

Certainly Khrushchev's press is a great improvement over Stalin's. Just as certainly, it is not a free press. All of the controls and all of the dictation from above remain. The difference is in how the controls are applied—in the length of the leash.

Edward Crankshaw looks to the time when "more and more Soviet journalists, in one context or another, will, however intermittently, be required or allowed to utter truth." In his view, "there are enough people in the Soviet Union who know the difference between truth and lies, and have seen that the truth can on occasion be spoken—there are tens of millions of them—to form the foundation of a public opinion which will demand not only specific action from the government but also more information on which it can base its views on the need for further action."<sup>11</sup> No one would dispute that plenty of Russians recognize propaganda for what it is,

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<sup>11</sup> *The New York Times Magazine* (Sunday), Dec. 2, 1962.

and dislike it. But it is hard to see how such dissatisfaction can ever develop into a concerted and effective force so long as those who hold the controls regard the press and public opinion itself in the frame of reference shared by Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev.

The degree of openness and freedom in the press depends, then, not upon *kto kovo?*—whether public opinion or those who long for such openness will prevail over the autocratic manipulation of facts and views—but, in the long run, upon the extent to which the Soviet regime can reconcile its creed with the facts of life. When the discrepancies are not too disturbing, it finds a measure of journalistic frankness expedient. When the contrast is too painful—as in the Cuban missiles case, the Chinese-Indian conflict, or the story of the Berlin wall—it suppresses the facts. For its main function remains now—as it has since its inception—to propagandize rather than to inform, to indoctrinate rather than to enlighten.

## A Correspondent in Moscow

*By Sacha Simon*

THE WESTERN COLONY in Moscow, consisting of diplomats, newspapermen and their families, totals about 2,000 persons. They can be roughly divided in three categories: those who look upon their stay in Moscow as exile, detesting every aspect of their daily life; those who live in an ivory tower and refuse to see or hear anything outside their professional obligations; and those, finally, who, moved by a desire to discover the strange and enigmatic world that surrounds them, pass their time fulminating against the over-bureaucratized Soviet institutions and extolling the warm nature and great virtues of the Russian people—the

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most sensitive, expressive, and hospitable of all peoples. . . .

Indeed, the warmth of the people and the harshness of the regime are the two factors that continuously confront everyone, and particularly the journalists who have the thankless task of reporting on a country still withdrawn in its own shell, still suffering from complexes that cast any foreigner in the role of a potential enemy or spy.

While knowledge of the Russian language is essential to an understanding of the Soviet scene, it is not sufficient of itself. Intellectually and emotionally, the Russian people—and their rulers—are so different from their Western counterparts that all comparisons are always partly false. A deeper knowledge of the country is necessary in order to appreciate Soviet life in all its nuances. That is why I considered myself very fortunate during

my various professional stays in the USSR: not only do I speak Russian as well as I do French, but Slavic blood courses in my veins (my mother was the grand-niece of the Russian writer Goncharov) and Russia was the land of my childhood; I left there at the age of 12, having witnessed the October Revolution.

This background helped me understand the Soviets, and they, I believe, appreciated what they called my spirit of objectivity. I always made sure that my facts were accurate, and then commented on them as freely as I deemed wise. This, indeed, is the golden rule of any foreign journalist working in the Soviet Union, but its practice is not as simple as it might appear. Soviet authorities consider only reports published in the official press as legitimate and reliable sources of information, and this as well as other restrictions explain the difficulty of reporting current Soviet events fully and promptly. Nevertheless, since Stalin's death the opportunities for more adequate reporting from the USSR have increased considerably.

MY FIRST TRIP to the Soviet Union as a special correspondent of a French newspaper took place in 1954. I arrived with the Comédie Française and decided I would try on that occasion to visit the village, about 100 miles south of Moscow, where I had spent my childhood. After waiting about two weeks, I received permission from L. F. Ilichev, who was then Head of the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to make the trip. Alone, without an interpreter, I set out first for Perimichl, a small town situated about five miles from my village. Upon my arrival there, the whole town of some 1,800 inhabitants confronted me as an intruder and potential spy. Old women who had known my grandmother refused to recognize me. Schoolboys stopped me in the street to ask whether I had official authorization to stay in the town. Representatives of the *ispolkom* (municipal council) urged that I return to Moscow, where "a visit is much pleasanter for a foreigner." On the second day the strain was relieved a bit for the first time. An old peasant woman from the village arrived and very cordially invited me to spend two weeks at Pokrovskoe: "The old people remember your grandmother's kindness. They are expecting you and look forward to seeing you again. . . ." I was deeply touched. Nevertheless, I had to leave, and postpone the visit to my childhood haunts.

Five years later, in 1961, I made the pilgrimage again, this time accompanied by a Soviet colleague whom I had asked to come along so as to avoid a repetition of the earlier misunderstandings. The three days that followed

were wonderful and heartwarming. The old *kolkhozniki* of the village surrounded me with affection and hospitality that did not falter for a minute. Suffused with childhood memories, I went from one *izba* (peasant room) to another, answering a thousand questions and filling myself on salted cucumbers, country omelettes, fruit and vodka. The news went from one end of the little village to the other: "The little *barchuk*, the son of our old landowner, came back to see us."

The chairman of the *kolkhoz*, a party member, who had come from the Smolensk region to reorganize the work on the land, gave me a guarded welcome. I still was, after all, a foreigner, a reporter for a "capitalist" daily, and the grandson of the prerevolutionary owner of the village. Nevertheless, after a few hours we became the best of friends. "I can see," he said, "that you came here with pure intentions to recapture your past. Make yourself at home here, do whatever you like. . . ."

This freedom of movement on the *kolkhoz* gave me the opportunity to illustrate with concrete examples the agricultural difficulties about which Khrushchev had recently complained in a public speech. Yet I resisted the temptation because it seemed to me that by doing otherwise I would have betrayed the confidence which the village had placed in me. I limited myself therefore to describing the affectionate scenes that filled the course of my visit.

It is often said, and it is indeed quite true, that the Russians detest duplicity in human relations. I think that I got along in the Soviet Union as well as I did because I always expressed frankly, and sometimes brutally, my convictions, which are so much opposed to theirs; because I never missed an opportunity to point out their errors and the stupidity of some of their institutions—particularly their propaganda.

BOTH OVERLY SIMPLISTIC and overly shrill, Soviet propaganda endeavors to fix in people's minds the image of a decadent bourgeois world in which horrible monsters—capitalists, imperialists, colonialists, bankers, priests, bloodthirsty soldiers and policemen—rule tyrannically over enslaved people. The graphic symbols of this childish propaganda are always the same: the big belly, the bestial face, the colonial helmet, the sword dripping blood, the aspergillum brandished as a club, represent the oppressors; and spindly legs of the undernourished, shackled hands and feet, fists outstretched and desperate mothers bearing sickly children, represent the exploited and oppressed. In contrast to this bourgeois inferno, Soviet life is pic-

tured as the best of all worlds. Everything in it, if not perfect, is at least worthy of admiration and especially rich in future promise.

The naiveté and improbability of this propaganda is an effective argument in discussions with the Soviets. More and more they are inclined to admit: "Yes, we know that certain aspects of our propaganda are still a holdover from the Stalinist period." But then, in explanation of the persisting anti-Western campaign, they usually add that as soon as anti-Soviet propaganda in the West becomes less virulent, "we shall tone down our statements."

Censorship was another subject which invariably bothered the Soviets whenever it was brought up by Western journalists. Officially, in fact, its existence was denied. "We have only a literary service," was the standard answer. But the thing was all too obvious, and it was easy for us to plead that without freedom of speech, which all the revolutionaries of the past 150 years have defended, there is no professional dignity for a journalist.

Censorship of the press had been practiced in Russia for over a century until it disappeared with the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in the 1917 February Revolution. The newly-won freedom did not last long, however. Following the Bolshevik seizure of power in the Revolution of October, the practice was reinstated and eventually under Stalin evolved into the most highly developed system of thought control known in history. While after Stalin's death censorship was relaxed somewhat, it remained in effect in all spheres, including outgoing dispatches of foreign correspondents in the USSR. All our reports, whether they were concerned with a soccer game or Khrushchev's press conference, had to be delivered to a special window at the International Telegraph Office where they were held, usually for half an hour, but sometimes as long as six hours. The basic criteria applied by the censors were elementary: only official sources of information, *i.e.*, Soviet newspapers and radio broadcasts, were to be used and considered legitimate; and as far as commentaries were concerned, everything that could offend the USSR, its government and its citizens was to be avoided. These rules had, of course, a preventive effect as well. In order to avoid excessive delays in the sending of our dispatches, we censored ourselves, and omitted from our stories any imprudent words or remarks. Having to choose between absolute sincerity and meeting our deadlines, we chose toned-down reports transmitted in time.

Prior censorship of outgoing dispatches was abolished in March 1961 and replaced by a check of

published reports, but the conditions of work for foreign journalists changed little as a result of it. We were then all the more at the mercy of the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on which we depended for our visas and which prescribed the regulations governing our stay in Moscow. A report considered incorrect by the Press Department was enough to complicate seriously the day-to-day existence of a foreign correspondent, and the sanctions tacitly applied were much like the punishment meted out to a disobedient school boy. I remember the case of a colleague who, because he had written that censorship would be lifted for the Powers trial,\* failed to receive his press card until a few minutes before the first hearing. Others, having published reports of which the Press Department disapproved, found themselves restricted for weeks to Moscow and its environs. A lady colleague of mine, who had proved to be too alert on previous occasions, was no longer invited to Kremlin receptions. "The number of journalists," she was told in all seriousness, "is limited because of the crowd. . . ."

Some of the measures that the Soviets resorted to were truly shocking, but these may not have been inspired by the Press Department. One day during my stay in Moscow, I was surprised to read in the papers an elaborate account of nightly debauches allegedly organized by an American reporter, a photographer, in his hotel room. Nothing was left out in the story—even the quantities of alcohol consumed were given, and a list of accommodating girls who were said to have participated. As I later found out, the facts were much more modest: a few friends, all strangers in Moscow, had gathered occasionally around a bottle of whisky to talk about their experience and life at home.

The latest among the insufferable acts of blackmailing that have come to my attention is the case of an American lady reporter who was picked up drunk in the street one night by one of the Moscow sobering-up crews. A long story in *Izvestia*, illustrated with three "edifying" photographs, described the attention that had been given to the intoxicated reporter and hypocritically lamented the misconduct of the Western press. All of us who were acquainted with the lady knew that she never drank and that she led an orderly and sensible life. Her astonishing misadventure was never explained. She had drunk two glasses of wine in the company of a couple of Russians whom she met in a restaurant. Shortly thereafter she found herself in the

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\* The trial took place in August 1960, *i.e.*, seven months before prior censorship of outgoing news was permanently lifted.—*Ed.*

street completely intoxicated. . . . The only thing that is always clear in connection with such "revelations" in the press is the fact that the victim is forced to leave the USSR. These "exposures," just as refusals to grant or extend visas, are less spectacular than outright expulsion, but the effect is similar.

EXPULSIONS HAVE the disadvantage that they generally lead to retaliation, and they are therefore rarer. I happen to be among the relatively few Western newsmen expelled from the USSR since World War II, and while I am not familiar with the circumstances surrounding the expulsions of my colleagues, fundamental honesty compels me to say that in my own case the order precipitating my departure was the result of a misunderstanding, the tragicomic details of which need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that the Soviet authorities stressed several times that my expulsion was not personal (the offending article was not written by me), and that three days after my departure they permitted me to return to Moscow in a private capacity in order to arrange for the transfer of my effects.

While the suspension of censorship of outgoing news offered little new freedom to foreign correspondents in Moscow, our sources of information also failed to improve. Aside from the extremely rare press conferences given by Mr. Khrushchev (two during my two-years' tour of duty in Moscow), no responsible Soviet official ever offered us any comments on Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Whenever we sought information from the Press Department (by telephone only), the response was invariably the same: "We can tell you nothing. Read *Pravda* or *Izvestia*." Thus left to our own resources, we depended for our news stories as well as our commentaries on the boring Soviet newspapers. Needless to say, it required much imagination and knowledge of Communist mentality to find in these dogmatic, conformist texts material that would enlighten Western readers about contemporary Soviet life.

This also explains why there was in Moscow such a spirit of solidarity among foreign journalists, even those belonging to rival newspapers. Exchanges of information and insight based on reading between the lines of the official stories helped us immeasurably in translating the phraseology of the Communist texts into comprehensible interpretive reports. At the same time, while trying to act as perspicacious observers, we sought to avoid offending the regime so as to escape unnecessary difficulties and unpleasantness.

One more obstacle which occasionally confronts foreign journalists in Moscow deserves mentioning.

### A Note to Our Readers

The last issue of this journal (November-December 1962) carried an item entitled "What Is a Crime?", which told of a young Soviet citizen named Adolf Yosifovitch Yutson who was sentenced to four years of compulsory labor for leading a "parasitic" life. We asked our readers to define the crime for which Yutson had been sentenced, and "to point to any other civilized country boasting similar legal concepts." Those who sent correct answers were promised a bound copy of J. V. Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*.

To this date we have received quite a few answers, some of them of a most interesting and provocative nature. To appraise them we felt that the knowledge and views of an expert on Soviet law would be in order. Accordingly, we have asked Mr. Leon Lipson, Professor of Law at Yale University, and one of the foremost authorities on Soviet legal problems, to help us judge which correspondents are entitled to the prize. We have also written to Professor P. S. Romashkin, Director of the Institute of State and Law in Moscow, asking him to comment on the Yutson case, as well as on the wider ramifications of the articles by Messrs. Robert Conquest and Jeremy Azrael (respectively "Liberalization—A Balance Sheet" and "Is Coercion Withering Away?") appearing in the same issue as our offer. The letters—including, we hope, a reply from Mr. Romashkin—and Mr. Lipson's analysis will be published in the May-June issue of *Problems of Communism*. Further letters will be accepted until March 1.

—The Editors

Soviet officials have the nasty habit of too often confusing expressions of friendship for the Russian people and moderation in one's utterances about the Soviet Union with approval of the Soviet system of government. And they are quick, given half an opportunity, to turn one into a Communist tool. The means employed for this purpose are subtle and varied: admit that you have a certain amount of admiration for the children's nurseries, and immediately you will be considered a political sympathizer. That is why in the Soviet Union I always expressed approval in somewhat muted forms, adding usually that "we in the West can also show excellent accomplishments." For every time I expressed approval, I felt my little finger caught in the awesome machinery of a political system which, in spite of the improvements of the post-Stalin decade, continues to conceive of men as termites without an individual will or purpose.

# The "Cold War" on the Literary Front

## Part III: The Party and the Writers

By David Burg

*EDITORS' NOTE: This is the third and concluding part of Mr. Burg's survey of Soviet literary life since Stalin's death. In the first ("The Writers' Underground," July-August 1962), the author depicted the subterranean sector of the literary scene; the second ("Groups, Trends, Genres," September-October 1962) dealt with the various groupings among Soviet writers, and with their literary and political credos. The last part traces the attempts of the liberal and radical men of letters to broaden the area of creative freedom—attempts that have been partially successful, in spite of the determination of the Communist Party and the so-called "dogmatist" writers to preserve the essentials of totalitarian controls over the arts.*

THE TWO PRECEDING articles dealt with the lively growth and multi-faceted development of Soviet literature in the post-Stalin decade. But if we supposed that neither books, magazines nor underground manuscripts were reaching us from the Soviet Union and that we were receiving only official Soviet pronouncements on literature, we would have the impression that nothing essential had changed as compared to Zhdanov's day. The new party program has merely rearranged the same old phrases, advocating, in effect, the continuation of Stalinist traditions in respect to art, and official Soviet criticism constantly reiterates these clichés.<sup>1</sup>

Soviet censorship has also theoretically remained immutable. The crude word "censorship" never appears in print, and indeed making sure that it never does is one of the functions of the establishment which with bureaucratic modesty calls itself the Chief Administration for Literary Affairs and Publishing (*Glavlit*). As

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a matter of fact, this word has not been used in public documents since 1925. Under Soviet rule the censor has become for the first time in the history of Russia the judge not only of what is politically permissible, but also of the esthetic qualities of literature. His prerogatives in this respect are enormous, inasmuch as there is no formal appeal of censorship decisions to any state judicial organ, although in fact there are protests from time to time—at no small risk—through party channels.

The enormous authority of *Glavlit* and the general party line on questions of art are thus probably the most longlasting constants in the system of controls over literature. Yet to say that is not to define the

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<sup>1</sup> See the new CPSU program in *Kommunist* (Moscow), No. 16, 1961. On p. 95 the reader will find the party's statement on culture and art, to wit: "In the art of socialist realism, which is based on the principle of party-mindedness and kinship with people, bold pioneering in the artistic depiction of life goes hand in hand with the cultivation and development of the progressive traditions of world culture. . . . The highroad of literature and art lies . . . through faithful . . . depiction of the richness and versatility of socialist reality, through inspired and vivid portrayal of all that is new and genuinely Communist, and exposure of all that hinders the progress of society . . ." etc., etc.