

FERMENT

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Alexander Yesenin-Volpin Russian mathematician -dissident (Part 3)

The Glorious ' 60's - Soviet Style

"Like black lightning the stormy Petrel
Ascends, pierces the clouds like an arrow,
Plucks the foam of the waves with his wing.
Now, he bears himself, like a demon -
Proud, a black demon of the tempest -
He laughs and sobs He laughs
Above the storm clouds and sobs from joy!

- *Maxim Gorky*

The West's decade of revolution had its counterparts in the Soviet Union - but who has written about it from this point of view? When was the last time we've seen the Russian 60's memorialized in novel, romance, pop songs, plays, musicals? Why haven't the reams of propaganda scaled the heights of hyperhype attained by our own brief experiment with anarchism?

In this period of Russian history , it is true, there are no phenomena comparable to the Beatles; no Woodstock; no Green Revolution; no "drug revolution" (*an article in today's Boston Globe describes Timothy Leary as a mathematical philosopher!*) ; no "sexual revolution"; no beatniks, no hippies, no yippies or yuppies; no communes, crash pads, be-ins , love-ins; no Marches on Moscow; no nationally organized

movements of draft resistance; no grape and lettuce boycotts; no proliferation of exotic religions, cults, food fads, New Age therapies, etc..

What did emerge was a civil rights movement of national - even international importance . Little known to the general public - though all the books are in the libraries- yet, within the world formerly contained behind the Iron Curtain it is rightly regarded as the equivalent of Gandhi's and our own civil rights movement. Furthermore, although the force and energy of our civil rights movement rapidly dissipated at the end of the 60's, leaving us a landscape littered with several quaint publicity seekers like Louis Farrakhan and the Reverend Al Sharpton, the Russian movement sustained its dedicated heroism for 30 years: from the death of Stalin in 1953 to the ascent of Gorbachev in 1988. Neither Glasnost, nor Perestroika, nor the long chain of miraculous developments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Empire, could have happened without the foundation of three decades of great sacrifice, suffering and idealism. Any Russian schoolchild of today knows the names of Galanskov, Ginzburg, Bakhstein, Kuznetsov, Bukovsky, Chalidze, Sinyavski, Daniel , Tverdokhlebov, Khaustov, Orlov, Marchenko, Sakharov, Grigorenko, Solzhenitsyn, Yesenin-Volpin.....*

(Sakharov: Memoirs, pg. 579: "When speaking in behalf of victims of illegality and brutality, many of whom I know personally, I have tried to convey the full measure of my pain and outrage and the depth of my concern [.....]: Anatoly Marchenko, Anatoly Shcharansky, Yuri Orlov, Sergei Kovalev, Ivan Kovalev and his wife, Tatyana Osipova; Viktor Nekipelov; Leonard Ternovsky; Merab Kostava; Tatyana Velikanova; Vasyl Stus; Mart Niklus; Viktoras Petkus; Levko Lukyanenko; Ivan Kandyba; Mikhail Kokabaka; Rostislav Galetsky; Malva Landa; Ida Nodel; Alexander Lavut; Vyacheslav Bakhmin; Genrikh Altunian; Gleb Yakunin; Yuri Fyodorv; Alexei Murzhenko; Raisa & Mykola Rudenko; Olga & Mykola Matusevich; Valery Abramkin; Mustafa Dzhemilev; Alexei Smirnov; Anatoly Kuryagin; Sergei Khodorovich; Vladimir Shelkov and Bidia Dandaron"..)*

To the logician Alexander Yesenin-Volpin belongs the honor of having forged, in the early 60's, the basic strategy that was to predominate in the Russian civil rights movement through the 60's and 70's. He was also a particularly tough dissident, often the first to show by the boldness of his example, the political effectiveness of his theoretical convictions.

Since September I've been writing about the modern Russian equivalent of Thomas Paine without knowing it. For several months I was misguided by the largely derisory opinions of academic mathematicians and "philosophers" (*I put quotation marks about their professional designation because I regard most of the wise men in our philosophy departments as at about the level of Carl Sandburg.*) It was they who told me that his ideas, indeed the very subject of super-finitistic intuitionism, was so weird as to be both incomprehensible and pointless. They knew almost nothing about his record in the Russian civil rights movement.

To listen to so many of these persons, educators who had encountered him in the mathematics and philosophy departments of Boston University, Tufts, Northeastern University or M.I.T., he was some combination of lunatic, alcoholic and fraud. Granted that after 5 years of punitive medicine in special psychiatric hospitals one does not emerge in a state that may be considered, by conventional standards, normal. The legend of his alcoholism, surprisingly durable, also does not seem to be based on very much hard evidence. Although so many in contemporary America are terrified of a horrible perishing at the age of 25 through merely inhaling the bouquet of a cognac, that does not mean that someone who drinks one or more glasses of vodka a day is an alcoholic.

As for his being a fraud: his work goes entirely against the grain of modern credentialized mathematical logic, which regards modal logic as dark superstition. Since the golden days of Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Carnap, etc., sententious doubt has been all the rage, and one is more likely to garner the maximum number of

#4.

merit badges by proving that some odd grammatical form - Oh, something like : *'Should I say I could do X ,if I would not do X unless X existed in some canonical form, with appropriate qualifications, despite the suspicion of evidence that , etc., etc.....?'* - analyzed to tedious exhaustion does not contain a quarkino of Ultimate Reality.

I have my own reasons for believing why this is so - the materialism of the West and all that jazz - but that really is "neither here nor there" (*Think of the philosophical quibbles in that pregnant idiom!*). There are two points to be made. The first is that Volpin's work is not fraudulent. The second is that his activities in the Russian civil rights movement are beyond censure, and admirable from any enlightened standpoint ; yet most of the people who denigrate him know about it only by hearsay. I am not claiming that the clarity of his political vision does not prove that his mathematical logic is equally clear. Yet it must be the case that anyone who understanding of the Russian political context was so acute that he was able to lay down the fundamental strategy of a 30-year movement for justice against one of the worst tyrannies in history, must have a very good mind. One suspects that when this mind turns to logic it also has some important things to say. I happen to find his ideas provocative; so does Judson Webb, mathematical philosopher (not the Timothy Leary kind) at Boston University; so does Jim Geiser, prominent logician and computer scientist; Gabe Stolzenberg of the Harvard math department; and others whose ideas in this area are worth listening to.

But let us rather pass over the learned ignorance of his colleagues in the faculties of the universities of Boston with an embarrassed silence , and turn to an examination of the record.

The Russian Civil Rights Movement.

"The wolfhound century leaps at the throat" -Osip Mandlestam

In November of 1953, Joseph Stalin, like Françoise Duvalier, Mao Tse-Tung, Franco, and other successful unnatural tyrants of the modern world died in Moscow of natural causes. To this day, the powerful stability of his sprawling Empire, combined with the ideology, Marxist-Leninism that stitched up its diverse parts into an indestructible unity, remains a deep mystery. 40 years of peace enforced by the Russian terror has been superseded by chaos and ethnic violence in much of its former territories: Bosnia, Croatia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Moldavia,Despite this, the verdict of history will continue to judge him as one of the evil presences of the 20th century, which, for other deeply mysterious reasons, have been so numerous.

Signs of new life pushing up beneath the Stalinist glacier were apparent almost immediately, though for some time it was not clear what direction organized resistance was going to take.

The Poetry Readings in Mayakovsky Square

"I'll go out on the Square
And into the city's ear
I'll hammer a cry of despair

This is me

Calling to truth and revolt
Willing no more to serve
I break your black tethers

Woven of lies....." (Manifesto of Man, *Yuri Galanskov, died in the camps in 1972 at the age of 33 from untreated peritonitis.*)

In the spring of 1958, a statue of the poet Mayakovsky was unveiled in Mayakovsky Square, near the center of Moscow. The official ceremony included a poetry reading presented by Komsomol organizations. A kind of spontaneous combustion turned the event into an open reading that went on into late in the night.

Without any sort of planning, a precedent was set for daily open readings in the vicinity of the Mayakovsky statue. In our American tradition, open poetry readings are

usually mediocre, and at least as boring as first-year logic or communal house meetings. But poets of caliber with something to say, began to show up in Mayakovsky Square. Poetry has always been far more popular in Russia than in most other places, and they came, bringing work that had been hidden for decades, under floorboards, or behind chimneys, or buried in the grounds.

"The poetry reading, right there on the square, in the center of Moscow, created an extraordinary atmosphere. Hundreds came to the readings, which were usually held in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays. Many of the readers were excellent professional actors and others were first-class original poets: Anatoly Shchukin, Kovshin, Mikhail Kaplan, Victor Klugin, Alexandrovsky, Shucht, and others."

"We were fighting for the concrete freedom to create, and it was no accident that many of us - people like Yuri Galanskov, Victor Khaustov, Vladimir Osipov and Edward Kutznetsov, later merged with the movement for human rights. We all got to know one another in Mayakovsky Square. (Bukofsky, pg. 146)

The authorities, realizing that they had made a mistake, quickly put an end to the open readings in Mayakovsky Square ; but the seed of an idea had been planted. They were revived in September of 1960 by a number of writers already active in the *samizdat* movement - the clandestine publication on home typewriters of writings critical of the regime, informally distributed outside of the literary industry of officially approved writers, publishers, and bookstores.

(*Under far less oppressive conditions, Ferment is American samizdat*) . The readings were continued, despite harassment , physical attacks and arrests for about 2 months.

During the revival of these readings, Alexander Yesenin- Volpin was released from yet another spell in the Leningrad 'special' pseudo-psychiatric hospital. Arriving in Moscow, Volpin went immediately to Mayakovsky Square. According to Bukovsky's account, it was there, in 1960, that he delivered his first lecture on the " Strategy of

Legality " which was to become the underlying methodology for 3 decades of confrontation with the Soviet government.

This is what makes Alexander Y. -Volpin, logician son of the much beloved poet Sergei Esenin, famous in Russia: Volpin is the architect of "legality" as a strategy. It is rather strange, but not all that surprising, that he should have this honor , since he is far from being your typical political organizer or leader of mass movements, like Gandhi, Martin Luther King , Cesar Chavez or others.

" Alik 's permanently disheveled look, total impracticality, inability to adapt to his surroundings, and absolute indifference to his appearance, [made] him an exemplar of the eccentric professor." (Bukofsky, pg. 234)

Volpin's idea was simply this: one could effectively combat a lawless government by insisting that it obey its own laws. Ludmilla Alexeyeva writes, (pg. 275)

"Volpin had been a pioneer in judicial education. He would explain to anyone who cared to listen a simple but unfamiliar idea to Soviets: all laws ought to be understood as they are written and not as they are interpreted by the government....."

Valery Chalidze confirms this :

" Another activity in the defense of rights has been the study of Soviet laws and international law. Not many have been engaged in this. But since it involves not only research but also the legal education of samizdhat readers, the work has had an influence on the whole movement. This is all the more true since, from its inception the movement has been somewhat law-oriented- in part because of the long-standing program of legal education vigorously carried on by Professor Volpin, which he began even before the movement developed."

Bukovsky, for one, thought him simply a madman for even suggesting such a strategy.

" I was astonished by the serious way he discoursed on rights in the country of legalized coercion. Not more than ten years before it had been revealed that these

same laws could coexist with the murder of almost 20 million innocent people. What sense was there in expounding on laws? It was like expounding humanitarianism to a cannibal. Alik himself had twice been committed to prison for reading his verse, and this not even in Mayakovsky Square, but at home, in a circle of friends.

The central concept in his arguments was the position of a citizen . [I had been told that] I was required to be a "Soviet man", someone enthusiastically building communism, endorsing the policies of the government and angrily condemning world imperialism. This concept of "Soviet man" was really the starting point for all the illegality in the country (Emphasis added) . Every ruler that came along filled it with anything he wanted to put into it.

Alik Volpin argued, however, that there was no law obliging us to be "Soviet people". A citizen of the USSR ,on the other hand, was quite a different matter. There was no law obliging all the citizens of the USSR to believe in communism or to help build it.Volpin's idea, therefore, came down to this. We reject the regime, not because it calls itself socialist- there's no law defining socialism and therefore citizens are not obliged to know what it is - but because it is based on coercion and lawlessness, tries to impose its ideology on people by force, and obliges everybody to lie and be hypocrites. We wish to live in a state ruled by law. (Emphasis added) . We are obliged to submit to nothing but the law.

"But they can't get by without using coercion", we objected to Alik: "If they were to introduce a strict observance of the law, they would simply cease to be a communist state."

" Actually I agree with you". Alik would say in a conspiratorial whisper, and everybody burst out laughing. (Bukovsky, pg. 234)

Volpin, in other words, agreed completely that the Soviet Union was in fact a lawless state. Under the grinding weight of Stalinism, contempt for legality and the law had thoroughly permeated every class of society: the politicians, the intellectuals, the

police, the media, the judicial and prison systems, and even the proletariat who, despite their 'dictatorship', had come to regard the mention of 'work' as a sick joke. True revolution then could only begin with the reconstruction of a new kind of human being: a *Soviet citizen*, neither a slave, nor flunky, nor informer, or congenital liar or accomplice, the qualities of which had seeped into the behavior of virtually everybody owing to the impossibility of surviving in any other way. Volpin taught that the creation of a new Russian identity could be accomplished through two means:

(i) Obedience to the laws (*At this stage, he did not discuss the possibility of civil disobedience to unjust laws, the touchstone of the Gandhian philosophy. Obedience, even to bad laws, was necessary in a state that did not even recognize the authority of law.*)

(ii) The organizing of a systematic program of calling the government to task whenever it ignored its own laws - (*obviously a very dangerous tactic but one which, when used properly, could and did, cause chaos throughout the Soviet bureaucracy. I refer the reader once again to Bukofsky's book, which describes how this could be done even from inside the prison system.*)

In fact, the law books of the former Soviet Empire were filled with many perfectly acceptable, even rather good laws. They contained most of the provisions of the Bill of Rights and the French declaration of the Rights of Man. Russia had also been a co-signer of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and would later be a co-signer of the Helsinki Accords in 1976.

" An article on the right to emigrate written by Professor Alexander Volpin recalls that when [the right to emigrate] came up during a discussion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Soviet representative stated that in the USSR there was no one who wished to leave the country, but that if such a person should appear he would be able to emigrate, although he would have to comply with a few legal formalities. And Volpin adds, ' In the meantime, quite a few people arrested on the

border have, because of these few legal formalities, served long terms of imprisonment, sometimes amounting to fifteen or even twenty-five years." (Chalidze, pg. 35)

The Trial of Ginzburg, Bakhstein, Kutznetsov & Osipov

"For every chopping block
was once a good pine tree,
A curly pine.
The block is only bad because
It's used to chop off people's heads
Such is the state and its government" -

(V. Khlebnikov)

Volpin soon provided a graphic illustration of the kinds of effective tactics possible through the use of his strategy of legality. The government rounded up the persons they considered the organizers of the Mayakovsky Square readings and used them to stage the first prominent show-trial of the 60's : the trial of Alexander Ginzburg ,Ilya Bakstein, Edward Kutznetsov and Vladimir Osipov. They were accused of having conspired in an assassination plot, an invented fairy tale that even the prosecutors didn't take seriously: the real reason was their organization of the Mayakovsky Square readings. As was customary in these things, the trial was removed to a venue difficult of access to the general public, to whom it was, in any case, closed.

Volpin breached the walls of the courtroom for the first time in Soviet history. To quote Bukofsky:

He showed up at the doors of the courthouse, brandishing a copy of the Criminal Code. The guards naturally tried to prevent him from entering; but by a persistent harangue, he was actually able to convince them that it was against the law to refuse

him entry. They might even get into trouble by keeping him out if he should choose to register a complaint with the right people.

"Little did we realize that this absurd incident, with the comical Alik Volpin brandishing the Criminal Code like a magic wand to melt the doors of the court, was the beginning of our civil rights movement, and the movement for human rights in the USSR." (Bukofsky, pg. 163)

It must be admitted that it never has been easy to best Volpin in an argument: *"... given that in real life the truth of any judgment is always conditional, all of Alik's arguments became encrusted with digressions, reservations, parentheses, exceptions and qualifications, and he invariably ended up with the problem of whether and how much a word corresponds to what it denominates, terminating in such a semantic jungle that nobody had the slightest idea any longer of what was being said..." (Bukofsky, pg. 234)*

Constitution Day, December 5th, 1965

" The human rights movement is considered to have a specific birth date - December 5, 1965 " (Ludmilla Alexeyeva, pg. 9)

Most historians of this period do not agree with Bukofsky's opinion that the civil rights movement began with Volpin's forced entrance into the trial of the organizers of the Mayakovsky Square readings. That turns out to have no real effect on Volpin's reputation -- since the event that is generally accepted as the inauguration of that movement is universally credited to Volpin as well!

" December 5, 1965 may be considered the birthday of the human rights movement. On that day the first demonstration in the history of the Soviet regime that was accompanied by human rights slogans. took place in Moscow's Pushkin Square . " (Alexeyeva, pg. 269)

"The first demonstration in the Soviet Union since 1927 took place on December 5, 1965..." (Grigorenko, pg. 338)

" On December 3 or 4, 1966, , I found an envelope in my mailbox containing two sheets of onionskin paper.[.....] The second sheet announced a silent demonstration on December 5, Constitution Day. It proposed that interested persons arrive at Pushkin Square a few minutes before 6 PM, assemble near the monument, and then at the stroke of the hour remove their hats and observe a minute of silence as a sign of respect for the Constitution and support for political prisoners, [.....] I learned much later that Alexander Esenin-Volpin was the author of this Constitution Day appeal, and of several other original and effective ideas to promote respect for human rights. (Sakharov , Memoirs, pg. 273)

(Here Sakharov is referring to the second year of Constitution Day demonstrations. As far as I know they are still an annual event.)

Original and effective! One often discovers that the ideas of logicians, philosophers and other scholastics are original, but how often are they effective! Isn't it assumed that "philosophy", a woolly-headed subject taught by sinecured casuists ,usually on the top floor of the stuffiest building on the college campus, can have no 'practical' applications? No light-bulbs; organ transplants; transistor radios; space shuttles; Cruise missiles; cures for cancer? No junk-bond schemes; ideas for the storage of nuclear wastes; genome projects; NAFTA treaties?

But not only is Volpin a philosopher, he is a specialist in a particularly arid branch of modern philosophy, the foundations of logic, set theory and arithmetic! And of a particularly useless and arid sub-branch of that subject, Intuitionism! And yet, from his deep study of the questions at the foundations of cognition, he draws forth demonstrations that launch civil rights movements; tactics that open court rooms; strategies that shape many different forms of protest; mental strength that rises above repeated incarceration in psychiatric hospitals designed to destroy the soul; moral strength that causes him to throw himself back into the fray, over and over again as soon as he is released! Until the 'authorities' have no choice but to send him, in 1972,

to the United States, where he wanders around in the mathematics and philosophy departments of Boston and Cambridge for a few years, surrounded by pigmies who denigrate him because they are unable to grasp the stature of the man.

The Trial of Andrei Sinyavski and Yuli Daniel

"May your smarting calluses

Remind you of others being mutilated

You are submerged in human destiny

From now on your destiny is pain"

... Y. Daniel, 1966, awaiting sentencing.

The immediate inspiration for the Constitution Day demonstrations lay in the arrests and trials of the two dissident writers, Andrei Sinyavski and Yuli Daniel. Some of their *samizdat* fiction smuggled to the West had been published under the pseudonyms of "Tertz and Arzhak"; for this they were arrested in September of 1965. In the Stalinist era, writers out of favor had been systematically put on trial, sent to the camps or executed, but they had never been charged for the contents of their works. Instead they were tried for espionage, conspiracy, assassination plots, and so on. This was the first trial in Soviet history in which writers were being tried for the ideas expressed in their works. It is ironic that this evidence of a relative 'liberalization' of the regime, was enough of a window into the tyranny to create the national movement that led to its overthrow in the late 80's. Ludmilla Alexeyeva goes on to say:

" A few days prior to December 5th, which is celebrated as Constitution Day, typed leaflets containing a "civic plea" appeared around Moscow University and other liberal-arts institutes:

'A few months ago KGB agents arrested two citizens: the writers A. Sinyavsky and Yu. Daniel. Under the circumstances there is reason to fear violations of the law with regard to the public nature of court proceedings. As is well known, all sorts of illegalities may take place behind closed doors, and a closed trial is itself an illegal act (article 3 of the constitution and article 18 of the RSFSR criminal code). It is unlikely that the works of writers constitute a crime against the state.

In the past illegal acts of the government cost the lives and freedom of millions of Soviet citizens. It is easier to sacrifice one day of peace than to suffer the consequences of unchecked arbitrary authority for years to come.

Citizens have the means to struggle against judicial arbitrariness: public meetings, during which one well-known slogan is chanted: " We demand an open trial for (insert the names of the defendants), " or is displayed on placards. Any shouts or placards going beyond the limits of a strict observance of legality are definitely dangerous and may possibly serve as a provocation. They must be stopped by the participants in the meeting themselves.

It is essential that everything be orderly during the meeting. At the first official request to disperse, it is necessary to disperse after having informed the authorities of the purpose of the meeting.

You are invited to a public meeting on December 5 and six o'clock in the evening at Pushkin Square near the statue of the poet. Invite two more citizens using the text of this plea.'

The author of this leaflet and a remarkable man in many respects was Aleksandr Yesenin-Volpin..... Those who belonged to the same age and social group as Volpin did not support the idea of a demonstration, and many tried to dissuade him from it. Young outsiders from the SMOGists and their friends helped distribute the leaflets. Three of these were detained: the sixteen year old school girl Yuliya Vishnevskaya, twenty-four year old Vladimir Bukofsky, and nineteen year old Leonid Grubanov. They were all hidden away in a psychiatric ward. Vishnevskaya and Grubanov were released after a month, but Bukofsky was held for about eight months."

It comes as no surprise to this author that the members of Volpin's social group, 43-year old academic mathematicians, gave him no support, but that he was enthusiastically supported by SMOG ,a group of teen-agers inspired by the beat movement in poetry. (*Bukofsky's account of his ordeal in the psychiatric hospital makes for fascinating reading - like the rest of his book.*)

Events moved swiftly after that: On the 16th of September, 1966, two laws directly threatening the civil rights of Soviet citizens were passed - already a marked divergence from the promulgation of excellent laws protecting those rights which were systematically ignored. Evidently the strategy of legality was already beginning to make its mark. These were:

Article 190- 1, providing sentences from 1 to 3 years, and/or a fine of 100 rubles, for criticizing the Soviet state or social system.

Article 190-3, providing identical sentencing for the formation of groups or organizations without the approval of the government.

This was too much even for the prominent intelligentsia, people like Sakharov, Romm and Shostakovich, who with several others, co-authored a letter to the government protesting these laws. Volpin expressed similar reservations.

The Trial Of The Four

" But why do you, state, feed on people

Why has the fatherland become a cannibal?"

- *V. Khlebnikov*

In February, 1966, after the sentencing of Sinyavski and Daniel (7 and 5 years at hard labor), Alexander Ginzburg compiled the "White Book", an informal transcript of this trial which was smuggled out to the West. For this his co-workers, Galanskov, Dobrovolsky, Lashkova and Radziesky were arrested in January, 1967. Radziesky was released in a few days after turning state's evidence. Ginzburg was arrested a year later. The trial of Galanskov, Ginzburg, Dobrovolsky and Lashkova has become known as "The trial of the four".

In February of 1967, V. Khaustov, and in August Bukofsky, Delaunay and Kushev were arrested for organizing protests against these arrests. Ginzburg's arrest in February, 1968, was coordinated with a tidal wave of repressive measures taken against all persons involved in protests related to the trial and condemnation of Sinyavski and Daniel. The following is from the Chronicle of Current Events, the amazingly thorough and accurate chronicle, compiled and distributed by civil rights activists, of all human rights violations by the Soviet government throughout the 60's and 70's:

" On 14 February A.S. Volpin was taken from his home by the police and the duty psychiatrist of the Leningrad district [of Moscow], Albert Matyukov. The reason given was that Volpin had not reported for a long time to the psychiatric out-

patients' department where he was registered, [(!!!) - What potential for black humor !] - (and to which he had not once been summoned during the past four years.) He was put in ward 3 of the Kaschenko hospital, where he was roughly handled by the ward supervisor A.A. Kazarnovsky, and the house doctor, Leon Khristoforovich.. On 16 February, on an order signed by I. K. Yanushevsky, chief psychiatrist of Moscow, Volpin was transferred to the No. 5 hospital at Stolbovaya Station, fifty kilometers from Moscow. (this is a hospital mainly for chronically ill patients and for petty criminals sent for compulsory treatment). ..Only after an appeal addressed to the USSR Minister of Health, Academician B.V. Petrovsky, initially by Academicians A.N. Kholmogorov and P.S. Aleksandrov and then by a further ninety-nine academics..... was some improvement made in Volpin's situation....

.....The only official basis for such actions could be the instruction 'On the immediate hospitalization of mentally ill persons who constitute a danger to society' ... In the first place, however, this is only official and not legal, since the very fact of compulsory hospitalization conflicts with articles 58-60 of the Russian Criminal Code, according to which compulsory measures of a medical nature are prescribed by a court. Moreover, the hospitalization of 'socially dangerous' persons directly conflicts with a fundamental principle of legality- that of the presumption of innocence, since it is a person who has actually committed an offense who is recognized as socially dangerous and this can only be decided by a court verdict.

Secondly, even this rather cruel and illegal instruction was flagrantly disregarded..... " (Chronicle of Current Events, No. 1, 30, April 1968.)

The citation goes on to list the numerous infractions of legality in the incarceration of both Volpin and Natalya Gorbanevskaya, first editor of the Chronicle of Current Events. She was imprisoned again in August for her participation in the demonstration against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. She is the author of "Red

Square at Noon" and now, like so many of the actors of these dramatic times, now lives in the West.

Now the heads began to roll even in the elite and relatively protected world of the scientific academies : every single signer of the petition to free Volpin was subject to some kind of harassment: demotions, cuts in salary, loss of employment, the acquiring of non-person status, (*A peculiarity of the Soviet system . A good description is given in the biography of the opera singer Galina Vishnevskaya*) , and in some cases, such as that of Yuri Shikanovich , arrest . It also seems to have been the occasion for the launching of a new campaign of anti-Semitism directed against scientific professionals.

Volpin was quietly released in May of 1968. The government's zeal in stamping out all of the consequences of the Sinyavski-Daniel trial seemed to have spent itself, not to flare up again until August 1968, when a new round of trials began, of persons connected with the demonstrations in Pushkin Square against the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

On November 11, 1970, Volpin , together with the physicists Valery Chalidze and Andrei Tverdokhlebov, announced the formation of the Committee for Human Rights in the Soviet Union. It seems to have been primarily an organization of scientists: Sakharov joined it, as did Orlov and Shaferevich, all physicists. It committed a blunder by antagonizing Solzhenitsyn through including him in its membership without asking for his permission. Eventually, too, Sakharov and Shaferevich were turned off by its excessively legalistic bias , while they were more pre-disposed to direct action. Despite these differences, it did a lot of good work in the 3 years of its existence, compiling reports on the mistreatment of deported minorities, the right to travel, to live wherever one wished, or to emigrate, and on the mistreatment of persons confined in the psychiatric hospitals.

By the year 1970, Volpin had spent 6 of his 48 years in prisons , and about as many years in special psychiatric hospitals. In their fanatical determination to break his uncompromising spirit of rebellion, the Soviet authorities seem to have rather created, (from their point of view), a monster. Evidence of the incurable character of Volpin's mental illness is seen in the fact that he alone, among all the dissidents who were allowed to emigrate to the West, gave a farewell speech from the window of his train, stressing the importance of campaigning for the right to return.

An Invidious Comparison

" It is well-known that the majority of those who protested re-Stalinization and the "trial of four" in 1968 were scientists" (Alexeyeva, pg. 307)

It is instructive, and extremely embarrassing, to contrast the reaction of the Russian scientific establishment to the events of the 60's and 70's, with that of our own scientific establishment to the events of the same period. During the periods of the civil rights movement and the Vietnamese War, our established scientists, apart from a barren handful, did little more than avail themselves of a fashionable rhetoric to condemn the actions of our government. Our scientists never risked even 1% of the punitive sanctions leveled against their Soviet colleagues; yet with a few notable exceptions, they chose to invest the major part of their energies into advancing their careers and feathering their own nests. A typical home-bred 'intellectual' might sign a petition calling for an end to the bombing of Cambodia, then go around boasting about it for the next year.

Herein the pre- and post- Stalinists overlooked an important truth, which they could have learned from us. It is pointless and self-defeating to incarcerate, imprison or otherwise persecute elite professionals working in the fields of scientific research, academic education and so forth. There is a much better way to silence them: One first loads them down with privileges, perks, prestige , status, economic security and comforts. It is not hard to convince them that all of these things are *indispensable*

prerequisites for the *extremely important* work that they are doing for the advancement of mankind and the betterment of society. Having done this, one then threatens to withdraw these privileges, perks, etc.

They will shut up like clams.

Our scientific establishment is riddled with this kind of careerism. Once in awhile someone may be turned down for some lucrative post because he voices some unpopular political opinion, but it is usually the case that the 'second best' job will allow him to live better than 99% of the rest of the world.

But how many of them would have risked the demotion with a 50% cut in salary that Sakharov earned in 1967 for writing a letter to Brezhnev? Or the two decades or so that Israel Gelfand, one of the world's greatest mathematicians, had to wait to be accepted into the Academy of Sciences, because he signed the "petition of 90"? Or Orlov's years in prison for his role in the Helsinki Watch Committees ? Or Bukofsky's dismissal from the university, despite his heroic efforts to accomplish all of his scholastic requirements? Or the ordeal of Zhores Medvedev, imprisoned for opposing the insanity of Lysenkoism? Or the long, savage persecution of Petro Grigorenko? (*It is ironic that, although he was a decorated general when he developed his very original path in the civil rights movement, he was a teacher of Cybernetics at the Frunze Military Academy, and thus technically a scientist.*) . Or the repeated imprisonments of the mathematician, Revolt Pimenov? Or the valiant struggle of the person depicted in these pages, the legalist logician Alexander Yesenin-Volpin?

"The full impact of weapons research on American higher education cannot be measured simply by federal and university budgets... In many disciplines, the military set the paradigm for postwar American science.... the military-driven technologies of the Cold War ...virtually redefined what it meant to be a scientist or an engineer."
(Stuart W. Leslie, *"The Cold War and American Science"*)

It is foolish and wrong to ask people to go out and be martyrs. I would not counsel anyone in that direction and I would not do it myself. I am not asking that persons should die in labor camps like Yuri Galanskov or Anatoly Marchenko. Or totally destroy their careers like Petro Grigorenko? Or wander about, homeless vagabonds, for 20 years like Vladimir Bukofsky? Or, like the poet Anatoly Lupynos, spend decades in the dreadful Dnepropetrovsk Psychiatric Hospital for the crime of reciting a poem in which a single line, taken out of context, could be interpreted as equating the Ukrainian national flag with a cleaning rag.

I encourage you to examine the illuminating study by Stuart Leslie, "*The Cold War and the Military-Industrial Academic Complex*", cited in the Bibliography. Leslie concentrates on M.I.T. and Stanford, (with some attention given to Cal Tech) . His thesis is that the extensive funding of our engineering schools by the Department of Defense and other military agencies since 1946, has lead to the creation of several generations of engineers and inventors unable to work in any other areas but those of weapons research, development and production. One of the primary reasons for the lightning advance of the Japanese in dominating the areas of domestic and civilian technology must certainly be this, that most of our creative engineers today are military engineers.

"[The Department of Defense] 's share of the MIT engineering research budget climbed back to 36 percent by 1984, accounting for 50 percent of the sponsored support for electrical engineering, 46 percent for aeronautics, and 18 percent for materials science. For some laboratories the figures were higher..." (Leslie, pg. 252)

And there is the wastefulness and destructiveness of the nuclear power program. And the use of human guinea pigs in nuclear radiation experiments, which has been known within the physics community for decades but which is just "surfacing" (how much irony can one pack into quotation marks?) today. And the politics that ties together oil, weapons production, and the balance of payments (*Ferment V, # 14.*"

The Cripple Factor September 10th, 1989) which has led to one war already and is bound to lead to many others. And, (*though I am an enthusiast of space exploration*) , the cost-overruns and corruption of NASA. And many, many abuses in science education in the schools ,and the formation of new generations of de-socialized, morally anaesthetized scientists. (*Ferment III, # 38 "The Schwarz Proposal" April 15, 1986*)

How many scientists go to jail , for even one day, protesting scandals like these ? How many accept a 50% cut in salary, a demotion down to janitor, universally derogatory and ignorant coverage in the media, the hypocritical disrespect of colleagues? The threat of not finding a job within their narrow specialty?

But when renewed funding for the Supercollider project was killed in Congress this year, the faces of physicists everywhere carried more injury than those of Telegraph Avenue panhandlers who have been spurned in their demands for quarters. One is supposed to believe that their objective was nobler, not only nobler than panhandlers'

, but of the rest of us as well. What civilized being could dispute the immense scientific advances to be achieved by this billion dollar boondoggle?

Yet the Supercollider was designed to make but a single experiment; it is useless for anything else. That one experiment is, to discover the Higgs boson which, by a certain theoretical model which is now fashionable (*but not with everyone - see Roger Penrose , NY Review of Books ,, October 21, 1993 : "Nature's Biggest Secret "*) unites all the forces of nature . If it is not discovered, that does not mean that it does not exist. It only means that the physicists will call for another trillion dollar boondoggle to search for it again.

At the same time, because of the glamour of these unbelievably costly projects using teams of hundreds of physicists , and high-tech deployments over the size of several football stadiums, an large amount of important low-cost research in physics,

(and in all the other sciences) , has not been funded over the past four decades. One should not be fooled by the claim that persons outside the physics community don't have the technical competence to judge the significance of their work. Technical language is the first refuge of a sophist.

Think about it: how many real political organizers came out of our scientific elite in the 60's? Ellsberg, certainly, Benjamin Spock, and a number of elder statesmen like Linus Pauling and George Wald who never risked more than some ignorant red-baiting in a small town local newspaper. Can you imagine Richard Feynman marching for civil rights in Selma? Eugene Wigner in the March on the Pentagon in 1967? Freeman Dyson in jail for burning draft records in Baltimore?

And consider our one highly publicized MacDonald's Big Mac in the international intellectual scene - Noam Chomsky! Sure he's done a few good things, but how does he fare in the company of Shaferevich, Orlov, Shcharansky, Pimenov, Chalidze, Shikanovich, Sakharov, Khaustov, Alikhanov, Volpin? Our "prime rib of intellectual" never spent a day in jail, never lost a job, never skipped a promotion, never took even a pay cut in his long and great radical career! Our politicians are smarter than the Russians ones. Our Military-Industrial-Academic complex keeps our scientists smothered in baby fat; and it is much loved in return . It is really so easy for anyone to say, "I protest!" , as long as he continues to dance around the fatted calf.

I could give many more examples of the close collaboration of American science with the worst aspects of capitalism and imperialism, but this would necessitate the researching and writing of another long article. For the most part, their careers are bound up with the system, which from their point of view gives them little to complain about. In the USSR, it must be admitted that, for any scientist with the least bit of respect for the scientific method, co-operation with the system was synonymous with lunacy.

One should not, however, imagine that Russian physicists, by some miracle, have any innate moral superiority over their counterparts here or in Western Europe. Under Stalinism, the physics community was the only segment of the entire society that was allowed even token freedom of speech. Stalin was too much in need of their intellectual originality to muzzle them entirely. They benefited from a grim moral trade-off: unlike writers, historians, or even biologists, physicists could, within narrow limits, say what they believed, provided that they continued to supply the motherland with bigger and better H-bombs.

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