

THE TROTSKYITE SNAKE AND SOVIET MONOTHEISM

by
Oleh Kandyba

When we consider the current program of the cinema and note how many films are devoted to the period of the French Revolution, we realize how far behind the times are the appreciative ability and the taste of the present day public compared to the march of events. Another great revolution, that of the Bolsheviks in Russia, stands, as yet, only on the threshold of popularization. At present, in movies and popular fiction, only the figure of Rasputin and his aristocratic milieu are displayed. The Russian revolution itself will appear on the screen in its full scope probably only when it is definitely completed and fits into a historical setting.

Its evolution, however, shows such classic features and, in spite of all historiosophic schooling and panic contra-action by the Bolshevistic leaders, repeats so faithfully the development of its French predecessor, that our inability to perceive these parallels shows a pitiful lack of far-sightedness. Furthermore, to observe from nearby a great historical process, in which a social law is worked out before our very eyes, should give keener satisfaction and arouse greater interest than to watch long past events portrayed on the shadow screen. Unfortunately, the real spirit of Russian revolutionary life and thought loses its flavor when ground through the printing presses of the official *Journal de Moscou* or described in the bourgeois vocabulary of the local correspondents of European newspapers. Only the greater events, such as the recent trial and execution of the old Bolshevik guard in Moscow reach us und impressed us with their power to suggest historical analogies.

The purpose of this article is to present some recent documents which throw light on present day Soviet life and psychology. They are taken not from political journals, but from magazines which in theory are purely literary.

Dear Comrade Yagoda and Comrade Balitsky*

The Soviet writers congratulate in you, in your person, all the praiseworthy followers of Dzerjinsky** — faithful sons of the Socialistic fatherland, who stand firm as guardians of the revolution, carefully watch the results of Socialism, unfeelingly beat all the counter-revolutionary putrefaction from the bandit Zinoviev-Trotsky nationalistic nest, all the slimy and thrice-despised dregs

* Two ministers of the Interior, practically leaders of the widely-known GPU, formerly "Czeka".

** The first leader of the "Czeka".

who tried hit the heart dearest to all humanity — the heart of the beloved leader and friend of all working people — the heart of comrade Stalin.

You knew the right time to discover the cheating, slimy enemy, who with his murderous hands prepared an attentat against the best sons of our fatherland.

The followers of Dzerjinsky nipped in the bud the bloody attempts of the nation's enemies, discovered for the whole world the bestial bond of the facist murderers — agents of the Gestapo-Zinoviev-Trotsky counter-revolution — and stand its leader on trial. They will get their desserts! To demonish them is the will of the 170 000 000 strong Soviet nation. That will be the highest expression of the Socialistic humanism.

We wish you, dear comrades, Yagoda and Balitsky, and all praiseworthy followers of Dzerjinsky, to hold strongly throughout the future the sharp sword of the revolution and to demolish unfeelingly all the counter-revolutionary-cheats, all the enemies of the nation.

Guard still more carefully our dear and beloved leaders, for whom our hearts are filled with undying love.

Long live the Communistic party, which nourished the famous followers of Dzerjinsky!

Long live the great Stalin!

(signed) The Executive Committee of the Association of Soviet Writers.
(*Radyansky Literatura*, Vol. 9, Kiev, September, 1936, p. 5.)

This is an example of the numerous letters and resolutions accepted at the meetings of the Soviet writers which took place throughout the USSR as a result of the Trotsky trial. Leaving aside its style (!) and the writers' very original interpretation of "Soviet humanism" (a term first invented by Stalin a year ago), let us turn our attention to the main point: the frequent use of two words new to Soviets: — fatherland and nation. Patriotism, a word formerly prohibited, is, as we know, now canonized. It replaces now the term "world revolution" in every article about any subject from economics to literary criticism. The Soviet "nation" however, represents a recent Invention. (The Soviet Union is half inhabited by nations which have nothing in common with the Russians.) In these two conceptions one can distinctly see a retreat by Russian Communism to pre-war imperial positions. It is a condition of great importance for inner and outer Russian politics.

In another letter of the Soviet Writers' Union, this time addressed to Stalin himself and published in the same journal, we meet the expression "squash the snake." Let us follow up this image, which permeates the latest Soviet literature like a constantly recurring motif, and while we do so, let us not forget that the best Soviet writers synopsisize in their novels and lyric poems the newest circulars of the ministries of agriculture, industry, or police.

The following is a poem printed in the official organ of the Union of Soviet Writers.

ENEMIES OF THE NATION.

The wicked black snake is squashed!
He who bites us cannot be saved.

.....

The jackals cannot make the lion fear them,

The chicken cannot peck the eagle,
 The Trotskyite snakes cannot stay in the country
 Where a new truth is created.
 Dogs, howl about your puppies.
 We will throw their dust into the air,
 And those who defend carrion
 Will be damned through the ages.
 The murderer Trotsky is nailed down;
 He must prepare his shroud.
 Reddened by blood, like a rat,
 He must tremble in his stinking hole.¹³

(Suleyman Stalsky, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, #53, Moscow,
 Sept. 20, 1936. p. 2.)

The general tone of this sample of proletarian art, published in the representative organ of the Soviet writers' elite, speaks for itself and for the latter.

In another number of the same journal we find a similar poem:

THE TWO-FACED SNAKE IS SQUASHED.

The two-faced snake is squashed.
 The nation was patient but the nation's anger
 Is boundless and unbelievably fierce
 Towards the cheating traitors, sworn enemies.
 If we hear the snakes' hissing again
 We will extract their venom — none will bite:
 Because all the nations in fraternal unity
 Raised themselves up around Stalin like a wall.

(Eugene Fomin, *Literaturna Gazeta*, #40, August 19, 1936.)

Here again we meet the Trotsky snake which now really begins to hold our interest. Of course it is a picture sent out by the authorities as the official interpretation of the role and action of Trotsky and his followers, and transplanted by obedient Soviet writers into literature. Behind it, however, there must be certain associations or reminiscences. We believe that another poem given enthusiastic title *The Sentence is Executed* will help us discover them. In spite of its length, we shall reproduce it completely because of its exceptional interest.

THE SENTENCE IS EXECUTED!

The years pass. And the flourishing garden
 Bears rich fruits.
 The nations live gaily
 Under the beneficent sun of the Soviets.
 In the great family of many languages,
 Every one is accustomed to see with love
 A great gardener walking tirelessly
 In the garden of people.

Each of us agrees
 To give his life for him, as for a father.
 He is the heart, he is the soul of the nations,
 He is the brain of millions of masses.
 But in the beautiful bed of flowers
 Concealed and unsuspected,
 Hidden in a nest among the bowers,
 Breed the sly and venomous snakes.
 Though often crushed and broken
 And thrown aside to rot,
 Coiled in a loathesome tangle,
 They redistilled their venom.
 You nourished an evil idea,
 Bankrupts who lost your human likeness,
 Thieves exiled by the nation,
 Azeffs, traitors, spies —
 You wanted to kill our soul
 To extinguish the great sun!
 Perhaps you thought the earth would endure this,
 The terrible Crime of Crimes?
 You ought to fall down dead,
 Instigators of infamous deeds!
 Because no one is permitted
 To raise his hand against the man
 To whom the people's love is given,
 In whom all their desires are centered.

(M. Sheremet, *Literaturna Gazeta*, #41, September 5, 1936.)

Stalin appears here as a great gardener — an evident reminiscence of the Biblical picture of God walking in the Garden of Eden. He is the heart, the soul, and the brains of humanity; he fills a role which in all times and by all nations has been attributed only to the Godhead. Opposed to him is an evil force in the traditional form of the snake — a consistent and complete repetition of the Biblical tale. To raise a hand against the Godhead, to extinguish the “great Sun” is a crime which the earth will not endure, which is not “permitted”; the criminal must fall dead. Is not all this evidence of a religious conception?

Another aspect of this same conception is found in another poem with the revealing title *He*.

HE.

Dedicated to my daughter Tamarochka.

Give me your soft hand
 Smile with the sun of your eyes . . .
 Soon, soon you will learn, little daughter
 To say your first word, “Mama.”

The big world will flow into sounds.
 You will reach out your little hands,
 I shall take you in my arms
 And bring you to see a portait.

Then I shall say: People lived and did not know
 That there exists a sun and blue sky . . .
 He came and commanded: There shall be a sun!
 And he revealed the great sun . . .

He — and immediately youth and joy,
 He — and immediately we walked shoulder to shoulder . . .
 Eternally there will flow into us
 The life-giving light of his eyes.

In the kernels of the wheat, in every heart,
 In each hammer's blow,
 Beats his great heart,
 The immortal Bolshevik's.

You will reach out your little hands,
 Smile with the sun of your eyes . . .
 Soon, soon you will learn, my little daughter,
 To say the sweet word, "Stalin."

(Iv. Nechoda, *Literaturna Gazeta*, #43, September 17, 1936.)

The title itself makes us think of analogies of religious character. This adoration of the ruler has a special flavor when we consider the custom of writing the name Stalin in capital letters. It reminds us of Egyptian paintings in which the figure of Pharaoh had to be larger than that of the other members of the royal family, and very much larger than his people. Similar is the case of Babylonian reliefs and tablets. If we notice how careful the Soviets are when mentioning their great men always in one invariable way: STALIN, Kaganovich, Kosior, Postishev, Lubchenko, and how their divinity is shown by different kinds of type, we can realize that there is a certain hierarchy with the equivalent of apostles, saints, and disciples, whose sanctity increases in a certain, preordained way. But let us return to Nechoda's poem. "He came and commanded: There shall be a sun" — a striking parallel to the Old Testament "Let there be Light." HE, the good, the eternal, gives the blue sky, youth, joy, all that is bright and good in life. HE is omnipresent in nature, in every heart, in every blow of the hammer — a purely pantheistic conception. Even the innocent child feels this divine goodness and will "put out its little hands" and learn "the sweet word Stalin" as soon as it can speak.

These examples chosen at random show how far the evolution of the mentality of the Soviet elite has gone. The belief in individuality, damned by Marxism, has been revived in a form familiar to modern Europe, Fuhrership. But during the Communist revolution the concept of Fuhrership, developing on the

basis of oriental Russian mentality and cultural tradition, went a step further. It is the adoration of the ruler characteristic of the peoples of the Orient. It reminds us of the adoration of the Pharaohs in Egypt, of the Roman emperors during the period of Eastern influence, and of the Mikado in Japan. At present in the Soviet Union Asiatic mysticism is still the basis of the Russian soul as it was in the days of Holy Russia with her White Czar.

This situation was made possible by the evolution of the Russian communism from materialism and the conception of the world revolution to the irrational feelings for the "fatherland" and the "Soviet nation," from the cult of the masses to the dictatorship not of a party but of an individual — father Stalin. We read nowadays about "left distortions" as the whole past of Bolshevism is now called. Compare this past with the recent canonization of classic Russian realism, the protection of the pre-revolutionary cultural heritage, the introduction of the Czaristic methods in the schools (homework, examinations), the popularization in the theatre of the motto originated by Stalin: "The better we live, the more gaily we live," the official protection of Kornichuk's play, Platon Krechet, a satire on the old revolutionary Bolshevistic types, and advocating prosperity and personal happiness. All this shows that the Soviet Bolshevist revolution has come to an end. There is now a Russian Empire, headed not by a Bonaparte, but by a "gardener Stalin" who is surrounded by an adoration of almost religious character representing the new Russian monotheism. The agricultural Adonis, of course, is ready at any moment to turn to Mars and then his sword will be as ruthless towards foreign enemies as it is now towards his own subjects and the Trotsky snake.