-cliche. Perhaps, an improved form might be suggested: "kak izvestno, nu nikogda ne bylo skazanno."

36 The French historian Michel Garder provides an
antidote for the Stalinist hyperbole about the siege and
defence of Stalingrad in his account of the event:

Before passing on to the second phase [of
the Civil War] it is necessary to recall a
relatively unimportant episode of this first phase:
the siege of Tsaritsyn, later exaggerated out of
all proportion for propaganda reasons. The Tenth
Red Army, commanded by the ex-metallurgical worker
Voroshilov and with Stalin as its political
commissar, was defending the city against the
timid assaults of an army of Don Cossacks who were
very reluctant to fight outside their own
territories. The besiegers' lack of enthusiasm
finally ended in their withdrawal without any
pursuit. This withdrawal was claimed as a great
victory by the Reds and enabled the Tenth Army
and its leaders to forge for themselves a legend.
Tsaritsyn later became Stalingrad (now Volgograd).

See Michel Garder, A History of the Soviet Army, rev. ed.

The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, a reliable barometer of
changes in party attitudes, describes the Battle of Tsaritsyn
in its first edition (1947) in a three column section in the
entry on Stalingrad. In the second edition (1957) this
section has been reduced to one-third of a column; Stalin's
name mentioned nineteen times in the 1st edition, is not used
once. By the 3rd edition (1970) of the Encyclopaedia the
entry is for Volgograd and the Battle of Tsaritsyn has been
reduced further to two lines.

37 The most recent edition of the Great Soviet
Encyclopaedia lists eight Golitsyns, all Russian military
leaders and statesmen, princes from different branches of one
family. The last named Golitsyn was Nikolai Dmitrievich (1850-
1925), the last president of the Council of Ministers in
tsarist Russia, from December 27, 1916 (New Style) to February
27, 1917 (New Style), a close friend of the Empress,
Aleksandra Fedorovna. See GSE, VII, 250-52.

38 S. V. Utechin, Everyman's Concise Encyclopaedia of

39 Eugene Lyons, Assignment in Utopia (New York:
Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937), p. 281

40 Cf. Chekhov's "Toska" (Weariness).

41 Voinovich described Chonkin and Niura's relationship
as the lyrical element in the novel. (Personal interview with
42 Personal interview with Vladimir Voinovich, 29 May 1981.
In *The Russians* the American journalist, Hedrick Smith, repeated a story told to him by Evgenii Evtushenko. The story reveals the frightening ignorance of the younger generation of Russians about Stalin. It begins around a campfire in Siberia when a young woman proposed a toast to Stalin.

Shaken, Evtushenko asked her why Stalin. She replied

"Because then, all the people believed in Stalin and with this belief, they were victorious." she answered.

"And do you know how many people were arrested during the years of Stalin's rule?" I asked.

"Well, say, 20 or 30 people," she answered.

Other students sat around the fire, and they were about her age. I started asking them the same question, too.

"About 200," said one lad.

"Maybe 2,000," said another girl.

Only one student out of 15 or 20 said, "It seems to me about 10,000."

When I told them that the figure is reckoned not in thousands but in millions, they did not believe me.

"Did you read my poem, *The Heirs of Stalin*?" I asked.

"And did you really have such a poem?" asked the first girl. "Where was it published?"


"But then I was only eight years old," she answered, somewhat at a loss.

And then I suddenly understood as never before that the younger generation really does not have any sources nowadays for learning the tragic truth about that time because they cannot read about it in books or in textbooks. Even when articles are published in newspapers about heroes of our Revolution who died in the time of the Stalinist repressions, then the papers fall silent about the cause of their deaths. In a volume of [Osip] Mandelshtam, which has been published just now, there is not a single mention of how he died — from tortures in a camp. The truth is replaced by silence, and silence actually is a lie.\(^1\)
Evtushenko's story bears quoting in full because it is evidence of a loss of historical memory in a generation of Russians. In the West lack of information or misinformation about the Soviet Union and its past is commonplace - in young students in Russia it is stunning. Recent literature that has sought to re-examine the past may miss its very intended audience because, like Evtushenko's students, these readers may not understand the full context of the period described in the given poem, story, or novel. To appreciate the fictional world created by Vladimir Voinovich in The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin the reader must have a good grasp of the real events and personalities of the world to which the novel refers. Without this understanding the reader will miss the thrust of this novel. The approach taken here has been to isolate the various characters and interpret their historical roles and importance for the common reader.

The nation's potential loss of memory is a great concern to its intellectuals. One of the foremost chroniclers of the Stalinist period, Nadezhda Mandelstam, mentions her fears in her memoirs. Though in the late fifties, she writes, forbidden thoughts and feelings were allowed to surface, "now again we are not supposed to remember the past and think - let alone speak - about it. Since the sole survivors of all the myriad families are now only the grandchildren, there is in fact nobody left to remember and speak of it. Life goes
on, and few indeed are those who wish to stir up the past. Not many years ago it was admitted that some 'mistakes' had been made, but now it is denied again – nothing wrong is seen with the past.²

Historical memory is important for Nadezhda Mandelstam because it is tied with responsibility, because, she says, "we answer for everything."³ One way to evade responsibility is not to recollect at all. A second way is to embellish or simplify the past and thus deceive by wishful thinking. The operation can be performed on the history of an individual life or a nation. She notes: "As we know only too well, history is constantly being falsified right in front of our eyes, and the older generation, exploiting the indifference of the young, cleverly hoodwinks them."⁴ If the process of embroidering the facts, inventing details, re-creating history continues, in fifty years, she warns, nobody will be able "to clean up this gigantic mess."⁵ Memory has not been totally erased and a few among millions have begun to ask questions, but a country that has been engaged in mutual destruction for half a century does not like to recall the past. She asks prophetically: "What can we expect to happen in a country with a disordered memory? What is a man worth if he has lost his memory?"⁶ The Russians, she insists, must overcome their loss of memory and settle the accounts presented by the past.⁷

Some Russian writers have overcome their loss of
historical memory and have attempted to make an honest
settlement with the past. Nadezhda Mandelstam herself is a
case in point; others include Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Lidia
Chukovskaia, Varlam Shalamov and Evgeniia Ginzburg. The
period of the "thaw" or liberalization after the death of
Stalin saw works published in the Soviet Union that attempted
to re-examine the past. Not everything sent to editorial
boards was published, but those works that were printed were
done so under the rubric of a disclosure of the "cult of
personality". The authorities however were soon frightened
at the liberalization set in motion by Khruschev's disclosures
of Stalin's "crimes". In November 1962 the publication of
Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich"
opened the gates to a flood of memoirs sent in to editors by
other ex-zeks from across the country who wanted to tell their
stories as well. As well in December 1962 Khrushchev was
outraged by the exhibition of modern and abstract art he
viewed at Moscow's Manege Gallery. The "thaw" was ended and
a "freeze" set in.

At this time Voinovich had begun to write his own re-
examination of the past: The Life and Extraordinary
Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin. He hoped to see it
serialized in Novyi mir. Chonkin never appeared in the
official Soviet press. The novel threatened to break too many
of the old taboos that had been revived.

Soviet taboos are rooted in power itself and the roots
of that power are found in the taboo. One taboo cannot be destroyed without shaking the neighbouring taboo nor can one taboo be dismissed without menacing the entire edifice of power. The taboos exist because everything in the Soviet Union must be explained. That interpretation has become a complement to the official doctrine. Behind the system of taboos stands the government and the party - the minority which sixty years ago seized power in Russia. While Soviet taboos are sacrosanct the existence of those in power is not threatened.

The system of Soviet taboos stands side by side with an elaborate Soviet mythology. The theoretical declarations of a Bolshevik party awaiting the opportunity to seize power became officially proclaimed dogma after 1917. Out of that dogma certain myths and fictions were deliberately created. These myths and fictions became taboo.

Unlike fictions, myths are believed by a part of the population of the Soviet Union, while the former are not. The Party consciously uses myths regardless of whether individual ideologists or Party leaders still believe in them. Some myths began as rational theoretical propositions (e.g. the myth about the scientific character of the Communist doctrine), others were deliberately created (e.g. the myth about the USSR as the most progressive country in the world). Some myths degenerate into fictions and what is a fiction inside the Soviet Union may be a myth in the West (e.g. the
fiction of the evolution of Communism towards humanity, justice, and a democratic order is a fiction in the Soviet Union and a myth in many quarters in the West).

Fictions are not representations of real things, but of fictitious entities placed on the level of real things. Fictions regulate life in the Soviet Union and are effective because the consequences that await the non-believer are grave. Though the Bolsheviks began to use fictions before 1917, the period of the greatest flourishing of fictions was that of Stalin's terror, the period when the consequences were the most terrifying. When fictions are no longer convenient they are quietly dropped or condemned as deviations of the correct interpretation of the official doctrine. For example, the fiction about Stalin as the incarnation of absolute wisdom and benevolence was dropped after his death, though in the last decade the myth of Stalin as a strong leader has reappeared.

The world of Bolshevik theory, one might argue, is a world of fantasies, illusions, myths, and fictions. The Stalinist myths and fictions may be divided into two groups: the positive ones, describing the greatness of Stalin and the supremacy of the socialist order; and the negative ones – to use Soviet terminology, "unmasking" and "branding" everything that did not appeal to Stalin in the present, past, and future.

The task of the first group of myths and fictions was
to destroy ideals so to obfuscate the understanding of concepts like freedom, happiness, humanity, and democracy.\textsuperscript{12} The ability to describe an event critically was lost. Perception was shaped so that people lost the ability to understand the real meaning of what was being done to them. Criticism was easily manipulated as thinking was closed off within the system's rigidly enforced epistemology.\textsuperscript{13}

The first group of myths and fictions included myths about the supposedly scientific qualities of Bolshevik theory, the accomplishments of socialism, the USSR as the most progressive country in the world, socialist humanism, free education and research, love of the working people for the socialist homeland, the realization of socialism in the USSR. History (particularly the history of the Party) was fictionalized. Other fictions included ones about the moral and political unity of the Soviet people, the most democratic constitution in the world, the principle of distribution 'to each according to his work', the happy and prosperous life, socialist humanism, the freedom of learning and art, the people's love for the Soviet state, the Communist Party and its leaders, and the labour enthusiasm of the Soviet people. The second group of myths and fictions is a smaller one. These appealed to the hatred within people and were necessary to the Stalinist system.\textsuperscript{14} The object of the negative myths and fictions was actually to encourage hatred and to redirect popular disgust and anger with the Soviet power towards other
subjects. These myths included the myth of capitalist encirclement and of the inevitable war with the capitalist countries; fictions about vigilance, about the people's wrath (against foreign imperialists and enemies of the people), and about criticism and self-criticism.

The myths and fictions regulated and mutilated life under Stalin. Solzhenitsyn has enumerated the traits of life for the Soviet citizen not in the camps; these include constant fear, servitude, secrecy and mistrust, universal ignorance of what was happening in the country, squealing, betrayal and lying as forms of existence, cruelty to those under arrest or suspicion, and a slave psychology.\(^{15}\)

Vladimir Voinovich shows his readers this life in the world he creates within his novel. These traits are characteristic of the party officials, secret police agents, and army officers, while the heroes, Chonkin and Niura, stand apart from this loathsomeness (to use Solzhenitsyn's term) by their innocence and naturalness. Voinovich also introduces the myths and fictions of the Stalinist period into Chonkin, although his attitude to these state sponsored fantasies is unlike that of the conventional Soviet writer. Voinovich delights in puncturing any state fantasy. He illustrates the discrepancies between the real and the official world. For example, the fiction that the regime was prepared - Barbarossa (the German invasion on 22 June 1941) is shattered by the novel's Party officials who fumble about much as did their
real counterparts in the first few weeks after the invasion. Voinovich's party and army officials bear a closer resemblance to real people than to Soviet literature's plaster saints. The supposedly scientific quality of Bolshevik theory collapses as a myth when the reader is presented with one of its true believers, Kuz'ma Gladyshev.

Voinovich refuses to acknowledge the taboos. The novel, in the author's words, is a satire of the idiocy of the times, shown by examples from every layer of society from the lowest - Ivan Chonkin - to the highest - Stalin. The lowly soldier, the reader recognizes immediately, is the novel's hero. The novel's intent is to show the natural man in unnatural circumstances.

The novel touches on most aspects of the times, including the language. Stalinist myths and fictions used and abused the Russian language in order to manipulate meaning to their own end. State fictions were enforced through the use of a corrupted language. New words, like kolkhoz or agitprop, were immediately recognisable as part of the regime. More insidious corruption took place when old words took on new meanings. For example, the Soviet citizen was to believe that "freedom" had been realized for the first time in world history in the Soviet Union after 1917. To anyone with any understanding of the Stalinist period, "freedom" during that time was a term to be used ironically: freedom denoted a lack of freedom. In the novel the village
"Grasnoe" ("filthy") has become "Krasnoe" ("red; beautiful"), even though the reader soon realizes that the village is more like its original appellation than its new Soviet one. Words would mean what the authorities declared them to mean. Like Humpty Dumpty, the leaders of the Soviet Union could say, "When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."

In the novel the word also has power. Primitive magic depends on the identification between the name of things and their essence. The name has power on its own. For example, the captain of the secret police detachment, whose own name inspired fear in Soviet citizens, discovers this anthropological insight when he learns that his prisoner's surname is Stalin.

The scene between the NKVD captain and the Jewish shoemaker is funny. The tone of the novel in general is humorous and includes scenes of light irony as well as scenes of low burlesque. The novel, however, sets out to do more than amuse. It is the carnival comedy of Rabelais' *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* or Boccaccio's *Decameron* as well as the significative comedy of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Chonkin's humour is grim at times. Most writers who have described the Stalinist period in Soviet history have taken a serious note – for example, Solzhenitsyn and Maksimov – while Voinovich has taken aim at the weighty and serious problems of the times with another deadly weapon:
laughter. Voinovich has created a delightful satire that is a fine mixture of lyrical, pastoral, picaresque scenes and scenes of grotesque and slapstick, ruled over by a gentle, naive and passive hero, Chonkin. The author's intent is to amuse his reader as well as to reveal the idiocy of the times.

The first paragraph of the novel sets the tone for the rest that follows. The narrator warns the reader:

Now, it is impossible to say definitely whether it all really did happen or not, because the incident which set the entire affair in motion (which, until recently, was still in motion) happened in the village of Krasnoe so long ago that there are practically no eyewitnesses left from that time. Those that are told all kinds of different stories and some can't remember anything at all. Besides, to tell the truth, it was not the kind of incident you'd remember for a long time. As for me, I've heaped up everything I heard on the subject and added a little something of my own as well, perhaps I even added more than I heard. But in the end, I was so taken by this story that I decided to set it down in written form. If the story seems uninteresting to you, or boring, or even foolish, then just spit and forget I ever started telling it. (p. 3)

There is a deliberate flavour of indefiniteness and fantasy, an almost fairy-tale atmosphere that reinforces the novel's generalising power - its typicality. It also emphasizes the sheer absurdity and implausibility of the typical in the Soviet world. Vladimir Bukovsky has expressed the enormity of the problem of conveying to Westerners, like many of the readers of The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin, how utterly absurd Soviet life is. He writes:
For most Western people it is psychologically difficult to grasp the atmosphere of a country in which phenomena like those described in this book [special psychiatric hospitals for political prisoners] have become routine. I often see looks of incomprehension when I describe life in the Soviet Union. Sometimes I deduce from the questions put to me that no understanding exists at all. Occasionally I am overwhelmed by despair and lose faith in the power of the human word. It is virtually impossible to explain the degree to which life in the USSR is unreal. It is not, there, theories and conclusions which develop out of the raw material of life, but on the contrary, the raw material of everyday life is created to fit in the ruling theory. Life does not develop normally and naturally in accordance with its inner laws, but is created artificially in ways calculated not to undermine the basic principles of ideology.
NOTES TO CONCLUSION


3. Mandelstam, p. 179.


7. Mandelstam, p. 207.

8. All these writers, one must note, had their work published in the West.

9. Tibor Merai, "Dogmy i tabu," Kontinent, No. 17 (1978): 239. I would like to thank Professor Gleb Zekulin for bringing this article to my attention.


13. The possibilities for almost infinite philosophical and psychological convoluted mirroring and parody to the point of the near disappearance of any kind of reality have been brilliantly exploited in the voluminous writing of Aleksandr Zinov' ev.


Personal interview with Vladimir Voinovich, 29 May 1981.

Interview.

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The following bibliography represents a selection of those materials consulted during the writing of this thesis. Because of the nature of the topic, the bibliography's final section, "Other Secondary Sources," includes books and articles from various disciplines, such as history, political science, philosophy, science, psychology, and so on. Some references are pertinent to the entire thesis and give a general introduction to the Stalinist period. Some refer only to certain chapters. A number in square brackets after an entry refers to the chapter number and indicates the entry is pertinent particularly to this chapter.
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