

Between Moscow and Baku:  
National Literatures at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers

by

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## ABSTRACT

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The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 reminded many that “Soviet” and “Russian” were not synonymous, but this distinction continues to be overlooked when discussing Soviet literature. Like the Soviet Union, Soviet literature was a consciously multinational, multiethnic project. This dissertation approaches Soviet literature in its broadest sense – as a cultural field incorporating texts, institutions, theories, and practices such as writing, editing, reading, canonization, education, performance, and translation. It uses archival materials to analyze how Soviet literary institutions combined Russia’s literary heritage, the doctrine of socialist realism, and nationalities policy to conceptualize the national literatures, a term used to define the literatures of the non-Russian peripheries. It then explores how such conceptions functioned in practice in the early 1930s, in both Moscow and Baku, the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan. Although the debates over national literatures started well before the Revolution, this study focuses on 1932-34 as the period when they crystallized under the leadership of the Union of Soviet Writers. It examines how the vision of the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers grew during its planning process, so that the ultimate event in 1934 was a two-week performance celebrating Soviet literature as multinational. It then looks to the Azerbaijani delegation to that Congress as an example of how non-Russian nationalities interpreted and negotiated Moscow’s broad policies. Azerbaijan is a useful case study as it incorporates a changing national identity, a multilingual literary heritage, an ethnically diverse urban proletariat, the pan-Turkic movement, and issues of religious versus ethnic identity.

*To Janice Strickland,  
the first person to delight  
in my words as much  
as I did.*

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The U.C. Berkeley Slavic department was a welcome home for many years, one whose halls reverberated with art, humor, theories, linguistic charts, camaraderie, electric ideas, and the occasional strange mode of transport. My professors encouraged independent exploration of my own path through Russian and Soviet literature. Acknowledging everyone who contributed to the ideas that eventually led to this dissertation would require a full department list for the last decade, but I can't go without naming a few who were especially important: Viktor Markovich Zhivov, Eric Naiman, Olga Matich, Alan Timberlake, and Lisa Little. Their interest and support have been invaluable. Without my fellow students, however, I doubt I would have survived the process of transforming my ideas into arguments. They are my intellectual family.

When we junior scholars complain – as workers in any field do – about the responsibilities and frustrations of the path we chose, I remind myself that the greatest compensation in academia is community. I am fortunate to work with interesting, intellectually generous, and talented people. Some of them even share my obsession with the Soviet periphery! I have presented aspects of this work at the California Slavic graduate colloquium, University of Washington graduate conference in comparative literature, AAASS, AATSEEL, and ACLA. Special thanks go to John Hope, Mary Childs, Polina Rikoun, and Naomi Caffee for listening to me ramble. On every occasion, the feedback and questions helped me refine my argument. The staff at the Moscow archives was helpful and fascinating, while my fellow researchers kept me entertained. A chance acquaintance led to another, who in turn introduced me to Chingiz Huseinov, a marvelous writer whose personal experiences animated many of the figures I only recognized from the page. Meeting him was a stroke of good fortune. My colleagues at Tulane University are no exception to this pattern. I owe Brian Horowitz and William Brumfield a great debt for their encouragement and faith in me.

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keep me on my toes. Their perspectives improved my work, but more importantly, their friendship continues to expand my world. I am fortunate indeed to know so many strong women. Outside of the department, Kamalika Chaudhuri, Klaudia Poiry, Alex Koppel, Zita Vasas, Karthik Balakrishnan, Adam Brin, and Joel Aufrecht were especially patient listeners throughout this process. I used photographs of Faith Hillis, Sabrina Rahman, and Andrea Dewees as an imaginary committee and tried to write so that that trio of scholars would find something of use in my work.

My family has never faltered in its love and support. From my grandmother's mad money to my uncle's lunches to my nephew's earnest phone messages, everyone has been there for me. While I suspect only sibling rivalry got my mother and her sister through so many of my draft pages, I loved having them as an audience. Mamica, you are my ocean. I find it hard to imagine school at any level without Monica showing me how to get through it with compassion and honesty. For that matter, I find it hard to imagine *life* at any level without Monica showing me how to get through it with compassion and honesty. Corina's pragmatic approach to Soviet history provided several insights, and her humorous tolerance leaves me in awe. When it comes time to engineer a pop-up edition of this dissertation, it will probably be my brother Toby who does the calculations to ensure Gorky's lectern doesn't wobble, Iulian who organizes the tools, and Andreas who shreds the failed designs. They have kept me moving forward, instead of just in circles. On the map of my heart, all the streets have their names.

In the spirit of my approach to literary history, I would like to thank some early influences who helped shape this path before I had a name for it. In roughly chronological order, that includes Sasha Sagan, Rodica Miron, Olga Peters Hasty, Donna Jones, Stathis Gourgouris, Thomas Keenan, Erika Gilson, Angela Miron, Michele Brown, and Ayla Algar. Janice Strickland, to whom this tome is dedicated, provided the first direct push. This time, the champagne is on me.

## TRANSLITERATION AND SOURCES

I have kept quotes in the original languages as much as possible. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

This work uses the Library of Congress transliteration system, except for names with conventional English spellings (such as Gorky) and some exceptions designed to make names more accessible to English readers. Where Russian names begin with the letter “ю” or “я,” I have transliterated them as “Yu...” and “Ya...,” instead of using an initial I, although I keep the Library of Congress “iu” and “ia” transliterations for those letters in the middle of words. I have also dropped an “i” from place names ending in “-ия,” like Tataria, although I have kept the double “ii” in personal names. Azerbaijani names have an informal transliteration, with the original in footnotes. Since Azerbaijani went through multiple alphabets, with different spelling conventions, I have stuck to post-Soviet sources in the Latin alphabet for quoting Azerbaijani texts. The bibliographic information uses the Library of Congress system without exception.

This dissertation uses published books, articles, and microfilm, and documents from the Russian state archives in Moscow. Many of those documents record speeches by non-native speakers. These were quickly transcribed by workers unfamiliar with many of the names and terms, especially those from non-Slavic cultures. Those transcripts were printed on poor quality paper, then edited by hand with additions crossing and recrossing the text. The documents were poorly stored for many years before they were given serious archival attention. Many of the already damaged materials were later converted to microfilm, with folded corners, torn sections, and faint marks thus lost forever. Others were handwritten to begin with, sometimes on scraps of paper or cardboard. The archivists at RGALI and RGASPI are dedicated scholars working to maintain the historical record as faithfully as possible, but the materials are frequently ambiguous. I am working from my own notes on those materials, adding another gap within which errors could compound. Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to resurrect the initial act of communication as honestly as possible. I accept full responsibility for variations from the archival sources and recognize that those materials themselves may vary from the historical events they purport to record.



## TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ashug</i>	Turkic or Caucasian bard
<i>byt</i>	everyday life
Central Committee	the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
Congress	First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (1934)
<i>dastan</i>	Turkic oral epic
fellow traveler	non-Party members of the intelligentsia who wrote works sympathetic to Soviet goals
<i>Izvestiia</i>	daily government newspaper
jadidism	moderate Islamic reformist movement in Central Asia, starting in the 1880s and suppressed by the Soviets
Kul'tprop	the Communist Party's Division on Culture and Propaganda
LEF	Russian avant-garde 1920s literary-cultural association, whose journal was published 1923-25
<i>Literaturnaia Gazeta</i>	literary newspaper, under organizing committee control from 1932 on, published by the Union of Soviet Writers after the Congress
LOKAF	Literary Organization of the Red Army and Navy, active in the early 1930s
Orgburo	the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee, responsible for administrative and personnel matters
<i>partiinnost'</i>	Party-mindedness
Pereval	Russian fellow traveler literary association from the early 1920s, organized around the literary journal <i>Krasnaia nov'</i>
Politburo	the Political Bureau of the Central Committee
<i>Pravda</i>	daily Party newspaper
RAPP & VOAPP	Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, the most powerful literary association from 1928-32
ROPKP	Russian Union of Proletarian-Kolkhoz Writers, peasant literary association established in 1931 as a replacement for the All-Russian Union of Proletarian-Kolkhoz Writers, active in the late 1920s
Union of Soviet Writers	the official Soviet literature association, inaugurated at the Congress in 1934
VOAPP	All-Union Alliance of Proletarian Writers' Associations, RAPP/s all-Union counterpart
VSSP	All-Russian Union of Soviet Writers, an early 1930s umbrella organization for literary associations that never achieved much power

## WHAT IS SOVIET LITERATURE?

Люди, марксисты, мыслящие слишком просто... не могут переварить того, что мы хотим подготовить элементы международной социалистической культуры путем предельного развития национальной культуры, точно так же не понимают, как мы хотим прийти к уничтожению классов путем усиления классовой борьбы, или как мы хотим прийти к отмиранию государства путем небывалого расширения функций этого государства, или как мы хотим добиться объединения народов разных стран путем их разъединения, путем освобождения их от какого-либо гнета, путем предоставления им права на образование национального государства. Кто не понимает этой жизненной постановки вопроса, тот не понимает, что мы проводим политику максимального развития национальной культуры с тем, чтобы она исчерпала себя до конца и чтобы затем была создана база для организации международной социалистической культуры не только по содержанию, но и по форме.

People, Marxists, who think too simply... cannot digest the fact that we want to prepare the elements of an international socialist culture by means of maximum development of national culture, just as they don't understand that we want to arrive at the destruction of the classes by strengthening the class struggle, or that we want to arrive at a withering away of the state through an unprecedented expansion of the functions of this state, or that we want to unify the nations of various countries by dividing them, by freeing them from any yoke, by offering them the right to form a nation-state. Whoever doesn't understand this vital formulation of the question doesn't understand that we are conducting a policy of maximum development of national culture so that it can exhaust itself completely and then a base can be created for organizing an international socialist culture not only in content, but also in form.

– Iosif Stalin, in a speech to Ukrainian writers<sup>1</sup>  
February 11, 1929

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaia intelligentsia. Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VchK-OGPU-NKVD o kul'turnoi politike, 1917-1953 gg.* (Edited by Andrei Artizov and Oleg Naumov. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia," 1999), 102. (RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 4490, ll. 3-17.) Translated with minor changes by Marian Schwartz in *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953* (Edited by Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 62. Hereafter, *VkhI* and Trans.

The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 reminded both internal and Western observers of the dangers of assuming that ‘Soviet’ and ‘Russian’ were synonymous concepts. As republic after republic declared independence, those few scholars who had focused on nationalism and national identity within the USSR looked prescient. The collapse of Soviet communism energized scholarly interest in the role of nationality, which is now frequently seen as one of the major causes of the breakup.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union was multinational both linguistically and ethnically, with close to two hundred officially recognized nationalities. It was divided into national republics and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which was officially a multinational federation. Each republic contained an array of smaller national territories, from autonomous regions to national councils in villages dominated by another nationality. Every Soviet citizen had a registered nationality, which was listed in identity documents. Although everyone was supposedly equal, political suspicions towards some nationalities and programs to foster equality by promoting other nationalities means that national identity affected educational, employment, and housing opportunities. What the Russians saw as a system advancing minorities, other republics experienced as Russian dominance. Subsequent national conflicts in many of the republics, including Russia, seem to confirm the argument that the Soviet Union’s economic instability was either aggravated or exploited by national movements fighting for independence. Historians cannot depict the lifespan of the Soviet Union without at least acknowledging the difficulties it had in negotiating a multinational state.

Literary scholars have yet to make a similar accommodation. From 1934, socialist realism, which called for writers to depict reality in its revolutionary development, was the official literary method. Western scholarship first dismissed this literature as turgid propaganda, then acknowledged it as part of the Russian literary trajectory, before Katerina Clark’s pioneering scholarship eventually embraced it as an aesthetic system meriting study in its own right. Evgeny Dobrenko and Thomas Lahusen shifted focus to the means of production: how, as it were, the socialist realist steel was tempered. Their work treats Soviet literature as a process of complex negotiation between authorities, writers, and readers to shape concrete texts. At its best, scholarship on Soviet literature balances aesthetic and ideological principles, individual and collective creation, and the messy practices of state institutions. This balancing act has restored dynamism and interest to a falsely stagnant subject, recuperating a historically significant period in Russian literature.

However, although it drew heavily from Russian literary traditions, Soviet literature cannot be studied merely as part of Russia’s literary history. Soviet literature was a primary forum for articulating the assumptions, values, and goals of a new society and a primary tool for re forging individuals *and nations* into fit members of that society. As such, it was too important to be left to writers of any nationality. In a 1929 speech to a group of Ukrainian writers who were visiting Moscow as part of the state promotion of national cultures, the Soviet leader Iosif Stalin explained his principles for fostering national literatures: “Перспективы такие, что национальные культуры даже самых малых народностей СССР будут развиваться, и мы будем им помогать.”<sup>2</sup> [The prospects are that the national cultures of even the very smallest

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Helene Carrere d’Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000). Edward Walker argues that it was not nationalism itself, but the federal organization of nationalities that led to the breakup in *Dissolution: Sovereignty and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> *VKhl*, 104. Trans., 63-4.

nations of the USSR are going to develop, and we are going to help them.] The next five years determined the nature of that help.

Stalin's interest in national development was more strategic than principled.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet Union needed to foster national literatures in their native languages, he argued, to raise the general level of culture. Nationalities with highly developed cultures produce educated peasants, workers, and soldiers capable of mastering new tactics and technologies. National culture is the base for education, and thus for economic and military progress. Hence, “Никакой серьезной индустрии развить мы не сможем, не сделав все население грамотным.”<sup>4</sup> [We are not going to be able to develop any serious industry without making the entire population literate.] The emphasis on literacy explains the attention given to literature, although Stalin did not fully explain why texts translated from the Russian were considered insufficient for teaching literacy.

Since socialism and communism require an educated proletariat, national literature was a prerequisite for building international culture. National cultural development thus contained the seeds of its own end. Stalin compared this to other dialectical processes, like “прийти к уничтожению классов путем усиления классовой борьбы” [reaching the destruction of the classes by strengthening the class struggle], “прийти к отмиранию государства путем небывалого расширения функций этого государства” [reaching a withering away of the state through an unprecedented expansion of the functions of this state], and “добиться объединения народов разных стран... путем предоставления им права на образование национального государства” [unify(ing) the nations of various countries... by offering them the right to form a nation-state.] Promoting national development was a way to end national differences: “мы проводим политику максимального развития национальной культуры с тем, чтобы она исчерпала себя до конца...”<sup>5</sup> [We are conducting a policy of maximum development of national culture so that it can exhaust itself completely...] Stalin's comparison of dialectic processes proved accurate in so far as national cultures went the same way as social classes, bureaucracy, and national territories – they outlasted the Soviet Union. The goal was a classless, stateless, international society, but in Soviet practice, the means became the end. Flourishing national literatures, although theoretically only flourishing for strategic reasons, proved that the Soviets were fulfilling the demands of history. Their eventual exhaustion mattered less than their demonstration of Soviet progress.

National cultural development needed to be harnessed towards the common Soviet good. Like the Soviet Union, Soviet literature attempted to unite a broad array of national languages and traditions in one multinational and eventually supranational project. Encouraging national literatures was insufficient, because they could not be trusted to develop along the correct path without supervision and assistance from the center. This belief led to the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers with branches at the various national levels. The Union was designed to be a professional organization jointly governed by the writers themselves and by political functionaries, roles that were rarely mutually exclusive, to ensure that Soviet literature served the state's demands. The Union of Soviet Writers fostered national cadres of writers, defined acceptable forms for national expression, guided translation between national literatures, funded literature as the main vehicle for national identity, and organized public spectacles to communicate the importance of national literatures to the masses. This dissertation will explore

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<sup>3</sup> This dissertation follows its subject's practice and uses the term “national” throughout to refer to nationalities within the Soviet Union, frequently with the exclusion of Russian. Exceptions will be clearly marked.

<sup>4</sup> *VKhI*, 103. Trans., 63.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 102. Trans., 62.

how the 1934 First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers established these roles and how that process led to a new understanding of both national literature and national identity at the local level.

Reexamining Soviet literature as multinational does not mean ignoring Russian writers, but instead incorporating Russian literary debates into the broader story about literature and power as it played out across the Soviet Union. While Russian literature is insufficient to define Soviet literature, neither can Soviet literature possibly be considered without it. Socialist realism was based on Russia's critical and literary traditions, adapted as necessary to accommodate national diversity.

### ***Dissertation Overview***

Soviet multinational literature developed through an ongoing dialogue between its Moscow center and the heterogeneous national peripheries. This study examines the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers to create a portrait of Soviet literature that is comprehensive, because it depicts both the broad goals of the union's founders and the physical convergence of the nationalities in Moscow, and contingent, because it recognizes national and local negotiations of production, criticism, and canonization. This requires representing perspectives from the center and the periphery, while acknowledging that a full depiction of the periphery's heterogeneity is necessarily beyond the scope of this study. Instead, a case study of Azerbaijan will investigate just one of the national delegations to the Congress.

Soviet literature melded elements of nineteenth-century Russian literary criticism, Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and changing Soviet policy on the status of nationalities into a complex system of only partially articulated principles which determined literary viability and status. This chapter will examine the principles governing the literary field in relation to their theoretical sources and to the discourse of socialist realism. Socialist realist writers were "engineers of human souls" who depicted "reality in its revolutionary development" in works that were "national in form, socialist in content." This chapter will also use scholarship on the nationalities question in Soviet policy to ground the concept of a Soviet national literature and to produce a definition of the literary field that applies to the entire Soviet Union, not just Russia.

After chapter 1 establishes the background and governing rules for Soviet literature, chapter 2 will focus on the organizing process for the 1934 Congress. On April 23, 1932, the Politburo issued a resolution "On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organizations," which raised the curtain on the final act of the literary debates of the 1920s. The 1932 resolution liquidated the dominant literary organization, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and its all-Union counterpart, and called for a new writers' union. Two weeks later, the Orgburo issued a resolution naming the members of an organizing committee for the new union. This was intended to be a quick transition, but the official congress of writers, designed to ratify the new union, was repeatedly postponed and gradually grew from a one-day proclamation of socialist realism to a two-week performance emphasizing national literatures. This dissertation will analyze how the organizing committee used the delay to reconcile Moscow's vision of national literatures with the experience of national writers.

While the organizing committee established the centrality of national literatures in general, it did not make strong claims on the nature of individual literatures. The reports on Ukrainian, Belorussian, Tatar, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik literatures were presented on the first two full days of the Congress, after Maxim Gorky's

welcoming evening session.<sup>6</sup> These reports presented claims about their national relations to history and modernity, other nations, and literary concepts such as genius and socialist realism. Chapter 3 will examine the Congress's structure and underlying political dynamics as a framework to read these claims, then analyze how these reports operated in the broader context of the Congress, including speeches by national writers, Russian speeches on specific genres, Suleiman Stal'skii's speech and *ashug* performance in Lezgian celebrating the Congress (followed by a Russian translation), the frequent demands for increased translation, and Gorky's final call to action at the closing session.<sup>7</sup> This will provide insight into the relation between nation and literature in the Soviet Union, as well as identify some of the local traditions, contingencies, and choices driving the development of national literatures.

Focusing on national literatures at the Congress complicates our understanding of Soviet literature as a whole. The Congress was both representative and declarative – it celebrated a multinational literature that came into existence through that celebration. Frequently studied as the foundational moment of socialist realism and Soviet literature for the coming decades, it was also the culmination of literary battles and debates over national identity inherited from previous decades. Issues like shared national epics, literary languages, and politically problematic authors were presented at the Congress as though they were historically determined and completely resolved. Analyzing these patterns produces a nuanced view of the national literary establishments, their claims to national status, and the multifaceted nature of Soviet literary culture.

This dissertation concludes with an analysis of the Azerbaijani delegation as a case study of a national literary establishment. Azerbaijan occupies an intermediate position on the Soviet spectrum between established nationalities that were primarily concerned with protecting their cultural heritage, like the Georgians, and newer ones that were still determining that heritage, like the Turkmen. The new national culture needed to accommodate a multiethnic population with considerable class and ethnic tensions centered around the Baku oil fields, relatives and kindred communities outside the Soviet borders, and a complicated multilingual heritage. Chapter 4 will trace the formation of an official literary community and acceptable literary past to show how the Azerbaijani delegation to the Congress personified many of the tensions animating national literatures as a diverse collective. It will also briefly examine the works of two of the delegates, the playwright Jafar Jabbarly and Samed Vurgun, a poet who was the first chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers of Azerbaijan, to show how Soviet national writers tackled multiple layers of affiliation. Finally, it will look at Azerbaijani literature's place in Soviet and world literature: what does a case like Azerbaijan, and by extension all of the Soviet national literatures, have to offer the broader world of literary scholarship?

Soviet nationalities created a diverse and vibrant multinational culture in response to and in defiance of central pressures. Examining official performances about literature in both Baku and Moscow provides a middle path between the top-down model of Soviet totalitarianism and grassroots dissidence. Compatibility with theoretical models and strategic instrumentality do not invalidate local authenticity or individual creativity. Individuals found ways to adapt or co-opt official positions to allow local beliefs, styles, and priorities to color and shape the development

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<sup>6</sup> By 1934, Gorky was the unquestioned father of Soviet literature. Newspapers, officials, the Congress, and other writers heralded his pre-Revolutionary works as early models of socialist realism, and his novels were among the first Russian literature translated into any national language.

<sup>7</sup> An *ashug* is a bardic performer found in many Turkic and Caucasian cultures, who sings or chants oral compositions, frequently with musical accompaniment.

of Soviet national literatures. For Azerbaijan, as for many republics, this process took place neither at the center nor in the periphery, but in the movement between the two. It is not coincidence that this movement mirrors the master plot of the socialist realist novel. As Clark describes it, the master plot begins with the hero's return to the story's locale and when he encounters difficulty in his task, "usually he goes either to Moscow or to the local 'center'" for assistance.<sup>8</sup> The movement between the periphery and the center maps the hero's progress from spontaneity to consciousness, which he transmits to the local level. This dissertation will discuss how Soviet literature was shaped by the relationship between the periphery and the center and how this trajectory affected the definition of Soviet literature as a whole.

My analysis defines Soviet literature as practice, not just a body of texts. Analyzing literature as text alone risks producing aesthetic justifications for politically motivated strategies and leaves Soviet literature with the perennial problem of "bad art." At the same time, I do not wish to diminish the role of the writer by implying a monolithic or unidirectional relation between literature and power. Literary texts have always been the product of both individual creativity and cultural forces. A text functions as the intersection between the generative minds of the author and the reader, mediated by the public sphere. The Soviet case makes the influence of the public sphere more explicit because the state and state-sponsored literary institutions formalized roles that remained largely unstated in other cultures, or determined by cultural and market forces rather than state ones. This does not necessarily mean that Soviet literature was more strongly determined by extra-textual concerns than other literatures, merely that the relationship is more evident. Furthermore, the Soviet Union's centralization and bureaucratization means that a wealth of materials are now available to help unravel the complex relationships constituting the cultural field of Soviet literature. The term "cultural field" comes from Pierre Bourdieu's work expanding Marx's theories to include non-economic systems. Instead of drawing difficult and perhaps artificial distinctions between literary and extra-literary influences, Bourdieu's approach allows me to step back to view Soviet literature in its broadest sense – as a cultural field incorporating texts, theories, writers, institutions, and literary practices. Each of these elements raises specific questions in the Soviet context.

The 1930s saw the messy, conflicting discourses of Soviet literature narrow into the apparently more orderly discourse of socialist realism. Soviet cultural leaders, led by Stalin, directed this transformation much like a gardener patiently trains, binds, grafts, and prunes a tree into its desired form. Their tools were both subtle and violent, deliberately wielded but guided by a vague and changing idea of the tree's eventual shape. Every tree, of course, has natural principles that limit what a gardener can do without killing it entirely. Every tree has roots; socialist realism was no exception.

### **The Discourse of Socialist Realism**

The rise of socialist realism broadened the space between literary practice and official discussions about that practice. This makes contemporary scholarship more useful as discursive examples than as analysis. Until the 1980s, Western scholars tended to focus on official prescriptions, disparaging descriptions, or both. C. Vaughan James (1973) and Herman Ermolaev (1977) tracked socialist realism's development, but treated it as internally consistent with what it proclaimed and as a facade for state oppression. Clark's *The Soviet Novel* (1981) heralded a new approach: analyzing how socialist realist novels implemented official models, thus correlating prescriptive and descriptive definitions. Although this dissertation focuses on

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<sup>8</sup> Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 258.

the practices of socialist realism, rather than the products, it continues Clark's emphasis on how socialist realism was implemented. Socialist realism was all-Union from its conception, but it was first defined in and by Russian, so any attempt to explore it must begin with that influence.

Russian heritage provided a rich soil for the accelerated yet sturdy growth of literature. Although Soviet theorists emphasized socialist realism's realist roots, the practice drew much of its strength from the romantic and populist traditions. In Russia, all of these movements shared a belief in the writer's cultural centrality, beginning with the romantic concept of the poet as prophet. Divine inspiration, conceived in terms borrowed from Greek antiquity and Biblical prophecy, guided individual geniuses to produce works that could inspire society. Realism replaced this model of creativity with an emphasis on the work's social concerns. Belinsky's prescription was widely accepted: art should reflect reality, manifesting historical development and universal truths through individual details, and thus encourage social transformation. Although this tasked writers to push society forward through more prosaic methods, Russian literary culture never abandoned the writer's messianic aspect. Writers also embraced romantic notions of national spirit. Instead of divine inspiration speaking through the prophetic genius, national spirit could move the prophet's pen. The society Russian writers were inspiring, reflecting, and transforming was significantly Russian, albeit more linguistically than ethnically demarked.<sup>9</sup> Literature struggled to balance Russia's role at the center of an empire with its sense of national belatedness compared with European literary models.

The Bolsheviks faced a similar problem of belatedness with respect to Karl Marx's model of historical development. According to Marx, societies progressed along one path, through the stages of capitalism to socialism and on to communism. Since Russia was the least-developed capitalist country in Europe, how could it have a socialist revolution? Lenin answered this question through Russia's unique status as both a capitalist state and an underdeveloped colony in relation to Europe. This made Russia the weakest link in the capitalist chain, a natural place for revolutionaries to strike. Further, he argued, Marxism had a flaw: once the proletariat grows powerful enough to rebel, capitalists would recognize the threat of revolution and undermine it by granting incremental improvements. To solve this, the proletariat needs a dedicated, professional vanguard to lead it to revolution before the trade union mentality undermines the chance of radical transformation. This vanguard could effectively accelerate Marx's historical progression, skipping the advanced stages of capitalism to reach socialism.<sup>10</sup>

The revolutionary vanguard also applied to literature. Marx believed that culture was a superstructure upon a socioeconomic base, so that cultural transformation followed socioeconomic changes. This meant that literature owed less to individual creativity or

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the different forms of Russian national and imperial identity, see Susan Layton's *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), the collection *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, edited by Daniel Brower and Edward Lazzarini (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation, and the Culture of the Golden Age*, edited by Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998); Ewa Thompson's *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), and Harsha Ram's *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003). *When Russia Learned to Read* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), by Jeffrey Brooks, traces how readers adapted to national identity claims in popular literature, which is particularly relevant for socialist realism. See especially pages 214-16.

<sup>10</sup> For brevity, this summary condenses Lenin's ideas on the vanguard party from "What Is To Be Done?" and on Russia's relation to Europe from "Imperialism, the Highest Form of Capitalism." Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii V.I. Lenina* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1967). "Shto delat'?", 6:1-192. "Imperializm, kak vysshiaia stadiia kapitalizma," 27:299-426.



inspiration, and more to the writer's class position. Lenin's vanguard theory, however, suggested that culture could drive socioeconomic progress. Thus, committed socialist writers could produce revolutionary works that accelerated literary development and pushed society as a whole towards socialism and communism. In other words, literature could be the DNA, not just the thumbprint. Under the old Marxist understanding, writers necessarily produced works appropriate to their time and place. Under Marxism-Leninism, writers had a social responsibility to orient their writing progressively, towards socialism and communism, the ensuing time and place.

Literature's political function justified Party interference and, ultimately, control. The broad question of how literature served society could be thus reinterpreted: how does literature serve the Party? Lenin's argument in his 1905 "On Party Organization and Party Literature," "Литература должна стать партийной,"<sup>11</sup> [Literature must become party (literature)] gave a starting place. *Partiinost'* (generally translated as party-mindedness) requires not just philosophical alignment, but Party control over every aspect of the literary process. In addition to obeying Party dictates, this means subordinating aesthetic interests to political ones, particularly the demands of ideology and the needs of mass readership. The Party purported to serve the interests of the proletariat and – given unfortunate Russian realities – the peasants, so party literature needed to be linguistically, stylistically, and thematically accessible to this public. This prohibited avant-garde literary experimentation in favor of familiar, well-established genres, chronological narration, identifiable heroes, and clear ideological frameworks. Folkloric elements helped literature accommodate peasant and national audiences, leading in many cases to new fields of "fakelore."<sup>12</sup>

The revolutionary period and 1920s saw bitter political battles over theoretical questions such as whether only proletarian writers could properly portray the proletariat, how to depict heroism without resorting to idealism or revolutionary romanticism, whether sympathetic portraits of class enemies undermined a work's ideological message, how adventurous proletarian audiences could be when handed new literary forms, and the appropriate uses of satire. Victories in these debates were largely strategic, not theoretical, and were frequently reversed. By the late 1920s, Stalin's personal preferences, couched in theoretical terms, served as the guiding aesthetic. The April 23, 1932 resolution heralded the end of proletarian literature's dominance with RAPP's demise, setting the stage for a new official literature that would synthesize Russian literary heritage and the contemporary needs of the Soviet state: socialist realism.

### ***Socialist in Form***

In *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic* (1992), Régine Robin analyzes how the term "socialist realism" evolved from May 1932 – when it was first officially used – through the 1934 Congress and beyond.<sup>13</sup> She persuasively argues that the term's power derived less from debates

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<sup>11</sup> Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii V.I. Lenina*, 12:100.

<sup>12</sup> Ursula Justus discusses this phenomenon in her article, "Vozvrashchenie v rai: sotsrealizm i fol'klor" (*Sotsrealisticheskii kanon*. Edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Hans Günther. Saint Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2000). The term comes from Roger Abrahams and Susan Kalcik's article, "Folklore and Cultural Pluralism" (*Folklore in the Modern World*. 1978).

<sup>13</sup> "Socialist realism" first appeared in an article by Ivan Gronskii in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* on May 23, 1932. Gronskii alternated between claiming credit for the term (as did Valerii Kirpotin) and attributing it to Stalin. A. Kemp-Welch gives a clear summary of the various claims in *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia, 1928-39* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 132.

over its definition and more from its presupposition. Articles and speeches about the goals, orientation, method, style, theory, bases, questions, and problems of socialist realism all treated the fact of socialist realism itself as already existing and beyond question. From its inception, socialist realism had a past of “anticipatory models,” like Gorky’s *Mother*, in which “socialist realism was already at work even though neither the concept nor its content was available.”<sup>14</sup> By naming socialist realism, the Soviet establishment (in the persona of either Stalin or Ivan Gronsksii, editor of *Izvestiia* and a high-level literary bureaucrat) was “giving a name to what had been nameless” and thus rendering it discussable.<sup>15</sup>

Socialist realism thus came into existence as an already full-formed discourse, like Athena springing from the head of Zeus. Michel Foucault uses the term “discourse” to analyze structures that define ways of knowing, usually organized around the “same object” (such as the literary text), “type of enunciation” (mass spectacle), “existence of a series of permanent and internally consistent concepts” (Marxism-Leninism), or “identity of opinions” (Stalinism).<sup>16</sup> It is a set of practices, not just a set of semantic relations. To properly analyze discourses, we must treat them not “as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things.”<sup>17</sup> This *more*, which overflows in the Soviet case, is the proper object of study: “the totality of the constrained and constraining meanings that pass through social relations.”<sup>18</sup> Discourse limits appropriate topics, forms of speech, and speakers, and usually succeeds in limiting thought accordingly. It is full of contradictions, but assumes “a principle of cohesion that organizes the discourse and restores to it its hidden unity.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, a discourse is not “an ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity of contradictions, and resolves them in the calm unity of coherent thought,” but “rather a space of multiple dimensions; a set of different oppositions whose levels and roles must be described.”<sup>20</sup> Yet one of the purposes of discourse is to ensure that those levels and roles are assumed as true within the discursive realm, and thus remain undescribed. The presupposition of socialist realism strengthened its discursive power.

Further, because socialist realism could thus escape clear definition, it could assimilate a spread of authorial positions; writers could use the same templates without agreeing upon the definition. The term embraces writers who used it as precautionary vocabulary precisely for its vagueness, writers with strong convictions about its definition, and writers hoping it would come to mean something altogether new. Socialist realism “thus becomes a very fuzzy framework, yet it invites emotional investment because it designates the future of Soviet literature, a literature

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<sup>14</sup> Régine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic* (Translated by Catherine Porter. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 49.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, “On the Archaeology of the Sciences,” in *Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume Two: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (Edited by James Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley. New York: The New Press, 1998) pp. 312, 314, 316, 318.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, “Le discours ne doit pas être pris comme...,” in *Dits et écrits III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 123. Translated by Karlis Racevskis, Introduction to *Critical Essays on Michel Foucault* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co, 1999), 6.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, 149.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 155.

endowed with hopes of greatness...”<sup>21</sup> This, Robin explains, is how socialist realism was invoked at the 1934 Congress, primarily by political speakers.<sup>22</sup>

The 1934 Congress approved writers’ union statutes establishing socialist realism as an official doctrine:

Социалистический реализм, являясь основным методом советской художественной литературы и литературной критики, требует от художника правдивого, исторически-конкретного изображения действительности в ее революционном развитии. При этом правдивость и историческая конкретность художественного изображения действительности должны сочетаться с задачей идейной перделки и воспитания трудящихся в духе социализма.<sup>23</sup>

Socialist realism, the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism, demands of the artist a truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. At the same time, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must coincide with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism.

This dense ideological cluster combines several essential elements of socialist realism – truthfulness, concreteness, reality, revolutionary development, artistic representation, ideological transformation, education, workers, and the spirit of socialism – without clearly expressing the relationships between them. We can loosely divide them into a methodological approach (truthfulness, concreteness, artistic representation), subject matter (reality in its revolutionary development), and desired effect (ideological transformation, education of workers, spirit of socialism), but these categories can be reassigned with no loss of meaning. This combination of ideologically over-determined and historically under-determined terminology with weak linking terms (coincide) allows socialist realism to be both richly and loosely defined.

Soviet discourse, like Soviet bureaucracy, was ideally fractal, with each section, however small, reiterating the larger pattern. Overall, socialist realism achieved this effect, although substantial differences emerge when comparing the national sections to the Russian ones. The system could not completely reshape individuals, languages, and pre-existing literatures’ traditions to the discursive model. While Russian writers and communities also struggled to accommodate their variations within the model, since the underlying trajectory assumed the unmarked Russian category, this was easier to accomplish. National literatures had to accommodate the gap between their marked status and Russian in addition to individual, linguistic, and literary specificity. One of the main purposes of the discourse, of course, was to mask this effort. Standardized elements helped reinforce the pattern across the national spectrum. These elements – including quotes, official definitions, structural templates, and slogans – originated in Russian, but their very brevity gave them broader scope. They were translatable precisely to the extent that the target languages could abstract them from a specifically Russian history and context; while the Ukrainian Pushkin could not be considered without the Russian link, the Ukrainian engineer could.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 44-47.

<sup>23</sup> Reprinted in Iudin, *Ob ustave soiuza sovetskikh pisatelei*, 26.

The statutes' definition of socialist realism is thus productive both across languages – where the abstract nouns could reproduce independently from the grammatical links between them – and as presupposed constructs. Socialist realist slogans function metonymically. Phrases like “engineers of human souls,” “national in form, socialist in content,” and “reality in its revolutionary development” substitute for separate aspects of socialist realism without fixing their definitions. More important than definitions were credentials. All three of these terms were attributed to Stalin, some more plausibly than others. The Central Committee representative Andrei Zhdanov used “reality in its revolutionary development” and the “engineers of human souls” in his opening speech at the 1934 Congress.<sup>24</sup> Stalin's formula “national in form, socialist in content” initially concluded “proletarian in content,” but he had changed it to the now classic phrasing by June 1930.<sup>25</sup> Before socialist realism emerged, the slogan described Soviet culture as a whole, which illustrates Robin's argument on presupposition. This does not make them hollow, but merely, as Robin suggests, fuzzy. The aspects those slogans represent could fluctuate and adapt without changing the outward face, preserving the illusion of discursive constancy and equivalence, but it does not mean those aspects were wholly arbitrary. Unlike a numeric equation, where zeroes can be freely substituted for each other, the theoretical equation that a slogan solves leaves linguistic traces. We can follow these traces back to their sources to reconstitute the theories producing a specific formula.

The core phrase “reality in its revolutionary development” attempts to reconcile the conflicting methods of realism and idealism (frequently mischaracterized as romanticism), what Rufus Mathewson calls “that amalgam of present and future, of *is* and *should be*.”<sup>26</sup> Clark identifies this as socialist realism's “modal schizophrenia,” a collapse of the novelistic timeframe of reality and the epic time of the revolution, which is both past and future perfect.<sup>27</sup> This provides a blueprint for readers to reimagine their own present as both developing towards and already achieving the goals of the revolution.

Literature as blueprint befits another of the common slogans of socialist realism prominent at the 1934 Congress from Zhdanov's opening onwards: “the engineers of human souls.” Zhdanov clearly cited Stalin, “Товарищ Сталин назвал наших писателей инженерами человеческих душ.”<sup>28</sup> [Comrade Stalin called our writers the engineers of human souls]. According to Gorky, Stalin used this description as a toast in an October, 1932 meeting with the organizing committee.<sup>29</sup> This slogan replaces earlier notions of writer-as-prophet or writer-as-mirror with a metaphor appropriate to the age of modernization. The engineer is an industrial prophet: he doesn't actually do the labor, but moves a project from ideal to reality by creating the blueprints to build machines and factories, ensuring that they run properly, and

<sup>24</sup> *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s"ezd sovetskikh pisatelei 1934: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1934. Reprint with appendix edited by S.S. Lenevskii. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 4. Hereafter, *PVSSP*.

<sup>25</sup> Iosif Stalin, *Marksizm i natsional'no-kolonial'nyi vopros* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1934), 194; Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>26</sup> Rufus Mathewson, *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), 231. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>27</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> *PVSSP*, 4. The phrase was also attributed to Stalin on the front pages of *Pravda* and *Literaturnaia gazeta* on the same day: August 17, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> Kemp-Welch, *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia*, 131. Valentin Kataev claims the phrase's original author was actually Yuri Olesha. See John and Carol Garrard, *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 256.

repairing them when problems arise.<sup>30</sup> An engineer operates in the proverbial real world, restricted by structural principles and laws of physics. He serves the proletariat even though he is not necessarily of them. The engineer need not be well-educated outside of his narrow purpose, however, which makes him a relatively accessible member of the intelligentsia to the less-educated classes. The term thus reassimilates the prophet into bureaucratic and technocratic norms. Jeffrey Brooks reads this appellation as a veiled threat, asking, “[W]ho could read ‘engineers’ in 1934 without recalling the Shakhty trial of 1928 and the arrest of half the engineers and technicians of the Donbas, or the industrial party affair of 1930, which also had cut deeply into the technical intelligentsia.” The parallel between literature and other industrial fields thus served to remind everyone involved of the state’s power. “To equate writers with engineers under these circumstances was to bring literature in line with other occupations that had been reconstituted to fit the requirements of the emergent stalinist order.”<sup>31</sup> If the engineer metaphor links writers to cooperative models of production, the modifying clause, “of human souls” implies that readers’ souls are mutable and malleable, steel to be worked, reforged, and poured into new models of being. “Human souls” acknowledges both the individual and the collective, converts ideas of national spirit and religious soul into social terms, and treats *homo Sovieticus* as a work in progress.

### ***Literature with Purpose***

The slogan “engineers of human souls” assumed that, just like engineering projects, writers’ output should be useful. Soviet literature could be evaluated by how well it succeeded in modifying the cultural superstructure to mobilize and transform the base. Literature showed the Soviet masses how to be Soviet.

In the 1929 speech to Ukrainian writers, Stalin reminded them that literature needed to be didactic. Even the lessons that literature taught were instrumental, not fundamental. Literature that spoke to the masses would encourage them to read, creating the educable workforce necessary for industrial and military advances. Literature would prepare the diverse populations of the Soviet Union for tractor manuals, courses on complex machinery, and military tactics. This was why Soviet nationalities needed their own literatures: “Без этого двинуться вперед, поднять миллионные массы на высшую ступень культуры, и тем самым сделать нашу промышленность, наше сельское хозяйство обороноспособными, – без этого мы не сможем.”<sup>32</sup> [Without this we are not going to be able to move forward, raise millions of the masses to a higher degree of culture, and thereby prepare our industry and our agriculture for defense.] Even the ideological content, in this formulation, was secondary to literature’s didactic purpose.

As of 1926, approximately 45% of Russians and 41% of Ukrainians were literate. Other Western nationalities ranged between 30% and 40%, with the Central Asian populations in the single digits.<sup>33</sup> Massive literacy campaigns improved this situation, but meant that most of the literate public was only marginally so. Literature needed to persuade them of the appeal and value of reading. Public performances broadcast literature’s centrality to national and Soviet identity. National delegations visited Moscow and Leningrad to celebrate their cultural

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<sup>30</sup> As with writers, Soviet engineers in the 1930s were primarily male and, more importantly for this slogan, popularly engendered as masculine.

<sup>31</sup> Brooks, “Socialist Realism in *Pravda*” (*Slavic Review* 53:4), 982.

<sup>32</sup> *VKhI*, 104. Trans., 63-4.

<sup>33</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 127.

specificity in literature and the other arts in *dekady*, ten-day festivals of national culture. These events educated the Russian public about the nationalities' existence and definitions, and confirmed Moscow's interest and respect to the national public back home. This process reached its apex at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, but writers were prominent in other spectacles, like the Seventeenth Party Congress earlier that year.

Socialist realism produced a flood of literary works. Indeed, saturation was one of its primary goals.<sup>34</sup> To fulfill its didactic objectives, the main genres were "newspaper" poetry and prose, children's literature, drama, and the construction novel. The last may have been socialist realism's most advanced form, and was certainly the most widely cited in defining socialist realism, but the more accessible modes were instrumental in creating and training the novel's readership. Short stories and topical poems appropriate for the newspapers and reading over the radio shaped public expectations for literature as a whole, saturated public discourse with the accepted tropes of Soviet power, provided models to those hoping to become writers someday, and reinforced the image of the Soviet Union as a garden of advanced culture. Children's literature was too often openly didactic, beyond what its readership would tolerate, but when properly balanced, it eased young readers into Soviet discourse and established expectations for life and literature. Drama, like oral genres such as the Turkic *ashug* songs, helped reach audiences that weren't sufficiently literate for other modes.

In *The Soviet Novel*, Clark analyzes socialist realist novels to extract the general principles of construction, which she terms the master plot. This plot reproduces, through the positive hero's life, "the stages of historical progress as described in Marxist-Leninist theory," as a dialectical progression from spontaneity to consciousness.<sup>35</sup> The socialist realist canon absorbed those works capable of adapting to this parable, making them only socialist realist post-factum.<sup>36</sup> For Clark, socialist realism is a symbolic system, a language that produces endless variations on the master plot. These provide ritualized "object lessons" on how the individual can become disciplined and take his place in a society that has undergone the same path from spontaneity to consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

By looking at newspaper usage of the term, Brooks locates socialist realism within the authoritative discourse of the state. As such, its meaning is contextual, produced in relation to other elements of the monologic political discourse. Writers negotiated its aesthetic qualities with the authorities, but those were incidental to its primary function: "the representation of the whole Soviet project in an age of calamities." The purpose of socialist realism, for Brooks, is to repress the pain of state terror: "The discourse and the literature it begot were shaped by an imperative to view the Soviet world other than through the catastrophes of that brutal era."<sup>38</sup>

Lahusen recontextualizes Clark's master plot in *How Life Writes the Book* (1997), by showing how an individual socialist realist novel assimilated and corrected its historical material. His project examines the writing and rewriting process of Vasilii Azhaev's construction novel, *Far from Moscow*. Like Brooks, Lahusen is interested in how socialist realism reconfigures state violence. Lahusen depicts Azhaev reworking personal experience to apply the master plot, then

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<sup>34</sup> I agree with Dobrenko's position that "Socialist Realism is important precisely because of its extensiveness," and thus should be considered in full, rather than just its canonical highlights. Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), xv.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Brooks, "Socialist Realism in *Pravda*," 991.

further revising the text through various editions in response to editors, critics, and readers. This process unpacks the collective nature of Soviet literary composition, revealing the extent to which the Soviet writer constructed himself (or, less often, herself) in response to cultural forces. In Lahusen's account, the purpose of socialist realism is twofold: to disguise reality's conflicts with ideology and to reforge writers into appropriate specimens of *homo Sovieticus*.

Dobrenko's twinned studies, *The Making of the State Reader* (1997) and *The Making of the State Writer* (1999), expand these questions of socialist realism as practice by examining its development in the 1920s and 1930s. Dobrenko reads socialist realism as an aesthetic project with extra-aesthetic goals. His analysis presents a dynamic system that evolves in response to political pressures, internal literary currents, readers' demands, and Soviet graphomania. The real products of socialist realism, he suggests, are not literary texts, but "people: readers and writers."<sup>39</sup>

Dobrenko's more recent book, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (2007), takes this approach still further. Here, socialist realism's true product is not just its immediate participants, but reality itself. Stalinist socialism, Dobrenko argues, is foremost an aesthetic and representational project. Because Russia was both economically and culturally unprepared for socialist modernization, building socialism meant building the appearance of socialism. Soviet culture celebrates the means of production over the products themselves:

The Soviet cult of labor is based on abolition of a fundamental rational component of any labor – its result. [...] The product of labor is dissolved in the grandeur of the project: the Soviet Union did not produce footwear, clothing, dwellings, or food products, but rather made "cast iron and steel" and "factories and blast furnaces," and waged a "harvest battle." The result was not a product as such but rather, as Mayakovsky so precisely put it, "socialism built in battles." The product itself ceases to be self-sufficient, the process of producing it becoming self-sufficient instead.<sup>40</sup>

Capitalism pays labor with products. By elevating production in the absence of product, Soviet culture eliminates the worker's interest in producing. To replace that interest, since it fails to transform oppressive capitalist labor relations into somehow rewarding and liberating socialist labor, Soviet culture transforms it into art. This art creates and glorifies labor as it should be, not as it is. Thus, the true product of Soviet socialism is socialist realism, and the true product of socialist realism is Soviet socialism. The reciprocal nature of this process reproduces Marxist labor relations, while trapping the Soviet subject within a comprehensive discourse that replaces (by producing) reality. "[T]he foundation of Socialist Realism is a collision of reality and ideal: Socialist Realism is not narrative, but discourse that produces – by the mediation of narrative (via 'master-plot') – reality."<sup>41</sup>

This provides an explanation for the temporal schizophrenia Clark identified in *The Soviet Novel*. Socialist realism's purpose was to fulfill consumer demands via the consumption of discursive reality, to replace products with ideology. Within this discursive dimension, the promises of the future were thus not only visible in the present, they were already present. "Whereas Futurism spoke of tomorrow, Socialist Realism laid claim not only (or even primarily)

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<sup>39</sup> Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer*, xviii.

<sup>40</sup> Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (Translated by Jesse M. Savage. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), xviii.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

to tomorrow but to *today*. Everything that Socialist Realism produced already existed, had already taken place.”<sup>42</sup> What Clark saw as a collapse of the distinction between present and future, based on historical knowledge of the disjuncture between Soviet production and its promises, Dobrenko reads as overlapping real and discursive visions of the present. At its apogee, socialist realism completely replaces the real present with the discursive one.

Dobrenko productively parallels the stages of political discourse with the development of socialist realism, showing that the Soviet terror follows formalist aesthetic stages. He correlates the dominant tropes of Soviet progress: conquest over nature (victories in the physical realm), then reforging class enemies through labor (the political realm), and finally the inner transformation of the socialist realist hero (the aesthetic realm). The final stage corresponds to the rise of Stalinist terror, as the elimination of criminals and enemies within socialist realism in favor of the cult of the hero reflects the extermination of those figures in Soviet reality.

Scholars have traditionally responded to the overlap between the political field and socialist realism by treating the latter as propaganda, a purely political phenomenon. Dobrenko claims this formula should be reversed: the political field is part of socialist realism and can best be understood aesthetically. “Socialist Realism’s basic function was not propaganda, however, but rather to *produce reality by aestheticizing it*; it was the ultimate radical aesthetic practice. [...] This is why Socialist Realism must ultimately be examined as an *aesthetic phenomenon*.”<sup>43</sup> In this, Dobrenko approaches Boris Groys’s position that the totalizing discourse of avant-garde art could lead to cultural totalitarianism.<sup>44</sup> In both cases, totalitarianism (or the attempt therein) becomes an aesthetic project. Although he acknowledges the overlapping fields of political power and aesthetic culture, Dobrenko treats socialist realism as a politically motivated aesthetic system, rather than an aesthetically framed political system.

This is where our approaches to Soviet literature differ. I reject the reduction of the Soviet cultural field to propaganda, but likewise refuse Dobrenko’s call to analyze it on purely aesthetic terms. The latter risks treating socialist realism’s attempt to construct Soviet reality as more successful than it was. Where Dobrenko looks at how the internal principles of socialist realism shaped political discourse, I am more interested in questions of agency: What happens to the creative process when literature becomes part of the Soviet “political economy”? Who writes and why? How do individual writers navigate the nascent discourse of socialist realism? What motivates them to contribute to this system? What effects do their attempts to survive the organizing process and flourish within the new writers’ union have on the final shape of Soviet literature? How do subordinated narratives of class, gender, nationality, and self interact with socialist realism’s master plot? How do national literatures engage with nationalities policy and the established literary elite in Moscow to negotiate the terms for a multinational discourse of socialist realism? Given that the Soviet project aimed to be totalizing, where and why do gaps remain? Which of the underlying discursive axioms are historically contingent rather than aesthetically constructed? What positions do writers take within Soviet discourse and within other discursive fields available to them? How do those intersections change over time? How does the experience of Soviet discourse differ at the center and the margins? across the margins?

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 5. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 4. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>44</sup> Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).



These questions are heavily influenced by the last decade or so of scholarship on subjectivity and self-authorship in the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> Rather than treat agency as transparent, my reading assumes that writers' identities and interests are dynamic, contingent, and constructed. They engage with socialist realism in complex, non-deterministic ways, shaping both its and their own identities through these interactions. To borrow Karen Petrone's apt phrasing, "I see individual actors shaping discourse even as it shapes them."<sup>46</sup> Socialist realism, in turn, is not a closed system, but part of the ongoing project of Soviet literature as enacted by multiple agents. Obviously, this approach benefits from my focus on the early 1930s, rather than a later period when socialist realism was more fully established. But I also believe it is misleading to situate Soviet literature in its Moscow stronghold and ignore what happens when Soviet identity and the demands of socialist realism encounter other literary traditions and cultural patterns. Precisely because socialist realism *was* a totalizing strategy, its liminal spaces are essential. The borders of socialist realism define the center.

### ***National in Form***

The Soviet Union inherited Russia's broad, multilingual, multiconfessional, multiethnic empire. Well before the Revolution, the Bolsheviks rejected the possibility of a purely international or post-national movement. The peoples of the Russian empire were simply not ready. Lenin decided that nations, not just classes, were major actors in history: nations moved towards communism. At Lenin's request, Stalin published an article in 1913 on "The Nationality Question and Social Democracy," which defined nations (and nationalities) as historically determined entities. (Stalin distinguished between nations, which had started the capitalist stages, and nationalities, which were pre-capitalist and lacked full-formed national identities. This distinction was routinely confused or ignored in later policy discussions and, for our purposes, the two are interchangeable.) Nations had the right to self-determination. However, Stalin qualified, the Bolsheviks were committed to defending the rights of the working class within each nation, which in practice meant that nations with developed bourgeois and capitalist controlled societies could not be allowed to secede, since they would inevitably oppress the workers. Nor could nations *without* capitalist classes be allowed to secede, as they were too vulnerable to foreign imperialist powers. Instead, nations should be granted rights to limited autonomy as national territories inside the socialist homeland. Only as autonomous nationalities protected by a strong socialist state could nations relax their nationalist defenses and work together towards an international class solidarity that would transcend and eventually replace national identity. Thus, the safest way to end nationalism was to push for the rights of nations to the *correct* form of self-determination. In 1914, Lenin expanded upon this argument in "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination." He argued that nations should be divided according to

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<sup>45</sup> For example, see Jochen Hellbeck's and Irina Paperno's work on how Soviet citizens fashioned themselves through diaries (Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006; Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009; and assorted articles), or Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone's excellent survey of approaches to this problem (including Hellbeck and Paperno), "Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective" (*Slavic Review* 67:4 (Winter 2008), 967-986). Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995) provided an earlier model for discussing how Soviet subjects learned to "speak Bolshevik," or use Stalinist discourses, without making claims about their political beliefs.

<sup>46</sup> Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 8.

their stages of capitalist development, so that the Party needed different approaches towards the nationalism of advanced nations and that of the oppressed nations that constituted Russia's colonies and subsequently the Soviet borders. While nationalism was inherently a dangerous bourgeois phenomenon for the former type, oppressed nations needed to develop their national cultures to progress towards communism and were thus theoretically capable of a healthy form of nationalism that should be officially encouraged.

After the Bolsheviks took over, the civil war proved the desperate need to both accommodate and control the periphery. Given the theoretical need to promote national development, the question of how to treat these populations was threefold: Which groups constitute nations or nationalities? At what stage of development are they? How can the Soviets hasten that process of development? Answering these questions correctly was the key to holding on to the borderlands and strengthening Soviet culture within each population. Stalin believed that nations were historically determined, but Soviet policy treated individual membership as innate.<sup>47</sup> As Francine Hirsch shows in *Empire of Nations*, ethnography was critical to determine national identity when local populations identified through other forms of affiliation, like tribe, language, or religion.<sup>48</sup> Hirsch calls this process "double assimilation: the assimilation of a diverse population into nationality categories and, simultaneously, the assimilation of those nationally categorized groups into the Soviet state and society."<sup>49</sup> The first form of assimilation was essential to the second. Underlying Soviet policy was the belief that everyone had one – and only one – national identity. Once those were established, telescoping territorial divisions would ensure that everyone was represented by a national soviet, village, district, region, or republic that corresponded to their national identity.

In practice, strategic needs governed the division between nations – entitled to republic status – and nationalities, which only received national regions within other national republics or the Russian federal republic. Most prominent among groups denied national status were the Tatars, whose cultural development far exceeded eventual republic-level nations like the Kyrgyz or Turkmen. Tatarstan, however, ranged too far into Russia's traditional boundaries. Instead, a ring of national republics shielded the Russian federation at the Soviet Union's heart. In his

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<sup>47</sup> For much of the twentieth century, Western scholarship on Soviet nationalities began with this essentialist definition of nations, although it generally argued that the Soviet Union was repressing its nations. In this model, the Soviet Union was a continuation of Russia's imperial project. This trajectory is epitomized by Robert Conquest's epithet for Stalin, "the breaker of nations." As the nation was reinterpreted as a cultural construction and as the national differences in the Soviet Union became more visible, however, many scholars argued that the Soviet Union was, instead, the maker of nations. At its simplest, this model reverses the earlier path of causality. However, it can allow for dynamic definitions of the nation, making it the site of power negotiation between central and local authorities and between authorities and local populations. These attempt to account for the differences between Soviet nationalities by examining Soviet practice. They emphasize the highly contingent nature of Soviet national definition and development, as well as the ambiguities inherent in national performance and identification. Fowkes, Martin, and Suny examine the nationalities policy as a whole to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union. See Ben Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union: A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*; and Suny, *The Revenge of the Past*. Adrienne Edgar's *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Yuri Slezkine's *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) explore how the policy shaped individual nations, the Turkmens and Jews respectively, while Douglas Northrop looks at the relation between gender, religion, and nationality in Uzbekistan in *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 14.

influential essay, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” Yuri Slezkine compares this effect to Soviet housing: nationalities each got a room, but the Russians kept the hall, corridor, and “the kitchen where all the major decisions were made.”<sup>50</sup>

Russia occupied a unique position as the elder brother in the brotherhood of Soviet nations and as the center of power. Russian was the unmarked, neutral category in Soviet life, while every other nationality was marked. Although this was standard practice, it was not uncontested. Even at the Congress, one of the national delegates asked plaintively, “А есть ли человек безнациональный? Пока что нет. Так кого же называют националом? Всякого не русского (может быть и не украинца), но всякого, кого при царизме называли инородцем.”<sup>51</sup> [Is there a non-national person? So far, none. So then whom do we call a national? Anyone who isn’t a Russian (and perhaps not Ukrainian), but anyone who under tsarism we called a non-Russian.] This was, he concluded, old Russian imperial chauvinism in a new form. However biased the system was, in early Soviet discourse, as Slezkine indicates, the opposite of “national” was “Russian.”<sup>52</sup> Although Russian culture maintained its centrality, until the second part of the 1930s, it was subsumed into Soviet culture, while other national cultures maintained their specificity within the Soviet designation. This is why there was no official report on the status of Russian literature at the 1934 Congress; most of the talks at the Congress focused on Russian literature and included ‘national’ writers as a nod towards the official policy of multinationalism. The Union of Soviet Writers only added a separate union for the Russian Republic in 1958, over twenty years after unions were formed for the other national republics.<sup>53</sup> The assumed equivalence between Russian and Soviet, which this dissertation attempts to unravel, is thus an understanding internal to the Soviet system as well as a scholarly one.

Russians were not the only historically advanced nationality. Some policies, like educational quotas, treated Western Slavs, Germans, Georgians, Armenians, Jews, and the Baltic peoples as advanced beyond the need for official promotion.<sup>54</sup> Russia’s sheer numbers, however, meant that more often, nationalities policy applied to everyone except the Russians. Official encouragement of national development focused on what Slezkine identified as “a state-sponsored conflation of language, ‘culture,’ territory and quota-fed bureaucracy.”<sup>55</sup> Martin qualified the latter as “a national elite,” as quotas primarily operated within the national territories.<sup>56</sup> In other words, each nationality should have a national territory, governed by a local elite in the national language, which served as the basis of a safely Soviet national culture.

Culture, in this process, was restricted to production and performance. Questions of daily life – such as housing, kinship relations and tribal loyalties, education, and vocation – were to be purely Sovietized: the same apartments from one end of the Soviet Union to the other, with the same relatives inhabiting them, sending children to the same schools to be trained for the same employment opportunities and married in the same registration offices, all overseen by the same Party structures. National culture was restricted to communicative, ritual, and above all artistic

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<sup>50</sup> Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism” (*Slavic Review* 50:2, 1994), 444.

<sup>51</sup> Sarmat Koserati (Northern Ossetia). *PVSSP*, 625.

<sup>52</sup> Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” pp. 425, 435. Slezkine also uses the term “unmarked” to describe Russian territory.

<sup>53</sup> Excepting, of course, those regions which became Soviet republics later, such as the Baltics.

<sup>54</sup> Soviet policy treated Jewishness as a national category, not a religious one.

<sup>55</sup> Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” 414.

<sup>56</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 10.

practices deemed compatible with doubled national and socialist identity. The arts both asserted national identity – through language, motifs, and topics – and demonstrated the flowering of Soviet cultural diversity. Only a socialist country had such time for the arts. Artistic production and reception created a healthy dialectical space that could move culture forward, maintaining national specificity while celebrating internationalism.

Literature was the first and clearest field for this process, but socialist realism that was “national in form” governed the visual arts, music, architecture, folk crafts, and the performing arts. The same marginally educated population that made drama essential to Soviet literature made opera the pinnacle of musical production, since it was the easiest to adapt to didactic purposes. Each Soviet nation, as Marina Frolova-Walker demonstrates, needed its own national opera.<sup>57</sup> (Smaller nationalities needed only folk music.) Composers were sent to Central Asia to adapt traditional musical motifs, frequently understood via Western Orientalist tropes, and national epics, as determined by the national literatures, to the stage. Frolova-Walker traces several stages in this process:

First, the culture of each republic developed according to Moscow’s directives, making them, to this extent, colonial cultures. Second, these cultural imports were consistently presented as authentic indigenous developments. Third, the burgeoning intelligentsia within each republic largely identified with these cultural developments and made their own contributions within the boundaries set by Moscow’s rules. We could even say that later in the century these colonial creations had been assimilated and endowed with some degree of authenticity in the eyes of each republic’s populace. If, following Eric Hobsbawm, we regard nationalism as a network of invented traditions, then in the case of the Soviet republics, we can say that various peoples acquiesced in the invention of traditions by others on their behalf.<sup>58</sup>

National musical canons were thus assimilated as their origin stories faded from memory. Of course, operas and folk songs retained lyrics in the national language, which was key to fulfilling Stalin’s dictate that culture be “national in form.” Because language was a more essential component of literature, national writers had to be fluent in their national language, making the localization more direct than it was for music. Nevertheless, rumors continued to circulate that Russian translators corrected and improved national writers, making them more literary.<sup>59</sup> In this argument, many national writers only became “real” writers in Russian translation. Even without this highly disputed influence, national writers certainly adapted Moscow’s models to their own works. Soviet literature encompassed many national satellites, but they rarely escaped the centripetal pull of Moscow’s orbit.

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<sup>57</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, “‘National in Form, Socialist in Content’: Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51:2 (Summer 1998), pp. 331-371.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 338-9.

<sup>59</sup> These accusations tended not to be made in print, but remained part of the early image of national literatures in general and were attached to some specific writers who rose to prominence later, such as Aitmatov. In fact, Soviet translators frequently omitted literary allusions unfamiliar to a Russian audience when translating national works into Russian, sometimes replacing them with Western references, and amplified the explicitly pro-Soviet content. Whether this improved the texts is a matter of perspective.

## **The Cultural Field of Soviet Literature**

In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu modifies Marx's claims that history and contemporary society can be explained through a strict socio-economic class analysis. Bourdieu introduces multiple social structures that each operate according to Marxist principles, but use different forms of capital. This creates a model for incorporating political power and cultural prestige into Marxist analysis as forms of *symbolic capital*, instead of attempting to reduce these forces to their economic impacts. Bourdieu posits multiple, hierarchical *fields* (i.e., economic, political, literary), each governed by its own laws and each producing its own form of capital. Each field, which can in turn accommodate multiple sub-fields (such as the avant-garde), is a structured space of potential positions occupied by agents according to the laws of power within that field. Since each position actually taken determines the subsequent value of potential positions, these fields are dynamic and continually evolving. Any depiction of a field thus needs to describe the laws governing it as a whole, its primary agents, and the relation to other fields of exchange. Depicting a historical moment within the field further entails an understanding of both the positions actually taken by agents and how that position-taking shapes the potential positions in the field.<sup>60</sup>

Bourdieu's model in figure 1 shows the relations between the conventional Marxist field of class relations, the field of symbolic power, and the literary and artistic field of cultural production. The poles represent the orientation of power and capital within each field. This model, while very productive for interpreting capitalist societies, quickly breaks down when applied to the Soviet case. This is not only due to the shift in relative size between the field of class relations and the field of power, but is also due to certain assumptions underlying Bourdieu's model. First, his theory is based on the Marxist belief that class relations govern the distribution of economic capital. Second, he assumes that economic capital – money – is the medium for acquiring good and services, a non-trivial assumption that only appears transparent within an established capitalist economy. To make this assumption explicit, I have added an

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<sup>60</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Edited by Randal Johnson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), especially the first chapter "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed" (29-73), which was originally published in English translation by Richard Nice in *Poetics* (Amsterdam), 12:4-5 (1983), 311-56. Bourdieu applies these concepts in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, also translated into English by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984). Bourdieu's theories have influenced a generation of scholars, and are an important part of post-Soviet studies. Scholars on the Soviet period are less likely to incorporate Bourdieu directly, although notable exceptions include Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); and Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi, and Eleanor Townsley's *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe* (London: Verso, 1998), which traces how Soviet bloc elites exchanged cultural capital for economic and political capital in the post-Communist years. Although their analysis is more applicable to Soviet bloc countries than the Soviet Union proper, it provides a model for adapting Bourdieu to a Soviet-style society. Martin uses Bourdieu's category of social capital to explain "strategic ethnicity," the use of national identity for self-promotion within the affirmative action system (143). Historian Jan Plamper's article, "Abolishing Ambiguity: Soviet Censorship Practices in the 1930s" (*Russian Review* 60 (October 2001), 526-44), describes censorship as an attempt to create a single linguistic field dominated by political power. Plamper argues for a model similar to the one I will propose here, writing, "The Soviet case differs from Bourdieu's trajectory in one significant way: whereas for Bourdieu changes in the economic field – the transition to capitalism – are ultimately primary (whether also causal, is a question of considerable debate) to the unification of the linguistic field, in the Soviet Union the political field is primary to all other fields." (540) Kotkin similarly acknowledges Bourdieu's potential for Soviet analysis in *Magnetic Mountain*, suggesting that scholars need not adopt Bourdieu's view of class structure to use his theories. (392n89.)

underlying field, coterminous with the field of class relations, to his model to produce Figure 2. Bourdieu's modified fields in figure 2 still describe the position of the literary field within a capitalist economy. Recognizing the Marxist assumptions about capitalism that underlie Bourdieu's model, however, allows for a new model in which those assumptions do not hold.

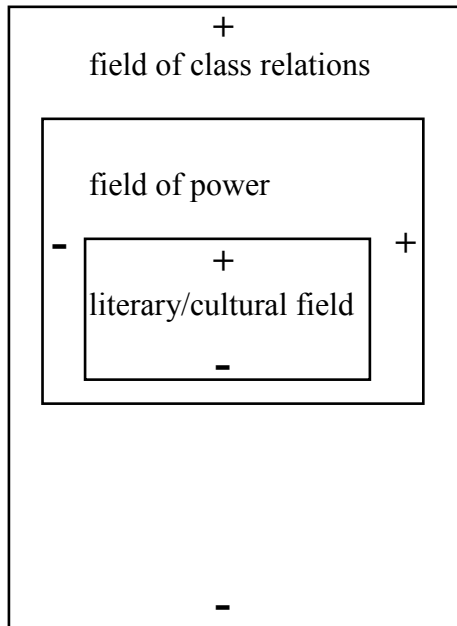


Figure 1<sup>61</sup>

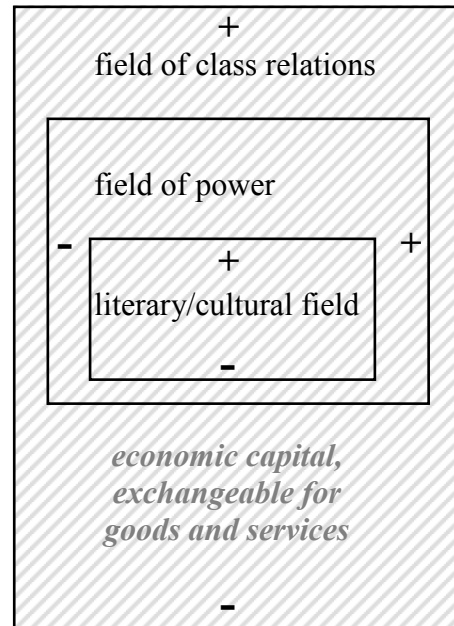


Figure 2

In the Soviet Union, symbolic capital could be directly exchanged for goods and services without first being exchanged for economic capital, as Bourdieu's model dictates. Certain goods and services were only exchanged for economic capital, others only for symbolic capital, some for either, and most required both. Consider bread (except in times of rationing) as representative of the first category. Vacations, theater tickets, and scarce goods distributed as prizes were distributed through symbolic networks, frequently without any economic cost to the recipient. Most goods, however, from sausages to boots to apartments, combined nominal economic cost with distribution of the purchase opportunity through symbolic networks. The black market also provided many goods for direct economic exchange, so that a good, such as a sewing machine, could be available through all three routes and through direct barter. Transactions that are generally transparent in a Western economy (cost = car) frequently required multiple exchanges between economic and symbolic capital in the Soviet system (cost + bribe = gift for official; gift + contacts = waiting list; waiting list + contacts + bribes + cost = car). Increased scarcity of material goods did not drive up the economic price, as it would in a capitalist economy, but restricted access through the symbolic networks driving the system as a whole. Adapting Bourdieu's model to the Soviet context to accommodate the multiple modes of exchange transforms his concentric fields to a Venn diagram (figure 3). This model both shows the relations between fields and indicates the difficulty of establishing clear orientations of power within each of the fields. Further, these fields should be seen as uneven and unstable expanses riddled with chutes and ladders that cause sudden changes in positions both within and between fields.

<sup>61</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 38.

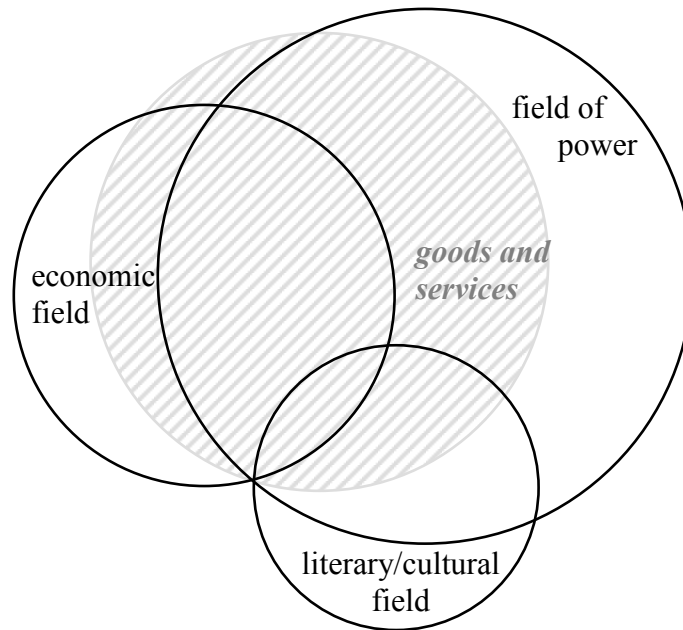


Figure 3

Despite the difficulties in translating Bourdieu for the Soviet context, his model has certain advantages for analyzing Soviet literature. Bourdieu's theory depicts the relations between economic, political, and cultural fields in a non-deterministic model which allows for individual choice and creativity on the level of position-taking. Each of the fields, as described above, determines the set of possible positions for agents through the laws which govern the field and through the actual position-taking of individual agents. The individual's upbringing and understanding of the field, which Bourdieu calls *habitus*, guide that position-taking, but do not determine it. Ideological discourse proclaims official laws for the field, polices the boundaries according to largely unstated laws, and gives agents the vocabulary to express their position-takings, with each statement reinforcing the discourse as a whole.

This model underlies much of the scholarship on the relationships between Soviet literature and power, which assumes a mode of exchange between the two. Lahusen and Dobrenko, in particular, are interested in how Soviet authors negotiate this map of power relations. Clark and Dobrenko's historical narrative in *Soviet Culture and Power* acknowledges the gap between personal belief and position-taking within the cultural field, the delicate and fluctuating exchanges between fields, and the sometimes disastrous influence of *habitus*. It is worth remembering that although Moscow was the center, the distribution of power in the Soviet Union does not necessarily correspond to the geographic map. As Lahusen shows, "far from Moscow" could be very close in terms of political capital.

### ***Literary Agents***

Clark doesn't explicitly use the concept of agency in *The Soviet Novel*, but identifies six major influences on Soviet literature and socialist realism in particular: literature itself, Marxism-Leninism, the myths of the Russian radical intelligentsia, cultural rhetoric, political events, and individual actors.<sup>62</sup> These actors – writers, critics, literary institutions, the bureaucrats administering them, and readers – all function as agents within the literary field. Their roles

<sup>62</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 8.

constitute position-taking within the field, as do the individual practices within these roles. The myth of the Soviet writer as either a party hack or a dissident shaped the positions available, but should not govern our understanding of actual position-taking within this field. An individual writer could and did take different positions at different times, with different creative works, and in his professional and private roles. Male and female writers faced different sets of possible positions, as did Russian and national writers, young and established figures, proletarians, peasants, and members of the intelligentsia. Writers were governed by habitus, by personal interest and ability, and by the state's system of punishment and reward. Because the literary field overlapped substantially with the field of power, this system of punishment and reward was highly developed. There were instances when literary capital could be exchanged for political power without an institutional intermediary, as when Stalin took a personal interest in a writer, but in general, institutions were the primary mode of exchange between these fields. Once instated, the Union of Soviet Writers regulated individual access to publication, salary, benefits, readership, research opportunities, and official recognition. It also cooperated closely with political institutions, including the state security organs. The Union enforced its principles for literary position-taking with everything from large publishing runs, permits to live in Moscow, and vacation homes on the one hand, to public criticism, blackballing, and deadly arrests on the other.

Dobrenko describes every Soviet writer as a censor.<sup>63</sup> This acknowledges the political field's influence on literature, but simplifies its effects. If every writer was a censor, then many of them were extraordinarily lenient ones. The state system of coercion determined which positions were favorable, but could not dictate which positions writers actually took. Writers and literary organizations interacted chaotically, while overlapping circles of interest and influence often led to taking contradictory or self-defeating positions. It is simplistic to assume writers act only to further their own interests, even when those interests are readily apparent. Independence from the field is a commonly-held personal value that maintains a certain level of randomness in an otherwise organized system. Simply put, writers don't always know their best interests, nor act on them when they do know. Artists are a contrary lot. Throughout the Soviet period, many writers – including official favorites – placed their aesthetic, moral, or political values above literary and political hierarchies.

Russian writers from Aleksandr Blok to Andrei Bitov wrote works that functioned as position-takings in multiple fields, from aesthetic sub-fields to the official literary field to the political field through to access to goods and services. This complexity contributes to the enduring power the best of Soviet literature holds over its readers: Soviet literature has a lot at stake. Writers' choices mattered. The choices Soviet national writers faced were even more complex. The republics and national territories' position within the USSR immediately doubled the basic cultural, political, and economic fields. While Moscow assumed that Soviet and local fields were perfectly aligned, this was only ever true for Moscow (and not always there). The further – physically and culturally – writers got from Moscow, the more likely that these fields were skewed in relation to each other. National writers thus often had to choose whether to work towards Soviet-level or national-level promotion, where Russian writers did not.

This argument directly contradicts how Moscow saw the position of national writers. For the various reasons stated above, Soviet literary authorities tended to be Russian and tended to treat Russian literature as more complex than the national literatures. The Leninist-Marxist understanding of culture assumed that if class, gender, and national position shape perception,

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<sup>63</sup> Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer*, xviii.



they obviously affect creative production. Proletarian writers' movements used this position to attack fellow travelers, and while Stalin and Gorky rejected the extreme version (bourgeois writers should be banned), they promoted a multiculturalism that depended on standpoint theory for its validity. National writers had merit because they were national, and thus could express a viewpoint inaccessible to Russian writers. At the same time, because they were explicitly *national* writers, while Russian was an unmarked category, Moscow refused to read national writers outside of their national identity. This approach ignored local fields entirely and relegated national writers to one position within the (Russian) Soviet literary field: national literatures. Unfortunately, this has also colored how scholars of Soviet literature approach (or, more accurately: ignore) the national literatures.

Standpoint theory provides an avenue for another approach.<sup>64</sup> One of the branches of standpoint scholarship suggests that subaltern positions have to understand the dominant position to survive in an unequal society. This creates an inequality: dominant classes can speak only from their own position, while dominated ones become fluent in both their own position and the dominant discourse. According to this argument, in patriarchal societies, female writers have more experience understanding the male position than the reverse, because they are surrounded with and measured by a male standard. Obviously, dominant discourse argues precisely the opposite: the dominant voice is universal, while subaltern voices can express only their individual particulars. However, the practice of passing is predicated on subaltern familiarity with the dominant culture. Widespread fears over ethnic and sexual passing suggest that dominant classes recognize the potential for subordinate individuals to master the dominant position. Because the Soviets treated nationality as innate and enduring, and designated Jewish as a national category, Russian Jewish writers raised this very question: were they assimilating, or passing? National writers further from the Russian center were less problematic. The center viewed their work as comfortably national, yet reading it from the periphery reveals the double-voicing. Many of the national writers were educated in Russian, especially in the early years, and thus faced difficult questions of affiliation and literary identity. Bilingual writers abounded. Later generations tended to start from a national base and move towards Russian, reversing the earlier pattern, but this did not simplify the discursive tensions in their oeuvres. National writers succeeded in Soviet literature to the extent that they mastered both the central position and their own – the view from Moscow *and* from Baku.

Of course, we need to distinguish here between literary complexity and the complexity of writers' position-taking. There may be a trade-off between the complex affiliations and identities national writers had to navigate and aesthetic complexity, which would justify the Russian assumption that national literatures were simpler: only aesthetically simpler works could survive the political complexities necessary to be accepted in the Soviet center. This argument would imply that national writers had to choose between Soviet success and full aesthetic expression. However, that argument resembles ongoing assessments of Soviet Russian literature as well, so it does not necessarily condemn the national literatures. Even if there is a trade-off between aesthetic and political complexity, it is an inherently productive one. We should read

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<sup>64</sup> Standpoint theory takes its name from Hegel's position that social position necessarily influenced individual perception, so that slavery produces a unique psychological standpoint. G.W.B. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.) Post-colonial, feminist, and other progressive movements have used this aspect of Hegel's master-slave dialectic to promote marginal and subaltern voices. For an analysis of Hegel's relevance to these movements, see Tony Burns, "Hegel, Identity Politics and the Problem of Slavery" (*Culture, Theory and Critique* 47:1 (2006), 87-104). My thanks to Monica Aufrecht for pointing me in this direction.

Soviet national works within their full set of alignments, as position-takings in all of the cultural and political fields within which national writers operated. This returns ambiguity and polyphony to many superficially naive and ideologically heavy-handed works. In the field of Soviet culture, many national writers were effectively double or even triple agents. Scholars (such as Maliheh Tyrrell, on Azerbaijani literature) have argued for Aesopian readings of these writers, but assigning “true” and “masking” designations to the various levels ignores the extent to which writers were willing and eager to take pro-Soviet ideological positions, while continuing to assert their national identities. The Soviet and national fields were skewed, but rarely in total opposition to each other.

Institutions, which normally play a small role in a capitalist literary field, were powerful agents in the Soviet fields. By the early 1930s, RAPP as well as its opponents controlled almost all of the publishing opportunities, criticism, and distribution of benefits. Their destructive competition led to the order for the new writers’ union, which was designed to regulate the Soviet literary field, replace the earlier tangle of institutions, and assume full control over professional opportunities. Regional and local movements without a Moscow-based counterpart were especially vulnerable, despite the scant attention the Russian peasant and proletarian writers’ organizations gave their republican allies. As much as leaders may have wished it, Soviet literary institutions were never monolithic. Writers preserved their individual goals and interests when joining, and continued to seek ways to pursue those goals within and outside the institution. Membership generally required public statements of support and administrative responsibilities within the organization; in exchange, it provided publishing venues, critical protection, and some form of solidarity. Although joining the wrong group could be disastrous, not joining any provoked suspicion.

Not coincidentally, the period when Soviet literary institutions centralized saw the writer’s role redefined from individual to communal, and – to a lesser extent – from creative to organizational. The term “writer” shifted from somebody who writes, to somebody who participates in public displays, meetings, and exchanges about literature. Writers needed writing to prove their rights to these public rites, but that became less important once they were institutionally established as writers. The health of literary culture was measured by the activity of public writers, not by their publications.

One of the organizing committee brigade reports illustrates this shift. Reporting on the poor level of literary life in Samara, Anna Karavaeva states, “настоящей творческой жизни в Самаре нет.” [There’s no real creative life in Samara.] Writers rarely meet, she complains, and there’s little organized presence, even though there are talented people there.

Чрезвычайно слаба связь писателей между собой. Положение таково, что молодые писатели совершенно не могут собрать аудиторию для читки своих произведений. Мне рассказывал один молодой писатель, что он всячески старался собрать группу писателей, чтобы почитать свои новеллы, приглашал к себе, обещал напоить чаем, с вкусными вещами и все-таки никто не пришел.<sup>65</sup>

Writers’ ties with each other are extraordinarily weak. The situation is such that young writers are completely unable to gather an audience for public readings of their works. One young writer told me that he tried everything he could to gather

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<sup>65</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 7. April 27, 1934.

a group of writers to read their novellas: he invited them over, promised to treat them to tea and tasty things, and all the same nobody came.

Karavaeva – and by extension, the room of Moscow writers listening to her report – is not concerned with the quality of novellas to be read or whether this young writer has any talent. (The condition of writers who *would* drop everything for the prospect of tea and a dubious reading is likewise beyond her concern.) The question here is not creativity, but creative life: a communal process. If the organizing committee can ensure collectivized means of production, the products will presumably take care of themselves. Literary work happens in groups, at factories, on brigades, at literary evenings, at organizing committee meetings and plenums; not alone with a pen.

Soviet society didn't just need new literature, it needed new writers. Writers could serve as role models for the process of re forging, ensure the masses properly grasped their works' didactic principles, and respond to their readers by rewriting, thus making their texts dynamic, rather than static. Writers could represent literary achievement through spectacle. The physical presence of the writer counted for more than the actual words on a page, especially when those pages were scarce or difficult for a newly-literate population to read.

The public writer corresponded to the new Soviet reader, who joined a reading circle at the neighborhood Palace of Culture, listened to a story read aloud at the collective farm, or read short works on a bulletin board at the factory. Reading was a method for integrating readers into the social collective, not fodder for private contemplation. As Brooks, Lahusen, and Dobrenko have shown, Soviet literature took readers' responses seriously. Every segment of the workforce deserved its own literary depiction, so that workers could recognize themselves in the works they read, increasing the likelihood that they would read them. This meant that readers were also experts on the worlds depicted in literature, so that authors had to consult with them or even correct works in response to workers' criticism. In theory, at least, the conscience of Soviet literature was not its writers, but its readers, who thus had the putative authority to demand changes. Although the Russian and national traditions of high literature continued, Soviet institutions paid considerable rhetorical attention to readership needs and to the expectation that writers would respond. Writers connected with the readership by responding directly at literary evenings, in discussions at factories, and replies to readers' letters. In many well-publicized cases, socialist realist writers amended their novels to incorporate readers' recommendations. Of course, readers were also subject to official messages on what and how to read, further complicating their positions. Whereas the reader's position in a capitalist literary field is primarily that of a market force, unless the individual reader holds another position in the cultural elite, the Soviet literary field allowed ordinary readers, especially en masse, to take creatively influential positions.

This process assumed a fundamental allegiance between writers and readers, rather than a dichotomy between them. Literary circles at factories and collective farms for aspiring writers further narrowed the gap between (published) writers and their public. Factory newspaper writers, village correspondents, and evening class students were all justified in claiming both solidarity with and attention from the public writer. The writers' union and organizing committees committed to expanding opportunities for the masses to become writers, not just readers.

According to Stalin's prescription, national culture was uniquely suited to reach – and thus teach – members of a nationality, so each nationality needed its own writers. National

specificity meant something beyond language. Literature needed to reflect readers' reality, whether that reality was set in Samara, Baku, or a reindeer herding collective in the far north. This meant that Gorky translations, however widely distributed, could not replace national writers. Each nationality needed a full literature: a small set of historical and contemporary masterpieces and a large set of public and communal responsibilities. Since the outwardly oriented tasks remained relatively constant regardless of the nationality's size, national writers had proportionately more responsibilities towards their public and organizations. National literatures were thus even less likely to indulge the old, solitary vision of the writer. Instead, the Soviet literary field expected writers to participate in an expanding set of practices.

### ***Literary Practices***

The cultural field of literature is defined by the production of literary texts. While this may seem like a circular definition, it excludes many texts which are properly the province of cultural studies. This study restricts the definition of literary texts to those which are both self-identified as such and have an aesthetic function. Textual integrity is almost always an issue in the Soviet period, as censorship and editing – by both the author and official figures – make it more difficult than usual to fix the “real” text. While it is tempting to use authorial preference and/or intent as a guide, privileging the author's version of a work over a censored version, we must acknowledge the high level of ambiguity inherent in Soviet texts. Socialist realist texts are more productive discursively than aesthetically, and benefit from being read accordingly.

The field also includes secondary texts, such as theory, criticism, reader responses, and statements about literature, the production of which entails substantially different positions from those of the literary author. Since socialist realism's formulation was highly ambiguous, established largely through precedent, and subject to political contingencies that redefined its terms and standards, any work could be criticized for failing to live up to the requirements of socialist realism. Within the cultural field of Soviet literature, this was one of its primary functions. Socialist realism served as a mechanism for enforcing the changing demands of power under the guise of a constant guiding principle. Even the most ideologically sound work could be criticized for failing to fulfill its aesthetic goals. Literary critics served as *bureaux d'échange* between cultural and political capital, indicating which positions were politically and economically favorable. They corrected speculative movements within the cultural field and enforced discursive parameters. Although extremely powerful, these positions had reduced creative potential and tended to be filled by Party functionaries who were more interested in their positions in the political field. Those who remained sincerely invested in the importance of literature, such as Aleksandr Fadeev, found the price of these positions ultimately too high to pay.<sup>66</sup>

As a cultural field, Soviet literature comprised a wide range of practices, among them production, publication, readership, canonization, education, performance, translation. The most familiar of these is literary production, which includes conventionally defined writing and revising as well as the Soviet system of suggesting acceptable topics, consigning works, sending out writers' brigades to tackle specific themes, and otherwise setting the limits of the sayable.<sup>67</sup> These tactics created an environment that minimized the need for censorship or punishment after

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<sup>66</sup> Fadeev was one of the Writers' Union's governing figures, who helped shepherd Soviet literature through the Stalinist purges, arrests, and executions. He killed himself in 1956.

<sup>67</sup> Foucault, “Politics and the Study of Discourse,” 59.

a work was produced, thus provoking Dobrenko's assessment that "a Soviet writer is a censor."<sup>68</sup> The process of revising a text was similarly shaped by other agents, from editors to readers. Rhetorically and conceptually, Soviet institutions tried to marry creative genius and inspiration to industrial modes of production. This was difficult in practice, so publishing statistics became the measurement of success.

Soviet publishing replaced the market demands of a capitalist readership with a command economy that allocated print runs according to power within the literary field. Like most other industries, publishing suffered from material and labor shortages that were exacerbated by changing demands from above. On top of chronic paper shortages, national literatures in most of the republics faced new alphabets that rendered existing typeface useless and created immediate demands for new textbooks and translations of Marxist-Leninist classics, both of which took priority over national literatures. Each national literature had at least one national press and literary journal, while more prolific literatures entered the 1930s with several competing publishing houses. These were frequently retained, but underwent dramatic changes in leadership during the consolidation of literary organizations. Publishers had final responsibility for the ideological content of their products, and therefore engaged in close editing and censorship, making it difficult to separate this aspect from questions of production.

In addition to publishing new works, national presses needed to publish editions of classical works. Canonization was an essential practice in the early Soviet period, especially in those regions with complicated and developing national identities. Neighbors competed over national epics and multilingual writers. Literary organizations within national traditions fought over which writers could be successfully assimilated to a safely Soviet narrative, which contemporary figures could claim those writers as part of their tradition, which older religious or courtly forms were national in origin, and how to translate a "national" work written in a non-national language; and used these battles to vie for power in contemporary institutions. Since the Russians were the furthest developed of the nationalities according to the Leninist model, they often functioned as final authorities over which works were true representatives of national literatures. These works were singled out for publication for national readership, translation, and textbooks.

Unlike in a market economy, Soviet publishing was not intended to meet the demands of its public, but to mold its readership. Reader response had some influence on publishing, but more influence directly on production. This process was shaped by collective reading exercises, ongoing letter exchanges, and mass literary events. Readership is closely connected with education, which was seen as the primary purpose of Soviet literature. This includes both literature's didactic function, especially important for popular and children's literature, and the educational enterprise of teaching literature. Phenomena like factory reading groups, red corners (information centers maintained in most institutions), and curricula overlap with issues of readership and education. The Soviet audience had to be taught both forms of literacy: reading (how to *read*) and interpreting (*how* to read). Soviet education focused less on critical reading habits than on establishing acceptable interpretations of each text, thus clarifying the work's message. Schools focused on the national canon, with teachers frequently reading official lectures verbatim to avoid accidentally teaching a non-canonical interpretation.

In the Soviet context, literary education was largely performative. Performance provided a way to reach the masses, who were supposedly the target readership for Soviet literature, but who frequently showed little interest or ability as actual readers. Performance also integrated

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<sup>68</sup> Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Writer*, xviii.

writers into the reader's experience and informed the audience about acceptable interpretations of the text, clarifying the work's message and increasing writers' accountability. It included public readings, dramatic productions, and public literary spectacles such as anniversary celebrations of individual authors and writers' congresses. Drama and spectacle were instrumental in reaching only nominally literate audiences, enforcing attention, and educating them about literature in general as well as specific themes of national importance. For "culturally-backward" nationalities, performance also integrated oral modes of composition into the definition of Soviet literature. Because performance is a mass experience, these genres helped shape the audience as a collective, rather than the individual reader. Performance joins other modes of reader outreach in transforming literary reception from individual to communal, paralleling the shift in authorship.

Central to a multilingual literature was translation. Works were translated both into and out of Russian, into and out of major European languages, and directly between national languages, although the latter effort was frequently the first to be cut when publishing directives competed. Translation was often done in stages, so that the final translator was a writer fluent in the target language without any knowledge of the original language. This system also allowed translation to serve as a refuge for politically marginal writers, who could largely avoid condemnation by restricting their publication to already praised texts. Although translation was a major enterprise, it was impossible to keep pace with the level necessary to make all of Soviet literature accessible in all of its languages. Demands for increased translation were frequently used to advance national claims, since they could always be made and the logic of encouraging national development made them difficult to reject. Simultaneously, however, translation threatened national literatures by reinforcing theories of linguistic transparency. It implied that the formula "national in form" was a matter of mere linguistic translation, rather than a rich cultural loam in which a national literature could thrive.

These literary practices cannot be defined in isolation, as they were interwoven and reinforcing. For example, the question of canonization cannot be studied without acknowledging the influence of literary theories, publishing practices, education, readership, and its influence on literary production. Any of these practices would justify a fascinating dissertation on Soviet literature on their own, but this project will not discuss any of them comprehensively. Instead, I will focus on the 1934 Congress as a crystallization of the cultural field at a particular moment and discuss the field's principles, agents, and practices as they arise.

### **A Literature National in Form, Socialist in Content**

What, then, *was* Soviet literature? It was a cultural field governed by the discourse of socialist realism and heavily influenced by historical events, individual actors, institutional and discursive demands, and the vagaries of creativity. It prominently featured national subfields that intersected and overlapped with other fields of power in a complex, non-Euclidean geometry so that the national literatures were both subordinate and superordinate to Soviet literature as a whole. To the extent that scholars have acknowledged this tension, they have mostly done so to resolve it in favor of what Kathleen Parthe categorizes as the geographical and chronological approaches.<sup>69</sup> The Writers' Union by its very structure subscribed to the first approach, implicitly arguing that Soviet literature was the sum of its (national and Russian) parts. Dobrenko's early work established him in the second camp, wherein each national literature had

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<sup>69</sup> Parthe, "What Was Soviet Literature?" (*The Slavic and East European Journal* 38:2, 1994), 290.

a Soviet period.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Parthe herself introduces this framework to dismiss Soviet literature's multinational aspect and focus on Russian. Dobrenko's more recent scholarship suggests that Soviet literature's discursive reality transcended both geographical and chronological divisions.<sup>71</sup> I would like to suggest that it did so largely by emphasizing national diversity, not by subsuming it to an all-Union ideal. Soviet national literatures thus become the very heart of the Soviet project, albeit a humanly off-center one.

Further shrouding the Soviet literary heart in Russian flesh, Soviet literature used the stages of Russian literature as benchmarks for national development. The Soviets believed that national development followed historically inevitable Marxist stages and that literature reflected the stages of that development. Since Russia was the most advanced nation in the Soviet Union, its literature necessarily contained the inevitable stages other literatures needed to pass through on their way to socialist literature. While some pre-literate nationalities could leapfrog from folklore to socialist realism in a single generation, any nationality that was literate before the revolution needed to produce a teleological, discrete literary history that reproduced the stages and icons of the Russian canon. Specifically, Pushkin functioned as the standard for an advanced literature, leading to a game of "Who's your Pushkin?" The *other* great Russian writer stood too far above the national literatures for this game to work. (I refer, of course, to Gorky.)<sup>72</sup> All of the national literatures, even Georgian with its medieval classics, had first to define their nation and literary canon; and second, to prove that canon's relevance and importance, using Russian literature as the standard.

Few works of national literature fit this schema without aggressive analysis, of course. Against the backdrop of emerging and competing nationalities, questions over who could claim the Turkic epic *Book of Dede Korkut* or, for that matter, Gogol were politically charged.<sup>73</sup> Categories like romanticism and the stages of realism applied poorly to Arabic and Persian-based literary genres, and not at all to newly literate cultures. The canon wasn't absolute, but subject to negotiation and revision. As Gregory Jusdanis defines it, the canon was "the sum of literary uses at a particular time," and those uses could shift.<sup>74</sup> Debates over the literary canon thus became debates over competing narratives of national identity, while contemporary writers became national spokesmen. In many cases, especially in Central Asia, national elites used Party networks and the process of Sovietization to preserve pre-Revolutionary power structures within

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<sup>70</sup> Dobrenko, "'Sovetskaia mnogonatsional'naia' kak oblast' semeinykh tain" (*Literaturnoe obozrenie* 11 (1990), 52-54).

<sup>71</sup> I understand Dobrenko is now returning to the question of Soviet multinational literature, which suggests a further iteration in his thinking on this subject.

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly for this process of canonization, Gorky's reputation was only firmly set in the early 1930s, when he returned to the Soviet Union. Stalin maintained close ties with Gorky while he was abroad and rewarded his return with a prominent birthday celebration and the position as honorary chair of the Writers' Union organizing committee. (Clark and Dobrenko aptly depict this relationship in *Soviet Culture and Power*, especially chapters 5, 8, and 9.) Thus, the Russian standard was itself in flux.

<sup>73</sup> Gogol's status was rarely challenged publicly because it was seen as a threat to the Russian center, but I give it as an example here because most Slavists are by now familiar with this dispute, so it provides a model for other, less well known dilemmas. An Armenian delegate at the Congress, the poet Egishe Charents, does give Gogol's assimilation as an example of Russian imperial aggression in the cultural realm, explaining that the ruling classes wanted to swallow Shevchenko too, but were unsuccessful. *PVSSP*, 559.

<sup>74</sup> Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1991), 51.

new discursive frames.<sup>75</sup> Literature became a venue for explicitly debating the value of various cultural tendencies that were being artificially conflated elsewhere to smooth the transition to Soviet power. By advocating particular works and writers as part of the national canon, writers could maintain a space for particular modes of political and cultural expression.

Canonization and performance fulfilled the respective categories of content and form for promoting national literatures and thus fulfilling Soviet literature's didactic mission. The national canon provided the basis for a national identity that inescapably led towards Soviet socialism, funneling the past into the present promise of the glorious future. More immediately, it gave schools the material for their textbooks, writers their literary language and body of allusions, and the other arts plots and images to adapt. Contemporary Soviet writers were both the narrators and the narrative of Soviet literature: they described a literary trajectory that culminated in their own presence. National canons thus formed the initial thesis in the dialectic of Soviet literature.

Marxism's developmental model suggested a precarious equivalence, however, between children, workers, and the "backward" nations. Each of these groups needed an outside presence to direct and hasten its growth towards mature socialism: adults, the Party, Russia. Each of these groups needed its own literature to help channel that growth. Where proletarian and national literatures clearly diverged from children's literature was their authorship. Children's literature was written by adults, whereas the proletariat and nationalities developed their own writers. Yet national authors were frequently seen as less capable of surviving without supervision than Russian authors, and this may be partially because they were seen as childlike in comparison. Their imperfect Russian language skills exacerbated this prejudice. While theoretically acknowledging the need for Russians to learn the national languages, Soviet literature functionally required national literatures to represent themselves in Russian. Although some national writers were fully bilingual, most were (understandably) less articulate in non-native Russian, worsening their comparative status to their Russian colleagues.

Stalin's 1929 speech hints at a functional reason for the differences between Russian and national literature. Although not explicitly labeled as such, the eventual, post-national and thus international future of Soviet literature was implicitly Russian in language, if not ethnic identity. National literatures needed to flower so that they could exhaust themselves completely, wither, and be resurrected as international socialist culture. Russian-language Soviet literature was already there. Of course, national writers never accepted this distinction. They suspected that both the Russian language and Russian writers remained *somehow* marked, despite being the "language of revolution" and Moscow, the world's first truly international city. This suspicion outlasted the Soviet state.

Both Moscow and the periphery thus needed to build cadres of national writers: Moscow, so that they could eventually exhaust their literary potential and bring about international socialism, and the nationalities, so that they could assert themselves against encroaching Russian-based identities and protect their national cultures. To do this, national writers actively sought positions within a Russian-based literary field that rewarded them for their allegiance to Moscow's categories. That does not mean they embraced the theoretical extinction those categories implied. Soviet national literatures operated in the space between central and local intent. Instrumental readings within the Soviet literary field should concede the possibility that works remain authentic as evaluated within their national fields. Individual creativity and local

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<sup>75</sup> This was largely due to the scarcity of literate, educated locals to fill positions. See Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, chapter 3, especially pp. 74-77, and Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 136.



traditions could survive Stalinism, and often did. Soviet national literatures must be read bilaterally, as the product of Moscow's cultural gravity and the desire of the periphery to escape or at least lessen that pull. Even this approach risks treating national identity as transparent, rather than a socially and individually constructed performance of self and affiliation. We no longer assume a unilateral relationship between Soviet literary theory and practice (i.e., socialist realist ideas led to *Cement*) and we embrace a non-deterministic view of the correlation between culture and literary production, even when studying a period that dictated the opposite. Soviet national cultures deserve the same respect. Their products deserve a thick reading, *à la* Clifford Geertz, rather than the thin reading an aesthetic approach to socialist realism would suggest. This is especially vital because during the Soviet period, national works were subjected to thinner readings than Russian ones.

General studies of nationalism rely on literary works to represent both national and nationalist identity, and the processes that create those identities. The literary text, with its assumed interiority and subjectivity, thus gives access to the historical moment and the multiple layers of power governing national cultural production, from Stalin down to the individual author. Unfortunately, historians too often assume the identities thus presented are purely representational – that literature does, in fact, hold a mirror to reality. Returning this process to literary scholarship grounds historical readings by maintaining the text's constructed nature. Literature does not give unimpeded access to the self in any culture, but particularly not under Stalinism. Soviet literature was written in a span of languages, each shaped by Soviet discourse as it tried to incorporate overlapping models of nation as community, institution, practice, and narration. Its cohesion across linguistic and cultural differences is impressive, but its diversity is equally so. Balancing these patterns with writers' lived experience reanimates early Stalinist literary culture, granting both historians and literary scholars a more accurate vision of the historic moment.

Although this project's interdisciplinary approach risks falling into the gap between these disciplines, I believe it has something valuable to contribute to both. National literatures enrich our understanding of socialist realism and the practices of Soviet literature, on the one hand, while providing new modes of understanding the development and performance of Soviet national identities on the other. This dissertation owes a great debt to the scholarship of Yuri Slezkine, Francine Hirsch, Marina Frolova-Walker, Thomas Lahusen, and Evgeny Dobrenko. To avoid being overshadowed by their excellent models while building in their neighborhood, I find it useful to assert my own principles for this project: A top-down model does not adequately explain the complexities of Soviet literature. Personalities matter, as do individual acts of creation. Throughout the Soviet period, literature was the result of negotiation, chance, context, and complexity. These are not the same as bravery, but they frequently required brave acts from individual writers who rose to difficult occasions. The discourse of socialist realism was always partially incomplete, allowing gaps and ripples, especially around the periphery. The organizing committee process for the Writers' Union reveals the conflicts within this discourse while setting its general direction and velocity. As so many scholars before me have noted, the beginning sows the seeds of the end.

Soviet literature was a complicated practice. My efforts in this chapter to avoid reducing the Soviet hydra to an easily slain, single-headed beast may unintentionally imply the ultimate futility of critical swords. The following chapters will provide narrower frameworks for approaching this fantastic creature. Chapter 2 shows how socialist realism develops in tandem with the official treatment of national literatures. Chapter 3 examines its moment of

canonization, the 1934 All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, while chapter 4 delves into one national sub-field to recapture some of the complexity lost by tackling national literatures a whole. Another way to consider this project is the gap between Soviet center and periphery. From this perspective, the following chapters respectively cover the dialogue between Moscow and Baku, Baku's pilgrimage to Moscow; and what happens to Moscow's directives when they come to Baku. Soviet literature thus finds itself in the journey between Moscow and Baku.

## PREPARING FOR THE FIRST ALL-UNION CONGRESS OF SOVIET WRITERS

Возможно, вам, писателям, приходилось бывать в осеннюю бурю в горах, в лесу, когда черная туча покрывает своим черным крылом дремучий лес, когда откуда-то врывается беспощадный ветер, как копье, большие чинары, чинара падает и раздаётся по всему лесу как бы гул пушки, жуткий гул, вдруг сверкает молния начинает падать сильный дождь. (Я думаю, писатели, вы представляете себе эту картину, хотя я и говорю на ломаном языке.) Человек, который в этот момент находится среди гор, в лесу, не знает, куда ему кинуться: стать под чинару он боится – она может упасть на него. Бежать к реке – но она превратилась в горный поток, и он боится, что вздувшаяся река захлестнет его, а если он встанет на возвышенное место, она, несущаяся, как змея, в струях мелких ручейков – сбросит его в обрыв. Вы поймете, как чувствует и как настроен человек в такой момент. Вы поймете чувства и настроения человека, который царским правительством держан именно в таком настроении. Вы поймете положение этих горцев – и я говорю не только о Чечне, но обо всем Кавказе – чтобы культивировать этих людей, чтобы их перевоспитать, нужна очень долгая работа и работа очень тяжелая. Нам, писателям-горцам, очень трудно потому, что мы не имели, как я сказал выше, до советизации никакой культуры кроме одной темноты.

Perhaps you, writers, have happened to be caught in an autumn storm in the mountains, in the forest, when the black cloud covers the dense forest with its black wing, when from somewhere a merciless wind strikes the large sycamores like a lance, when a sycamore falls and resounds throughout the forest like the howl of bullets, a terrible howl, and suddenly with a flash of lightning a hard rain begins to fall. (I believe, writers, that you can imagine this picture, although I speak brokenly.) A person caught in the mountains, in the forest, at this moment doesn't know where to turn: he's afraid to stay under a sycamore, which could fall on him. Run to the river? But it has turned into a mountain flood and he's afraid that the swollen river could sweep him away, and if he stands on an elevated spot, the river, spawning rivulets like a snake, will throw him down the precipice. You understand, what a person feels in this moment. You understand then the emotions and spirit of a person kept precisely in this position by the tsarist government. You understand the situation of these mountain peoples – and I speak not just of Chechnya, but of the entire Caucasus. To cultivate these people, to reeducate them, takes a lot of very difficult work. It is difficult for us, writers from the mountain peoples, because we, as I said before, had no culture before Sovietization save ignorance alone.

– Said Baduev, Chechen delegate<sup>1</sup>

November 3, 1932

<sup>1</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 61-2. November 3, 1932.

On April 23, 1932 the Politburo issued a resolution abolishing the Association of Proletarian Writers (both Russian and All-Union – RAPP and VOAPP) and uniting all writers into one organization. Two weeks later, the Orgburo resolution implementing this decision created an organizing committee to establish the bylaws and structure of this new union, and then convene a congress of writers to herald it. Originally seen as a quick transition with the congress scheduled for early fall, this process took over two years of heated debates and ever-expanding reorganization. The main factor cited in this delay was the nationality question.

The organizing committee – or rather, organizing committees – held three plenum sessions to prepare for the congress. At the first plenum, amid primarily political speeches denouncing RAPP and praising the Politburo resolution (or defending RAPP and praising the Politburo resolution), Said Baduev, a Chechen poet, stood up and delivered a speech of a strikingly different nature. Almost alone of the plenum speeches, Baduev’s talk incorporated extended literary imagery. He portrayed the figure of a Chechen tribesman, a mountaineer, trapped in an autumn storm. Every way he thinks to turn promises only a new form of death. His beloved river, rocks, and trees are transformed into the storm’s ominous agents, rendering both action and inaction just two routes to his literal downfall. This scene, Baduev concluded, allegorized the state of the Caucasian peoples under tsarist rule. Reeducation and reorganization were major enterprises for the Soviet nationalities, which had been confined to darkness until Sovietization. Baduev framed his allegory in purely pro-Soviet terms, praising the new Soviet Chechnya, where Mikhail Lermontov’s wicked, dagger-wielding Chechen was replaced by a “трудоу чеченец-колхозник, ударник на красном тракторе, [который] правит рулем, а не точет кинжал.”<sup>2</sup> [a hard-working Chechen collective farm worker, a shock worker, who steers a red tractor instead of sharpening his dagger.] Nevertheless, Baduev’s image aptly illustrates the position of the Soviet national writer trying to navigate the storm of literary politics. National literatures were trapped between stony local conditions, the flood of Moscow’s expectations, and the threat that whichever towering figure they took shelter under would come crashing down.

This chapter will analyze the organizing committee’s efforts to rescue the national literatures from their mountain storm and to present a vibrant, constructive, multinational picture of Soviet literature at the eventual congress. The first part focuses on the organizational history of the organizing committee: its background, membership, and activities. The second part illuminates the gap between Moscow and Baku, between the center’s expectations and the reality of the periphery. Finally, the third part describes the organizing committee’s solution to the problem of national literatures. Throughout this chapter, I will allow the committee members to speak for themselves as much as possible, since the diversity of this process is one of its most interesting aspects.

### **Organizing the Organizing Committee**

Understanding how the organizing committee influenced national literatures requires a broader picture of how the committee functioned. The April 23 resolution heralded the end of RAPP, but only began the power struggles over whether it would be replaced or reincarnated, and in what form. The institutional flux preceding the organizing committee naturally continued into the committee’s tenure. It was marked by shifting alignments between the literary and political fields, as individual writers and factions gained or lost favor with Stalin and the Communist

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<sup>2</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 61.

Party's Division on Culture and Propaganda (Kul'tprop), and by radical changes of position within the literary field.

The 1920s was an energetic period for Soviet Russian literature, with literary experiments and competing schools vying for readership, patronage, and state approval. Chief among these schools was the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP). This organization existed in various incarnations from 1920 and included local branches, from the powerful Moscow branch (MAPP, which maintained partial autonomy) to the minor national members of the all-Union alliance (until 1928, the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers [VAPP]; subsequently, the All-Union Alliance of Proletarian Writers' Associations [VOAPP]). Other prominent groups included rival organizations (the avant-garde LEF, early Proletkul't, and subsequent Smithy and October), peasant writers (VOKP), military writers (LOKAF), and writers organized around primarily aesthetic considerations (Serapion Brothers, Oberiu, *Pereval* [Mountain Pass]), as well as numerous writers who chose to remain unaffiliated. In 1927, the Politburo issued a resolution to consolidate Russian writers' organizations under an umbrella federation.<sup>3</sup> This project failed, as RAPP continued to absorb (more or less successfully) other proletarian literary movements, like LEF's successor REF and much of *Pereval*'s membership in 1929-30, and pushed the All-Russian Union of Peasant Writers (VOKP) into subordinate status as the Russian Union of Proletarian-Kolkhoz Writers (ROPKP).<sup>4</sup> RAPP's vocal opposition concentrated in the official umbrella organization, the All-Russian Union of Soviet Writers (VSSP).

The situation for national literatures was not necessarily more complicated than in Moscow, but the relative power of the different movements shifted, and there were locally organized groups like the Ukrainian Vaplite, which advocated the appropriation of Western literature. RAPP argued forcefully for the promotion of writers from a proletarian background (not just writers on proletarian topics, although this was related), but this assumed a ready cadre of writers absent in many newer literatures. National literatures could not necessarily afford to abandon their bourgeois fellow travelers. In general, there was a basic divide between national literary scenes in the Western republics and Eastern ones, especially in Muslim areas. Many writers from Muslim regions followed cultural movements with no Russian equivalent, such as the moderate reformist *jadid* movement in Central Asia, a fact which nuanced their allegiance to the Soviet cultural authorities. Even proletarian, pro-authority organizations, like the Red Pen groups, promoted and tolerated different literary methods than their Russian counterparts, as a necessary accommodation to local traditions.

Although RAPP was officially a member of VAPP/VOAPP, in practice the all-Union organization was run by the Russian one. VAPP/VOAPP was an afterthought. Each of the republics and most major RSFSR nationalities had membership organizations: BelAPP, KazAPP, KirgAPP, the Tatar TAPP, UzAPP, the All-Ukrainian VUSPP, the Transcaucasian ZAPP with its subordinates AzAPP, ArmAPP, and GruzAPP, et ceterAPP. Turkmenia was an APP-less exception, while Abkhazia founded its organization on September 4, 1931, less than eight months before all of the APPs were dissolved by Politburo decree.<sup>5</sup> For the most part, the local APPs were left to fight their own battles so long as they followed the basic tenets of proletarian

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<sup>3</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 633, l. 3-4. May 5, 1927. Translated in *Soviet Culture and Power*, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Clark and Dobrenko give a concise account of RAPP's rise in *Soviet Culture and Power*, 150. For more detail, see Edward Brown's *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953) or Kemp-Welch's chapter "Proletarian Hegemony" in *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia*.

<sup>5</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 8, l. 94. October 31, 1932. RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 10, l. 1-2. November 1, 1932.

literature. Like RAPP, local organizations purged overly divergent members, and restricted publications for fellow travelers as much as they could given the limited resources available.<sup>6</sup>

VOAPP's reign coincided with the reorganization of Soviet publishing under the Association of State Publishing Houses (OGIZ) in 1930. VOAPP was thus fighting editorial board and censorship battles in a transitional environment complicated by new bureaucratic structures and a massive Kul'trop review of editorial and contract portfolios.<sup>7</sup> The turmoil in publishing exacerbated the focus on Moscow politics, and thus the lack of attention and resources for the national APPs.

The lack of leadership for national literatures was a common problem for VAPP/VOAPP, at least as reported when it was safe to criticize. After the resolution stripping VOAPP's power, the Komi-Zyrian writer Samakov recounted, “Я был на пленуме ВОАП. Хотел там что-нибудь услышать о литературах народов СССР, в частности, о нашей литературе.[...] Ни одного слова – о литературах народов СССР. Руководство РАПП'а национальной литературой было слабое.”<sup>8</sup> [I was at the VOAPP plenum. I wanted to hear something there about the national literatures of the USSR, in particular, about our literature. Not one word about the national literatures of the USSR. RAPP leadership was weak on national literature.] Kavi Najmi, a Tatar proletarian writer, explained this weakness more directly, wryly acknowledging, “Конечно, РАПП по вопросам национальной литературы писал длинные декларационные абстрактные творческие письма, которые ничем не могли практически помочь писателям, особенно национальным.”<sup>9</sup> [Of course, RAPP wrote long, declarative, abstract, letters on creative questions in national literature, which couldn't help writers in any way, especially national writers.] In response to a Kazakh complaint about VOAPP leadership, one of the organizers, Boris Kovalenko, defended RAPP, admitting that nationalities outreach was weak. “Правда, должен сказать, что с западной полосой народов СССР мы были лучше связаны – с Украиной, Белоруссией, с еврейской литературой; хуже обстояло дело связи с Востоком – Закавказьем например; еще хуже с литературой национальных меньшинств РСФСР.”<sup>10</sup> [True, I must say, that we were better connected to the Western area of Soviet peoples – with Ukraine, Belorussia, with Yiddish literature; the situation of connections with the East was worse – with Transcaucasia, for example; and even worse with the literatures of national minorities of the RSFSR.] However, he disingenuously suggested, the fault had to be shared between the organizations: “В этом большая вина ВОАП, большая вина РАПП.”<sup>11</sup> [Much of the fault for this lies with VOAPP, much of the fault with RAPP.] (This answer smoothly ignored RAPP's control over VOAPP.)

Although more recently available material complicates the view that Maxim Gorky “beat” (the) RAPP, Stalin and the Party's growing dissatisfaction with its hegemony coincided

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<sup>6</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, l. 39-41. November 1, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Brian Kassof's 2000 dissertation, *The Knowledge Front: Politics, Ideology, and Economics in the Soviet Book Publishing Industry, 1925-1935* (Ph.D dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2000), analyzes this process at GIKhL, among other publishing houses. See 470-530. According to Kassof, in 1931, GIKhL fulfilled only 74% of its production target due to OGIZ's irregular paper supply (486). This statistic should be read against the production levels in the republics which will be discussed in the next section.

<sup>8</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 83. November 3, 1932. I was not always able to track down full names for figures mentioned in the transcripts, including Samakov. Unfortunately (but not surprisingly), this is more common for non-Russian figures. Where possible, I have given or transliterated names from their national languages, rather than the Russified version.

<sup>9</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 7. March 10, 1934.

<sup>10</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 8, l. 3. October 31, 1932.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

with Gorky's return from abroad.<sup>12</sup> Gorky was welcomed home as a giant of Soviet literature, combining revolutionary credentials with his status as primary inheritor of the nineteenth century Russian realism. Clark describes the turmoil his return created on the literary scene: "What really happened in 1932 was not that RAPP, the player who up to that point seemed to be winning the game of Soviet literature, suddenly lost, but rather that another player entered the game, the pieces were swept off the board, and a new game was begun."<sup>13</sup> This new game was, of course, over control of the organizing committee for the writers' union. And in the opening moves, it was not yet clear that national players would even be allowed on the board.

### ***The (Russian) Organizing Committee***

The April 23, 1932 Politburo resolution "On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organizations" surprised most writers. It stated that the organizations promoting proletarian art had moved from a necessary fostering of proletarian writers and workers to a narrow framework that was slowing the progress of Soviet culture. Accordingly, it liquidated RAPP/VOAPP in favor of a more inclusive writers' union and ordered a similar process in the other arts. The RAPP leadership tried strenuously to undermine this process, but ultimately failed.<sup>14</sup> On May 7, the Orgburo issued instructions for implementing this decision. It approved a committee of twenty-four writers to organize the RSFSR branch of the new union, ordered that equivalent committees be created in the national republics, and called for an all-Union federation of organizing committees. The RSFSR organizing committee inherited everything from RAPP, while the VOAPP files, property, and journals went to the all-Union committee.

*Literaturnaia Gazeta* soon published a statement about the new direction of Soviet literature and listed the organizing committee members. It announced that the RSFSR literary organizations "призывают всех советских писателей сплотиться вместе с остальными трудящимися вокруг коммунистической партии," [call upon all Soviet writers to rally together with other workers around the Communist Party] and "постановляют для осуществления решения ЦК о создании единого союза советских писателей, созвать внеочередной съезд советских писателей."<sup>15</sup> [to realize the Central Committee decision about the creation of a united Soviet writers' union, resolve to call an extraordinary congress of Soviet writers.] The repeated distinction between the RSFSR organizations and the Soviet writers as a whole implied that the Russian organizing committee was taking responsibility for the all-Union congress without actually committing to such. The statement was signed by thirty-four writers on behalf of the VSSP, RAPP, ROPKP, LOKAF, and Pereval.

The new honorary chair of the organizing committee was Gorky, with Gronskii serving as the committee's functional chair. Gronskii, an associate of Stalin's and the head editor of *Izvestiia* since 1928, also led the committee's Party faction. Although he was interested in literary affairs, Gronskii's main appeal was as a bureaucrat and political loyalist. His assignment was to steer the organizing committee's daily work, presumably freeing Gorky to focus on more literary issues like socialist realism. (Gronskii still took credit for helping Stalin develop the term "socialist realism," of course.) Valerii Kirpotin, head of the Kul'trop literature section,

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the arguments around this moment, see *Soviet Culture and Power*, 144.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 33.

<sup>14</sup> Kemp-Welch gives a blow by blow account of this battle in *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia* (116-24), which does an excellent job describing the organizing committee factions' political maneuvering, although like most scholarship on this period, he restricts his narrative to Russian literature.

<sup>15</sup> "Splotit'sia vokrug kommunisticheskoi partii: O sozdanii orgkommiteta edinogo soiuzs sovetskikh pisatelei." *Literaturnaia gazeta*. May 17, 1932.

rounded out the leadership as organizing committee secretary. As a literary critic and the director of the Communist Academy Institute of Literature and Languages, Kirpotin nicely balanced academic and bureaucratic credentials.

Despite the proclaimed change in direction, most RAPP members were not purged from literary organizational work so long as they recanted their excesses, and RAPP had prominent representation on the organizing committee. Key figures from the RAPP leadership were appointed: the novelist Fadeev, playwright Vladimir Kirshon, and Vladimir Stavskii. Several other organizing committee members – Fedor Panferov, Aleksandr Bezymenskii, Aleksandr Serafimovich, Konstantin Fedin, and Mikhail Chumandrin – had been active in RAPP by 1932. Most of these writers also signed the *Literaturnaia Gazeta* statement, which added the dramatist Aleksandr Afinogenov to the list of committee members approved by the Orgburo resolution. Rival organizations were also represented. The VSSP was also prominent on the new committee, with five of the eight signatories included: Petr Pavlenko, Lydia Seifullina, and fellow-travelers Leonid Leonov, Aleksandr Malyshkin, and Vsevolod Ivanov. Peasant writers were not as well represented, with only Petr Zamoiskii appointed from ROPKL, although Panferov's background was also in peasant literature. Poets Nikolai Aseev and Nikolai Tikhonov came from LOKAF, with Chumandrin joining the former Serapion Brothers Tikhonov and Mikhail Slonimskii in representing Leningrad. Filling out the committee were former Smithy members Vladimir Bakhmet'ev and Ivan Zhiga, the old Bolshevik writer Feoktist Berezovskii, and Vladimir Bill'-Belotserkovskii. RAPP campaigns had denounced several of these members, so the committee's primary fault lines were clear.

Despite the emphasis on "RSFSR," which included many nationalities, all of the organizing committee members wrote in Russian, and most were living in Moscow or Leningrad. Few had any experience of the Soviet periphery. Serafimovich grew up on the Don and in what was now Poland, while Stavskii was secretary of the Northern Caucasus APP before his position with RAPP in Moscow. Berezovskii and Seifullina came from Siberia, but in 1924, Berezovskii moved to Moscow and Seifullina moved to Leningrad, then Moscow. Bill'-Belotserkovskii was listed as a Jewish national in his passport and spent several years in the United States, but this background didn't necessarily further his understanding of the Soviet nationality question. Tikhonov and Pavlenko showed the most experience with Soviet nationalities. Tikhonov had traveled to Transcaucasia and Turkmenistan, deriving inspiration there for his work. Pavlenko grew up in Tbilisi and served on a trade delegation to Turkey. His work focused on Transcaucasian and Central Asian themes, with story collections titled *Asiatic stories*, *Istanbul and Turkey*, *Anatolia*, and *Journey to Turkmenistan*. The last of these was based on a 1930 trip to Central Asia by a group of Russian writers, which he proposed and organized. Pavlenko was thus the closest figure the organizing committee had to an expert on all-Union literature. The committee's relative national homogeneity compared with the obviously heterogeneous literary factions meant that national literature was not one of the first subjects the committee tackled.

### ***The All-Union Organizing Committee***

While the Russian organizing committee was organizing itself, the republics were heading in the same direction along somewhat thornier paths. In many places, the new organizing committees looked little different from the APPs they replaced, and lacked the resources and willpower to carry out broader reforms. After the RSFSR organizing committee was firmly established, the Politburo turned its attention to the all-Union counterpart. On June 22, it ordered Kul'tprop to propose candidates for the republics' seats: seven or eight for Ukraine, four for Belorussia, and



six each for Transcaucasia and Central Asia.<sup>16</sup> Selecting these candidates took longer than assigned, but on August 3, the Politburo approved the all-Union organizing committee. Since the all-Union committee was supposed to have delegates from the local organizations, it made sense to wait until local organizing committees existed. On the other hand, the RSFSR organizing committee still planned to hold the congress that fall, and this delay made that even less likely.<sup>17</sup>

The all-Union organizing committee contained the same officers as the RSFSR committee, selected representatives from the national committees, and *all* of the members of the RSFSR committee, giving Russian nationals just over half of the seats. (Technically Bill' - Belotserkovskii's nationality was Jewish, but Russians representing Ukraine and Central Asia canceled him out.) The all-Union committee still contained no representatives from RSFSR minority national territories. More than the Russian members, national representatives tended to fit one of two profiles: they were either Party members active in literary organizations or major writers.

Although the members were officially equal, in practice Ivan Kulik headed the Ukrainian delegation as chair of the Ukrainian organizing committee. Kulik was a pre-Revolutionary Party member with international experience, having spent a few years in the United States and Canada, where he served as Soviet consul. A leader in VUSPP, the Ukrainian APP, Kulik was joined on the organizing committee by fellow VUSPP and VOAPP bureaucrat Ivan Mikitenko. Petro Panch had also come to VUSPP after his involvement with the Ukrainian peasant writers' association Plow and the Western-oriented Vaplite, although he joined the opposition faction Prolitfront in 1930. The remaining Ukrainian national seats were filled by the peasant poet Mikhail Tereshchenko, Vaplite organizer Mikola Khvil'ovii, and satirist Ostap Vishnia. The Russian writer Vladimir Kuz'mich and Yiddish poet Itsik Fefer completed the contingent from Ukraine.

Like Ukraine, Belorussia sent a Yiddish poet, Izi Kharik. The Belorussian writers Mikhas' Lyn'kov, Kuz'ma Chornii, and Andrei Aleksandrovich came from BelAPP and the Komsomol writers' organization *Molodniak*, which Chornii left in 1926 to found the *Pereval*-affiliated *Uzvyshsha*. In his memoir, Kirpotin singled out Belorussia's exclusion of major writers (Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas) by the BelAPP leadership.<sup>18</sup>

The Transcaucasian members divided neatly into two for each republic. Sandro Euli, the head of GruzAPP, and the poet and editor Nikoloz Mitsishvili represented Georgia. Azerbaijan sent the Red Pens and AzAPP organizer Suleiman Rustam and the dramatist Abdurrahim Haqverdiev, who was soon replaced by the young writer Mirza Ibrahimov. The Armenian organizing committee chair, Egishe Chubar, was joined by Aleksandr Shirvanzade, an Armenian writer with extensive experience in Baku and Tblisi. When the Armenian organizing committee reorganized in 1934, Chubar lost his position and attended the Congress as part of the Azerbaijani delegation.

Abu al-Qasim Lahuti, a prominent Iranian poet who lived in Moscow from 1922 on, was the driving force among the Central Asian members. Although the highly respected Sadridin Aini represented Tajikistan on the committee, Lahuti was the major voice for Tajik literature during the organizing committee process. Uzbekistan sent the Uzbek organizing committee

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<sup>16</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 114, d. 305, l.5-6.

<sup>17</sup> P. Skosyrev, "Vserossiiskii ili vsesoiuznyi: Kakim dolzhen byt' pervyi s"ezd sovetskikh pisatelei." *Literaturnaia gazeta*. Aug 29, 1932.

<sup>18</sup> V. Kirpotin, *Nachalo: avtobiograficheskie stranitsy* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986), 144.

chair, Rahmat Majidi, and the poet and playwright Umarjan Ismailov. Oraz Tash-Nazarov, a Turkmen poet who had been studying in Moscow, and the Kyrgyz writer Baiazov filled out the national representation, with Nikandr Alekseev, the Russian editor of the journal *Soviet Literature of the Peoples of Central Asia*, serving as an expert on the entire region.

Beyond its late start, the all-Union committee faced impediments which the Russian committee did not. The geographic distribution meant committee meetings were frequently conducted without full national representation, weighting the all-Union committee even further towards Moscow. Lahuti and Kulik were prominent voices for the republics, but they remained minority figures on a largely Russian committee. The all-Union committee's work was further hindered by national members' dual focus: whereas Russian literary interests were considered synonymous with the needs of Soviet literature as a whole, specific national interests were not. Thus, national committee members split their efforts between Moscow and their designated field of expertise in a way that Russian writers did not.

### ***The Organization***

Because the leadership and Russian members were the same for both the RSFSR and all-Union committees, it was rarely clear which organizing committee was operating at any given moment. Politburo resolutions, *Literaturnaia Gazeta* articles, and organizing committee documents routinely referred to the committee without designating which one was at stake. Functionally, there was one Moscow committee. The dual structure remained, however, and was invoked for two useful functions. First, whenever it was convenient to do so, the organizing committee could exclude representatives from the national republics and claim to be meeting as the RSFSR committee. This was both logistically simpler and better reflected the actual power structure. Second, the committee's Janus-faced nature allowed the leadership to deflect criticism. When acknowledging national complaints, for example, Lev Subotskii ostensibly agreed with the republics, noting that “Всесоюзный Оргкомитет фактически не развернул свою работу, работал только Оргкомитет РСФСР, который зачастую занимался московскими делами в ущерб делам периферий, особенно – автономных республик и областей.”<sup>19</sup> [The All-Union Orgcommittee in fact did not set to work, only the RSFSR Orgcommittee worked, and it frequently concerned itself with Moscow matters to the detriment of the periphery, especially the autonomous republics and regions.] Artificially maintaining the distinction suggested that fault for the organizing committee's failures lay with the republics themselves, as the RSFSR committee had at least started work as ordered. Moscow's disproportionate share of resources and attention similarly became an internal matter through this distinction, rather than an example of great-power chauvinism.

The transitional nature of the organizing committees, as well as the ambiguous relation between them, created multiple potential paths for decision-making. The committee soon created multiple administrative bodies that further blurred the apparent lines of command, embodied the earlier factional power struggles in the official apparatus, and exacerbated the fluctuation and instability of the literary field as a whole. This created spaces in the power structure and discourse – ones into which national writers could insert their demands for Moscow's attention and assistance, and cracks into which national literatures could disappear.

The first meeting of the RSFSR organizing committee elected a presidium of Gronskii, Kirpotin, Leonov, Malyshkin, Panferov, Tikhonov, and Fadeev, with Aseev and Pavlenko as

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<sup>19</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 5, l. 57. October 30, 1932.

candidates.<sup>20</sup> In retrospect, this added layer of bureaucracy was an early clue that the promised transition would not be quick. The Party members on the committee met as a faction and liaised with Party authorities outside of the committee's primary chain of command.<sup>21</sup> The Party faction, rather than the presidium, was the primary power base within the committee. Headed by Gronskii under close Kul'tprop advisement, it decided issues that were then presented to the presidium for endorsement. Kirshon complained to Stalin and Lazar Kaganovich that the Party faction was in fact controlled by its leading committee, without giving proper weight to other Party members: "бюро фракции /т.т. Гронский, Кирпотин, и Панферов/ приняло все эти решения без какого бы то ни было обсуждения с коммунистами-писателями, хотя бы с членами Оргкомитета, а затем прямо вынесло на Президиум с беспартийными писателями, где и утверждено."<sup>22</sup> [the faction's bureau (Comrades Gronskii, Kirpotin, and Panferov) made these decisions without any sort of discussion with the Communist writers, even with the Organizing Committee members, and then took it straight to the Presidium with non-Party writers, where it was approved.] Since the RAPP leaders were Party-members, this circumvented what authority they had left. Although this was Kirshon's immediate concern, the process he described remained largely constant throughout the organizing committee's history.

As the membership indicates, the Russian and all-Union committees had a common concern: how to absorb RAPP/VOAPP figures without giving them control over the new union. The April 23 resolution eliminated RAPP, and the organizing committee stripped RAPP editors from journals and *Literaturnaia Gazeta*. Kirshon's letter to Stalin and Kaganovich was written to protest this treatment, which he described as liquidation instead of unification. He pleaded for them to save *On Literary Guard* as a home for RAPP views.<sup>23</sup> This request was denied. On June 5, the Orgburo combined *On Literary Guard*, *For Marxist-Leninist Art Studies*, and *Proletarian Literature* into one monthly journal, although Kirshon was given a seat on the editorial board and also reinstated on the board of *Growth*.

Gorky and Gronskii disagreed on the reintegration of RAPP figures, with Gorky supporting his personal connections, like prominent and dogmatic RAPP theorist Leopold Averbakh.<sup>24</sup> After the April 1932 resolution, RAPP leaders apologized for their apotheosis of the proletarian writer, but their apologies only minimally appeased. However, by the fall, the organizing committee reached an apparent rapprochement with RAPP: although apprehension over their bad apple status still applied, the committee needed strong organizers; RAPP's aptitude appealed. (VOAPP, such as it was, lacked equivalent entry to the committee.) In October, the Party faction announced the appointment of Subotskii, Averbakh, Ivan Makar'ev, and Vladimir Ermilov to the organizing committee.<sup>25</sup> The Politburo sent Subotskii, whose previous assignment was in the Red Army prosecutor's office, as a Party representative, but the other three were all RAPP leaders.<sup>26</sup>

In August, 1933, the Politburo assigned another functionary, Pavel Yudin, to run the newly established secretariat of the organizing committee: Yudin, Kirpotin, Fadeev, Stavskii,

<sup>20</sup> The committee met on May 19. In addition to the presidium, it approved a local organizing committee in Leningrad and appointed commissions on literary journals, organizational apparatus, and literary circles. "Pervoe zasedanie orgkomiteta." *Literaturnaia gazeta*. May 23, 1932.

<sup>21</sup> This followed a common Soviet organizational model with overlapping governmental and Party structures.

<sup>22</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 305, l. 118ob. May 31, 1932. Emphasis in original.

<sup>23</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 305, l. 118-9. Translated in *Soviet Culture and Power*, 157-8.

<sup>24</sup> Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power*, 144. Gorky and Gronskii had several conflicts on various stages.

<sup>25</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 4, l. 31. October 29, 1932.

<sup>26</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 348, l. 96. August 3, 1932.

and Vsevolod Ivanov.<sup>27</sup> Yudin had written a *Pravda* article against RAPP that signaled the April 23 resolution, and was working for the Politburo when appointed. This left the organizing committee – which was by definition a temporary body – with the committee proper, the presidium, the Party faction, the Party faction bureau, and the secretariat to organize the committee.

Like any such body, the committee operated at the intersection between official power structures and individuals, all of which could best further their ambitions by promoting the organizing committee as a quasi-permanent apparatus. Simply put, whoever controlled the organizing committee would probably control the union. The more importance the committee achieved, the greater the power of its leaders and members and the greater the chance that power would survive the transition. Individual members were thus battling for position within the organization and the organization's position in the cultural-political field. Assimilated RAPP/VOAPP members tacitly relinquished factional prominence in exchange for individual advancement within the committee. Conversely, most national representatives could only gain visibility by promoting national literatures as a whole and their own literatures within that category. Notably among the national members, Kulik rose to a prominent position as a functionary, rather than as a representative of national literature, but his committee activities largely addressed national literatures. He traveled as a representative of the Moscow organizing committee, for example, but to other republics, not to Leningrad.

By citing instances of personal advancement, I am not arguing that writers' positions in organizing committee discussions were purely strategic, rather than reflecting genuine differences in literary philosophy. The balance between belief and strategy varied for each author at each moment, and the two were by no means mutually exclusive. Most commonly, writers' statements articulated personal beliefs through strategic lenses within the discursive field of what was sayable. Whether their speeches were "true," to either facts or personal opinions, is almost beside the point. More important is why this particular set of statements emerged at this historic moment, and what forces caused that confluence. The organizing committee was a messy, polyphonic process. Although I am especially interested in liminal statements which suggest where the discursive boundaries lay and how those boundaries shifted, these statements do not indicate that writers' "true" positions were outside the pale, nor do more central (and thus safer) statements prove a strategic or toadying relation to Soviet power. Instead, both central and liminal positions reveal how writers used power, negotiated with political forces, and stretched the discourse to advocate for their beliefs, which tended to include a belief in personal advancement. This does not condemn them any more than their Party-mindedness would save them during the terror of 1937.

Because the organizing committee's legitimacy was grounded in the coming union, its rhetorical stance conflated these two entities. Like socialist realism itself, the organizing committee repeatedly invoked the present in the future tense: the committee as the present instantiation of the future union. The committee's ostensible purpose was to organize the new union and the congress heralding it. Conflating the present committee and future union allowed the organizing committee to accumulate functions intended for the union, like overseeing publishing, educating young writers, expanding factory and kolkhoz writing circles, allocating apartments and vacations, and fostering national literary cadres. These activities, while useful, were primarily the means to an end. The organizing committee was only partially concerned with writers' well-being, or even with the status of literature as a whole. From a political

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<sup>27</sup> *PVSSP*, appendix: 81.

perspective, the committee's goals were to institutionalize power into an official apparatus, and to maximize the position of that apparatus within the political field.

The congress and union mattered insofar as they justified the committee's immediate activities, and would serve to concretize the organizing committee apparatus and promote it to the public and the Party. From the committee's perspective, the point of the congress, in other words, was to support the organizing committee, not vice versa. From this vantage point, the delays did not represent committee failure. Since they allowed the committee to expand considerably and to build institutions – subcommittees, commissions, offices, brigades, and the multiple layers of leadership – that survived in the new union, the delays were an essential component of the committee's success.

### ***The Plenums***

When the Orgburo established the first organizing committee, the congress was planned for the fall of 1932. When the all-Union committee started meeting, it postponed the congress until May, 1933.<sup>28</sup> On March 19, 1933, the Politburo approved the organizing committee and Kul'tprop proposal to set the congress for June 20. In June, the Orgkom reported that it was acceding to the joint request of Ukraine, Tataria, Kazakhstan, and Armenia to give them the summer to prepare. That August, it decreed that the congress would occur in May 1934 to broaden its coverage of Soviet literary life.<sup>29</sup> In 1934, the congress was set for August 15 to 26.<sup>30</sup> It opened two days after that date, on August 17, 1934, well over two years after the organizing committee first met.

The delays were useful politically, but the proximate causes were more literary and organizational. Not coincidentally, the problems justifying the delays were the main topics of the organizing committee plenum sessions. In addition to organizational meetings and conferences on selected topics, the committee held three week-long plenums with additional writers invited to give prepared reports and discuss unresolved issues. In a memorandum to the Politburo, Kul'tprop deputy Rabchev described the first plenum's composition as “съехались большие писательские делегации от республик, в зале постоянно присутствуют крупнейшие московские и ленинградские писатели.”<sup>31</sup> [major writer delegations convened from the republics, and prominent Moscow and Leningrad writers were constantly present in the hall.] The organizing committee used the plenums to test writers' opinions, to model and enforce new discursive patterns, and to develop policies. Some of the materials were carefully prepared (especially the speeches selected for publication in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, *Pravda*, and *Izvestiia*), but the plenums also featured a substantial amount of spontaneous debate. Even prepared speeches were frequently interrupted by audience questions or rebuttals.

The first plenum ran from October 29 through November 3, 1932, and focused on limiting RAPP's influence and rehabilitating its former members. Much of the debate concerned RAPP's legacy, with Fadeev and Averbakh defending its achievements against a list of grievances. The national representatives reported on the status of the transitions in their respective territories, with several wearily repeating that their local APP had committed the same errors as RAPP or a variation thereof. Some tackled the question of VOAPP's failure toward the nationalities. The Kazakh representative Sabit Mukanov complained that the organizing

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<sup>28</sup> “V orgkommitete.” *Literaturnaia gazeta*. October 11, 1932.

<sup>29</sup> “Bol'shie zadachi – bol'shaia rabota.” *Literaturnaia gazeta*. August 17, 1933.

<sup>30</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 146, l. 3-5. Detailed agenda approved July 21, 1934.

<sup>31</sup> *VKhI*, 186. November 1, 1932. Trans., 159

committee was pretending that RAPP's inability to include fellow travelers was the only reason for the April 23 resolution. This narrow-mindedness excluded many of the same writers RAPP had: "[Е]сли мы первым моментом считаем вопрос о попутчиках, хотя еще можно поспорить – является ли это первым моментом, но пусть попутчики будут первым моментом, то вторым моментом я считаю неумелое руководство РАПП крестьянскими писателями."<sup>32</sup> [If we first consider the question of fellow travelers, although it's debatable whether this is the first issue, but let the fellow travelers be first, then I consider the second issue to be RAPP's incompetent leadership of peasant writers.] After giving examples of RAPP's neglect of peasant writers and the kolkhoz writing circles, Mukanov continued, "Другая причина, вызвавшая решение ЦК партии, - это неумелое руководство РАПП'a национальными организациями."<sup>33</sup> [Another reason motivating the Party Central Committee resolution is RAPP's incompetent leadership of national organizations.] Although many national representatives demanded more attention to national literatures, Mukanov's complaint neatly united the warnings that the literary situation in the periphery lagged behind Moscow's progress in ways the organizing committee had not anticipated.

Drama was the main topic of the second plenum, held February 12 through 19, 1933. At the first plenum, Kirpotin explained the importance, claiming, "в настоящее время нам больше всего нужна пьеса."<sup>34</sup> [at our current time, we need plays more than anything else.] Theater was a tool for re-educating the masses and exposing them to literature despite high levels of illiteracy (or purely functional literacy) and low levels of publishing. "Нам необходимо исходить из знаний рабочих и крестьян, из их возможностей и способностей прочитать книгу, прочитать литературно-художественное произведение.... С точки зрения воспитания и перевоспитания своего класса театр является самым надежным и самым верным средством."<sup>35</sup> [It is essential to proceed from workers' and peasants' knowledge, their opportunity and ability to read a book, to read a literary work.... From the perspective of class education and re-education, theater is the most reliable and dependable medium.] Accordingly, the organizing committee devoted most of the second plenum to drama. Gronskii described the plenum's appeal in a letter to Stalin, Kaganovich, and Aleksei Stetskii, noting that "вопросы драматургии вызвали огромный интерес, как среди писателей, так и среди театральных работников. Зал заседания пленума был буквально набит битком, и это несмотря на то, что мы очень скупо раздавали гостевые билеты."<sup>36</sup> [questions on dramaturgy created great interest both among writers and among theatrical workers. The plenum hall was literally packed full, and this despite how sparingly we gave out guest tickets.] Gronskii attributed this interest not to the relative strength of Soviet theater, but to the relative weakness of Soviet drama theory and criticism, and the absence of a Party line to direct playwrights.<sup>37</sup>

Another reason for the interest in drama was its relative power within the literary organization. Dramatists resisted the call to unify, arguing that their works differed from literary products consumed through publication. Most of their payment came from staged production agreements, not from publishing houses, and they were reluctant to abandon their higher payments or even pay union dues out of them. The second plenum represented a compromise

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<sup>32</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 2-3. October 31, 1932.

<sup>33</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 7, l. 3.

<sup>34</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 4, l. 32. October 29, 1932.

<sup>35</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 32-3.

<sup>36</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 127, l. 2.

<sup>37</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 127, ll. 2-3.

with the dramatists. The organizing committee granted the dramatists a relatively autonomous section within the committee and subsequent union. The Politburo formally approved this section's presidium a few months later, naming the figures Gronsksii, Sergei Amaglobeli, Kirshon, Afinogenov, Bill'-Belotserkovskii, Vsevolod Vishnevskii, Aleksei Faiko, Boris Romashov, Olesha, Lev Slavin, Aleksei Tolstoy, and Stavskii (all Russians).<sup>38</sup> Drama remained a primary topic for the organizing committee, and one of the main topics at the eventual Congress.

The third plenum – March 7 to 11, 1934 – focused on organizing the congress, with emphasis given to the main topics for the congress: national literatures, poetry, drama. Especially relevant considering that the national literatures were being blamed for the congress delays, the organizing committee announced that the congress would begin with reports on national literatures. The national speeches at the plenum rehearsed themes for congress talks, although with more attention to negative aspects and some debate. Debates ended with policy pronouncements by major figures, which helped to consolidate and stabilize the fluctuating discourse into an established form in which the congress could safely occur. The third plenum set norms for both the national congresses to select delegates, and for the national reports at the congress. By this stage, national literatures knew how to present themselves in Moscow and at home.

### **National Literatures: Views from the Center and Periphery**

The organizing process' instabilities revealed that the gaps between Moscow's ideologically based vision for Soviet literature and contemporary literary practice were far greater on the periphery than in the center. Further, Moscow viewed this problem differently than the republics. Moscow's initial disregard of national literatures was informed by two contradictory yet reinforcing beliefs. The first widespread belief was that the national literatures were truly less developed and thus less important than Russian literature, or at least Russophone literature. This bias had a valid historical foundation, since Russia had a more established literary tradition than many, albeit not all, of the Soviet nationalities. Russia's central position in the process of Soviet canonization solidified this advantage. Although Leningrad remained an influential second city (and reported on its status at the plenums and Congress much like the republics), in the negotiation with national literatures, Russian literature primarily meant Moscow. Perhaps more accurately, as the center of power and culture, Moscow was almost inevitably also the center of Soviet literature, and its literature happened to be Russian. Moscow dominated the Russian provinces as well as Russia's former imperial colonies, but only one of these forms of dominance threatened nationalities policy.

Russian Orientalism, an aesthetic discourse which filtered imperial encounters in the Caucasus and Central Asia through European conceptions of the East, contributed to Moscow's dismissive opinion of national literatures.<sup>39</sup> Russian literature had a set of paradigms and motifs for representing its Eastern territories, and Soviet Russian writers frequently misunderstood or

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<sup>38</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 348, l. 97. Politburo resolution, May 15, 1933.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). According to Said's theory of Orientalism, all Western depictions of the East – and most colonial and post-colonial Eastern self-depictions – are created or filtered through a model of the Orient which obscures the original subject and justifies imperial expansion and control. The Russian representation of the Orient, especially the internal Orient, is more complicated than Said's model of hegemonic discourse allows. Writers like Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoy tended to use elements of Orientalism while simultaneously expressing an affiliation with the non-Russian other, betraying an uneasy sense of Russia as the West's Oriental subject.

resisted national literature that challenged the conventions set by Russian literature. At the first plenum, Uzbek delegate Majidi criticized Russian literature set in Uzbekistan, which consisted almost exclusively of ethnographic sketches.<sup>40</sup> This literature, he complained, reproduced the stereotype of the Sarts, Central Asian city dwellers, “которые больше всего любят сидеть в чайхане и пить кокчай.”<sup>41</sup> [who loves above all to sit in a tea-house and drink green tea.] Chariev had a similar complaint about an insulting Russian play that gave the impression that Turkmenia was governed by kulaks and was making no progress, except through a brigade sent from Moscow.<sup>42</sup> Since Russian depictions of other nationalities were frequently static and reductive, Russian opinions of national culture tended to be correspondingly low.

Although the view that the national literatures were less important contradicted official policy and could not be expressed openly, it nevertheless emerged in discussions of Russia’s leading position in the brotherhood of national literatures. References to Russian as “the language of Lenin” justified this position in non-imperialist terms, preempting the prevalent charge of great power chauvinism.<sup>43</sup> And since Russian literature was a model for national literatures, reforming Moscow was an obvious first step to reorganizing Soviet literature as a whole. From this perspective, the organizing committee correctly allocated most of its resources to Moscow.

At the first plenum session, Shamil Usmanov, a Tatar representative, used the theoretically all-Union literary newspaper *Literaturnaia Gazeta* as an example of this bias. *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, he complained, refused to tackle any lesser subjects:

[Литературная Газета] никак не хочет спуститься ниже уровня международной литературы. Мы можем там увидеть страницы, посвященные литературам – немецкой, венгерской, даже украинской, но ниже союзных республик газета не спускалась, а всякие попытки давать туда статьи, освещающие литературную жизнь той или другой национальности, если эта статья не носила энциклопедического характера, кончалась неудаче, клалась в дальний портфель редакции этой газеты.<sup>44</sup>

[T]he *Literary Gazette* has no desire to lower itself below the level of international literature. We can see there pages dedicated to literatures like German, Hungarian, even Ukrainian, but beneath the level of Union republic the paper won’t descend. Every attempt to publish articles there illuminating the literary life of this or another nationality, if that article doesn’t show an encyclopedic character, has failed, has been stashed in the editorial board’s portfolio for the future.

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<sup>40</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 6, l. 97. October 30, 1932.

<sup>41</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 6, l. 86. According to Francine Hirsch, in the 1920s Soviet ethnographers decided that Sart identity did not constitute its own nationality. The Sarts were divided into Sarts and Sart-Kalmyks along linguistic lines, and in the 1930s they were officially assimilated into the Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationalities respectively. (Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 113, 288-90).

<sup>42</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 8, l. 97a. October 31, 1932.

<sup>43</sup> Although this formula occasionally grated. At the second plenum, a speaker praised how well all the delegates were speaking, “этим языком, – не русским языком, а языком Октябрьской революции,” [this language, not the Russian language, but the language of the October revolution] when another writer called out, “А украинский язык – какой революции: не Октябрьской революции?” [And Ukrainian belongs to what revolution, not the October revolution?] RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 24, l. 2-3. February 15, 1933.

<sup>44</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 27. November 3, 1932.



This indifference to national literatures persisted even when national writers were on official business, Usmanov continued. “Когда образовались при оргкомитете комиссия для руководства писателями националами, находящимися в Москве, мы дали декларативную статью о целях задачи, которая хотя и была признана годной для помещения, но не была помещена.”<sup>45</sup> [When the organizing committee’s commission on national writers living in Moscow was formed, we gave them a declaration on our task’s purposes. Although it was labeled appropriate for publication, it was not placed.] When questioned, the editors told the commission that its article would be published on a special page for articles on national literatures, rather than as a normal article. Usmanov concluded by condemning *Literaturnaia Gazeta* for its “компанейщина” [company-ism], arguing that the delay and sporadic publication on national literatures, “от случая к случаю, от праздника к празднику,[...] показывает нежелание газеты руководить повседневно литературами народов СССР.”<sup>46</sup> [from time to time, from holiday to holiday, show the paper’s reluctance to provide daily guidance to the literatures of the peoples of the USSR.]

While indifference relied on Moscow’s advanced status, the second commonly held belief about national literatures assumed exactly the opposite. In this assumption, each of the national literatures fully reproduced the literary organizations and level of development found in Moscow. It was therefore logical for the Moscow-based organizing committee to focus its efforts on its own writers, because every national literary organization was conducting the same process locally. Thus, when the Russian organizing committee had finished reorganizing Russian writers and convening the all-Union organizing committee to organize the Congress, it called upon the republics to send the results of their own organizing processes. An August 29, 1932 *Literaturnaia Gazeta* editorial titled “All-Russian or all-union: How the first congress of Soviet writers should be,” announced that:

Чтобы делегации писателей от разных национальностей пришли на съезд подготовленными, необходимо предварительно на конференциях или, может быть, на расширенных пленумах областных и республиканских оргкомитетов, и конечно, в печати проработать все вопросы, вытекающие из постановления ЦК от 23 апреля. Со всей искренностью, со всей серьезностью, со всей конкретностью, со всем знанием дела на этих предварительных конференциях или пленумах должны в дискуссиях быть подытожены все творческие и организационные достижения каждой отдельной литературы; должны быть выяснены, определены все те вопросы, которые в данный момент, являются основными. Без такой предварительной подготовки съезд может захлебнуться в разного рода оргвопросах, и на подлинную творческую работу съезда просто может не хватить времени.<sup>47</sup>

So that the writer delegates from various nationalities come prepared to the congress, it is necessary first to work through all of the questions ensuing from the April 23 TsK resolution in conferences or, perhaps, in full plenums of the regional and republican organizing committees, and, of course, in the print media. At these preparatory conferences or plenums, all of the creative and

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Skosyrev, “Vserossiiskii ili vsesoiuznyi,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*. Aug 29, 1932.

organizational achievements of each individual literature should be discussed with all sincerity, with all seriousness, with all concreteness, with full knowledge of the issue. All of the currently fundamental questions must be clarified and defined. Without this preparation beforehand the congress could choke on any number of organizational questions, and not have time for true creative work.

The level of preparation demanded here was a fantasy even for Russian literature, let alone the national literatures. Many organizing committee members were genuinely surprised to learn that the comparative backwardness of the national literatures meant few were anywhere near prepared for the impending Congress. Gronskaa's report to the Politburo following the second plenum gave a rough hierarchy of the republics' preparedness, based on their progress in the battle against factionalism. In the RSFSR, he reported, factionalism had been eliminated. Ukraine was similar, although it was still breaking up a left-deviant group. Belorussia had a month or two left in the process, as did Armenia, while Georgia and Azerbaijan still needed to begin the campaign.<sup>48</sup> Central Asia was not listed. Not only was the periphery different from the center, it wasn't even internally homogeneous.

The view that the periphery was the same as the center also justified Moscow's repeated response to national funding requests, that republics should fund their own organizing committees. Moscow funding for offices, apartment buildings, and dachas could be restricted to Moscow writers, because every organization theoretically had the same access to resources and funding at its own level. In practice, of course, most funding came from Moscow or not at all.

The all-Union organizing committee was ideologically opposed to both of these views. National literatures had to be recognized as both important and underdeveloped, and thus worthy of both attention and assistance. Even those trying to promote national literatures could fall into one of these traps, though, as when the organizing committee decided to create a museum exhibit to accompany to Congress and called for the national organizing committees to send extensive materials – photographs, first editions, literary histories – immediately. Despite frequent calls for broader literary discussions at the plenums and in organizing committee organs like *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, most Russian writers continued the assumed equivalency between Russian and Soviet literature. The broadminded included a brief nod to the national literatures or an apology for not knowing any literatures other than Russian, but for the most part, national literatures were only included in Soviet literature when they were the primary topic of discussion.

As before, a distinction must be made between the official position of the organizing committee and the individual decisions made by its members. Without discounting their devotion to principle and ideology, it is naive to assume that the writers participating in the organizing committee ignored their own literary careers to do so. Russian writers understandably had higher levels of engagement in issues directly affecting Russian literature and their own position within that field. Even writers who agreed with the promotion of national literatures as an ideological principle were reluctant to donate their time and energies to actively promote them, especially if that took them away from Moscow and the critical debates happening there. A handful of writers used their status as champions of the nationalities to gain prominence in the organizing committee and, subsequently, the Writers' Union bureaucracy. For most Russian writers, however, national literatures were a distraction from the battles that tangibly mattered.

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<sup>48</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 127, l. 2.

This viewpoint was reflected in the behavior at the first plenum in 1932. The organizing committee reserved time for national writers and official reports on national literatures, but this did not necessarily translate to the audience's attention. In the middle of Euli's speech on Georgian literature, Gronskaa interrupted in his position as chair to scold the audience:

Ко мне в Президиум поступает много записок следующего содержания: "Когда выступают представители литератур народов, входящих в Советский Союз, их встречают хождением, шумом и проч." /ГОЛОСА: Позор./ Может быть здесь приглашенные в качестве гостей не понимают значения этого факта. Если нужно мы можем разъяснить это значение. Но изволительно заметить – это, повторяю, относиться к гостям, которых пригласили, что у нас – Советский Союз, что у нас здесь – пленум Всесоюзного Оргкомитета. /ГОЛОСА: Правильно/аппл./ т.е. пленум литератур народов Советского Союза /аппл./<sup>49</sup>

Many notes are reaching me at the Presidium with the following content: "When the representatives of the national literatures within the Soviet Union give their speeches, people respond by walking about, making noise, and so on. (Voice from the audience: Shame.) Perhaps those who have been invited here as guests do not understand the significance of that fact. If necessary, we can clarify that significance. But allow me to observe – I repeat, this is addressed to those invited guests – that this is the Soviet Union, that we have here the plenum of the All-Union Orgcommittee. (Voice from the audience: Correct.) (applause) That is, the plenum of national literatures of the Soviet Union. (applause)

Gronskaa's repeated claim that his scolding is directed towards the guests, as opposed to the writers, could be genuine. Still, when national writers voice similar complaints about their treatment, those complaints never mention invited guests, so it is more probable that Gronskaa was trying to soften his criticism or to imply that obviously no Russian writer could behave so inappropriately. He naturally refrains from pointing out that the audience is primarily Russian, but his censure relies on the opposition between Russian and national writers.

Two days after Gronskaa's interruption, Vladimir Lidin, at the end of a speech on the effects of the Central Committee resolution, returned to the figure of the guest in his apology to the national writers for his ignorance of their work:

Я, товарищи, неоднократно испытывал чувство стыда от того, что я очень мало знаю писателей братских нам народов. Мне стыдно, что мы сидим в гостях, произносим речи, даже не зная иногда по именам тех, к кому эти речи обращены. Украинский или грузинский писатель для меня не гость, а товарищ по общей советской литературе, и если я приеду на Украину или Грузию, я тоже для них буду не гость, а товарищ и борец на культурном фронте.<sup>50</sup>

I, comrades, have repeatedly felt ashamed that I am very poorly acquainted with the writers of peoples fraternal to us. I am ashamed that we visit together, deliver speeches, sometimes without even knowing by name whom these speeches

<sup>49</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 8, l. 41. October 31, 1932.

<sup>50</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 11, l. 126. November 2, 1932.

address. The Ukrainian or Georgian writer isn't a guest to me, but a comrade in our common Soviet literature, and if I come to Ukraine or Georgia, I won't be a guest to them, but a comrade and fighter on the cultural front.

Lidin's echo of the term "guest" in relation to national writers further softened Gronskaa's critique, albeit unintentionally, while returning to Gronskaa's call for unity. Soviet camaraderie, in Lidin's view, was only hindered by the insistence on discussing national writers as such. The problem was specifically the term "national." "Я бы хотел, чтобы наш пленум покончил с этим ограниченным словом 'национал' и положил бы начало поименованию всех писателей всех народов, живущих в нашем Союзе, единственным определением: 'советский писатель'."<sup>51</sup> [I would like our plenum to put an end to the circumscribed term "national" and to begin to call all writers from all peoples, living in our Union, by the sole designation "Soviet writer."] This call for unity was rightly rejected, as collapsing the divisions between writers into the general designation "Soviet" commonly meant erasing attention or support for non-Russian writers. The term "литература народов" became more prevalent than the term "национальная литература" for national literatures, but the adjective "national" remained primary to designate Soviet writers in languages other than Russian. Euli noted this vocabulary in his speech, first referring to the "вопрос о литературах народов Советского Союза," [the question of the literatures of the peoples of the Soviet Union] then following that with disparagement for the earlier term:

[Т]ермин – национал, термин неверный, отдающий плохим душком[...] Когда мы оперировали термином – национальная литература, это была обезличка. В Москве в наших журналах, в ВОАПП<sup>52</sup>е этот термин был очень распространен, хотя против него много раз выступали. Нужно, чтобы обезличка была ликвидирована, – не национальная литература, а украинская, грузинская, узбекская, татарская, белорусская, [армянская] и т.д. и т.д.<sup>52</sup>

The term "national" is a false term which emits a stale odor... When we operated with this term, "national literature," it showed a lack of responsibility. In Moscow in our periodicals, in VOAPP this term was widely used, although it was opposed many times. We need to liquidate this lack of responsibility: not national literature, but Ukrainian, Georgian, Uzbek, Tatar, Belorussian, Armenian, etc.

Euli here addressed one of Georgian literature's main concerns, that lumping Georgian literatures with the literature of newly established and sometimes newly literate nationalities was an implicit slur on their own literary inheritance, which stretched back centuries before the Russians even had an alphabet. The Georgian organizing committee did not exempt itself from the promotion of national literatures, however, or from the assistance Moscow eventually granted. National writers, resenting their niche status, could not afford the invisibility that would result from eliminating that niche.

While Moscow had to be persuaded that national literatures deserved both attention and assistance, this was the starting point for the view from the national peripheries. Moscow's attention and assistance was the best chance for national writers to survive – and not just as writers. The reorganization of Soviet literature coincided with massive famines in several of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 8, l. 102. October 31, 1932.

republics and national territories. While the organizing committee was approving plans for dachas at Peredelkino and building a designated resort on the Black Sea for its members, many national writers were hungry, homeless, and unpaid. Although conditions for most Russian writers were far from luxurious, they still represented a vast improvement over conditions elsewhere in the Soviet Union. That comparison underlay most of the national calls for assistance from Moscow, although rarely was it made openly in the plenum sessions. Specific economic issues did emerge, although in general the organizing committee tried to focus on differences in cultural development and to paper over the economic differences. Unfortunately, there was a paper shortage.

### ***Publishing Issues***

Lack of paper for publishing was a common complaint at the first plenum. Joomart Bokonbaev, from Kyrgyzia, complained that only 5% of its 1932 plan for literature had been fulfilled, with the state publishing house *Kyrgyzdat* publishing only two books (книжки) and backlisting ten. Kazakhstan reported a similar level of production, while the Ukrainian representative, Vishnia, claimed that Ukraine could fulfill only 60% of its production quota. The Chechen representative estimated that national regions and republics were meeting between ten and twenty-five percent of their publishing quotas. All of them blamed paper shortages.<sup>53</sup> Paper shortages were an issue across the Soviet Union, but like most scarce commodities, paper was relatively available in Moscow and got progressively more difficult to obtain as the distance from power grew. The problem thus lay in both production and distribution, and the organizing committee was assumed to have some influence over the latter.

National representatives argued that the paper shortages for national publications had more impact than they would in the center. National literatures tended to be centralized into a few publications or publishing houses. The relative scarcity of venues compounded the effects of the paper shortage, as Bokonbaev explained in his speech:

...у нас некоторые писатели не печатаются с 1928 г. из-за недостатка бумаги. На этот вопрос тоже надо обратить внимание. Если в Ленинграде и Москве печатается несколько десятков журналов и газет, то в национальных республиках, и частности – Киргизской, нет ни одного журнала. “Фрунзенское наступление” вышло только в один номер в течение двух лет.<sup>54</sup>

Some of our writers haven't published since 1928 because of the paper shortage. This question also needs attention. If in Leningrad and Moscow a few dozen periodicals and newspapers are being printed, in the national republics and specifically in the Kyrgyz republic, there isn't a single periodical. Only one issue of the *Frunze Offensive* has come out in two years.

Since the *Frunze Offensive* was a primary forum for Kyrgyz literature, this publishing delay meant a serious setback for Kyrgyz literature as a whole. Relatively undeveloped literatures had no canon of texts to rely on like Soviet Russian literature did by the 1930s, so a six-month or year gap in publishing was substantial. Paper shortages meant many of the periodicals introduced to promote national literatures were largely hypothetical.

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<sup>53</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 7, l. 80; d. 9, l. 80; d. 12, l. 64. October 31-November 3, 1932.

<sup>54</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 7, l. 78. October 31, 1932.

National literatures tended to come last in the list of publishing priorities, even within the republics. Publishing houses printed time-sensitive, political, and administrative materials ahead of literary periodicals and books. For example, the Siberian publishing house was accused of delaying the local *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and the thick journal *Siberian Fires*, which published works from many Siberian national literatures in Russian translation.<sup>55</sup> In his report to the organizing committee on Siberian literature, Nikolai Nikitin complained that, “Типография печатает журнал лишь после того, как напечатает всякие заказы, в том числе кооперативные книжки, карточки и проч. В результате декабрьский номер выходит в мае. [...] Выходит там Литгазета, но однажды в месяц.”<sup>56</sup> [The printing press prints the journal (*Siberian Fires*) only after it finishes all other orders, including identity booklets, cards, and the like. As a result, the December issue comes out in May.... The *Literary Gazette* comes out there, but once a month.] Understandably, when faced with severe paper shortages, printing houses privileged Party reports, worker and collective farm identity booklets, and needed instruction manuals over cultural production. Lenin and Stalin’s works were more important than literature, and translations of Russian socialist realist classics took precedence over works written in the national language.

In a similar vein, the Tatar delegate Usmanov reported that GIKhL’s paper allotment for Russian translations from the national literatures was a paltry 1.5%. “Московским товариществом писателей, которое является местным издательство, выделено 10%-ов от всей своей продукции на национальные литературы. В свете того, 1½% ГИХЛя кажется настолько ничтожный, что говорит сам за себя.”<sup>57</sup> [(T)he Moscow association of writers, a local publishing house, allocated 10% of its production to national literatures. In light of this, 1.5% of GIKhL appears so insignificant, it speaks for itself.] Vishnevskii acknowledged this issue, comparing the translation of national literatures to that of Western literature, “Странное дело: мы нередко переводим второстепенные книги второстепенных капиталистических писателей – даже сейчас, когда мы вследствие недостатков в работе наших издательств вообще очень мало переводим.”<sup>58</sup> [It’s strange: we not infrequently translate second-rate books by second-rate capitalist writers, even now, when we are translating very little in general due to inadequacies in the work of our publishing houses.] National literatures obviously had more socialist content to offer. Vishnevskii concluded, “Я думаю, что в резолюции... нужно написать, что мы должны значительно больше переводить друг друга, читать друг друга.”<sup>59</sup> [I think that we should write in the resolution that we must translate each other, read each other substantially more.] This call for translation would become a standard element in national appeals.

By the 1934 plenum and the eventual Congress, the publishing discussion focused on achievement, not shortages. Republic after republic cited the strides it had made in publishing, including national writers. For example, at the third plenum, Najmi announced a yearly plan for

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<sup>55</sup> Nikitin specifically cites Khakassian literature in his report, “Хакасские писатели вовлекаются в русскую литературу, и в Сибири печатаются переводы с хакасского языка на русский и произведения русских писателей на хакасский язык.” [Khakassian writers are drawn to Russian literature, and in Siberia they’re publishing translations from Khakassian into Russian and works from Russian writers into Khakassian.] RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 12. April 27, 1934.

<sup>56</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 12, l.13. April 27, 1934.

<sup>57</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 27. November 3, 1932.

<sup>58</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 13, l. 70. November 3, 1932.

<sup>59</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 13, l. 70-1.

Tatar literature of 960 quires (printer's sheets), up from 600 quires in 1928 for everything from farming manuals to political texts.<sup>60</sup> The Azerbaijani delegate Haji Baba Nazarli reported:

Несколько слов о Госиздате. В прошлом году азербайджанское гос.издательство выпустило 420 печ.листов худож.литературы, включая сюда русскую литературу, западную литературу и азербайджанскую литературу. В этом году в план Азгосиздата включено 900 печ.листов худож.литературы, из них 200 печ.листов для произведений азербайджанских писателей, 400 листов на произведения русских писателей, классиков и современных и 200 печ.листов – западных писателей. 50 печ.листов для армянских и грузинских советских писателей.<sup>61</sup>

A few words about Gosizdat. Last year the Azerbaijani government publishing house issued 420 quires of literature, including Russian literature, Western literature, and Azerbaijani literature. This year the Azgosizdat plan includes 900 quires of literature, of which 200 are for works by Azerbaijani writers, 400 are for works by Russian writers, both classics and contemporary, and 200 – Western writers. 50 quires for Armenian and Georgian Soviet writers.

Unlike the Congress, however, the plenum session still included challenges to the rosy picture of Soviet publishing. The day after Nazarli's report, Azerbaijani poet Simurgh (Taghi Shahbazi) called attention to this achievement, saying “200 печатных листов, о которых говорил тов. Назарли – для нас конечно, недостаточны.”<sup>62</sup> [The 200 quires of which Comrade Nazarli spoke are, of course, insufficient for us.] Assuming sixteen average-sized pages to the quire, 200 quires of Azerbaijani literature equalled approximately 1800 pages.<sup>63</sup> Soviet publishers economized greatly on book size, but even considering the pamphlets that passed for books in this period, this quota represented a small shelf's worth. Further, most were published in restricted print runs, as run-size wasn't always specified in the plan. Few speakers at the plenum or Congress ever performed these calculations, of course, or indicated how few books (as opposed to titles) were published. Simurg argued that Azerbaijan's conversion to the Latin alphabet in 1929 made this publishing quota even less impressive than it sounded:

До перехода на новый латинизированный алфавит, вся наша литература издавалась на старом алфавите. Теперь, с переходом на новый алфавит, старые издания не переиздаются. Таким образом, теперь, когда мы уже окончательно перешли на новый алфавит, эти старые издания изъяты из библиотек и продажи. Они валяются где-то на складах. Таким образом молодежь и вся читающая публика совершенно лишена возможности использовать наше прошлое наследие.<sup>64</sup>

Before the transition to the new Latinized alphabet, all of our literature was published in the old alphabet. Now, with the transition to the new alphabet, old editions aren't being republished. Thus, now that we've conclusively gone to the

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<sup>60</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 16. March 10, 1934.

<sup>61</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 34, l. 12. March 10, 1934.

<sup>62</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 22. March 11, 1934.

<sup>63</sup> Gregory Walker, *Soviet Book Publishing Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), xii.

<sup>64</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 22.

new alphabet, these old editions have been pulled from libraries and from sale. They're lying somewhere in warehouses. Thus our youth and all of the reading public is absolutely prevented from using our former heritage.

Another speaker, Kirshon, noted that the quantitative increase of paper came at the expense of quality. The books Kirshon saw in Tataria, for example, were published on shoddy paper. “Мы посмотрели, как эти книжки издаются. Они издаются, примерно, так, как отчет финансового отдела коммунального хозяйства в 1922-23-24 г.г. Они издаются на безобразной бумаге, отвратительно и небрежно.”<sup>65</sup> [We have seen how these books are published. They are published, basically, like the communal housing financial report for 1922-24. They are published on disgraceful paper, repulsively and roughly.] In a later meeting with *Pravda* on Belorussian literature, Kirshon voiced similar concern about a children's book competition, complaining that the publisher lacked paper good enough to print books with illustrations.<sup>66</sup> At the third plenum, Kirshon tied the lack of quality paper to earlier complaints about paper distribution and the priority given to Russian literature, concluding, “Нужно со всей остротой сказать: дорогие товарищи, то, что вы на художественную литературу не даете хорошей бумаги и считаете это ненужным – это есть проявление великодержавного шовинизма. /Аплодисменты/. За эти вещи надо бить.”<sup>67</sup> [We need to say in all seriousness: dear comrades, that you aren't giving good paper to literature and consider it unneeded – this is an instance of great power chauvinism. (Applause) They should be beaten for such things.]

Even publishing was no guarantee of support for writers. Several republics reported delayed payment from state publishing houses. Simurg continued his diatribe about the Azerbaijani publishing quota by protesting that when works *were* published, the writers still weren't paid: “Наше издательство не только не имеет договора с писателями, но даже не выплачивает гонорара писателям. Достаточно сказать, что на сегодняшний день Азербайджанское издательство должно писателям 60 тыс. рублей.”<sup>68</sup> [Our publishing house not only doesn't have contracts with writers, it doesn't even pay their publishing honorariums. It's enough to say that today the Azerbaijani publishing house owes writers 60 thousand rubles.] Considering the scarce amounts of literature published, this was a substantial backlog. Simurg acknowledged the organizing committee's efforts at redress, but claimed they were ineffective: “Этот вопрос мы поставили в свое время перед бригадой Всесоюзного Оргкомитета и они говорили об этом, но все и ныне там. До сих пор писатели не могут еще ликвидировать свои расчеты с издательством, а издательство заботится об этом очень мало.”<sup>69</sup> [We put this question to the brigade from the All-Union Orgcommittee in its time and they talked about it, but it's still the same. Writers still can't cash in their accounts with the publishing house, and the publishers take very little trouble over this.] The brigade report the following month confirmed Simurg's portrayal of the situation:

Оргкомитет Азербайджана помещается в фойе театра, где с крыши отчаянно течет; ГИЗ по несколько лет не платит писателям за изданную продукцию,

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<sup>65</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l.45-6. March 11, 1934.

<sup>66</sup> RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 58, l. 26. August 22, 1934.

<sup>67</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 46. March 11, 1934.

<sup>68</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 2. March 11, 1934.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



журнал не выходит, Литгазеты нет – жалоб очень много и нам приходилось слышать такие выражения: “Есть ли вообще Оргкомитет?”<sup>70</sup>

The Orgcommittee of Azerbaijan meets in a theater foyer with a leaky roof, GIZ hasn't paid writers for their published production for several years, the (literary) periodical doesn't come out, there's no *Literary Gazette* – there are very many complaints and we had to listen to comments like, “Is there an Orgcommittee at all?”

Nikitin's report on Siberian literature voiced similar concerns, “ОГИЗ платит только после выхода книги и писатели по несколько мес. ждут, когда они будут напечатаны.”<sup>71</sup> [OGIZ pays only after the book's release and writers wait for several months until they are printed.] He cited recent, apparently successful efforts to improve conditions: “Культпроп обещал принять меры и действительно передал в ОГИЗ 15-20 тыс.руб. для выплаты писательского гонорара без опозданий.”<sup>72</sup> [Kul'tprop promised to take measures and indeed transferred 15-20 thousand rubles to OGIZ for paying writers' honorariums without delay.] He did not, however, report whether writers received those payments. Since national writers had fewer benefits and other forms of support (apartments, cafeterias, designated resorts, dachas, etc.) than their Moscow counterparts, missing honorariums meant they could not support themselves as writers.

### ***Lack of Educated Cadres***

One of the structural flaws in the organizing committee system was unequal cultural development among the nationalities. Each national literature needed an organizing committee and writers to organize, but the list of national literatures included newly literate populations. At the first plenum session, Majidi reported that, “В Узбекистане, имевшем до революции только до 3% населения азбучно грамотного, нельзя было говорить о какой-нибудь большой художественной литературе.”<sup>73</sup> [In Uzbekistan, where before the Revolution under 3% of the population had basic literacy, it was impossible to speak of any kind of major literature.] Bokonbaev likewise declared that there were no Kyrgyz writers before the Revolution, while Grigoriia reported that there was no Abkhazian APP until 1931, because there were no writers to be members.<sup>74</sup> “Литературы в Абхазии конечно не было. Были отдельные случаи, когда наши абхазцы писали маленькие рассказчики, стишки и имели только возможность декламировать их где-нибудь на вечерах, в школах, в наших клубах и т.д., но в печати они никогда тогда не печатались.”<sup>75</sup> [There was, of course, no literature in Abkhazia. There were isolated instances, when our Abkhazians wrote little stories, verses and only had the opportunity to declaim them somewhere at a gathering, in school, in our clubs, and so on, but they were never published in print form.] The triumph of Soviet Abkhazian literature was its very existence. The first book written in Abkhazian, Grigoriia announced, was published in 1931.

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<sup>70</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 4-5. April 27, 1934.

<sup>71</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 12.

<sup>72</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 12-13. April 27, 1934.

<sup>73</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 6, l. 86. October 30, 1932.

<sup>74</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 7, l. 77. October 31, 1932.

<sup>75</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 10, l. 2. November 1, 1932.

В декабре м-це 31 года впервые вышла в свет абхазская литература. Впервые в свет вышла абхазская книга. Это было большой победой в нашей действительности. Я не знаю, как вы расцените этот факт, но для нас это была большая радость. Книжку покупал всякий – не только тот, кто умел читать, но и тот, кто не умел читать – всем было приятно то, что на родном абхазском языке появилась книжка.<sup>76</sup>

In December 1931, Abkhazian literature first appeared in print. An Abkhazian book first appeared in print. It was in fact a large victory. I don't know how you appreciate this fact, but for us it was a large joy. Everyone bought the book – not only those who could read, but also those who couldn't – it made everyone happy that a book had appeared in our native Abkhazian language.

Abkhazian may have been the youngest literature at the plenum, but the Komi-Zyrian representative Samakov claimed, “Я – кажется, самый маленький делегат на это пленуме и представляю, может быть, самую маленькую литературу. Я поступаю от Коми-зырянской организации, которая живет рядом с самоедами-ненцами. Литература у нас существует уже 15 лет.”<sup>77</sup> [It seems that I am the smallest delegate at this plenum and I represent, perhaps, the smallest literature. I come from the Komi-Zyrian organization, which lives near the Samoed-Nenets. Our literature is already 15 years old.] It was quite a stretch to imagine that these literatures, even if the illiterate purchased their books, could support a hierarchical literary organization capable of sending detailed reports and representatives to Moscow. There simply weren't enough writers.

Small nationalities with few literate and educated members needed those individuals for state administration, while the organizing committee needed them to organize other writers in addition to writing themselves. In a predominantly proud, pro-Soviet report, Samakov acknowledged this problem.

Наши писатели, главным образом, сидят в кабинете. Они и партийные и советские работники, работники издательства. Им неоднократно ставили вопрос, чтобы вырвать писателей из кабинетов, но нам говорят: если освободить их из издательства значит закрыть издательства, закрыть школы, потому что не будут выходить учебники, некому редактировать и проч. У нас создан национальный театр, который стоит, бездействует из-за отсутствия репертуара, а писатели сидят в кабинетах. Писатели заняты партийной работой, советской работой.<sup>78</sup>

Our writers, for the most part, sit in offices. They are Party and state workers, publishing house workers. We've repeatedly attempted to pull the writers out of their offices, but they tell us that if we release them from publishing, that means closing the publishing house, closing schools, because the textbooks won't come out since there will be nobody to edit them and so on. We have created a national theater which stands vacant due to the lack of a repertoire, and the writers are sitting in offices. The writers are busy with Party work, with state work.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 83. November 3, 1932.

<sup>78</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 84.

Given the vast economic, educational, and social problems facing the Komi-Zyrian as they attempted to build proper Soviet collective farms with proper Soviet workers, literature might not seem like the most urgent task for these writers to address. Yet, as discussed in chapter 1, Moscow considered national literature one of the basic official elements of that education and transition. The Komi-Zyrian writers were caught between contradicting Party demands.

Larger, better established national literatures still weren't large enough to accommodate writers' preferences. While there were enough Russian writers to allow some leeway in how much bureaucratic work individual writers assumed, national literary organizations needed all of their writers to take on organizational work. Aleksandr Zuev's report on the Azerbaijani brigade, for example, rebuked the Party faction of the Azerbaijani organizing committee, saying "Фракция Оргкомитета работает плохо. Из 25 партийцев в работе фракции принимает участие только 9 человек. К нашему приезду можно было констатировать, что работа Оргкомитета шла к развалу."<sup>79</sup> [The Party faction of the Orgcommittee is working poorly. Of the 25 Party members, only nine people participate in the faction's work. One could say that the Orgcommittee's work was heading towards a collapse before our arrival.] Participation in national organizing committees was not optional.

### *A Critical Shortage of Critics*

Still worse than the state of literary bureaucracy was the state of criticism. Literary critics were supposed to play an essential role in national literatures as gatekeepers and guides to socialist realism. Unfortunately, few were interested or capable. Criticism presented greater political risk than writing, offered less potential reward than organizational work, and required a higher level of education than either. Almost every national representative at the first plenum bemoaned the poor state of criticism or the dearth of qualified critics. Speakers repeatedly pointed to criticism as the weakest aspect of national literatures. However, none of them had concrete suggestions for improving criticism beyond requesting Moscow's intervention. By the third plenum, conditions had improved for only some of the national literatures, with Effendi Kapiev from Dagestan referencing the "пресловутый вопрос о критике" [notorious question of criticism].<sup>80</sup> Although he praised the great strides of the previous two years and Dagestani preparation for the Congress, Kapiev noted:

На 7 с лишним литератур дагестанских, на литературные произведения Дагестана не было еще ни одной более или менее значительной критической статьи, потому что нет вообще квалифицированных критиков в Дагестане. Чем это объяснить? Это объясняется тем, что мы очень молоды.<sup>81</sup>

There has not been a single critical article on or about the more than seven literatures of Dagestan, the literary works of Dagestan, however significant, because there aren't any qualified critics in Dagestan. What explains this? It can be explained by the fact that we are very young.

Local organizations, he warned, were helpless, since they didn't have qualified cadres to delegate to literary study. "[М]ожно ли доверить руководство литературой людям, в

<sup>79</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 5. April 27, 1934.

<sup>80</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 33. March 11, 1934.

<sup>81</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 34.

литературоведческом отношении не подкованным, не знающим истории и специфики художественной литературы, можно ли им доверить такое ответственное и сложное дело?”<sup>82</sup> [Can we entrust the leadership of literature to people who are untempered in regards to literary scholarship, who don't know literary history and specifics? Can we entrust them with such a responsible and complicated matter?] Even for national literatures which had skilled literary scholars to entrust with critical matters, critical production lagged significantly behind artistic production.

Existing national critics were either remnants from pre-Revolutionary, generally bourgeois movements, and thus not to be trusted, or new Soviet critics typified by several flaws. They had a poor understanding of literary and Marxist-Leninist theory, preferred abstract terminology over concrete examples, were excessively cautious, and deferred to leading literary factions. At the first plenum, Majidi complained that in Uzbekistan, naive critics were unfairly censoring writers. “В критике дошло даже до таких моментов, что были запрещены стихи отдельных писателей, потому что там пишут о плачущем ребенке. Как будто в Советском Союзе ребенок не должен плакать.”<sup>83</sup> [Criticism has reached the point that the poems of some writers were banned because they wrote about a crying baby. As if in the Soviet Union a baby must not cry.] His fellow writers laughed at this example, but without a clear understanding of how to identify a work's ideological content, censors relied on simplistic and blatant criteria. Majidi continued, “Они подходили к литературным произведениям и стихам с такой точки зрения: имеются ли там слова ‘пролетариат, колхоз, батрак.’ Если эти слова имеются – значит идеология выдержана и можно выпустить. Если таких слов нет – эти вещи запрещались.”<sup>84</sup> [They approached literary works and poetry from this perspective: are there the words “proletariat, collective farm, poor farmers”? If those words were there, it was ideologically sound and could be published. If those words weren't there, these things were banned.] This, of course, hindered Uzbek literature's development, since censors promoted less sophisticated literature at the expense of more nuanced voices. More dangerously, this litmus test allowed ideologically unsound work to reach the public. Ibrahimov, from Azerbaijan, worried that critics' inclination for abstraction made their work useless to writers:

У нас критика является самой больной стороной, она здорово отстает. Критические кадры иногда не занимаются конкретными проблемами, у нас в критике существует абстрактность, в критике говорится “вообще”, иногда неуместно, говорится о социалистическом строительстве, о росте и т.д. Все эти слова нужно говорить, но когда и где? А когда говорят об этом неуместно, эти понятия превращается в сухую абстрактность.<sup>85</sup>

Criticism is our weakest aspect, it is seriously lagging. Our critical cadres don't always tackle concrete problems. Our criticism is full of abstraction, it speaks “in general,” it sometimes wrongly discusses socialist construction, growth, and so on. It's necessary to say all of these words, but when and where? And when they discuss something inappropriately, these concepts change into dry abstraction.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 6, l. 89. October 30, 1932.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, l. 45. November 1, 1932.

Azerbaijani critics reproduced the Uzbek critics' mistake, but on the level of criticism rather than that of the literary work. Instead of looking for ideological terms in the works they reviewed, they recited those terms in lieu of discussing any works at all. Their dry abstractions substituted for real analysis of literature and presented the illusion of ideology instead of its truth. In short, national critics tended to be poorly educated and lacking in conviction.

Delegates also criticized critics as either overly insular, and thus unfamiliar with Soviet classics, or neglecting their obligation to their national literatures by preferring more important topics. Chubar reported that few Armenian writers followed literature in other Soviet languages. “У нас, как будто не мало критиков и ‘критиков’. Но когда недавно я обратился ко многим из них, с предложением написать о Серафимовиче, то получился конфуз. Не смогли написать – не из-за недостатка бойкости пера.”<sup>86</sup> [We have no shortage of critics or ‘critics.’ But when I recently went to several of them and proposed writing about Serafimovich, confusion resulted. They couldn’t write about him, and not because their pens lacked fluency.] Not only had none of the Armenian critics read Serafimovich – whose *Iron Flood* had a central position in the new Soviet canon – few were persuaded that they should. On the reverse side, Ibrahimov complained about the difficulty of getting Azerbaijani critics to address Azerbaijani writers:

Наши критические кадры иногда думают, что писать нужно только о великих людях и не считает достаточно достойным писать о наших писателях, например, они пишут о Горьком, о Гете и т.д. – мы конечно, не возражаем против этого, о них также надо писать, но в первую нужно писать об имеющихся писательских кадрах, разбирать их творчество, показать пути дальнейшего развития и проч. Некоторые критики думают, что если М.Горький является мировым человеком, выступил на мировую арену, и если о нем писать, то критик также выступит этим самым на мировую арену – конечно, это неверно. Можно писать о незначительном писателе, но писать так, чтобы действительно выйти на мировую арену. Это одна из болезненнейших сторон нашей критики.<sup>87</sup>

Our critical cadres sometimes think that they should only write about great people and don’t consider it sufficiently worthy to write about our writers. For example, they write about Gorky, about Goethe and so forth. We, of course, don’t object to this, it’s also necessary to write about them, but first we need to write about our literary cadres, analyze their work, show the path for future development and such. Some critics think that if Gorky is a world figure, who performed on a world stage, and if they write about him, then the critic also performs on that world stage – of course, this is wrong. It’s possible to write about an unknown writer, but to write so that you actually appear on that world stage. This is one of the worst aspects of our criticism.

Although Ibrahimov attributed their interest in Gorky and Goethe to a desire for fame, it is also likely that national critics preferred to parrot established opinions about literature rather than risk censure by tackling new material. Since Soviet literary analysis meant commending or condemning writers for their ideological soundness, it was far safer to write about works whose

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<sup>86</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 19, l. 192. February 12, 1933.

<sup>87</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, l. 45. November 1, 1932.

ideological position had already been certified. Gorky and Goethe were secure subjects; Azerbaijani writers weren't.

### *National Minorities*

Another issue complicating the work of the national organizing committees was the demand to acknowledge and promote minority literatures within the national organizations. Kapiiev referred to the “more than seven” literatures of Dagestan; the Dagestani organizing committee had to represent all of them. Every republic's organizing committee had a Russian section, and most included other minority sections as well. Ukraine had sections for Russian, Yiddish, German, and Moldavian literature, while Mikhail Klimkovich reported separately on Belorussia's Yiddish, Polish, and Lithuanian sections. Azerbaijan's organizing committee had Russian and Armenian sections, and Nazarli gravely reported its lack of outreach to smaller nationalities, “Надо признаться, что мы до сего времени не занимались литературой мелких нацменьшинств, как талыши, курды, горские евреи. Это большой недостаток в нашей работе.”<sup>88</sup> [We must confess that we haven't addressed the literatures of minor national minorities, like the Talysh, Kurds, and Mountain Jews. This is a large deficiency in our work.] Grigoriia cited a black community writing in Abkhazian as an example of Soviet progressiveness:

Нигде в мире, за исключением Страны Советов, негры не имеют прав. В нашей Абхазии есть целый ряд поселков негров. Несомненно негры забыли свой язык, свою родину, они обабхазились и довольно хорошо владеют абхазским языком. Эти негры наравне с нами работают. [...] У них есть литературные кружки. Они создают свою литературу и печатаются у нас на абхазском языке поскольку они в основном сейчас владеют только абхазским языком.<sup>89</sup>

Nowhere in the world except in the land of the Soviets do blacks have rights. There are several settlements of blacks in our Abkhazia. The blacks have undeniably forgotten their language, their homeland, they have become Abkhazian and mastered the Abkhazian language quite well. These blacks work alongside us... They have literary circles. They are creating their own literature and publishing it with us in Abkhazian inasmuch as they generally use only Abkhazian now.

Although Grigoriia stressed equality and collaboration with this community, his use of “в нашей Абхазии,” “с нами,” and “у нас” [In our Abkhazia, with us] in opposition to “у них” and “они” [They have, they] restricts the power of his claim and maintains a clear separation. Grigoriia further reported that the Abkhazian organizing committee had sections for Russian, Georgian, Greek, Armenian, and Laz literature and was publishing in all of those languages.<sup>90</sup> Bashkiria had sections for German, Latvian, and Chuvash literatures.<sup>91</sup> The national minority sections meant that national literatures' limited resources were further diluted, with a substantial

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<sup>88</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 34, l. 9ob. March 10, 1934. By 1935, Alekberli reported that Baku was publishing a newspaper in Tat, the language of the Mountain Jews. RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 40.

<sup>89</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 10, l. 3. November 1, 1932.

<sup>90</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 10, l. 3-4.

<sup>91</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 3.

proportion of them even designated for the promotion of Russian literature within their territories.

Perhaps the only positive aspect of this structure was that it was better than the proposed alternative, wherein the primary national organization would be responsible for writers working in that language, no matter where they resided. Subotskii, speaking on behalf of the organizing committee presidium, shut the door on that proposal at the second plenum, saying, “иначе возникает некоторая опасность, которой мы всячески должны избегать: опасность противопоставления писателей живущих в другой республике писателям объединенным в республиканском центре.”<sup>92</sup> [Otherwise a danger arises that we must avoid by any means: the danger of an opposition between writers living in another republic and writers united in the republic’s center.] The primary threat Subotskii envisioned was the relationship between Russian writers in Russian and those in the republics, or, in the example he cited, between Belorussian writers in Minsk and those in Moscow. In other words, the presidium judged it better to have conflicts within national territories than across national boundaries.

### *National versus Nationalist*

The most powerful local conflicts remained between writers within a national literature, not between writers of different nationalities. Although nationalities competed for resources, they did so primarily by promoting themselves rather than attacking each other. Partly, it was safer to attack one’s fellow nationals as bourgeois nationalists than to risk misreading the political currents on the broader stage. Attacking class enemies was consistently part of the organizing committee’s rhetoric, but it translated into an active policy in only a few regions, and there primarily in concert with larger national campaigns.

In the first half of 1933, Kirpotin sent a letter to the Communist factions of the republic, regional, and local organizing committees calling for vigilance against bourgeois nationalists, whose activities were evolving. Bourgeois nationalism, he warned, “‘примазывается’ к той борьбе, которую ведет партия с велико-державным шовинизмом, как с главной опасностью, пытаясь под флагом этой борьбы протащить буржуазно-националистические тенденции в литературе.”<sup>93</sup> [...is attaching itself to the Party’s battle against great-power chauvinism as the greatest threat, attempting to install bourgeois-nationalist tendencies in literature under the banner of this battle.] This cautioned national literatures not to go too far when attacking Russian literature’s centrality, since national promotion could be interpreted as bourgeois nationalism. Further, Kirpotin implied, any disagreement, complaint, or conflict was potentially the work of bourgeois nationalists: “Отдельные буржуазные элементы, не имея возможности проникнуть в печать, пытаются развернуть свою деятельность в самой литературной среде, прибегают к слухам, сплетням, клевете.”<sup>94</sup> [Individual bourgeois elements, lacking the opportunity to get into print, attempt to expand their activity in the literary milieu and resort to rumors, gossip, and slander.] Those attacking bourgeois nationalism could be hidden enemy elements themselves. The emphasis on masked enemies meant that anyone could be fingered, transforming the vehemence of the accused’s support for the Party into a weapon against them.

Kirpotin’s warning had little effect on most national and local organizing committees, which could afford to read it as a continuation of the ongoing political discourse. However,

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<sup>92</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 19, l. 120-21. February 12, 1933.

<sup>93</sup> RGALI, f. 2196, op. 3, d. 352, l. 17. Undated, but references date it to May or June, 1933.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Belorussia and Ukraine were embroiled in broad campaigns against bourgeois nationalism and masked counterrevolutionaries. Both republics had volatile political scenes fueled by highly mixed national populations that continued across the border into Poland. This made battles over Soviet politics and the painful process of collectivization into national fights, and in turn rendered questions of nationality threatening to Sovietization as a whole. These campaigns peaked in late 1933 and were reported extensively at the third plenum. Kulik made the relation between the republic-wide and literary campaigns explicit, describing the enemy as “двурушники с партбилетами в кармане” [double-dealers with party membership cards in their pockets] and explaining, “Точно так же, как вся коммунистическая партия большевиков Украины не сумела во время разоблачить националистический уклон,[...] не сумели его заметить и мы в литературе.”<sup>95</sup> [Just like the entire Ukrainian Communist Party of Bolsheviks could not unmask the nationalist deviation in time, neither could we notice it in literature.] Although Belorussian and Ukrainian literature tried to incorporate positive aspects (such as claiming the heroic border guard as a specifically national theme), the anti-nationalist campaigns exacerbated common national questions about aesthetics, language reform, and power struggles within the local organizing committees.

Kulik termed the bourgeois nationalist strategy in Ukraine “Wallenrodism” after the classic Polish writer Adam Mickiewicz’s character Konrad Wallenrod, a Lithuanian who infiltrated the Teutonic knights. Quoting Mickiewicz’s aphorism, “Рабов единое оружие – есть измена,” [The only weapon of slaves is betrayal.] Kulik claimed that nationalist writers were modeling their behavior on Wallenrod:

И вот эту измену, как единственное оружие борьбы, это предательство и продажность, возведенные в принцип, доведенные до степени высшей добродетели,- проповедуют украинские фашисты вообще и украинские фашисты и шовинисты в писательской среде.<sup>96</sup>

And thus the Ukrainian fascists as a whole and Ukrainian fascists and chauvinists in the writers’ milieu preach this betrayal as the only battle weapon, this treason and selling out, elevated to a principle, raised to the level of the highest virtue.

Although Kulik defines Wallenrodism as a literary approach, he uses it to describe primarily political stances by both authors and characters. He quotes a character in a Western Ukrainian novel who justifies his Communist Party membership on the grounds that they’ve won, so the best strategy is to corrupt from within. Specifically, nationalists should join the Party and attempt to divide it: “Раз большевизм поддерживается массами, раз большевизм стал фактом, с которым нельзя не считаться, то остается только этому большевизму Московскому, как он говорит, противопоставить украинский[...].”<sup>97</sup> [Since the masses support Bolshevism, since Bolshevism has become an unavoidable fact, it remains only to oppose this Moscow Bolshevism, as he calls it, with a Ukrainian one.] Thus, Kulik claims, many of the writers agitating for increased attention and funding of Ukrainian literature were actually doing so to undermine Soviet solidarity.

Language reform, by no means simple in more peaceful republics, was one of the main battlegrounds in Belorussian and Ukraine. At the third plenum session, Klimkovich condemned

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<sup>95</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 20. March 10, 1934.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 22.



“тот огромный вред который приносили националистические языковеды, которые приносили люди, специально присланные сюда в Советскую Белоруссию в качестве прямой агентуры контр-разведки[...].”<sup>98</sup> [that great harm caused by the nationalist language scholars, caused by people specially brought here to Soviet Belorussia as direct agents of counterintelligence.] These agents obtained head positions in the Academy, undermining the modernization of the Belorussian language by pushing it closer to Polish. Kulik described this process in more detail:

Агенты польского фашизма у нас на Украине – эти самые двурушники усиленно пытались реформировать украинское правописание и украинскую терминологию, во-первых, в сторону приближения их к польским, и, во-вторых, в сторону противопоставления русскому языку и, наконец, тем, чтобы превратить эту терминологию в украинский язык непонятный для пролетариата, для рабочих масс и даже для колхозных масс.<sup>99</sup>

Agents of Polish fascism in Ukraine – these same double-dealers tried forcefully to reform Ukrainian orthography and terminology, first by making it closer to Polish, second by opposing it to Russian, and finally by changing the terminology to make Ukrainian unintelligible to the proletariat, to the working masses and even the collective farming masses.

To do this, the Ukrainian Academy of Science surveyed villages about their vocabulary using ridiculous questionnaires that focused on what words uneducated elders used for modern conveniences like the light bulb, technical terms from mathematics and the sciences, and international concepts like the equator.<sup>100</sup> The Academy implemented the results of this research, so that even Ukrainian writers, “в один прекрасный день проснулись безграмотными, а, между тем, кое-кто из нас прилично знал украинский язык.”<sup>101</sup> [on one fine day woke up practically illiterate, and incidentally some of us knew Ukrainian very well.]

The power struggles in the Party and the Academy spilled over into the Ukrainian organizing committee. At the third plenum session, the all-Union organizing committee voted to expel the Ukrainian delegates Vishnia and Khil’ovii for counterrevolutionary connections.<sup>102</sup> Vishnia had been openly critical of funding and paper shortages at the first plenum session, making him an easy target as an anti-Moscow nationalist. At the third plenum, Kulik condemned Vishnia and his coconspirators as political and literary enemies:

Нам пришлось особое внимание уделить разоблачению этих враждебных агентов не только с точки зрения их политической деятельности, но и как писателей, нужно было наглядно и детально показать массам,[...] что Остап

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<sup>98</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 57-8. March 10, 1934.

<sup>99</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 51.

<sup>100</sup> Aleksandrovich described a similar process for Belorussian at a meeting with *Pravda*, complaining, “Дело в том, что националисты в учебниках и словарях того периода для перевода таких слов, как пролетариат, революция, диалектика, давались специально подобранные словечки /например диалектика – пустословие/.” [The problem is, nationalists in textbooks and dictionaries of that period translated words like proletariat, revolution, dialectic with specially selected terms – for example, dialectic became rant (*empty wordness*).] This echoed his complaint at the Congress itself. RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 58, l. 11. August 22, 1934.

<sup>101</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 51.

<sup>102</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 113. March 11, 1934. Khvil’ovii had already killed himself, so removing him from the committee was a formality. They were replaced by Kirilenko, who wrote extensively on the glories of collectivization, and Kopylenko.

Вишня и другие – бездарности, шпионы, для которых литература служила маскировкой основного их занятия – шпионажа и вредительства.<sup>103</sup>

We had to direct special attention to the unmasking of these enemy agents not only from the perspective of their political activity, but also as writers. It was necessary to fully and openly show the masses... that Ostap Vishnia and the others were hacks, spies, for whom literature served to mask their fundamental enterprise – espionage and wrecking.

Kulik's conflation of political and literary merit followed Soviet theory while reinforcing his own status as Vishnia's opposite in both regards, justifying his status within Ukrainian literature and the organizing committee. His censure identified a particular characteristic to Vishnia's writing, however, which may indicate the actual motivation behind Vishnia's fall from grace. Kulik introduced Vishnia as "Остап Вышня, который под видом невинного юмора издевался над колхозами и воспевал кулака..."<sup>104</sup> [Ostap Vishnia, who mocked collective farms and sang the kulak's praises under the guise of innocent humor.] Kulik returned to the question of kulaks later, claiming that for Ukrainian literature to develop, it needed to continue the "процесс ликвидации кулака как класса в художественной литературе."<sup>105</sup> [process of liquidating the kulaks as a class in literature] This phrase, at least as it was applied to actual writers, indicates writers who sympathized overly with the peasantry, rather than writers from a wealthy peasant background. Kulik's condemnation of Vishnia thus uses the discourse surrounding collectivization across the Soviet Union and, within Ukraine, the discourse used to disguise catastrophic famine. Vishnia, who had already proved himself an outspoken critic of economic conditions, at least by the standards of officially condoned Soviet culture, wrote about village life and collective farms. It is highly probable that Vishnia's true crime against Soviet literature was a moment of sympathy with or honesty about the peasants' experience of collectivization. Kulik complained that collectivization hadn't received proper literary treatment in Ukraine, "хотя Оргкомитет эту тему упорно выдвигал перед писателями."<sup>106</sup> [although the Orgcommittee insistently put this topic before writers.] Although Kulik never referred to the Ukrainian famine, the oddness of the phrase "liquidating the kulaks as a class in literature" functions as a moment of discursive excess to hide the agonizing reality behind his speech.

### ***Looking to Moscow***

While the national organizing committees faced varying challenges to varying degrees, they agreed on one solution to all of them: Moscow. Moscow had the writers, the money, the paper, the critics, and most importantly, the power. By the time the organizing committee held the first plenum, Moscow was sufficiently organized to implement the April 23 resolution, whereas most of the republics had yet to determine what it meant. At the plenum's opening, Subotskii praised Moscow, Leningrad, and even Kharkov, the Urals, and the Northern Caucasus for their improvements to writers' daily lives, but noted that equivalent work had not even begun in many places. However, he warned, "Но в целом ряде мест это дело еще не сдвинуто с мертвой точки. Было бы неправильно жаловаться здесь на руководство Оргкомитета РСФСР или

<sup>103</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 25.

<sup>104</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 22.

<sup>105</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 26.

<sup>106</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 63.

Всесоюзного Оргкомитета. Здесь дело за местными организациями. Из центра только ничего не сделаешь.”<sup>107</sup> [But in a whole range of places this matter still hasn’t moved from a full stop. It would be wrong to complain here about the leadership of the RSFSR Orgcommittee or the All-Union Orgcommittee. This is a matter for local organizations. Nothing gets done from the center alone.] Instead of relying on Moscow, he suggested, “Здесь дело контакта и деловой связи с местными советскими партийными и профессиональными организациями.”<sup>108</sup> [This is a matter of contact and official connections with local Soviet party and professional organizations.]

Without Moscow’s weight behind them, however, it was difficult or impossible for national writers to lay claim to the limited resources of their local Party and professional organizations. Subotskii’s recommendation conveniently ignored the uneven distribution of resources to these organizations, not to mention literature-specific issues like publishing and criticism. National representatives responded by asserting their centrality to the organizing committee’s project. Majidi concluded his speech with a request to institutionalize assistance for the nationalities:

Последнее пожелание Оргкомитету. Я слышал сообщение о том, что будет организовываться секция национальностей при Оргкомитете. Я считаю, что это секционную работу нужно умножить – ее нужно улучшить с точки зрения оказания необходимой литературной помощи, литературного руководства литературам нац. республик, где нет достаточно марксистски подготовленных кадров, где не имеется достаточно критических кадров.<sup>109</sup>

A last request for the Orgcommittee. I heard that it will organize a nationalities section under the Orgcommittee. I believe that this section’s work needs to be increased, it needs to be improved with regard to giving necessary literary assistance, literary leadership to the literature of the national republics, which lack sufficient cadres trained in Marxism, which don’t have enough critical cadres.

Vishnia characteristically turned this request into criticism. Beginning with an image of hospitality and Soviet brotherhood, he lamented, “Мы с этим не раз встречались, целовались, обнимались, были на многочисленных банкетах, вы у нас, мы у вас, а все же к нашему стыду мы мало обращали внимания на развитие литератур народов СССР.”<sup>110</sup> [We have more than once met, kissed, embraced, been at numerous banquets, we’ve hosted you, you’ve hosted us and all the same to our shame we have paid little attention to the development of national literatures of the USSR.] His next sentences contradicted the solidarity implied by his initial “we,” specifying whose shame it in fact was:

И тут, больно вам это, или не больно, но надо вам сказать правду в глаза: самый задний пост в этом отношении русская литература. Характерно то, что мы украинцы вашу литературу прекрасно знаем, прекрасно знаем русскую литературу, мы знаем и белорусскую литературу, и грузинскую литературу, и татарскую литературу, и т.д. Мы переводим на украинский язык литературы всех народов СССР, мы переводим и русскую литературу

<sup>107</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 5, l. 59. October 30, 1932.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 6, l. 94. October 31, 1932.

<sup>110</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, l. 53. November 1, 1932.

на украинский язык и в изрядном количестве это делаем, а вот русский писатель не особенно настаивает на том, чтобы на русском языке дать литературы народов Союза.<sup>111</sup>

And here, whether or not you find it painful, I need to tell the truth to your face: Russian literature holds the very last place in this regard. It is characteristic that we Ukrainians know your literature wonderfully, know Russian literature wonderfully, and we also know Belorussian literature, Georgian literature, Tatar literature and so on. We are translating the literature of all people of the USSR into Ukrainian, and we translate Russian literature into Ukrainian and do so in unusual quantity, and here a Russian writer doesn't particularly insist that the literatures of the Soviet peoples be available in Russian.

Vishnia's answer to the indifference of Russian writers towards the national literatures treated this as a question of power, not education. The organizing committee, he argued, needed to take on "лицо именно Всесоюзного Комитета, не Всероссийского а Всесоюзного."<sup>112</sup> [...precisely the face of an All-Union Committee, not All-Russian but All-Union.] As a member of the committee, Vishnia was apparently arguing for a more prominent role in its hierarchy. What actions an all-Union committee would take to solve the inequalities between Moscow and the periphery was left for other speakers to address, but Vishnia showed no doubt that the responsibility lay with the center.

Whether discussing problems of literary development or economic, national representatives shied away from direct calls for material assistance. Increased attention, it was understood, produced funding increases. Thus, speakers reiterated the need for translations into Russian, greater appreciation of national literatures, and especially, official visits. Gumer Gali concluded his report on Tatar literature with such a request: "Для нас чрезвычайно важно, чтобы Оргкомитет послал нам на длительный срок компетентного товарища, который мог работать с писателями, помогал бы нам в деле выполнения задач, которые ставятся перед советскими писателями решением ЦК Партии."<sup>113</sup> [For us it's extraordinarily important that the Orgcommittee should send us a competent comrade for an extended period, someone who could work with writers, help us fulfill the tasks the Party Central Committee resolution set Soviet writers.] Samakov made a similar appeal, complaining that "В Коми-Зырянскую обл., литература которой существует уже 15 лет, не приезжал ни один русский писатель."<sup>114</sup> [To the Komi-Zyrian region, whose literature is already fifteen years old, not a single Russian writer has paid a visit.] An audience member corrected him, saying the Northern organizing committee had already sent two. (Samakov refrained from pointing out that the two claims weren't necessarily contradictory. Indeed, subsequent organizing committee projects would show marked differences between who was sent and who arrived.) The most poignant request, however, came from Baduev, who linked his call for assistance to the Russian literary tradition:

Я обращаюсь к вам профессиональным писателям с единственной просьбой, - чтобы эти писатели, как Лев Толстой, как Лермонтов, как Пушкин, хотя он и нелестно выразился о Чечне, приезжали бы в наши горы хоть один раз в 10

<sup>111</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, l. 53-4.

<sup>112</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, l. 54.

<sup>113</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 15. November 3, 1932.

<sup>114</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 83. November 3, 1932.

лет и показали бы нам, растущим молодым писателям, как подойти к той или другой теме, какую горную тематику взять, как это сделал Лев Толстой в “Хаджи Мурате”, Лермонтов в “Измаил Бей”, и чтобы вы сами написали что нибудь из горской жизни, из горской тематики.<sup>115</sup>

I address you professional writers with a single request, that these writers – like Lev Tolstoy, like Lermontov, like Pushkin, despite his unflattering depiction of Chechnya – come to our mountains at least once in ten years and show us, young growing writers, how to approach this or that topic, which mountain themes to take, like Lev Tolstoy did in *Hadji Murat*, Lermontov in *Izmail Bey*, and to write yourselves something about mountain life, about mountain themes.

By depicting the organizing committee’s emissaries as the successors of Tolstoy, Lermontov, and Pushkin, Baduev implied that Russian writers need not choose between developing their own literary careers and assisting national writers. Instead, visiting the periphery would further both equality and inspiration. The national literatures, in this model, are less backward brothers and more apprentices, priming the canvas for the master. Many Russians found Baduev’s image persuasive, but limited. If one was going to visit the periphery, apparently it was best to choose a destination based on the potential for creative and personal stimulation, not local need.

### **Preparing the Periphery**

At the first plenum, in the same speech warning national and local organizing committees to find their own sources of support, Subotskii acknowledged that Moscow had neglected its broader constituency. The problem was apparently organizational: “Всесоюзный Оргкомитет фактически не развернул свою работу, работал только Оргкомитет РСФСР, который зачастую занимался московскими делами в ущерб делам периферий, особенно – автономных республик и областей.”<sup>116</sup> [The All-Union Orgcommittee basically hasn’t started work, only the RSFSR Orgcommittee, which has mostly focused on Moscow at the expense of the periphery, especially of autonomous republics and regions.] The distinction between the RSFSR and all-Union committees was disingenuous, since the leadership was the same for both and the Russian organizing committee held responsibility for establishing the all-Union one. After this slight-of-hand evasion, however, Subotskii’s admission outlined the eventual tactics used to prepare the national literatures for the Congress. The organizing committee, he claimed, should have sent instructors, maintained communication with the periphery, sent “конкретной систематической помощи”<sup>117</sup> [concrete, systematic help], had the local committees report to Moscow, and established an all-Union structure that detailed funding obligations.

Although the organizing committee undertook several of these activities, they were not initially a priority. Even before the first plenum session, the RSFSR organizing committee established a “национальная комиссия” [national commission] of national writers living in Moscow.<sup>118</sup> This commission was entrusted with the leadership of national literatures within the RSFSR, but its members included Lahuti and Usmanov, who actively pushed for greater

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<sup>115</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 12, l. 64. November 3, 1932.

<sup>116</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 5, l. 57. October 30, 1932.

<sup>117</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 5, l. 58.

<sup>118</sup> “V orgkomitete.” *Literaturnaia gazeta*. September 5, 1932.

organizing committee attention to the republics. It created writing groups for Tatar, Yiddish, Belorussian, German, and Chuvash literature, among others; initiated a Russian-language literary journal for national literatures; and organized translation classes to improve the quality and quantity of Russian translations.<sup>119</sup> The organizing committee also sent ad hoc delegations to the republics, such as a Kulik-led writers' brigade to Armenia, and founded a new journal, *Literature of the Peoples of the Soviet Union*.<sup>120</sup> Despite these efforts, the nationalities continued to push for greater institutional representation and assistance.

### ***Send in the Brigades***

In August 1933, well into the additional time allocated to organize the national literatures, the all-Union organizing committee institutionalized its assistance to the periphery by establishing literary brigades. This acknowledged the problem's magnitude, but it also reflected the increased institutionalization of the organizing committee's power structures and the broadening scope of the planned Congress. The brigades were an established Soviet work technique that allowed the committee to dispatch power instead of more immediate forms of assistance, such as funding. Instead, the brigades would leverage the organizing committee's weight to generate funding, publishing priorities, housing, and political recognition at the local levels.

The organizing committee Secretariat ordered the brigades to engage in the following activities:

1. Собираание и изучение всего литературного материала, характеризующего творчество писателей и состояние литературной организации каждой Республики, края и области.
2. Выезды на периферию в целях укрепления живой связи и конкретной помощи лит. организациям. Регулярная товарищеская переписка.
3. Организация переводов на русский язык, продвижение в печать лучших лит.художественных произведений писателей Союзных, автономных Республик, областей и переводов с русского на языки народов СССР.<sup>121</sup>

1. The collection and study of all literary materials characterizing writers' work and the state of literary organization for each Republic, state and region.
2. Travel to the periphery to strengthen the live connection and concrete assistance to lit. organizations. Regular comradely correspondence.
3. Organizing Russian translations and arranging the publication of the best literary works of writers from Union and autonomous republics and regions, and the translation from Russian into the languages of the peoples of the USSR.

Further, the brigades should publicize their efforts as well as ongoing work by local literary organizations, both on the periphery and back in Moscow. "На группы возлагается ответственность за широкое освещение в местной центральной прессе творчества и работы писателей всех литорганizations СССР."<sup>122</sup> [Groups are responsible for wide coverage in the local and central press of the creations and work of writers from all lit.

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<sup>119</sup> "V orgkomitete." *Literaturnaia gazeta*. December 23, 1932.

<sup>120</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 19, l. 188. February 12, 1933. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 127, l. 3-4. Undated, probably February, 1933.

<sup>121</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 33, l. 25. August 27, 1933.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

organizations of the USSR.] Finally, the Secretariat urged haste, concluding its directions with the command, “Группа должна поступить к работе немедленно.”<sup>123</sup> [The group must get to work promptly.] And most of them did.

The Secretariat assigned seven or eight writers to each of the brigades to Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Tataria, with slightly fewer to Turkmenistan and four each to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Two large brigades – 31 writers each – were delegated to the RSFSR national literatures and to Russian literature outside Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>124</sup> The brigades were chaired by major figures in the Soviet literary establishment: Fadeev chaired the Ukrainian brigade, Kirpotin chaired the Belorussian, Pavlenko – the Georgian, Bezymenskii – the Armenian, Averbakh – the Azerbaijani, Kirshon – the Tatar, Ermilov – the Uzbek, Lahuti – the Tajik, Vsevolod Ivanov – the Turkmen, Serafimovich – the brigade on national literatures within the RSFSR, and Panferov – the one on Russian provincial literatures. Other writers of note assigned to the brigades included Valentin Kataev and Fedor Gladkov to Ukraine, Yurii Tynianov to Georgia, Marietta Shaginian to Armenia, Boris Pil’niak to Azerbaijan; Olesha, Ilf and Petrov to Tataria; Osip Brik, Demian Bednyi, Andrei Bely, and Mikhail Sholokhov to the RSFSR nationalities; and Boris Pasternak (initially) to the Russian provinces. Some of the brigades contained national writers active in Moscow, such as David Egoroshvili in the Georgian brigade and Kovalenko in the Ukrainian one, but most contained only Russians.

The brigades were impressive – a large-scale, organized campaign studded with literary and organizing committee luminaries. However, these were by no means the only obligations facing these figures. The brigades suffered the universal problem of committee appointments: the more important the members, the less time they had to devote to the brigade. The same protocol creating the brigades to the periphery also established brigades on socialist realism, drama, poetry, young authors, Yiddish literature, children’s literature, and international literature. Fadeev, chair of the Ukrainian brigade, was hereby designated the chair of the poetry and Yiddish brigades as well, not to mention his continued position as acting chair of the entire organizing committee during Gronskii’s medical leave.<sup>125</sup>

Nor were brigade assignments final. Some members joined later, such as the folklorist Sokolov, who took advantage of the opportunity to visit Dagestan as part of the brigade there.<sup>126</sup> Others quietly transferred to brigades better suited to their personal or literary interests, while still others patiently ignored the assignment altogether in the hopes that they would be dropped or overlooked in the rush. Georgia was a particularly compelling destination for Russian writers, as it combined attractive travel opportunities, a thriving literature with roots in antiquity that offered possible inspiration, and a literary culture that needed less assistance than most other national literatures. Pasternak and Ol’ga Forsh left the provincial Russian and Ukrainian brigades respectively in favor of Tbilisi. Kirpotin, head of the Belorussian brigade (and the drama brigade, as well as a member of the poetry and Yiddish ones, and the organizing committee presidium secretary), managed to visit both Georgia and Armenia. Kazan was another appealing destination, with (unusually) almost all of its brigade visiting, plus a few new members.

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<sup>123</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 33, l. 26.

<sup>124</sup> The latter brigade continued to debate whether it should focus on a few regions, such as Volga and Arkhangelsk, where it could possibly achieve meaningful results by the Congress, or attempt to send a sub-brigade to each of the regions within the RSFSR.

<sup>125</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 33, l. 27-8. August 27, 1933. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 348, l. 96. May 15, 1933.

<sup>126</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 70. March 11, 1934.

Central Asia was considered a less desirable assignment. Lahuti complained about the brigade to Tajikistan, which he chaired, that “Она отказалась поехать, потому что Караваява должна была быть на 17-м съезде; другие тоже не согласились.”<sup>127</sup> [It refused to go, because Karavaeva had to be at the Seventeenth (Party) Congress; the others also wouldn't agree to it.] Faced with the Tajik organizing committee's pleas, Lahuti went alone: “Каждый день приходили телеграммы о том, что момент очень серьезный – приезжайте. Я вынужден был заменить собой бригаду и поехать вместо бригады.”<sup>128</sup> [Telegrams arrived every day, saying that the moment was serious – come. I had to replace the brigade myself and go in place of the brigade.] The Azerbaijani brigade lacked such a dedicated leader. At the third plenum, when other speakers praised the brigade efforts, Simurg reported, “Плохо еще то, что наша бригада сейчас без головы. Председатель бригады тов.Авербах, как будто бы сейчас не работает.”<sup>129</sup> [It's also bad that our brigade is currently without a head. It's as though the brigade chair Comrade Averbakh isn't working at present.] To be fair, Pil'niak visited Baku shortly after the brigade appointment, but he appears to have done little organizational work. On March 13, two days after Simurg's speech (although in response to criticism from other quarters as well), the organizing committee Secretariat appointed a new brigade led by Afinogenov, with only Zuev remaining from the first delegation. Four members of the new Azerbaijani brigade soon visited, but Zuev's report back to the organizing committee presidium echoes Simurg's complaint, “Состояние бригады по изучению литературы Азербайджана плохое: уехал тов. Авербах, был выделен новый состав бригады, который не работает.”<sup>130</sup> [The condition of the brigade for studying the literature of Azerbaijan is poor: comrade Averbakh has left, a new brigade membership was established, which doesn't work.] Eventually, all of the new brigade members (Afinogenov, Zuev, Aseev, Boris Lavrenev, Mikhail Svetlov, and the later addition Chumandrin) actively fulfilled their brigade responsibilities, but by then the Congress was upon them.

Averbakh's unwillingness to contribute even minimally to his brigade became a matter of debate because he was chairing it, but he was far from alone in his reluctance. There were several reasons Russian writers were reluctant to participate. The very reasons national literatures were successful in demanding assistance – underdeveloped literary scenes, poor material conditions – made visiting them less rewarding. Perhaps more importantly, time spent on the periphery was time away from Moscow, where the battles actually affecting Russian writers were fought. Although brigade work indicated a certain level of *partiinost'*, so did other forms of organizational work that were more closely connected to their personal status. And any organizational work stole time from creative endeavors. Yudin attempted to convince writers otherwise, claiming that the material gathered during their brigade trips would more than compensate for the time lost, saying:

Работайте вместе, это не помешает ни в какой мере творческому плану каждого из писателей, участвующих в этой работе, наоборот, обогатит творческий план писателя, поможет ему больше увидеть жизнь, больше увидеть людей и посмотреть как работают писатели других республик.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 6. March 11, 1934.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 24. March 11, 1934.

<sup>130</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 37, l. 1. May 15, 1934. RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 6. April 27, 1934.

<sup>131</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 121. March 11, 1934.



Work together. This doesn't interfere in the slightest with the creative plan of each writer participating in this work. On the contrary, it enriches the writer's creative plan, helps him to see more of life, to see more of people, and to watch how writers from other republics work.

This appeal may have consoled the brigadiers, but it did not win many converts. Considering the opportunity costs associated with the brigades, it is a testament to writers' curiosity or dedication that so many of them did make the effort.

### ***Brigades in Action***

The brigades' tasks essentially amounted to communication and assistance. They shuttled information between Moscow and the periphery, making reports to Moscow and explaining Moscow's demands to the republics. At their best, the brigades not only fulfilled the terse directive, "Регулярная товарищеская переписка," [Regular comradesly correspondence] but made prolonged visits to local organizing committees, especially those outside the republic or regional capital.

While in the periphery, brigades met with workers' writing circles, unaffiliated writers, librarians, Party officials, publishers, and the public, but the local organizing committees were their obvious focus. The brigades sorted out local writers, clarifying expectations and directives, and temporarily filling the critical gap by deciding a flurry of theoretical and practical debates. At the third plenum, Zharskii, a Polish writer from Belorussia, described this process, "Бригада провела у нас целый ряд совещаний – по драматургии, по детской литературе, по поэзии. Члены этой бригады, бригада в целом беседовали очень детально с каждым писателем, с очень многими писателями.[...]"<sup>132</sup> [The brigade held an entire set of meetings on dramaturgy, children's literature, and poetry. Brigade members and the brigade as a whole had very detailed conversations with each writer, with a great many writers.] These meetings with individual writers and in larger forums provided a map for local writers to follow, so that:

...стала больше развиваться самокритика, ибо товарищи действительно развернули большую работу, вдумчивую работу, работу, которая укрепила состояние нашей литературы, которая помогла нам практически изо дня в день преодолевать те огромнейшие недостатки, которые мы имеем в нашей работе.<sup>133</sup>

Self-criticism started to develop more, since comrades truly turned towards serious work, thoughtful work, work that strengthened the state of our literature, that helped us practically from day to day to surmount those great flaws that we have in our work.

The brigade had the critical authority local organizations lacked: since it had Moscow's weight behind it, local writers and critics could safely conform to the brigade's pronouncements. The brigades also set work plans and timelines for Congress preparations, as Zuev described in his report on the Azerbaijani brigade: "[П]режде всего необходимо было организационно подкрепить Оргкомитет и на заседании секретариата и фракции был намечен план работ до съезда писателей. Был разработан календарный план работы фракции, утвержденный

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<sup>132</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 82. March 11, 1934.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

культпропом ЦК Азербайджана.”<sup>134</sup> [Before all else, it was necessary to organizationally reinforce the Orgcommittee and a plan for the work that needed to be done before the writers’ congress was outlined at sessions of the secretariat and (Party) fraction. A timeline for the faction’s work was developed and confirmed by the Azerbaijani Central Committee Kultprop.] These ambitious plans weren’t always fulfilled, even by the brigades themselves. Zuev noted that his brigade started late, worked episodically, and that, “чтобы закрепить начатую работу, необходимо было тотчас же по приезде бригады в Москву послать в Азербайджан инструктора Оргкомитета для осуществления намеченного оргплана. Этого не было сделано.”<sup>135</sup> [in order to consolidate the early work, it was necessary to send an Orgcommittee instructor to Azerbaijan as soon as the brigade arrived in Moscow, to implement the developed orgplan. This wasn’t done.]

Prominent writers on the brigades tended to conduct literary evenings or readings in addition to the organization meetings, using their popularity with other writers and readers to bolster the organizing committee process. Writers rarely discussed how many (or few) readers they were reaching through these efforts, as opposed to the prominent references to outreach for aspiring writers. At one point, while Dimetradze was describing literary evenings held after the brigade visit to Georgia, Stavskii interrupted to ask, “А читатели участвовали?” [And did readers participate?] Dimetradze reassured him, “Читатели тоже участвовали. Участвовали и наша молодежь.”<sup>136</sup> [Readers also participated, as did our youth.] He did not give any indication of how many readers this comprised. However, since national elites were generally small, this readership could contain the Party members and local officials brigades were attempting to reach, readers who were far more important for immediate efforts than the poorly literate masses.

Brigade members met with local authorities to push for material support. As prominent all-Union figures, they had easier access to officials, and their very presence on the periphery signified Moscow’s priorities. It was common for brigades to meet with the chair of the republic’s Party, and whether or not he pledged support, that high-level meeting could be leveraged in subsequent meetings with lower officials in charge of housing, publishing, and so on. Promises weren’t always kept, as Simurg complained above, but the overall level of support increased dramatically. After Lahuti visited Tajikistan, he reported:

Коли до декабря месяца 33 года за время своего существования Таджикская организация советских писателей получила только 5 т.рублей, то теперь после поездки бригады Оргкомитета и благодаря и своему руководству ЦК партии Таджикистана, ассигновано на 34 год 300 тыс.рублей, это во первых, во вторых – 250 тыс. рублей на постройку дома писателей, в третьих – Всесоюзным Оргкомитетом союза писателей ассигновано 80 тыс. рублей для подготовки выставки к съезду.<sup>137</sup>

If until December 1933, the Tajik organization of Soviet writers received only 5,000 rubles for the full duration of its existence, now, after the Orgcommittee brigade’s trip and thanks to the leadership of the TsK of the Party of Tajikistan, 300,000 rubles has been appropriated for 1934. That’s first of all, and second,

<sup>134</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 5-6. April 27, 1934.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 34, l. 23. March 10, 1934.

<sup>137</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 8-9. March 11, 1934.

250,000 rubles to build a House of Writers, and third – the All-Union Orgcommittee of the writers' union has allocated 80,000 rubles to prepare the exhibition for the Congress.

Lahuti's report credited these achievements to the brigade's visit, although he previously acknowledged that he went without the other, reluctant members. Although most reports neglected specific sums, they indicated similar increases in funding commitment. This was essential for the success of the organizing committee process. It gave writers the opportunity to work, as opposed to fighting for survival under often difficult conditions. It gave the local organizing committees credibility both as legitimate Soviet organizations, since power was measured in terms of resources controlled, and as literary authorities, since they now had the necessary carrot and stick (or whip and gingerbread) to make their theoretical pronouncements meaningful. And independent sources of funding actually increased rather than decreased the ties to Moscow, as local organizing committees now had the resources to carry out some of Moscow's orders and participate fully in organizing Soviet literature. The all-Union organizing committee could assign expenses to the local organizing committees, even for the Congress itself: Moscow paid the delegates' way to the Congress, and provided hotel rooms and meals during, but local committees had to buy the return tickets.<sup>138</sup>

### ***Brigades in Moscow***

Brigade work continued back in Moscow. None of their reports contradicted the bleak pictures painted by the national delegates, but their confirmation consolidated Moscow's view of the periphery and spurred further action. Some added telling details, like Zuev's image of the Azerbaijani organizing committee meeting in a leaky lobby. Others, like Lahuti, negotiated funding from Moscow to supplement local resources. The brigades had greater authority on the subject of national literatures than the national writers themselves, as they were considered both impartial and, as a result of their few months of work, experts.

From the beginning of the organizing committee process, Moscow preferred Russian experts to national ones. When the Congress was still being planned for the fall of 1932, Skosyrev wrote in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* that:

Если писатели в массе национальных литератур не знают, то каждый отдельный писатель в той или иной мере занимался и занимается какой-либо национальной литературой. В статье, в отдельной брошюре он может, он должен познакомить с этой литературой других писателей. Мы знаем, например, что гг. Лапин и Хацревин знают Таджикистан; они обязаны перед съездом рассказать нам то, что знают. С. Мстиславский занимался художественной литературой Дагестана. «Литгазета» или другой какой орган печати должен заказать ему статью о дагестанских писателях. За те два месяца что остались до съезда, многое можно успеть сделать.<sup>139</sup>

If writers don't know national literatures en masse, then each individual writer to some degree has and continues to study some national literature. He can, he must acquaint other writers with that literature in an article or separate brochure. We know, for example, that Comrades Lapin and Khatsrevin know Tajikistan; they

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<sup>138</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 10, l. 117.

<sup>139</sup> Skosyrev, "Vserossiiskii ili vsesoizuznyi," *Literaturnaia gazeta*. Aug 29, 1932.

are obligated to tell us what they know before the Congress. S. Mstislavskii has studied the literature of Dagestan. The *Literary Gazette* or some other press organ should commission an article from him about Dagestani writers. In the two months remaining before the Congress, much can be accomplished.

The preference for Russian experts fueled the brigade process, as returning members had an easier time gaining a Moscow audience than national writers did. In the spring and summer of 1934, the organizing committee planned a series of lectures and conferences to prepare writers for the Congress. These included a conference on Yiddish literature, a talk by Kulik on local nationalism, talks on the works of a few major national writers (Mikitenko, Lahuti, Kupala, Kolas, Mikola Bazhan, Mikheil Javakhishvili, and Peretz Markish), and presentations on the state of national literatures.<sup>140</sup> Brigade members also published articles and books on national literatures, such as Gol'tsev's book on Georgian literature.<sup>141</sup>

Besides their own works, the brigades pressured Russian publishers to issue translations of their respective national literatures. Zuev reported five new book contracts for translations of contemporary Azerbaijani works, as well as continuing efforts to persuade Moscow and Leningrad publishing to follow suit.<sup>142</sup> Drastamat Simonian, from Armenia, praised that brigade for negotiating almost 100 quires of works by Armenian poets, prose writers and one dramatist in Russian translation.<sup>143</sup> The all-Union committee commissioned a Russian language anthology of Uzbek literature.<sup>144</sup>

Finally, the brigades met the requirement set by the organizing committee's order to get "wide coverage" for their activities. The arrival of prominent writers in the periphery made the newspapers and radio, which also announced and then reviewed the literary evenings and reported on translation contracts. The brigade members wrote travel reports and articles surveying national literatures for Russian periodicals, including *Literaturnaia Gazeta*. Even the news that national literatures made the news could make the news.

### ***Reviewing the Brigades***

Moscow's official position on the brigades was positive, although Russian writers continued to see any attention to national literature as a distraction from more important issues. These views were occasionally voiced, but tended to be drowned out by defenses of the brigades, as when Kirsanov suggested at the third plenum that they were mostly for show. The Tatar writer Najmi attacked this statement, saying Kirsanov was deeply wrong. "Он заявил даже, что работа этих бригад является каким-то взаимным обменом любезностями между различными городами. Это в высшей степени оскорбительно и для членов бригад и для советских писателей на местах."<sup>145</sup> [He even stated that the work of these brigades is some sort of exchange of courtesies between different cities. This is offensive to the highest degree to both the members of the brigades and to local Soviet writers.] Kirshon similarly scolded "легкомысленные товарищи, (если мягко их назвать)" [the light-minded comrades (to name them gently)] who criticized the brigades as irrelevant, threatening, "этих самых молодых товарищей нужно за

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<sup>140</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 40, l. 4-5ob. March 17, 1934.

<sup>141</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 37. March 11, 1934.

<sup>142</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 44, l. 5. April 27, 1934.

<sup>143</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 18. March 11, 1934.

<sup>144</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 40, l. 1ob. January 8, 1934.

<sup>145</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 7. March 10, 1934.

такие вещи беспощадно бить по рукам.»<sup>146</sup> [These young comrades should be mercilessly rapped on the knuckles for such things.]

Most of the brigades earned profuse praise from the locals, although there were complaints, especially about the amount of attention or time allotted. Kapiev's third plenum speech gives a good example of these comments, which tended to temper praise with criticism:

Создание и посылка бригад. Почему Оргкомитет не мог раньше подумать об этом хорошем, замечательном начинании? Но говорить о колоссальных результатах работы этих бригад нет оснований: некоторые бригады на местах оказались беспомощными, ибо были составлены неудачно и, кроме того, спешили. Ведь дело не в том, чтобы провести на местах совещания, сделать доклад о недопустимом отставании литературы от социалистического строительства, сделать доклад о задачах предстоящего съезда. Наша литература имеет свои специфические наболевшие конкретные вопросы. Нужно было разрешить их, а для этого нужно было знать местные условия работы. Только тогда можно обеспечить рост наших литератур.<sup>147</sup>

Composition and sending of the brigades. Why couldn't the Orgcommittee think of this good, wonderful beginning earlier? But there's no basis for speaking of colossal results from the work of these brigades: some brigades have proved useless on site, since they were put together poorly and, moreover, worked in haste. The point isn't to hold meetings locally, to give a talk about the intolerable backwardness of literature from the pace of socialist building, to give a talk on the tasks of the coming congress. Our literature has its own specific, difficult, concrete issues. We needed to solve them, and for this you need to know the local work conditions. Only then can you facilitate the growth of our literatures.

The danger here was that brigades would treat the peripheral literatures as interchangeable, as seen from Moscow instead of as seen on the ground. If only brigades had understood their task properly, claimed Kapiev, what colossal results could have been achieved. Simurg's speech contained a similar "if only" element, "Мы были бы очень рады, если бы бригада, приехавшая к нам, выполнила бы такую же работу как бригада по Украине."<sup>148</sup> [We would have been very happy, if the brigade which came to us had completed the same work as the brigade to Ukraine.] As already noted, Simurg and other Azerbaijanis complained about Averbakh's disinterest in the brigade.

Participation had its own pitfalls; the disproportionate authority Russian writers gained by visiting the periphery carried a potential for abuse. Early in the process, before the official brigades, the Turkmen representative Chariev warned the organizing committee, "Маленькая просьба к оргкомитету. Когда посылаете писателей нац. республикам пожалуйста их проверяйте! Ато они творят (конечно не все) такие вещи, что не дай бог."<sup>149</sup> [A small request for the orgcommittee: When you send writers to the national republics, please examine them first! Or else they get up to (of course, not all) such things, God forbid.] At the third plenum, Simonian gave an example of what "such things" could be. He cautioned against

<sup>146</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 47. March 11, 1934.

<sup>147</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 36. March 11, 1934.

<sup>148</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 24. March 11, 1934.

<sup>149</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 8, l. 97a. October 31, 1932.

unorganized visits, which could cause “некоторые неприятные недоразумения. [...] [Н]аряду с огромной помощью, которую мы получили от литературной бригады, иногда существуют такие неприятности.”<sup>150</sup> [some unpleasant misunderstandings. Together with the great help that we’ve received from the literary brigades sometimes such nuisances occur.] A Leningrad comrade, he reported, had recently arrived in Armenia.

Он явился к нам в союз писателей, лично ко мне и сообщил, что он является представителем, лектором Ленинградской организации писателей и что одновременно он является секретарем Пушкинской комиссии Академии Наук, что он приехал в Армению для того, чтобы ознакомиться с некоторыми рукописями Пушкина, находящимися в музее Армении. Он выразил пожелание прочесть один доклад. Мы ему радушно приняли, дали ему полную возможность прочесть один доклад. Доклад этот носил название: “Пушкин и наша современность”.<sup>151</sup>

He came to us at the writers’ union, to me personally and announced that he was a representative, a lecturer at the Leningrad writers’ organization and that he simultaneously served as the secretary of the Pushkin commission of the Academy of Sciences, that he had come to Armenia in order to familiarize himself with some of Pushkin’s manuscripts that were housed in the Armenian museum. He expressed a desire to give a talk. We received him warmly, gave him full opportunity to deliver one talk. This talk was titled, “Pushkin and our contemporary times.”

This anticipated event went sadly awry:

Доклад был очень поверхностный. В течение целого часа он говорил о том, что вот всем нам нужно учиться у Пушкина, но конкретно не говорил о том, чему, собственно, должно учиться у Пушкина писателям и, в частности, армянским писателям. После доклада начались прения. Что называется, этого докладчика несколько прижали к стене. Пристали к нему: скажите в конце концов, ведь вы – докладчик, Пушкиновед. - как вы мыслите, что мы должны использовать у Пушкина? Как должны учиться у Пушкина?

Очевидно, не владея достаточно своей темой, он долго мялся, наконец, допустил такое выражение: “Пушкин был работоспособный. Прежде чем он вырабатывал какой-нибудь эпитет, он над этим эпитетом заминался 2 недели. Например, для того, чтобы схарактеризовать “Онегина”, он искал в течение 2-х недель одного эпитета и наконец нашел: Онегин он назвал крахмальным нахалом.” “Вот, говорит, - работоспособность Пушкина. Извольте учиться у Пушкина этой работоспособности”.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>150</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 19, 20. March 11, 1934.

<sup>151</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 19.

<sup>152</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 19-20. The actual phrase in Evgenii Onegin is “перекрахмаленный нахал,” which Nabokov translates as “overstarched jackanapes.” Aleksandr Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 1837-1937* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1937), 6:177. *Eugene Onegin, a Novel in Verse*. Translated with commentary by Vladimir Nabokov (New York: Pantheon, 1964), 3:294.

The talk was very superficial. For an entire hour he spoke about how we all needed to learn from Pushkin, but he didn't speak about what, exactly, writers needed to learn from Pushkin and specifically Armenian writers. After the talk, discussion started. This speaker was somewhat backed up against the wall, as they say. They pushed him: tell us, in short, after all you're the speaker, a Pushkin scholar – what do you think, what should we use from Pushkin? What do we need to learn from Pushkin?

Obviously not knowing his own topic well enough, he hemmed and hawed for a long time, and finally uttered this expression: "Pushkin was very capable. Before he would employ some epithet, he would work for two weeks on that epithet. For example, in order to characterize Onegin, he searched two weeks for one epithet and finally found it: he called Onegin a starched rogue" "There, he said, "Pushkin's capacity for work. You should learn this capacity from Pushkin."

Simonian's audience could not resist this anecdote, and Kirpotin quipped, "Сам он был, повидимому, не крахмальный, но нахал не малый." [He himself was, apparently, not starched, but not a small rogue] To avoid such incidents, he suggested, "[С]прашивать документы."<sup>153</sup> [Check documents.] Defended Simonian, "Мы у него спрашивали."<sup>154</sup> [We checked him.]

Like Kapiev's complaint, Simonian's anecdote illustrates how Russian writers could sour the automatic trust inspired by their central credentials through their presumptions towards the periphery. Russian writers did not necessarily understand or even acknowledge local literary conditions, or callously assumed local simplicity or ignorance. Simonian's Pushkin scholar tried to deliver a series of platitudes instead of an academic talk, forgetting that a group of Armenian writers were still, foremost, a group of writers educated in the Russian system. Instead, he found that even Pushkin's aura could only cover so far. And, since many of his Leningrad colleagues were in Simonian's audience, he also learned that missteps on the periphery would eventually follow him home.

Considering the potential for offense, it is remarkable how well most of the brigades did. Simonian's Pushkin scholar, after all, was not actually a brigade member. Although the absence of targeted complaints could be due to discretion, the national writers' open criticism of specific figures and honesty about other complaints makes this unlikely. The brigades were a broad success. Indeed, most of the national representatives called for the brigades to continue in some form. Local writers wanted the brigades to stay longer, presumably increasing both the quantity and quality of their work, as greater knowledge about local specificity would lead to more useful interventions. Lahuti conveyed one such request in his report:

В своих неоднократных письмах, адресованных мне, они просили меня обратиться в Оргкомитет с просьбой послать бригаду, которая не только посмотрела-бы, как они работают, но помогла-бы и руководила ими в ежедневной работе во всех областях. Они просят, чтобы эта бригада пробыла в Таджикистане 2-3 месяца.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>153</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 20.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 10. March 11, 1934.

In multiple letters addressed to me, they have asked me to approach the Orgcommittee with the request to send a brigade that wouldn't just observe how they would, but would help and direct their daily work in all areas. They request that this brigade spend two or three months in Tajikistan.

Considering this and other requests, Kirshon expressed the widely held view that the brigades should be institutionalized, “Я считаю, что нельзя смотреть на эти бригады только как на бригады по подготовке к съезду. Этого мало.”<sup>156</sup> [I think that it's impossible to look at these brigades only as brigades to prepare for the Congress. That's not enough.] Some form of administration for the national literatures was required, after all, and it made sense to continue the brigades' successful outreach. Kirshon recommended that, “эти самые бригады должны остаться постоянно и должны представлять собой не что иное, как новые формы руководство Всесоюзного оргкомитета и помощи нашим братским республикам.”<sup>157</sup> [These same brigades should remain permanently and present themselves as the new form of all-Union orgcommittee leadership and assistance for our brother republics.] Kirshon's argument focused on the organizing committee, not the writers' union it was supposedly organizing, as the primary institution. He assumed, correctly, that the organizing committee structures would carry over into the new union. The permanent brigades had certain advantages, as everyone was already acquainted (or off the brigade), and the brigades were already learning about their respective literatures. However, Kirshon urged, “бригады... нужно составить получше так, чтобы все лучшие писатели вошли в эти бригады...”<sup>158</sup> [we need to arrange the brigades better, so that all the best writers join these brigades.] The brigades would continue the existing efforts, while producing original works about the other republics:

Необходимо, чтобы эти бригады включились как следует в работу и помогали-бы не только литературной работе данной республики, но и работе самой республики, т.е. чтобы товарищи писали очерки, чтобы товарищи побывали на стройках, чтобы товарищи, представляющие из себя достаточно квалифицированных представителей нашей литературы, помогали-бы общей работе писателей республики, к которой они прикреплены. Они должны являться как-бы подкреплением отряда писателей тех братских республик, к которым они прикреплены.<sup>159</sup>

It's essential that these brigades involve themselves in the work as they should and help not only the literary work of a given republic, but the work of the republic itself, that is, comrades should write sketches, comrades should visit construction sites, comrades, as sufficiently qualified representatives of our literature, should help the general work of writers in the republic to which they are attached. They should be the support for the writers of the brother republics to which they are attached.

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<sup>156</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 47. March 11, 1934.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 47-8.



He continued in this vein for a while before concluding dryly that it was necessary “чтобы они сидели не только в Москве.”<sup>160</sup> [that they not only stay in Moscow.]

While loudly grateful for Moscow’s assistance, national delegates repeatedly urged one change to the brigades: make them more representative of Soviet literature as a whole. Before the official brigades were established, Chubar praised the ad hoc brigade which visited Armenia and suggested that sending brigades to other republics could be part of the educational program for national writers.<sup>161</sup> During the Congress, Aleksandrovich repeated the request for inclusion, asking “почему кого-нибудь из белорусских писателей не послать с бригадой в Казакстан, а украинцев в Белоруссию? Это имело бы большое значение и в смысле создания чувства пролетарского интернационализма и в смысле помощи писателю вообще.”<sup>162</sup> [Why not send some Belorussian writer with the brigade to Kazakhstan, and Ukrainians to Belorussia? This would have great significance both in the sense of creating the feeling of proletarian internationalism and in the sense of helping the writer in general.] After calling to institutionalize the brigades, Kirshon reiterated the requests to broaden brigade membership:

В наши братские республики отправлены только русские писатели. Я думаю, что это совершенно неправильно. Нам нужно сейчас же пересмотреть состав бригад с тем, чтобы в Татарию поехали-бы не только русские товарищи, но, скажем, и белоруссы, чтобы из Грузии товарищи поехали на Украину и т.д.<sup>163</sup>

Only Russian writers are sent to our brother republics. I think this is absolutely incorrect. We need to immediately review the brigades composition so that not only Russian comrades would go to Tataria, but, say, also Belorussians, so that comrades from Georgia would go to Ukraine and so on.

Aleksandrovich, Kirshon added, had already agreed to join the brigade to Tataria.

In principle, the organizing committee supported institutionalizing and broadening the brigades. Yudin stated, “Тов. Киршон правильно говорил, и в прениях неоднократно поднимался этот вопрос, что работу наших бригад, наших комиссий по литературам национальных республик нужно сделать постоянной практикой.”<sup>164</sup> [Comrade Kirshon correctly said, and this question has been raised more than once in discussions, that the work of our brigades and our commissions on the literature of the national republics needs to become a permanent practice.] The brigades formed the knowledge base for the Writers’ Union Section on Nationalities. While that base did not necessarily incorporate national writers to the extent they wanted, the nationalities sector organized a variety of brigades: not just Moscow to the periphery, but also the reverse and between republics. Literary brigades continued to be an important tool for fostering national literatures, as well as rewarding (or punishing) individual writers. In 1935, the Section on Nationalities funded over 30 individual trips, Russian brigades to Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Kara-Kalpakia; a Georgian-Belorussian exchange; six Chuvash

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<sup>160</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 48.

<sup>161</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 19, l. 193. February 12, 1933.

<sup>162</sup> RGASPI, f. 386, op. 1, d. 58, l. 12. *Pravda* meeting. August 22, 1934.

<sup>163</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 48. March 11, 1934.

<sup>164</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 35, l. 121. March 11, 1934.

writers to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan; and sent a trio of Kara-Kalpakian writers to Baku, Tbilisi, Tashkent, Leningrad, and (of course) Moscow.<sup>165</sup>

### **Exhibiting National Literatures**

Reports and speeches by national writers and brigade members delimited the task of national literatures at the Congress. Questions of genre and socialist realism were largely left to Russian writers. National writers could contribute to these discussions, but their contributions weren't expected and, when made, were on Russian terms. The presentation of national literatures focused on two elements: each nationality needed an acceptable literary history and a thriving organization of Soviet writers ready to join the writers' union. At the third plenum, the organizing committee declared that the first days of the Congress would be spent on national reports: each of the republics, plus Tataria, which Najmi suggested had earned its place by winning the Order of Lenin at the Seventeenth Party Congress that January.<sup>166</sup> In addition to these reports, national literatures were given prominent placement in the newly proposed exhibition to accompany the Congress.

The organizing committee Secretariat approved a proposal for the exhibition on January 8, 1934. It appointed a fourteen-member committee, chaired by Averbakh and including Pavlenko, Panferov, Vsevolod Ivanov, Leonov, and Aseev among its members; and assigned assistants to carry out the committee's work. The Secretariat's order gave the committee ten days to "окончательно утвердить план выставки и уточнить вопрос о привлечении соответствующих средств."<sup>167</sup> [finalize the exhibition plans and clarify the question of assembling appropriate materials.] Averbakh tackled this assignment with the same enthusiasm and dedication he brought to the national brigades. After four months, Zorin wrote to the organizing committee presidium complaining that Averbakh's committee hadn't done anything and should be fired.<sup>168</sup> This wasn't strictly accurate, as the committee had issued calls for materials (although it is not clear that Averbakh contributed), but the presidium followed Zorin's recommendation and dissolved the old committee. The presidium also allocated 278,000 rubles towards Zorin's requested 300,000 for the 1000 to 1500m<sup>2</sup> exhibition.<sup>169</sup> The new committee had Al'tman chairing, Zorin as vice chair, and in place of the previous writers appointed the more organizationally oriented figures that Zorin recommended: Zuev from the Soviet Literature publishing house, Oborin from GIKhL, and Zozuli from the organization of journalists. The presidium's resolution on the project suggested that the exhibition committee, "к обсуждению ряда принципиальных вопросов по устройству Выставки привлечь широкие круги советской литературной общественности, без отрыва отдельных писателей от непосредственной и творческой работы."<sup>170</sup> [to discuss the principles for the Exhibition's design, consult a wide circle of Soviet literary organizations without tearing individual writers away from their immediate and creative work.] Writers should contribute to the exhibition, in other words, in addition to other Congress preparations, not in place of them.

The exhibition was designed to reinforce the message of the Congress. Its guiding principles "должны быть тезисы докладов, а основными организаторами и консультантами

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<sup>165</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 79, l. 28-9.

<sup>166</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 36, l. 3. March 10, 1934.

<sup>167</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 40, l. 2.

<sup>168</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 57-9. April 8, 1934.

<sup>169</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 58ob. April 8, 1934. f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 7-8.

<sup>170</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 7.

по отделам Выставку должны быть непосредственно докладчики по отдельным вопросам.<sup>171</sup> [should be the reports' theses, and the basic organizers and consultants for the Exhibition's divisions should be the speakers directly on specific questions.] The exhibition plans thus illustrate what aspects of Soviet literature the organizing committee had prioritized by 1934. It contained sections for: world literature (“с показом роли советской литературы” [displaying the role of Soviet literature]), Russian literature, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Transcaucasian literatures, Central Asian literatures (Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik), national literatures of the RSFSR, drama, poetry, folklore, children's literature, military literature, young authors, and literary sketches.<sup>172</sup> Noticeably absent from this list is the novel, or any mention of socialist realism. (Indeed, prose tended to be the default “literature” at the Congress, as opposed to drama and poetry, which required special panels.) The exhibition's sections followed the basic schedule of the Congress: first “general” topics, then national literatures, then genres.<sup>173</sup>

Each section was expected to depict “историческая роль решения Центрального Комитета Партии от 23 Апреля 1932г.,” [the historic role of the Party's Central Committee decision of April 23, 1932] and “органическая связь советской литературы с конкретным участием в социалистическом строительстве, а также передовая ведущая роль советской литературы.”<sup>174</sup> [the organic link between Soviet literature and concrete participation in socialist construction, and also the leading role of Soviet literature.] While this suggests socialist realist content, it does not specify it. However, after two years of the organizing committee process, writers knew what was expected.

In March, the first exhibition committee issued a call for materials for a general pavilion on national literatures, requesting that materials be sent to Moscow by April 15. This call described in detail the function of national literatures at the exhibition. The displays should give enough information about each literature that the visitor could “наглядно ознакомиться с ростом и спецификой национальной культуры.”<sup>175</sup> [become familiar with the growth and specifics of national culture at a glance.] The primary message was not cultural, however, but political: literature in context. The exhibition was designed to show:

...перед трудящимися всего мира те огромные возможности развития национальных культур, которые дает ленинская национальная политика нашей партии и которые возможны только в условиях советской власти в противовес национальному гнету, бесправию и вырождению культуры в условиях экономического кризиса, который царит в странах фашизма и диктатуры буржуазии.<sup>176</sup>

...to the workers of the entire world the great opportunities for the development of national culture which our Party's Leninist nationalities policy has provided and which are only possible under Soviet power, as opposed to the national oppression, absence of rights and cultural decline under the conditions economic crisis prevalent in countries under fascism and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 7-8. The section on literary sketches was added to the project at a later date.

<sup>173</sup> The term “общий” [general] is used frequently to refer to Russian and world literary topics. Although many of these topics were discussed throughout the Congress, Gorky's opening speech addressed world literary history in length, while Zhdanov focused on unmarked Soviet literature, so the order holds.

<sup>174</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 8.

<sup>175</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 2. March 11, 1934.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

One way to achieve this effect was to “дать в качестве контраста на ярких примерах эксплуататорский и угнетательский характер колониальной политики царизма в отношении отдельных национальностей.”<sup>177</sup> [for contrast, give vivid examples of the exploitative and oppressive character of tsarism’s colonial politics in relation to individual nationalities.] The contrasts and argument advanced by the displays should prove that “единственный возможный путь расцвета национальных культур – это путь по которому идут народы Советского союза под знаменем нашей партии, под знаменем Ленина – Сталина.”<sup>178</sup> [the only possible path for the flowering of national culture is the path the peoples of the Soviet Union are taking under the banner of our party, under the banner of Lenin and Stalin.] In a juxtaposition characteristic of the rhetoric around Soviet literature, although heavier than most organizing committee dispatches used, the call for materials instructed:

Выставка должна быть построена на высоком идейно-политическом уровне и являться боевым, большевистским орудием и пропагандистом политики партии в национальном вопросе, отражая борьбу на два фронта против великодержавного шовинизма и местного национализма.

В связи с Выставкой создается исчерпывающий книжный фонд всей художественной литературы на всех языках народов СССР, начиная с октября 1917 г.<sup>179</sup>

The exhibitions must be constructed on a high ideological-political level and be a Bolshevik battle weapon and propaganda for the Party’s policy on the national question, depicting the battle on two fronts against great-power chauvinism and local nationalism.

In connection with the exhibition a permanent book fund is being created to house all literature in all languages of the peoples of the USSR, beginning from October, 1917.

To furnish this fund, the exhibition committee expected the national organizations to send “Все книги, выпущенные за советский период с 1917 года.”<sup>180</sup> [All books, published in the Soviet period from 1917 on.] For the exhibits, additional materials were requested: examples (with summaries) of “наиболее ярких произведений художественной литературы до-революционного периода” [the brightest works of literature from the pre-revolutionary period], folk poetry, documents “отражающие двойную цензуру – духовенства и властей” [depicting the double censorship – religion and power], their first Soviet publications, photos, production statistics, material on alphabet reforms, a history of literary organizations, evidence of writers’ outreach to factories and collective farms, periodicals, books inspired by the April 23, 1932 resolution, and examples of other national arts – music, paintings, films, crafts.<sup>181</sup> Every writer should have a brief biography outlining his professional activity, political orientation, and membership in literary organizations by year. Major writers should also provide their cumulative publishing statistics, titles, reviews, and show the growth of their edition size.

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<sup>177</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 2ob.

<sup>178</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 2.

<sup>179</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 2ob.

<sup>180</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 3.

<sup>181</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 3-3ob.

Although the committee soon changed, the list of materials remained essentially the same: “книгу, журнал, художественную диаграмму, картину, гравюру, портрет, кино, фотографию, диапозитивы, макет, рукопись.”<sup>182</sup> [books, periodicals, diagrams, pictures, gravures, portraits, film, photographs, transparencies, models, manuscripts.]

The detail and volume requested reveals Moscow’s reluctance to incorporate the information from national and brigade reports into its vision of the periphery. The exhibition represented a large additional burden to already overextended national organizing committees, one which they were supposed to deliver without taking writers from any other organizational or creative work. The quick turnaround on materials assumed well-organized files, archives, libraries and museums that already had everything, so that the exhibition committee merely had to collect and ship them. When the committee issued its call for materials in March, materials were due by April 15 and the exhibition was scheduled to open in mid-May.<sup>183</sup> Local organizations sent panicky responses asking for more time, money, and personnel. The chairman of the Azov-Black Sea oblast’ exhibition committee wrote in early April promising to send its materials by April 25, but asking plaintively, “Просим немедленно сообщить нужны ли материалы только по национальной литературе или же материалы по всему краю?”<sup>184</sup> [We request that you urgently inform us, is material needed only on national literature or materials on the entire region?] Everything, came the reply. Another letter from the Mari region stated the situation more boldly: if the organizing committee wanted them to put together a display in fifteen days, it needed to send money to pay someone to do it.<sup>185</sup> When the committee was replaced in mid-April, the new plan called for the exhibition to open by July 25.<sup>186</sup> It actually opened on August 26, over a week after the Congress began.<sup>187</sup>

What did the exhibition exhibit? The call for materials suggested topics like newly literate nationalities, “борьба за большевистские темпы, за оборону СССР, за качество, за социалистическую организацию труда, за овладение техникой, за новые кадры, за антирелигиозное воспитание. Рост и развитие детской литературы,” [the battle for Bolshevik (work) tempo, for the defense of the USSR, for quality, for a socialist organization of labor, for the овладение техникой, for new cadres, for anti-religious education. The growth and development of children’s literature.] and “Горький и национальные писатели, значение Горького, влияние Горького, учеба у Горького.”<sup>188</sup> [Gorky and national writers, Gorky’s significance, Gorky’s influence, learning from Gorky.] In general, the national literature displays presented national first, literature second, with at least half of the plans devoted to socio-economic achievements. Most displays were chronological, starting with pre-revolutionary conditions and limiting literary coverage to the Soviet era. Obviously, newly literate nationalities had no choice, but even cultures with established literary traditions conformed to the narrative of Soviet development. Photos of new machinery and schools preceded those of writers and most of the tables, collages, maps, and diagrams were devoted to economic progress, not literary. Some of the displays used material from the Ethnographic Museum, which was already formatted for a Russian audience, but which further tilted the story

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<sup>182</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 8.

<sup>183</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 40. March 13, 1934.

<sup>184</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 53. April 9, 1934, reply marked as sent April 14.

<sup>185</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 56.

<sup>186</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 8.

<sup>187</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 20. August 24, 1934.

<sup>188</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 3. March 8, 1934.

away from literature.<sup>189</sup> However, the exhibition allowed nationalities not speaking at the Congress – especially RSFSR nationalities like the Buryat, Mari, and Kalmyk – to officially participate under the umbrella of Soviet literature.

When the Congress transformed the organizing committee structures into the Writers' Union, the exhibition similarly became a permanent collection. The organizing committee presidium resolved that it would, “Войти с ходатайством перед соответствующими организациями о превращении Выставки в постоянную Выставку художественной литературы.”<sup>190</sup> [Petition the responsible organizations to convert the exhibition to a permanent literary exhibition.] In its planning, belated opening, presentation of nationalities, and institutionalization, the exhibition echoed the larger process of the Congress itself.

### **On the Eve of the Congress**

By reiterating and condensing the years of organizing committee debates into its short planning period, the exhibition synthesized the forces shaping the Congress into a static and apparently stable portrait of Soviet literature. The Congress' form was more complex than that of the exhibition, but likewise emphasized Soviet literature's stability and inevitability. The diverse voices comprising the Soviet choir had been trained to sing in harmony, not polyphony. Yet to an ear trained by the plenum sessions and back-and-forth between the center and periphery, the national harmonies repeated discordant notes. The Congress collapsed the deliberate confusions of the organizing committee structures, the dominant issues from the plenums sessions, and the gap between Moscow and Baku into a synchronous performance of power and diversity.

Studying the organizing committee process allows for a deeper reading of the Congress proper. Its records recontextualize the Congress' reports and speeches, bringing underlying tensions to the surface of the text. The organizing committee was tasked with shepherding writers from RAPP and its opponents into a new, inclusive writers' union capable of representing the full flowering of Soviet literature. This task proved far more difficult than any of the organizers anticipated, not because RAPP was so deeply entwined in Soviet culture, but because they naively assumed that the bulk of the task lay in Moscow. The profoundly unequal development across the Soviet Union meant that Soviet literature, in its full form, encompassed both barely literate peoples struggling with massive shortages and evolved literary traditions that exceeded the Russian developmental model Moscow assumed. This made creating a writers' union that could represent Soviet literature as a whole, incorporating the breadth of national literatures, a monumental task. To fulfill the mandate, the organizing committee had to narrow its goals: national literatures were not expected to meet the same standards as Soviet Russian literature. They needed to produce two aspects that could stand in for the full span of a healthy literary culture: canons and cadres – the story and the storytellers. The organizing committee is thus a vital chapter in Soviet literature. It shows how Soviet literature came to take the form it did. The conflicts explain the dual status of Soviet national literatures as both equal and secondary, resulting in a Soviet literature that was both truly multinational and defined by its Russian branch. Soviet multinational literature was trapped between Moscow's limited expectations and the fierce desire and potential of national writers on the other. Viewed in Hegelian terms, the organizing committee was a dialectical process between Moscow's thesis and the periphery's antithesis. The Congress would display the resulting synthesis.

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<sup>189</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 135, l. 29.

<sup>190</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 1, d. 39, l. 20.

## NATIONAL LITERATURES AT THE CONGRESS

Далее, я считаю необходимым указать, что советская литература не является только литературой – русского языка, это – всесоюзная литература. Так как литературы братских нам республик, отличаясь от нас только языком, живут и работают при свете и под благотворным влиянием той же идеи, объединяющей весь раздробленный капитализмом мир трудящихся, – ясно, что мы не имеем права игнорировать литературное творчество национальностей только потому, что нас больше. Ценность искусства измеряется не количеством, а качеством. Если у нас в прошлом – гигант Пушкин, отсюда еще не значит, что армяне, грузины, татары, украинцы и прочие племена не способны дать величайших мастеров литературы, музыки, живописи, зодчества. Не следует забывать, что на всем пространстве Союза социалистических республик быстро развивается процесс возрождения всей массы трудового народа «к жизни честной – человеческой», к свободному творчеству новой истории, к творчеству социалистической культуры. Мы уже видим, что чем дальше вперед, тем более мощно этот процесс выявляет скрытые в 170-миллионной массе способности и таланты.

Further, I consider it essential to state that Soviet literature is not just literature in Russian, it is an all-Union literature. Since the literatures of our brother republics, differing from us only by language, live and work in light of and under the beneficial influence of the same idea that unites the entire world of workers crushed by capitalism, it is clear that we don't have the right to ignore national minorities' literary creation just because we are bigger. Art's value is measured in quality, not quantity. If we have in our past the giant Pushkin, that doesn't mean that the Armenians, Georgians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and other tribes are not capable of producing supreme masters of literature, music, painting, and architecture. One shouldn't forget that across the entire expanse of the Union of Socialist Republics, the process of the rebirth of the whole mass of working peoples, is quickly unfolding towards "an honest, human life," towards the free creation of a new history, towards the creation of socialist culture. We already see that the further it progresses, the more powerfully this process reveals the abilities and talents hidden in the mass of 170 million.

– Maxim Gorky<sup>1</sup>  
August 17, 1934

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<sup>1</sup> *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd sovetskikh pisatelei, 1934, 15. Hereafter, PVSSP.*

The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers opened the evening of August 17, 1934 in Moscow's central Hall of Columns. Around 580 delegates and a full hall of bureaucrats, writers, journalists, and labor heroes wildly applauded the chairman, Maxim Gorky, as he invoked Stalin's iron will and the vast population of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> After approving several administrative bodies, the Congress listened to Andrei Zhdanov's now famous speech, which heralded socialist realism as an official doctrine and canonized the phrases "engineers of human souls" and "reality in its revolutionary development." When Zhdanov finished, a standing ovation accompanied Gorky's return to the lectern.

Gorky's report on Soviet literature traced a cultural history starting from antiquity's Greek myths and fairytales about Vasilisa the Wise. For a report on Soviet literature, as Gorky himself noted, the speech spent very little time on Soviet literature. Those interested in Gorky's opinion on current writers could find it in his writings. Instead, Gorky's speech presented the dual failures of Western and Russian literature to represent labor, the class structure, and the path forward. He explicitly compared Russian literature's trajectory to that of Western literature with phrases like "Как и на Западе, наша литература" [Like in the West, our literature] and "русская литература, так же, как и западная" [Russian literature, just like Western].<sup>3</sup> Russian literature's influence on the West provided a further connection: Turgenev inspired Scandinavian writers; Tolstoy, French novelists; and Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and through him the fascists. Gorky singled out Dostoevsky, in particular, for his harmful influence on the pre-Revolutionary Russian intelligentsia. In contrast with what Russian literature had done, Gorky outlined what Soviet literature *needed* to do. So far, Soviet literature had not lived up to its promise, but it would. And by Soviet literature, Gorky continued, he meant all of Soviet literature: "советская литература не является только литературой – русского языка, это – всесоюзная литература."<sup>4</sup> [Soviet literature is not just literature in Russian, it is an all-Union literature.]

By concluding his chronology with all-Union literature, Gorky did not mean that national literatures were more advanced than Russian literature.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Russian culture had advanced Soviet literature so far that it could now embrace the national literatures. Backwardness, Gorky intimated, is no reason to disparage the national literatures because the acceleration of Soviet development means they too will attain Russian levels of achievement: "Если у нас в прошлом – гигант Пушкин, отсюда еще не значит, что армяне, грузины, татары, украинцы и прочие племена не способны дать величайших мастеров литературы..."<sup>6</sup> [If we have in our past the giant Pushkin, that doesn't mean that the Armenians, Georgians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and other tribes are not capable of producing supreme masters of literature.] Gorky's speech thus set Russian literature as the progressive outcome of world literature and the universal standard to which inherently specific national literatures should aspire.

Gorky's speech introduced the two main approaches to the national literatures: that they were equivalent to Russian literature, "отличаясь от нас только языком" [differing from us

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<sup>2</sup> The organizing committee authorized 570 delegates, but it is unclear exactly how many delegates ultimately attended. Even the Congress transcript gives conflicting numbers: 570 in the language and background tally, 582 in the nationality tally, 591 when counting by delegation, and 597 names. Not all of those named as delegates actually attended, and not all attendees turned in the requested information, but this makes it difficult to establish precisely how many delegates were present. When calculating nationality statistics, I use a combination of the national tallies and the delegation information.

<sup>3</sup> *PVSSP*, 10, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *PVSSP*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> As in previous chapters, I use the term "national" to designate Soviet cultures other than Russian.

<sup>6</sup> *PVSSP*, 15.



only in language] or that they were backward, hoping one day to produce their own giant Pushkin. The rest of the Congress undermined the first possibility by obscuring the linguistic difference, strengthening the second view. Gorky's inclusion further rested on exclusionary rhetoric. Although he reminded his audience of the need to acknowledge and embrace the national literatures, he did so using a "we" that excluded non-Russian writers:

Так как литературы *братских нам республик*, отличаясь от нас только языком, живут и работают при свете и под благотворным влиянием той же идеи, объединяющей весь раздробленный капитализмом мир трудящихся,— ясно, что *мы* не имеем права игнорировать литературное творчество нацменьшинств только потому, что *нас* больше. [...] Если у нас в прошлом — гигант Пушкин, отсюда не значит, что армяне, грузины, татары, украинцы и прочие племена не способны...<sup>7</sup>

Since the literatures of *our brother republics*, differing from us only by language, live and work in light of and under the beneficial influence of the same idea that unites the entire world of workers crushed by capitalism, it is clear that *we* don't have the right to ignore national minorities' literary creation just because *we* are bigger. [...] If *we have in our past the giant Pushkin*, that doesn't mean that the Armenians, Georgians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and other tribes are not capable...

Gorky's use of the first person plural made the central Russian position clear – he was speaking as a Russian to Russians, despite the majority of delegates and plurality of those present who were not Russian. Writers from the brother republics were not, ultimately, part of "us."

Several of Gorky's images reinforced the diminished portrait of national literatures. First, "нацменьшинство" [national minority] reduced the nominally independent territorial nationalities to a term that usually referred to non-titular nationalities within a territory. This suggested that, despite their vaunted self-governance, the republics were really little different from autonomous national territories within the RSFSR. Three of the four national groups he names had republic status, meaning they were officially nations, not nationalities, and the Tatars had more claim to republic status than many of the Central Asian nations granted it. Nevertheless, the phrase "и прочие племена" [and other tribes] reduced them to tribal equivalents, far below nations and nationalities in the Soviet hierarchy. Since tribes were differentiated from nationalities and nations on their level of cultural development, this suggested that the Armenians, Georgians, Tatars, and Ukrainians lacked national awareness and a national culture. Gorky argued that quality matters more than quantity, and thus Russians should not ignore the national literatures because they may some day produce something of quality. This assumption effectively erased the pre-Revolutionary national canons, which all of his named nationalities were shortly to present at the Congress. Describing national talents as "скрытые" [hidden] supported the idea that national literatures lie in the future, not the past. Gorky's speech established the dominant narrative for Soviet literature: "(Н)а всем пространстве Союза социалистических республик быстро развивается процесс возрождения всей массы трудового народа «к жизни честной — человеческой», к свободному творчеству новой истории, к творчеству социалистической культуры."<sup>8</sup> [...across the entire expanse of the Union of Socialist Republics, the process of rebirth is quickly

<sup>7</sup> *PVSSP*, 15. Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> *PVSSP*, 15.

unfurling for the whole mass of working peoples, towards “an honest, human life,” towards the free creation of a new history, towards the creation of socialist culture.] In other words, social liberation leads to national development leads to literary achievement.

The developmentalist narrative plausibly accounted for most of the national literatures represented at the Congress, but a minority of the national delegates. The Congress represented almost fifty nationalities, but well over half of those delegates came from just nine national literatures.<sup>9</sup> Not coincidentally, most of the latter had pre-Revolutionary literary traditions, if not always in their new national language. In several notable cases, those traditions spanned back centuries before the Slavs even had an alphabet. Gorky’s speech collapsed even the more venerable national literatures into a developmentalist narrative that explicitly denied their traditions.

This chapter follows how the national literatures presented themselves individually and collectively at the Congress. The first section discusses the form of the Congress and how it affected its various audiences. The second section considers the national reports as a collective genre and as individual opportunities to advance national claims. The third section analyzes the national performances throughout the Congress, as well as Russian references to the national literatures, to extrapolate the definition and role of national literatures at the Congress. This allows the conclusion to investigate the Congress’ discursive boundaries and suggest ways of interpreting the new union’s mandates within that framework.

### **Why Hold a Congress?**

The Orghuro resolution implementing the literary reorganization called for a congress to celebrate founding the new writers’ union. State spectacles were one of the fundamental ways Soviet power was performed, spread, and reconfirmed. In *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, Petrone connects the form of Soviet parades and celebrations to socialist realism, arguing that Soviet officials used the discourse of celebration to convey popular support to both the leaders and the population. “The main vehicles for teaching the population what it meant to be ‘Soviet’ in the 1930s were the political activities surrounding celebrations.”<sup>10</sup> Literature was also a “main vehicle” for this purpose, but its reliance on performance to reach a broader audience supports Petrone’s claim. Even for other didactic methods, like texts, celebrating was key to teaching the Soviet population. Nothing as important as the new writers’ union could start with a mere whimper.

Congresses were reserved for formal institutions, as opposed to other state celebrations like jubilees, holidays, events commemorating technological or production successes, and the *dekady* (ten-day festivals) publicizing national cultures. Although the choice of a congress feels over-determined by its historical context, it is at least conceivable that the event designating the new writers’ union could have taken another form: a literary evening in a theater, an academic or creative conference with multiple sessions running simultaneously, a festival with multiple

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<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this calculation, I excluded Jewish writers writing in Russian from the “national” category and only included the 24 Jewish writers writing in Yiddish. The nine national literatures to which I here refer are (in order of number of delegates) Georgian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Armenian, Tatar, Belorussian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, and Tajik. The Writers’ Union lists 52 nationalities, including Russian, but that also includes foreign writers living in Moscow like Lahuti, who is listed as Persian, as well as Italian and Hungarian writers. One Albanian is listed as part of the Azerbaijani delegation, but the man in question, Ahmed Trinich, was an Albanian Turk (as opposed to an Azerbaijani ‘Tiirk’) who wrote in Turkic/Turkish and was affiliated with Azerbaijani literature, not Albanian. Thus, a more accurate number of Soviet nationalities is 47.

<sup>10</sup> Petrone, *Life Is More Joyous, Comrades*, 6.

displays (including writers writing!) and literary readings, or a brief public ceremony presided over by Stalin himself. Choosing the format of a congress reflected a particular vision of Soviet literature. The congress as a genre established certain formal elements for the event (chair, delegates, speeches, voting), guided the expected outcomes of ostensibly free debate (resolutions, elected representatives, commissions), and suggested the venue. It distinguished between the levels of engagement required of speakers, voting and non-voting delegates, and guests in a way that other event genres would not. A festival or conference would have offered more opportunities for different levels to interact, for example, thus evening out the hierarchy, while a staged event with Stalin would have heightened the differences between the speakers and their audience. The Congress established that the fundamental model for the writers' union was an institution that combined a rigid hierarchy with debate and putatively egalitarian principles and goals: the Party.

The Seventeenth Party Congress, held January 26 to February 10, 1934, was proclaimed the "Congress of Victors" because it celebrated the victory of socialism. It lasted almost the same span of time as the Congress of Soviet Writers and blanketed the public with its exemplary speeches and congratulations. Fedor Panferov, one of the organizing committee members, spoke at the Seventeenth Party Congress to call for more kolkhoz literature. As Jeffrey Brooks phrased it, "The writers met in the lull between the Seventeenth Party Congress [...] and the assassination of Sergei Kirov in December."<sup>11</sup> During that lull, the Party Congress set the tone. Like the Party Congress, the Congress of Soviet Writers featured prominent Party representatives, international figures, and Soviet heroes. At the writers' Congress, the polar explorer Otto Shmidt served as a representative and outstanding member of the reading public, an ordinary reader whose commitment to Communist achievement made him extraordinary.<sup>12</sup> His presence connected the writers' Congress to ongoing Soviet narratives and current newspaper headlines. Telegrams to and from the Congress further reinforced its sense of immediacy, making the Congress a living event with a deliberative body whose debates fueled action.

Like many modes of public performance, the Congress relied on scripted authenticity. Mass coverage of the Party Congress and participants' experience at that and other congresses meant that every delegate, invited speaker, guest, and observer knew how to be at the Congress. Strict generic and discursive parameters governed their participation. Their speech – both at the podium and in the aisles – was well rehearsed, covered familiar topics, and evoked familiar phrases. The purportedly spontaneous acts were, if anything, more predictable than speeches read from carefully prepared notes. Wild applause followed expected cues. Joyful paeans rang out to Stalin, Gorky, and the Soviet Union capable of producing such a writers' union. The Congress' length furthered its effulgence. The melange of voices ran the spectrum from classical literary allusions to high ideological pedantry to gentle jokes at each other's expense to the stray reference to bestiality. Young pioneers, kolkhoz workers, transportation engineers, related artists, heroes of the Revolution, and a survivor of the Paris Commune entered the hall to add their greetings, congratulations, and bouquets. Within the planned spontaneity, however, the Congress' main surprises came from scheduled speakers, not impromptu bursts from the audience.

The Congress was structured to cover the chief issues of Soviet literature, introducing each topic with an official report (or reports), followed by a series of speeches that constituted

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<sup>11</sup> Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, 106. Kirov was the head of the Leningrad Communist Party; his death was the official justification for extensive Party purges, persecution, and executions.

<sup>12</sup> See Petrone, *Life Is More Joyous, Comrades*, 48 and 65-71, for a longer discussion of Shmidt's symbolism.

“discussion” on the topic, and concluding with a resolution praising the official report. The topics thus covered were, in order: the state of Soviet literature as a whole (including specifically the national literatures and children’s literature), international literature, drama, poetry, young writers, and the composition of the new writers’ union. These topics spanned several sessions – twenty-six in all, spread out over fifteen days of meetings. In addition to these meetings, communal meals, lodging, and excursions to sights like the metro excavations and the airport kept writers occupied and in the public eye.

If you exclude the Party speakers – Zhdanov, Karl Radek, and Nikolai Bukharin – the Congress talks were fairly evenly divided between Moscow writers and writers from outside the capital. Of course, it was hardly coincidence that the Party voices came from the center of power, but the overall balance is significant. The overall array of voices within the Congress discussions needed to reflect the span of Soviet literature as a whole.

The Congress’ two-week duration likewise allowed it to address the official position on numerous topics, while projecting the apparent possibility of meaningful dissent. Yurii Olesha’s and Isaac Babel’s often cited and more often condemned speeches granted the Congress validity as a space for debate, while the enormity of what remained unsayable restricted the range of that debate so tightly as to make it essentially meaningless. It thus clarified official policy on Soviet literature and registered positions only one or two degrees off course as dangerous. Not only did the form of the Congress allow for different roles, its duration ensured each of these roles had its public moments. Almost 250 different speakers represented themselves, their delegations, nationalities, countries, genres, readers, workers, and the Party. The Congress unanimously approved the union’s statutes and organs, passed resolutions commending various speakers, sent greetings to Stalin and Defense Commissar Kliment Voroshilov, and called for the liberation of German communist leader Ernst Thälmann. This all passed on the central stage with delegates responsible, at least in principle, for voting for or against any given speaker or resolution. The Congress’ form created a surplus of information and activity to match any shock brigade’s output.

Throughout the Congress, three modes of performance operated simultaneously. The Congress was, as a whole and at every moment, an act of communication, ritual, and proclamation. As communication, it presented new and received information about writers, literatures, Soviet identities, and the form and function of the new union. This communication may have been *less* important than the other modes of performance, but it was not *unimportant*. Individual pieces of information mattered to different speakers or sectors of the audience, although frequently not to the entire audience. Ritual is a form of performance with a largely self-contained audience that serves to bind a community and enact cultural values. The Congress created the Writers’ Union through the ritualized performance of the speakers, delegates, and Party representatives. In this sense, it operated similarly to a religious service with worshipers, clergy, and a frequently invoked god (Stalin) and prophet (Gorky). From this perspective, the organizing committee plenums can be seen as heightening the ritual’s gravity through repeated invocations and procedures. Because rituals gain significance through cultural heritage, they are not lightly invented. The choice of the congress genre greatly strengthened the event’s power as ritual by connecting it to Party symbols and rites. This helped convey the authority necessary for this performance to qualify as proclamation, an utterance that makes something so by performing it. The Congress proclaimed socialist realism, proclaimed the new union, and proclaimed a multinational Soviet literature through its diverse speakers.

All of these modes are didactic, but they have different relations to the utterances' meanings and affect different audiences. The ritual aspect of the Congress projected a self-contained and authoritative audience, while the communicative aspect was aimed at a broad external audience. Speeches were reprinted and reported in the mass press. Speakers wove together messages aimed at higher levels of the hierarchy (at the organizing committee, the Party, and Stalin himself), at their present peers, at their readership, at the world (as represented by the international delegates) and occasionally at specific individuals. Their speeches projected an assumed audience, once which all too often subtly excluded the national writers and readers the Congress ostensibly represented. The friendly "we" which speakers used to include their audience frequently invoked a Russian collective, as it did in Gorky's opening speech. The shared experience was presumed to be Russian. National speeches addressed a more complex audience, because the collective was fragmented. Most national speeches explicitly addressed a somewhat indifferent Russian audience, a multinational Soviet audience sympathetic to their goals but unfamiliar with their national specificity, and a national audience eager to see themselves represented on the all-Union stage. The first needed convincing, the second information, and the third created a sense of responsibility and expectation.

Trouble occasionally resulted from messages intended for cross audiences. The national writers were particularly prone to this, as for some reason they refused to accept that Russian writers were speaking to a Russian audience, instead of the Soviet one in which they were properly included. This conflict, of course, vastly predated the Congress. Between national reports on the first full day of the Congress, a guest brought the Congress greetings from the Lapp reindeer herders on the Kol'skii Peninsula. He praised Russian writers for tackling Lapland as a subject, but warned, "Писатели за последнее время много пишут о саамах, об их хозяйстве и быте. [...] Очень хорошо, что пишут, но нехорошо то, что пишут очень поверхностно, из-за чего иногда получается нелепость." [Writers recently are writing a lot about the Lapps and their subsistence lifestyle. It's good, that they are writing, but not so good that they are writing very superficially, with sometimes absurd results.] These results were too often tainted by outmoded stereotypes. The speaker Gerasimov provided a recent example, by an explorer named Lebedev, who described his first day in a Lapp camp, "Тут я увидел, что с лопарями нужно говорить очень медленно, они живут с оленями и собаками и совсем иначе движутся и говорят, чем мы, живущие в городе." [Here I learned, that you must speak very slowly with the Lapps, they live with reindeer and dogs and move and speak totally differently than we do, living in the city.] Chided Gerasimov, "Не так нужно писать, т. Лебедев!"<sup>13</sup> [That's not how you should write, comrade Lebedev!] Lebedev's depiction, he concluded, erred in treating the Lapps as the backward background for Soviet progress, rather than as a progressive force in their own right. While this message was considered unexceptional to the Russian audience, the Lapps justifiably bristled at its implications.

Saken Seifullin, a Kazakh poet, went still further: "Те же русские писатели и поэты, кто и занимаются показом быта национальностей, видно они не изучают всерьез жизнь народов СССР. Не изучая и не зная народов СССР, они выдают выдуманное ими за реальное, выдуманные, ложные типы выдают за реальных людей нашей эпохи."<sup>14</sup> [The very same Russian writers and poets who engage in showing national *byt*, evidently don't study the life of Soviet peoples seriously. Neither studying nor knowing the peoples of the USSR, they present their inventions as if they were real, present false stereotypes as if they were real people

<sup>13</sup> *PVSSP*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> *PVSSP*, 606.

of our era.] Seifullin gave several examples of works that misrepresented Central Asian cultures, including works by Vsevolod Ivanov, Viktor Shklovskii, and Aleksandr Afinogenov. Both Ivanov and Shklovskii, he charged, knew so little of geography that they confused Kazakhs and Kyrgyz in their works, while Afinogenov's Kazakh student character was ridiculous.<sup>15</sup> “Все это доказывает, что писатели и поэты, не знающие языка наших национальностей, безответственно пишут о них. И эти свои писания преподносят русскому читателю как подлинное, художественно-реалистическое изображение жизни.”<sup>16</sup> [All of this shows that writers and poets who don't know the language of our nationalities, irresponsibly write about them. And they offer their writings to the Russian reader as an authentic, artistically realistic reflection of life.]

Even those supporting national writers could fall into the trap of treating them as somehow slower than the Russian standard. The following day, the Iranian revolutionary poet Lahuti gave the report on Tajik literature. Although he shared Gerasimov's viewpoint that literature on the nationalities needed to show the wonderful progress of Sovietization, his depiction of Tajik life echoed Lebedev's portrait of the Lapps. In Tajikistan, Lahuti reported, “Люди, которые привыкли медленно ходить, медленно говорить, медленно думать, теперь не могут не быть захвачены общим могучим потоком строительства; они быстрее зажили, быстрее задвигались, быстрее стали ориентироваться.”<sup>17</sup> [People, who were accustomed to walking slowly, speaking slowly, thinking slowly, now can't help but be caught up by the powerful flood of construction; they've started living faster, moving faster, and getting oriented faster.] The faster someone spoke, by implication, the more modern and Soviet he was. Since national delegates understandably had more difficulties with their speeches at the Congress, frequently using slower and heavily accented Russian, Lahuti's equation between slow-speaking and thus slow-thinking nationals was particularly painful. Lahuti, who had been living in Moscow off and on since 1922, represented a major world literature. Although he spoke on behalf of the Tajiks as a self-confessed admirer, his unintentional bias aptly reveals the too common opinion of his fellow Muscovites. Zhdanov sent Stalin an update during the Congress in which he lauded the writers' progress after a rocky start: “В первые 2 дня были серьезные опасения за съезд. Это было когда шли доклады по первому вопросу. Поскольку они путались, народ бродил по коридорам.”<sup>18</sup> [For the first two days there were serious concerns for the congress. This was when the reports were being delivered on the first item. As long as they were being read, people wandered through the corridors.] The first two days which failed to capture the people's interest were, of course, those devoted to national reports.

These days similarly failed to capture Western scholars' interest when they studied the Congress. Most studies of socialist realism have ignored the national literatures entirely. Régine Robin is a notable exception to this trend. Her *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic* analyzes the national question at the Congress, especially with respect to literary language. She sees the national and Soviet in opposition, represented by the periphery and the center respectively. I would suggest that Soviet identity is produced through the national dialogues with the center, rather than produced in Moscow and shipped out to the republics. In taking the latter view, Robin ultimately sides with Moscow's perspective.<sup>19</sup> In his otherwise commendable

<sup>15</sup> *PVSSP*, 606-7.

<sup>16</sup> *PVSSP*, 607.

<sup>17</sup> *PVSSP*, 142.

<sup>18</sup> RGAPSI f. 77, op. 3, d. 112, l. 2. Translated in *Soviet Culture and Power*, 166.

<sup>19</sup> Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic*, 31-36.

article “Socialist Realism in Pravda: Read All about It!” Brooks treats the national literatures as a distraction from Soviet literature proper, claiming “Journalists also undercut literature as an autonomous occupation by depicting obsequious non-Russian writers at the congress.” He complains that “*Pravda* gave non-Russians 20 percent of the articles and 12 percent of the space, and *Izvestiia* also featured them prominently,” although he acknowledges in a footnote that this was roughly proportionate to their time at the podium and far less than their percentage of delegates. In Brooks’ reading, *Pravda*’s abridged editions of the national reports portrayed the national writers “as artists who incorporated their national identities in themselves rather than in their works or literary resonance with any audience.”<sup>20</sup> Brooks quotes Suleiman Stal’skii, Oraz Tash-Nazarov, and Mikhail Klimkovich praising Stalin in order to conclude, “*Pravda*’s portrayal of such figures served to diminish all the arts.”<sup>21</sup>

Aesthetic evaluations are notoriously subjective and thus especially vulnerable to confirmation bias. As discussed in chapter 1, scholars have found productive and insightful ways to approach socialist realism without denying its less appealing aspects. While the national reports are not inherently scintillating throughout, nor are they noticeably worse than other, heavily studied parts of the Congress. The writers in the Hall of Columns had no equivalent problem remaining focused on Radek’s report on “Contemporary World Literature and the Tasks of Proletarian Art” (which likewise escaped Brooks’ scorn), nor in politely welcoming the workers from the Moscow metro. If *Pravda*’s portrayal of national writers “served to diminish all the arts,” the rest of the Congress served them little better. Zhdanov’s letter suggests that most of the Russians in the audience were prepared to tolerate the national literatures, not to listen to them. Accordingly, they found little of value in the national reports. But this does not mean that there *was* little to value in these reports, merely that they had – and have long since continued to have – an indifferent audience.

To find the interesting moments in the national reports, we must begin from the premise that the reports *are* interesting. This section will summarize material readily available to Russian and Western scholars, because unfortunately few of them have taken advantage of that availability. Scholars made the major Russian speeches part of the English-language record decades ago, but this project needs to synthesize the approaches of multiple generations of scholarship to insert the national reports into the same canon. I believe the results will prove worth the attention.

### **The Tractor and the Nightingale**

Unlike Soviet Russian literature, Soviet national literatures had to prove both elements of their identity. The national reports, which took up most of those first two full days, elaborated the difficulties of this task. Lahuti related an anecdote in his report on Tajik literature that illustrates what happened when Tajik writers tried adapting their familiar literary traditions to Soviet discourse:

Вы знаете, что соловей на Востоке есть символ неги, лени. Соловья там слушают, наевшись плова и растянувшись на коврах в тени деревьев, пока не уснут. Трактор, как вам известно, есть нечто совершенно противоположное. Между тем один из наших писателей пишет: «Собирая хлопок, я слушал звуки трактора, нашего дорогого трактора, советского орудия

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<sup>20</sup> Brooks, “Socialist Realism in Pravda: Read All about It!” 984.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 985.

производства; он звучал в моих ушах как голос соловья, и мне было так приятно, так сладко, что я забылся сном».

Возможно ли, чтобы советские хлопкоробы спали под соловьиный звук трактора? Думаю, что нет.

Итак, таджикским писателям нужна учеба; упорная учеба.<sup>22</sup>

You know that in the East, the nightingale is a symbol of ease and laziness. After satiating themselves with pilaf, they stretch out on carpets in the trees' shade and listen to nightingales until they fall asleep. The tractor, as you well know, is something completely opposite. And yet, one of our writers writes: "Gathering cotton, I heard the sound of a tractor, our dear tractor, the Soviet weapon of production; it sounded in my ears like the voice of the nightingale, and it was so pleasant, so sweet, that I lost myself in sleep."

It is possible that Soviet cotton workers sleep under the nightingale sound of the tractor? I think not.

And so, Tajik writers need training, persistent training.

If the Russian production novel can be summarized as "boy meets tractor," the Tajik kolkhoz lyric thus becomes "tractor meets nightingale."<sup>23</sup> Like many socialist realist attempts, the collision frequently destroyed one or the other (and when in doubt, bet on the tractor). However, occasionally the music they produced together was enchanting. The national reports presented an array of variations on this theme (border guard meets tractor, boy meets oil derrick, the tractor unveiled) within a canonical teleology.

The national presence at the Congress was extensive. Sixty-five percent of the delegates were recognized as members of Soviet nationalities. Of the 591 delegates counted in the delegations: Moscow sent 175 (30%), Leningrad sent 45 (7.6%), 200 came from the rest of the RSFSR (34%), and 171 came from the other republics (30%). Since the regional RSFSR delegates included 69 Russians (11.7%) and 131 national representatives (22%), this meant that there were four roughly equivalent groups: Moscow writers, Russian writers from outside Moscow, RSFSR national writers, and writers from the republics.

Those proportions were established quite late in the process. Less than a month before the Congress, Stetskii reported to Zhdanov that the organizing committee had just doubled the republics' quotas, bringing, for example, Georgia from six to twelve delegates. This increased the overall ranks to 500 delegates.<sup>24</sup> Most of the subsequent increase went to the republics, with Georgia now bringing 30 delegates, of which 22 voted. Ukraine sent 42, Belorussia sent 27, Armenia – 18, Azerbaijan – 17, Uzbekistan – 16, Turkmenistan – 7, and Tajikistan – 14. Not all of those delegates were national writers, of course, but the vast majority were. Ten Russian delegates came from the republics, as compared to 31 members of the Moscow delegation who wrote in languages other than Russian. (These are not precisely equal categories, but this imbalance accommodates the substantial number of Russian-language writers in Moscow who were identified as Jewish nationals.)

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<sup>22</sup> *PVSSP*, 144.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, "‘Boy Gets Tractor’ and All That: The Parable Structure of the Soviet Novel," in *Russian and Slavic Literature* (Edited by Richard Freeborn, R.R. Milner Gulland, and Charles Ward. Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1977), 359-75. Later used in *The Soviet Novel*, 183.

<sup>24</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 120, d. 127, l. 5. July 23, 1934.



The national reports advanced individual and national specificity through a discourse that used rhetorical sleight-of-hand to replace logical connections, fit an astonishing variety of histories into a standardized narrative, and cited Lenin and Stalin to justify their right to be speaking at all. The reports' praise for Soviet brotherhood and Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy, as well as frequent use of the slogan "national in form, socialist in content," was more than ritualistic; national writers had good reason to believe in these concepts. The education and production statistics they cited are common to the Stalinist speech as a genre, but they also reflected meaningful gains for the republics in question. Their enthusiasm for the accepted logic of their new literary histories was less convincing, particularly for those nationalities with literary antiquities. The basic narrative to which national literary histories needed to conform was Russian-based, but whereas the Russian version included pre-Revolutionary revolutionary writers, the national versions tended to highlight Russian intervention and salvation.

Most reports shared an underlying circular logic. They used the nation's status and development to justify the importance of its literature, then used that literature to justify national status. The acceptable history moved from colonial oppression to Revolutionary revelation, with new socialist fervor complicated by various mis-APPs, all corrected and redirected by the April 23, 1932 resolution to bring about the current flowering of national culture, which needs only better critics and more topically-oriented works to fulfill the Union's plan. To fit diverse literary traditions to this model, the national reports tended to rely heavily on juxtaposition to imply causation. Almost any work published after April 23, 1932 could be directly attributed to the resolution's influence. While it obviously affected writers' lives and material conditions, the resolution's direct effect on literary works was, at best, tenuous. But since the Congress' audiences could be relied upon not to question the relationship, most of the speeches merely juxtaposed the date with a statement about the improved quality, quantity, or mere existence of new works.

Literary quotation, not surprisingly, focused on poetic excerpts. Less predictably, the reports spent almost as much time quoting unacceptable writers as acceptable ones. The Ukrainian poet Ivan Kulik only quoted enemy writers in his report on Ukrainian literature, while others balanced their citations more. "Bad" quotation gave a speaker someone to argue against, thus structuring his rhetoric for an audience that loudly agreed with his defense of Soviet achievement. Quoting positive examples, on the other hand, risked underwhelming the audience and weakening that argument. Only one of the national reports, Malakiia Toroshelidze's survey of Georgian literature, engaged in what could properly be called literary analysis. The rest gave the critical verdicts with little evidence supporting those positions.

### **National Specificity**

The national reports functioned as introductory lectures on the major Soviet literatures other than Russian, with shorter speeches throughout the rest of the Congress providing similar information for an array of smaller literatures. What determined the literature's status as major or minor, of course, was the nationality's status within the Soviet Union. The republic-level nationalities were joined in their reports by the RSFSR Tatars, who had "earned" this privilege via the Order of Lenin. The report order was predictable, as it followed the Soviet discursive convention of moving from West to East. The reports began with Ukraine and Belorussia, then Tatarstan, the Transcaucasian republics, and finally Central Asia. Grouping the reports regionally avoided explicitly ranking them by importance, although it still implied a hierarchy, and it emphasized territorial identity over common literary tasks. Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, for example, faced

similar issues with a literary canon in non-national languages, while Belorussia might have been more productively paired with the other more recent literatures. Because most Soviet discussions of the nationalities followed the same geographic order, however, this choice felt neutral, while any other arrangement would have been marked.

### *Ukraine*

Like most of those delivering the national reports, Kulik was a member of the All-Union Organizing Committee and had thus spent two years delivering various aspects of this report to a Moscow audience. Kulik began his report, however, by responding to an immediate concern: Gorky's comment that Soviet literature was all-Union literature. Although he skipped the sentence about literature being measured by quality, not quantity, his quote was fairly accurate. Kulik repeated Gorky's line that the Armenians, Georgians, Tatars, and Ukrainians could also produce masters, but omitted the phrase "и прочие племена" [and other tribes], suggesting that he disagreed with that characterization.<sup>25</sup> Once finished with Gorky's magnanimous proclamation, however, Kulik responded on behalf of all the national literatures: "[Д]аже до Октябрьской революции, в условиях ужасающего национального гнета, эти народы сумели все-таки выдвинуть ряд крупнейших имен, крупнейших творцов, мастеров художественной литературы, произведения которых вошли в сокровищницу литературы всемирной."<sup>26</sup> [Even before the October revolution, under the conditions of the terrible national yoke, these peoples still managed to bring forth a host of powerful names, powerful creators, masters of literature, whose works entered the treasury of world literature.] In other words, Gorky's predictions of the glorious future for the national literatures had, for at least some of them, already come true. Georgian literature had obviously reached this level, Kulik explained, while Ukrainian was following the same path. In fact, the bourgeois nationalists were trying to co-opt the national literatures precisely *because* these masters of literature were so influential. Literature matters more when society has few other venues for self-expression. As the Ukrainian poet Malaniuk, admittedly a "поэт-фашист, эмигрант," said, "Когда у нации нет вождей, ее вождями становятся поэты."<sup>27</sup> [The Ukrainian poet-fascist emigrant Malaniuk, says..., 'When a nation has no leaders, poets become her leaders.'] These two positions sum up the national reports: national literatures deserved world recognition, and frequently already had it, and they were uniquely positioned to represent their nations.

Although every nation develops along a similar path, Kulik maintained, it does so in its own way. For Ukraine, that way was paved with enemies. The Ukrainian report spent far more time attacking bourgeois nationalist writers outside Soviet Ukraine and counter-revolutionary writers within, than it did describing acceptable Soviet Ukrainian literature. These enemies, explained Kulik, insisted on defining Ukraine in opposition to Russia, rather than in harmony

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<sup>25</sup> *PVSSP*, 39.

<sup>26</sup> *PVSSP*, 39. The Armenian writer Bakunts later added another layer to this defense, returning yet again to Gorky's image: "Многие выступавшие приводили имена гигантов прошлой национальной культуры. Но я хочу сказать по поводу этого следующее: в бывшей тюрьме народов, в старой царской России, перечисленные выше народы не дали и не могли дать таких гигантов, как Пушкин. В годы расцвета Пушкина на окраинах империи еще грохотали пушки усмирительных экспедиции." [Many speakers have brought forth the names of giants of the national cultural past. But I want to say the following on this matter: in the former prison of people, in old tsarist Russia, the peoples enumerated earlier did not produce and could not produce giants like Pushkin. During the years Pushkin flourished, the guns of pacification expeditions were still thundering on the empire's borders.] Those peoples weren't just behind, Bakunts suggested, they were delayed – by the Russian Empire. (*PVSSP*, 213.)

<sup>27</sup> *PVSSP*, 39.

with Russian support. They appropriated apparently literary positions as fronts for insidious political positions: “На Украине формализм особенно часто является ширмой для протаскивания враждебной нам националистической идеологии.”<sup>28</sup> [In the Ukraine, formalism especially often turns out to be a cover for dragging in enemy nationalist ideology.] Even the April 23 resolution, Kulik reported, didn’t fix Ukrainian literature. “Почему? Да потому, что нам мешала вредительская работа контрреволюционеров, националистов, двурушников, петлюровцев...”<sup>29</sup> [Why? Because of interference from the wrecking of counter-revolutionaries, nationalists, double-dealers, Petliurovists...] The main fields for this battle, however, were Ukraine’s literary legacy and literary language. Kulik described Taras Shevchenko as the Ukrainian equivalent of Nikolai Chernyshevskii or Nikolai Dobroliubov – a progressive thinker with considerable literary talent and influence over Russian and Belorussian literature. The nationalists had attempted to misrepresent him as an enemy of the revolution because he was not a committed Marxist.<sup>30</sup> They used this unfair standard to appropriate Shevchenko’s legacy away from Soviet Ukrainian literature with the hope that contemporary writers and readers would follow. Second, the nationalists worked to pervert the Ukrainian language, distancing it from Russian and from the Ukrainian workers in order to seize control. Shevchenko was key to this battle, too, as he codified literary Ukrainian. “Я считаю, что Шевченко сыграл в создании украинского литературного языка не меньшую роль, чем Пушкин в создании русского литературного языка, а возможно, что и большую.”<sup>31</sup> [I believe that Shevchenko played no smaller a role in the creation of the Ukrainian literary language, than Pushkin in the creation of a Russian literary language, and perhaps a greater one.] Yet despite this serious opposition, Soviet Ukrainian literature was triumphing. Kulik cited a cluster of successful poetic works, the conversion of older writers after the April 23 resolution, and progress among the Russian and Yiddish writers within Ukraine. He concluded his speech with Lenin’s call for unity between the Great Russians and Ukrainians.

### ***Belorussia***

Although many of the issues facing Belorussia were similar to those in Ukraine, the Belorussian report focused more on the republic’s general cultural development. After introducing and quoting Yanka Kupala on pre-Revolutionary poverty, Klimkovich reviewed Belorussia’s progress: from 80% illiteracy to nineteen institutions of higher education, 81 technical schools, and 37 scientific institutes; from a tiny proletariat oppressed by landowners to a tenfold increase in production. Literature grew apace, from barely ten writers before the Revolution, all of whom were corrupted by nationalist tendencies, to 69 members and 26 candidates for the new union.<sup>32</sup>

Like Ukraine, Belorussia needed to replace its Western focus with an orientation “на пролетарскую Москву” [on proletarian Moscow].<sup>33</sup> Where Kulik defined Ukrainian through its struggle to overcome anti-Moscow nationalism and class enemies, however, Klimkovich instead emphasized the parallels with other Soviet nationalities. Belorussian literature was “часть союзной литературы, ибо она создавалась, росла и крепла в тесном единении с литературами братских республик”<sup>34</sup> [a part of Union literature, for it was created, grew, and

<sup>28</sup> *PVSSP*, 47.

<sup>29</sup> *PVSSP*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> *PVSSP*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> *PVSSP*, 49.

<sup>32</sup> *PVSSP*, 51, 56.

<sup>33</sup> *PVSSP*, 54.

<sup>34</sup> *PVSSP*, 50.

grew strong in close unity with the literatures of brother republics]. BelAPP's missteps "были общими для всех воапских организаций"<sup>35</sup> [were common for all of the VOAPP organizations], while the work of the new writers union members "должно стать на уровне всей всесоюзной литературы."<sup>36</sup> [needs to be on the level of all the all-Union literature] If Ukrainian literature aimed to join Georgian at the level of world literature, Belorussian literature would settle for meeting it at the all-Union level. Klimkovich closed his report with a poem by Aleksandrovich expressing this goal:

Заботливо смотрит садовник за садом.  
Так наша страна в свою ясную рань  
Поддержкою крепла, вниманием богатым  
Всех братских народов, всех братских стран.  
И лишь потому на вершины мы встали,  
Что сердцем единым мы мощно росли,  
А сердце могучее нашей земли –  
Родной наш, любимый наш Сталин.<sup>37</sup>

The gardener carefully watches over the garden.  
Thus our country in its clear, early hour  
Is strong with the support and full attention  
Of all fraternal peoples, of all fraternal countries.  
And we have only risen to the heights,  
Because we have grown mightily with a united heart  
And the powerful heart of our land –  
Is our native, our beloved Stalin.

### ***Tatarstan***

The Order of Lenin earned the Tatars their place at the Congress as the only RSFSR nationality to give a national report. Kavi Najmi's report celebrated Tatarstan's achievements while hewing closely to the prescribed narrative for Soviet nationalities. The Tatar report told a story of suffering under the double yoke of national/religious backwardness and tsarist oppression, followed by Soviet liberation, glorious industrialization, and latinization. In a twist on the familiar description of Russian as the language of the Revolution, Najmi praised Tatar's "латинизированный алфавит, который известен нам как алфавит Октября."<sup>38</sup> [the Latinized alphabet, which is known to us as the October alphabet.] Pre-Revolutionary writers suffered from repressive publishing conditions and bourgeois nationalist tendencies. Unlike the Ukrainian and Belorussian examples, however, Tatar bourgeois nationalist writers apparently relied heavily on religious identity, which the old alphabet only exacerbated. Instead of the opposition "Russian-national," Tatar writers used the opposition "Russian-Muslim."

Educational progress, Najmi explained, was essential to overcoming this problem. When the village Kutlishkino, for example, was ruled by Gaiaz Iskhakov, "был один грамотный человек – мулла, теперь же 70% колхозников стали грамотными... Во времена Гаяза Исхакова в Кутлишкине только мулла читал газеты, теперь же колхозники выписывают

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<sup>35</sup> *PVSSP*, 52.

<sup>36</sup> *PVSSP*, 57.

<sup>37</sup> *PVSSP*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> *PVSSP*, 67.

112 газет.” [there was one literate person – the mullah, but now 70% of the kolkhoz workers are literate.... In the time of Gaiiaz Iskhakov, in Kutlishkino only the mullah read newspapers, but now the kolkhoz workers subscribe to 112 newspapers.] These strides created a readership for Soviet literature: “Во времена Гаяза Исхакова татарские трудящиеся массы имели лишь одну «литературу» – молитвенники, теперь же на полках колхозников мы видим уже классиков, произведения А.М. Горького, произведения крупных представителей советской литературы.”<sup>39</sup> [In the time of Gaiiaz Iskhakov the Tatar working masses had only one ‘literature’ – prayer books, but now on the kolkhoz workers’ shelves we can see classics, the works of Gorky, and works by the great representatives of Soviet literature.] This education extended across Tataria in the form of universities and technical schools, schools for factory and kolkhoz workers, and over 300 libraries. Although there were still nationalist holdouts, Soviet Tatar writers were making great strides in genres from drama to the construction novel to children’s literature.

### *Georgia*

Toroshelidze’s report on Georgian literature stood out in several respects, not least of which is its length. Toroshelidze gave the longest talk of any at the Congress, speaking over twice as long as any of the other national reports.<sup>40</sup> This granted him the time to engage in actual literary analysis of selected works, most of them pre-Revolutionary by centuries. Without denying the dominant narrative for nationalities, Toroshelidze forestalled it with Georgian literature’s antiquity:

Древнюю грузинскую литературу ни в коем случае нельзя отнести к числу малых литератур провинциального, узко местного масштаба, она с правом должна быть причислена к рангу больших литератур. [...] Мало того. Древнегрузинская литература представляет в известной мере уникальное явление и счастливое исключение из цикла основных литератур средневекового христианского мира в том отношении, что в Грузии получила блестящее развитие чисто светская изящная литература.”<sup>41</sup>

Classical Georgian literature cannot under any circumstances be consigned to the number of minor literatures on a provincial, narrow, local scale; it must rightfully be counted among the rank of major literatures. [...] But that’s not all. Classical Georgian literature is, to some extent, a unique phenomenon and happy exception to the cycle of the main medieval Christian literatures in the sense that a refined, purely secular literature developed brilliantly in Georgia.

Georgian literature is thus not only older than Russian literature by centuries, it prevailed through conditions that withered Greek literature on the vine.

In one of the few instances of prolonged literary analysis at the Congress, Toroshelidze introduced as evidence Shota Rustaveli’s twelfth or thirteenth century masterpiece, “The Knight in Panther Skin.” Toroshelidze presented the poem’s complex meter, its sound patterns, and its thematics to argue that it built upon both Eastern and Western influences. “Так поэма Руставели, связанная глубокими корнями с Востоком, одновременно выявляет

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<sup>39</sup> *PVSSP*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Radek spoke longer in total, but it was divided into two speeches.

<sup>41</sup> *PVSSP*, 74.

поразительные параллелизмы с литературой Запада.”<sup>42</sup> [Rustaveli’s poem, connected through deep roots to the East, at the same time displays striking parallels with the literature of the West.] By situating Rustaveli’s work at the intersection between East and West and thus appropriating the hitherto Russian center, Toroshelidze subtly challenged Russian claims to universality. “The Knight in Panther Skin,” Toroshelidze asserted, is a world classic. “[Д]аже творение великого предшественника Возрождения – Данте не может выдержать сравнения с поэмой Руставели.”<sup>43</sup> [Even the work of that great forefather of the Renaissance, Dante, cannot withstand comparison with Rustaveli’s poem.] This comparison implicitly rejected the Russian standard of comparison. Although Toroshelidze later used Russian literature as a model, calling the nineteenth-century writer and public intellectual Iliia Chavchavzade “одновременно и поэт и критик-публицист – и Гоголь и Белинский”<sup>44</sup> [simultaneously both poet and critic – both Gogol and Belinskii], this comparison likewise suggested that Georgian literature surpassed Russian, on the grounds that it takes two Russian writers to equal one Georgian. Translation furthers Georgian culture’s position. Not only did Georgian literature unite Eastern and Western influences while thriving under difficult circumstances that often limited both realms, it assimilated both literatures through translation. “Почти на каждом переводе с персидского лежит в той или иной степени специфическая печать грузинского быта, каждый перевод заметно окрашен в краски национального колорита.”<sup>45</sup> [Almost every translation from the Persian contains to some degree the specific stamp of Georgian life, each translation is noticeably tinted by national color.] Ivane Machabeli’s Shakespeare translations were considered “одним из лучших среди переводов его на другие языки”<sup>46</sup> [one of his best translations in any language], although Toroshelidze refrained from indicating whose consideration this was. Not only were Georgian writers masters on the world stage, he implied, they mastered world literature.

Toroshelidze further decentered Russian by presenting a Georgian-specific vision of Russian literature that was essentially Pushkin-less. Not only had Russian literature influenced Georgian writers only intermittently, but the Russian works available in Georgian translation presented a vastly different canon. “Переводили таких авторов, как Греков, Юркевич и Козлов, которые вряд ли известны даже русскому читателю, и очень мало переводили классиков.”<sup>47</sup> [We translated such authors as Grekov, Yurkevich and Kozlov, who are probably not known even to Russian readers, and we translated very few classics.] Pushkin’s poor opinion of Tbilisi justified his absence in Georgian translation, with *Evgeny Onegin* still waiting to be published. Lermontov was more widely available, albeit slightly revised, as were Krylov and Chekhov. The Georgians translated only limited works from most of the Russian greats: Turgenev’s prose poems; Gogol’s “Inspector-General,” but not *Dead Souls* and *Taras Bulba* only in 1930; and Tolstoy’s *Childhood* “для детской литературы”<sup>48</sup> [for children’s literature] and some short works, but not *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina*. On the other, very strategic hand, “каждое произведение Горького переводят буквально на другой же день после его появления в русской печати.”<sup>49</sup> [Each of Gorky’s works is translated the very next day after

<sup>42</sup> PVSSP, 76.

<sup>43</sup> PVSSP, 77.

<sup>44</sup> PVSSP, 87.

<sup>45</sup> PVSSP, 79.

<sup>46</sup> PVSSP, 82.

<sup>47</sup> PVSSP, 82.

<sup>48</sup> PVSSP, 82.

<sup>49</sup> PVSSP, 82.

they appear in Russian.] Thus, Soviet influence remained, while Russian influence became something the Russians themselves might not recognize.

Toroshelidze's talk ran far longer than the totality of any of the other national reports before he reached the ostensible subject of his report: Soviet Georgian literature. He acknowledged the normally momentous April 23 resolution only minutes before he concluded his talk with a brief nod to the minority literatures within Georgia and a verbal bow to the "мудрый, любимый вождь трудящихся всего мира, великий Сталин."<sup>50</sup> [...wise, beloved leader of the workers of the world, the great Stalin.]

### *Armenia*

Drastamat Simonian's report on Armenian literature followed Toroshelidze's lead in emphasizing its literary antiquity, but did so within a narrative frame that hewed more closely to the discursive standard. For one thing, although Armenian literature had a thriving classical period, its progress was interrupted and thus more recent stages could fit the Russian-based model. Its position within the East-West dynamic was also interesting. Whereas Toroshelidze aligned Georgian literature at the intersection of these worlds of influence, Simonian proclaimed that "Армянская культура принадлежит к числу древнейших культур Востока."<sup>51</sup> [Armenian culture belongs to the ranks of Eastern cultures of antiquity.] He cited its fifth-century alphabet, early legends and songs, the epic "David of Sasun," and classical poetry. However, the seventeenth century division of Armenia had caused a cultural collapse that undermined all literary production save folklore. When writers began writing in Armenian again, they did so in a divided culture: Western Armenia, under Ottoman control, used French models; while Eastern Armenia, within the Russian Empire, followed Russian influence and bourgeois, nationalist models that focused on the need to resurrect "Greater Armenia."

Simonian restricted himself to one example of each canonical category for this part of his report, unlike Toroshelidze's surfeit of Georgian writers. Only when he reached the Soviet period, which he praised as a literary return to the country after three centuries, did Simonian start listing figures.<sup>52</sup> Diasporic writers, like Aleksandr Shirvanzade, returned to Soviet Armenia to participate in this renaissance, while a flood of new writers proved the success of Soviet literacy, education, and cultural programs. "В союзе писателей Армении – до 70 писателей."<sup>53</sup> [The Armenian writers union has up to 70 members.] Although prose and drama were still lagging, the flowing of Armenian literature was a Soviet triumph.

### *Azerbaijan*

The Azerbaijani report completed the Transcaucasian triangle of venerable literatures, but it was also the strangest case.<sup>54</sup> As a Turkic culture administratively grouped with Georgia and Armenia, Azerbaijan straddled the conceptual territory between the Caucasus and Central Asia. Azerbaijan claimed a strong canon of historical figures writing in the three classical imperial languages of the broader region: Persian, Arabic, and Turkic. This made national attribution a delicate question. Whereas the Georgian report presented classical Georgian writers and argued that they were major, the Azerbaijani report presented major classical writers and argued that

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<sup>50</sup> *PVSSP*, 103.

<sup>51</sup> *PVSSP*, 104.

<sup>52</sup> *PVSSP*, 108.

<sup>53</sup> *PVSSP*, 109.

<sup>54</sup> This report will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

they were Azerbaijani. In particular, Mamed Alekberli defended Azerbaijani claims on the Persian-language poets Fuzuli and Nizami. In contrast to sharply denied Arabic, Persian, and even German claims to Azerbaijani writers, claims from competing Soviet nationalities were not so much as mentioned. Alekberli claimed the tenth-century *dastan* epic *Book of Dede Korkut* as clearly Azerbaijani.<sup>55</sup> Composed in Turkic and passed down for centuries, Dede Korkut's stories lay at the heart of not only Azerbaijani, but also several Central Asian Turkic national folklores. The Soviet conception of discrete nations that long preceded national consciousness, meant that only one of these nationalities could claim the epic. Instead of defending Azerbaijan's claim, Alekberli presented Dede Korkut's Azerbaijani status as though no competing claims could possibly exist. And indeed, within the restricted discourse of the Congress, none did.

Further complicating Alekberli's report, he eschewed chronological order to treat the classical period as one broad literary school. He described (in order) writers from the eighth century, tenth century, thirteenth, twelfth, thirteenth, sixteenth, tenth, eighth, then eighteenth. Nor did Alekberli group writers by influence or language of composition. Indeed, his report reads as if it was designed to confuse his audience, leaving only a general impression of classical poetry determined more by a retroactively defined Azerbaijani-ness than by the immediate historical pressures. Alekberli's version united writers living in different empires with different literary traditions into a canon that was ethnically, geographically, or linguistically identifiable as Azerbaijani – but rarely all three at once.

Alekberli's history finally turned from Eastern models of greatness to Russian ones in the nineteenth century, with Mirza Akhundov, in particular, fulfilling the role of Russian-styled master. “Его галерея типов так же красочна, разнообразна, характерна, как галерея типов Грибоедова, Гоголя и Островского.”<sup>56</sup> [His gallery of types is as vivid, as varied, as characteristic as those of Griboedov, Gogol, and Ostrovskii.] This model continued into the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet periods, with the current writers union containing both fellow travelers and dedicated young Communists. In Azerbaijan, Alekberli proclaimed, there were now around sixty writers.<sup>57</sup> Although there was obvious work to do, especially on critical questions, the recent national congress of writers showed Azerbaijan's progress on the literary front.

### ***Uzbekistan***

Like Klimkovich and Najmi, Rahmat Majidi used educational and economic progress to presage his nation's literary developments. According to his report, Uzbekistan had suffered under the double yoke of imperial rule, which ensured cultural backwardness and the rise of bourgeois forms of opposition. Uzbek national culture was long trapped in Turkestan's morass of jadidism, pan-Islamism, pan-Turkism, pan-Turanism and, of course, nationalism. The jadids, in particular, had a pernicious influence. They coopted the possibility of genuine reform in support of retrograde feudal and clerical elements, delaying cultural progress. Ignorant writers, both Uzbeks and well-meaning foreigners like the Ukrainian novelist Ivan Le, idealized the jadids as positive characters and even portrayed them as Bolsheviks. This meant, Majidi explained, that Uzbek literature had to continually struggle against nationalist and pan-Turkic ideas. Further exacerbating this battle were questions of literary heritage and language. Counter-revolutionary writers kept promoting Chagatai in place of Uzbek and claiming a diverse array of writers as Turkic, Chagatai, or Uzbek. Acknowledging that early Turkic culture had perhaps more

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<sup>55</sup> *PVSSP*, 113. There is actually extensive debate over the epic's era, as it conflates details from several periods.

<sup>56</sup> *PVSSP*, 116.

<sup>57</sup> *PVSSP*, 120.



commonalities than national divisions in Central Asia and Azerbaijan was, of course, a clear marker of pan-Turkism and thus unacceptable.

Majidi produced a suitable Soviet genealogy for the Uzbek writers' union, tracing the Red Pen and UzAPP movements through the battle to implement the 1932 resolution. None of these movements, however, had solved the problem of a literary Uzbek language that would reconcile their heritage with the language used by the masses. This was a contemporary problem for Uzbek writers: “Разница между языком многих писателей и языком массы велика.”<sup>58</sup> [The difference between the language of many writers and the language of the masses is great.] Uzbek writers attempted to follow Russian models, but this had the peculiar effect of over-Sovietizing Uzbek culture, so that in some works, even “дореволюционный деханин Узбекистана мыслит, говорит как самый культурный, передовой человек нынешней эпохи, как большевик.”<sup>59</sup> [the pre-Revolutionary peasant of Uzbekistan thinks and speaks like the most cultured, advanced person of our contemporary era, like a Bolshevik.] Uzbek literature still needed to find a balance.

### *Turkmenia*

Turkmen literature's relatively blank slate made it an excellent candidate for the developmentalist narrative, but it also left the narrative somewhat hollow. Tash-Nazarov cited a brief poetic flowering in the second part of the eighteenth century, a movement soon crushed by Russian and British imperialism. Five tyrants – the tsar, the shah, the emir of Bukhara, the Afghan emir, and the Khivan khan – divided the nation, so that not a single Turkmen writer emerged until Soviet liberation. Contemporary readers, Tash-Nazarov complained, too often focused on the period of oppression to claim that Turkmenia had no pre-Revolutionary literature:

(С)овсем недавно иные «ученые» вовсе отрицали существование туркменской литературы в прошлом. Великодержавные шовинисты недавно на этом основании утверждали, что, поскольку туркменская литература вообще не существовала, то нельзя и мечтать о создании новой туркменской литературы, потому что на пустом месте ничего не создашь.<sup>60</sup>

Quite recently other “scholars” completely denied the prior existence of Turkmen literature. On this basis, great-power chauvinists recently confirmed that, since Turkmen literature didn't really exist, it was impossible even to dream about creating a new Turkmen literature, because you can't create anything in such an empty space.

This conflict gave Turkmen bourgeois nationalists the opportunity to claim that literary heritage for their purposes. Because only elites were literate, even the post-Revolutionary literature was their domain: “Поскольку в прошлом грамотность являлась достоянием торговых, чиновничьих и вновь нараставших буржуазных элементов, литературный фронт оказался почти целиком в руках националистов.”<sup>61</sup> [Since in the past literacy was the achievement of commercial, bureaucratic, and newly resurfacing bourgeois elements, the literary front was almost entirely in the hands of the nationalists.] Other nationalities had multiple movements to

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<sup>58</sup> *PVSSP*, 133.

<sup>59</sup> *PVSSP*, 135.

<sup>60</sup> *PVSSP*, 136.

<sup>61</sup> *PVSSP*, 137.

fold into the writers union, Tash-Nazarov stated, but the organizing committee was the first real literary organization for new Turkmen writers. Young poets were rising to the needs of their increasingly literate audience, although Turkmen prose was still essentially non-existent. They needed more translation to provide literary models. The organizing committee had started this process, overseeing the first translations of Soviet Russian classics into Turkmen, including Gorky's oeuvre. Despite the imbalance, Tash-Nazarov called for increased translation in both directions between Turkmen and its fraternal literatures.

### *Tajikistan*

The Tajik delegate scheduled to give the national report failed to arrive, so the Iranian poet Lahuti stepped into the breach. Lahuti had been heavily involved with the All-Union organizing committee, advocating on behalf of the national literatures in general and Tajik literature in particular, so this substitution surprised few. The confusion between Tajik and Persian cultural identity gave Lahuti's representation greater credence, but the underlying question remains: why not have another Tajik speak on behalf of Tajik literature? It is probable that none of the remaining Tajik delegates were as rhetorically comfortable in Russian, and they may have felt that a recognizable figure like Lahuti was more appropriate than a stumbling unknown, but the situation was still strange.

Lahuti's introduction did nothing to minimize the strangeness. He began with a childhood anecdote about finding the term "Tajik" in a poem, looking it up in a dictionary, and learning that the Tajiks were an extinct tribe whose appellation the Turks sometimes used to refer to the Persians. Imagine, he related, his wonderment when he met Tajik Party officials in Moscow: "Я вспомнил Саади, словарь и фразу: «Таджики – некогда существовавший народ». Трудно выразить словами радость, которая кипела во мне при разговоре с этими представителями советского Таджикистана и его компартии."<sup>62</sup> [I remembered (the poem by) Saadi, the dictionary, and the phrase, "Tajiks – a once existing people." It is hard to put into words the joy that bubbled up in me during the conversation with these representatives of Soviet Tajikistan and its Communist Party.] Tajikistan had worked to raise its literacy rate from 0.5% to 60%, Lahuti reported, and its budget for cultural enlightenment alone was greater than the entire budget of Afghanistan. Tajik writers were matching these great strides, with everything from letters and postcards (19 million sent in 1933) to works of poetry. "В Таджикистане насчитывается всего около 100 писателей, печатающих свои произведения."<sup>63</sup> [In Tajikistan altogether there are around 100 writers, publishing their works.]

Lahuti's introductory anecdote established an opposition between educated Persian culture and the purportedly vanished tribe of Tajiks. Yet Tajik culture belied that clear distinction. In Soviet practice, Tajik and Persian were divided along class lines, with most of the rulers identified as Persian and the lower classes assumed to be Tajik, albeit sometimes Persian-assimilated Tajiks. Classical Persian poetry, Lahuti acknowledged, thus also belonged to the Tajiks. "Поэты IX, X, XI веков... писали на родном языке таджиков, на языке, который до сегодняшнего дня понятен и близок широким массам Таджикистана."<sup>64</sup> [Poets of the ninth, tenth, eleventh centuries... wrote in the native language of the Tajiks, in the language which has remained understandable and dear to the broad masses of Tajikistan to this day.] These poets included world famous figures like Firdousi and Omar Khayyam. Lahuti carefully avoided

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<sup>62</sup> *PVSSP*, 141.

<sup>63</sup> *PVSSP*, 143.

<sup>64</sup> *PVSSP*, 142.

saying whether they wrote in Tajik or Persian, as opposed to “the native language of the Tajiks.” The former meant relinquishing his own culture’s claim to these works, while the later represented a Persian claim over the Tajiks that amounted to great-power chauvinism. Lahuti’s circumlocution left Tajik identity intact while recognizing the substantial overlap between the two nations he represented at the lectern. Soviet Tajik writers were struggling to accommodate this classical heritage to the needs of their newly modern readership, but under the leadership of the Communist Party, they would fulfill the trust given them by their great leader, Comrade Stalin.

### *National Speeches*

Several of the smaller – or at least non-republican – nationalities gave shorter versions of the national reports during speeches ostensibly responding to the issues raised in the reports on Soviet literatures, poetry, drama, or young authors. Whereas a Russian speaker could begin with his opinion or argument about Soviet literature (discursively restrained as those arguments might be), most national speakers began by establishing their literature’s credentials. A shortened developmentalist narrative governed these credentials: colonial repression, followed by Soviet flowering. Illiteracy illustrated the limitations of pre-Soviet culture. Afzal Tagirov reported that, “Колониальный грабёж, 95% неграмотных среди населения, отсутствие письменности, литературного языка и литературы, господство суеверий, знахарства, шептунства и вымирание народа – таковы были результаты «культуры», насаждавшейся в Башкирии духовными отцами «инородцев».”<sup>65</sup> [Colonial robbery, 95% illiteracy, lack of a writing system, a literary language, or literature; the dominance of superstition, quackery, and whispered incantations; and the people’s slow demise – such were the results of the “culture,” spread in Bashkiria by the spiritual fathers of us “natives”] Those escaping the trap of religion and superstition faced explicit censorship, as Il’ias Jansugurov indicated: “Царская цензура не давала никакой возможности развитию казакской революционной литературы.”<sup>66</sup> [The tsarist censor gave no opportunity for the development of Kazakh revolutionary literature.] Russian literature stood in colonial relation to the national literatures, suppressing the inherent need for local culture. Fedor Chesnokov depicted the trap this created for Mordvinian literature. “Эта интеллигенция говорила, что Мордве незачем иметь свою литературу, что с нее достаточно и русской литературы. А кто кроме кулаков и их сынов читал тогда русскую литературу, когда грамотность не достигала и 15%, а среди женщин 5%?”<sup>67</sup> [This intelligentsia said that there was no reason for Mordvia to have its own literature, that Russian literature was sufficient for it. And who other than kulaks and their sons read Russian literature, when literacy was under 15%, and 5% among women?] What pre-Revolutionary national literature emerged, did so through bourgeois nationalist movements. Soviet national literatures were thus defined through their opposition to nationalism: “Мордовская литература, так же как и многие братские литературы, росла в боях с местным национализмом...”<sup>68</sup> [Mordvinian literature, just like many of the fraternal literatures, grew up in the battles with local nationalism.] The Soviets inevitably triumphed, of course, and each national literature had a generation of promising new writers. Aaly Tokombaev explained that pre-Revolutionary Kyrgyzia had two writers, one writing in Kazakh and one in Tatar: “Наша литература рождена

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<sup>65</sup> *PVSSP*, 211.

<sup>66</sup> *PVSSP*, 241.

<sup>67</sup> *PVSSP*, 257.

<sup>68</sup> *PVSSP*, 257.

Октябрем.”<sup>69</sup> [Our literature was born with the October Revolution.] Arkadii Zolotov heralded this process in Chuvashia, “Но за годы революции в советской Чувашии выросли десятки молодых авторов, вышедших из трудовых масс...”<sup>70</sup> [But in the years of revolution, dozens of young authors grew up in Soviet Chuvashia, emerging from the working masses.] For this generation, Russian literature was no longer a colonial oppressor any more than Moscow was a colonial power: “Наша русская советская литература так же близка и родна чувашам, татарам, украинцам, словом – всем трудящимся всех национальностей, как и своя литература, и наоборот – лучшие достижения национальных отрядов литературы обогащают всю советскую литературу в целом.”<sup>71</sup> [Our Soviet Russian literature is as close and native to the Chuvash, Tatars, Ukrainians – in a word, to all of the workers of all nationalities – as our own literature, and the reverse is also true: the best achievements of the national branches of literature enrich all Soviet literature as a whole.] The close relationship to Soviet Russian literature was an essential step for the developmentalist narrative, as otherwise the complaints about tsarist oppression could be heard as anti-Moscow sentiment, and thus a nationalist attack on Soviet unity. This relationship was demonstrated through the translation of Soviet classics, especially Gorky, the use of those classics as models for national literature, the brigades’ fraternal work, and the ecstatic national presence at the Congress.

Few of the national speakers addressed Soviet literature from an independent viewpoint, instead of explicitly speaking as national representatives. Their speeches thus served to broaden the definition of Soviet literature through national diversity more than through diversity of opinion. Combined with the national reports, they gave a dynamic portrait of the issues facing the national literatures. Foremost among these was the need to distinguish between national and nationalist tendencies.

### **What Is National?**

National literatures defined themselves in strict opposition to nationalism. Except for one reference to “[г]рузинская раса” [the Georgian race], the Congress did not depict nationalism as racialized.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, nationalism’s premises were rarely defined, so that it functioned as a general pejorative term for a wide array of political and aesthetic sins. Nevertheless, some characteristics were repeated often enough to create a predictive template of those writers, historic and contemporary, most likely to be condemned as nationalist.

### ***Nationalist Politics***

Nationalist writers had an unhealthy focus on the national and literary past, instead of the Soviet present and future. Majidi warned that “Использование литературного наследства, «историзм» – основные маски националистов.”<sup>73</sup> [Using the literary legacy, “historicism,” – these are the nationalists’ basic masks.] For the Tatar nationalists, the past was religiously determined, with Najmi attacking, “[р]елигиозно-националистические мотивы.”<sup>74</sup> [religious-nationalist motifs.] Kulik proclaimed the dominant nationalist genre to be the memoir, which by definition focused on the past. This foreshadowed the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists’ ultimate

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<sup>69</sup> *PVSSP*, 541.

<sup>70</sup> *PVSSP*, 245.

<sup>71</sup> *PVSSP*, 245.

<sup>72</sup> *PVSSP*, 96.

<sup>73</sup> *PVSSP*, 129.

<sup>74</sup> *PVSSP*, 64.

failure, as “Ясно, что когда людям ничего не остается в настоящем, нет никаких надежд на будущее, приходится жить только прошлым, воспоминаниями.”<sup>75</sup> [It is clear that when nothing is left for people in the present and there is no hope for the future, they are left to live only through the past, through their memories.] In contrast, Soviet Ukrainian writers wrote about their bright national future under communism.

The past was especially dangerous for national literatures. Unlike their Russian counterparts, national writers could not assume a commonly accepted literary past. Canonization and the demand for a literary language replete with allusions and intertexts meant that national writers were constantly addressing their history while trying to avoid accusations of nationalism. Historical topics were generally safe for national writers so long as they used Marxist categories and adhered to a teleological model of historical development. A properly Soviet national past was essentially socialist realist, in that each moment was shown to contain the seeds of the Soviet future. This created Aesopian possibilities, since writers could subtly parallel the colonial past and the Soviet present, but it was a necessary danger to create an official Soviet history for each nationality. However, the nationalists were also fighting for control of the canon. Majidi warned that “Борьба националистов под флагом использования литературного наследия не прекратилась и в настоящее время.”<sup>76</sup> [The nationalists’ battle under the flag of using the literary legacy has not ceased even in the present.]

National literatures ideally represented the national culture as set within the USSR as a whole, capturing the middle ground between too narrow a focus on local life, absent its political context, and a broad orientation that looked beyond Soviet borders. Because “nationalist” was the primary term for condemning national writers, it included groups that could be more productively read through other lenses. Simonian described how Armenian bourgeois nationalism grew through Western European ideology, filtered through the Russian empire and French literary influence. Trying to insert themselves into the European imagination was framed as a nationalist project, albeit not one intrinsically opposed to Sovietization. A contemporary Western orientation was more dangerous, as it was necessarily anti-Soviet.

The Eastern counterparts had several philosophical branches, including pan-Turkism, jadidism, and pan-Islamism. Although these were, strictly speaking, internationalist or supranationalist movements, they were identified as nationalist because, like some westernizing currents, they rejected Soviet socialism. National delegates who may have had more nuanced views understood that “nationalist” was the pejorative of choice, so that defending any of these movements as non-nationalist missed the real point. Alekberli condemned an Azerbaijani nationalist literature that “становится на путь пантюркизма, реакции, панисламизма, проповедует национальную замкнутость.” [follows a path of pan-Turkism, reaction, pan-Islamism, and preaches national seclusion.] Ignoring the evident contradiction between national seclusion and pan-Islamism, Alekberli described this literature as bearing the slogan, “тюркизм, исламизм и модернизм.”<sup>77</sup> [Turkism, Islamism, and modernism.] The odd word out, “modernism” was clear to those listeners familiar with jadidism, a religious reform movement devoted to education and modernization. Lahuti conflated these movements, first defining jadidism in national and class terms, “Джадидистская (реформистская) литература, выражавшая интересы национальной буржуазии” [Jadidist (reformist) literature, representing the interests of the national bourgeoisie], and then equating it with pan-Turkism and pan-

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<sup>75</sup> *PVSSP*, 41.

<sup>76</sup> *PVSSP*, 129.

<sup>77</sup> *PVSSP*, 118.

Islamism: “джадидизм, как пантюрокское, панисламистское движение, после Октябрьской революции оказался во враждебном нам лагере.”<sup>78</sup> [jadidism, like the pan-Turkic, pan-Islamic movement, after the October revolution found itself in the enemy camp.] Implicitly recognizing a distinction between the reformers and nationalists per se, Majidi argued that jadidist writers worked against the dictatorship of the proletariat. Furthermore, “[в] течение весьма долгого времени националистические элементы идеализировали и продолжают идеализировать джадидизм.”<sup>79</sup> [The nationalist elements idealized jadidism for a very long time and continue to idealize it.] Although by this standard, almost all national literature was off limits, the equation justified condemning jadidist writers.

The Western and Eastern deviations shared a fundamental mistake: they replaced or opposed Moscow. Klimkovich explained this phenomenon: “Литература БССР противопоставила нацдемовской ориентации на Запад правильный показ буржуазного Запада и ориентацию, открытую и полную, на пролетарскую Москву.”<sup>80</sup> [The literature of the Belorussian SSR opposed the national-democratic orientation toward the West with a correct depiction of the bourgeois West and an orientation, open and complete, toward proletarian Moscow.] Kulik criticized nationalist writers for defining Ukrainian identity in opposition to Russian. In Yurchenko’s novel *Red Smoke*, this division plays out between the local Ukrainians and an invasive group. “[Ж]ивут на Украине, дескать, «украинцы», но туда приезжают из Москвы «москалии», которые стараются Украину «превратить в Московщину». Вот и вся убогая «идеология» произведения.”<sup>81</sup> [There live in the Ukraine, he says, “Ukrainians,” but from Moscow come some “Moscowers,” who try to turn Ukraine to “Moscow-ism.” That’s the work’s entire wretched ‘ideology.’] Stalin himself, Kulik continued, identified the Ukrainian battle against Moscow as “против русских вообще, против русской культуры и ее высшего достижения – против ленинизма.”<sup>82</sup> [against the Russians in general, against Russian culture and its highest accomplishment – against Leninism.] Tash-Nazarov gave a purported pro-Soviet example of this opposition, Burunov’s poem “Eighteen Drowned Turkmen,” which “проводит явно националистическую идею.”<sup>83</sup> [carries an explicitly nationalist idea] This poem narrates a historical event, an expedition of Turkmen workers heading to the Caucasus in search of grain. The expedition was captured by a White Army ship and sunk. However, by making all the White officers Russian and ignoring the Russian workers on the ship who sympathized with the Turkmen brothers, Tash-Nazarov charged, Burunov turned this Revolutionary episode into a national attack. The result implies that “трудящиеся туркмены были потоплены белогвардейцами потому, что они были туркменами, потому, что у них высокие шапки.”<sup>84</sup> [The Turkmen workers were sunk by the Whites because they were Turkmen, because they had tall hats.] Azerbaijan was a rare case in that its nationalism was defined through attacks on other brotherly nations like the Armenians, especially during its brief period of bourgeois independence.<sup>85</sup> Most nationalism was anti-Russian, and thus anti-Soviet, or vice versa.

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<sup>78</sup> *PVSSP*, 142.

<sup>79</sup> *PVSSP*, 127.

<sup>80</sup> *PVSSP*, 54.

<sup>81</sup> *PVSSP*, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Stalin, *Marksizm i natsional'no-kolonial'nyi vopros*, 173. Cited in *PVSSP*, 42.

<sup>83</sup> *PVSSP*, 138.

<sup>84</sup> *PVSSP*, 138.

<sup>85</sup> *PVSSP*, 119.

### *National Languages*

Most of the national literatures faced significant practical and theoretical issues around the question of national language. Georgia and Armenia were the only republics that could modernize and thus Sovietize their languages without risking linguistic identity. Belorussia and Ukraine needed to maintain or increase linguistic differentiation with Russian and each other, while Azerbaijan and the Central Asian languages needed to purge Arabic and Persian influences without reaching results too similar to those in other territories, including the Republic of Turkey. Azerbaijan and Tajikistan also wanted to remain intelligible to national populations across the border in the hopes of later Soviet expansion. Latinization in the 1920s helped this process, since minor differences in pronunciation could now be codified into separate spellings, but it made national canons less accessible.

Of course, the biggest problem with the Turkic national languages was not openly discussable: Were they separate languages? Since Leninist-Stalinist nationalities policy defined nationalities largely (although not exclusively) by language, dividing pre-Revolutionary Turkic into national languages was essential to justify national and territorial divisions. However, while there were three primary literary languages in Turkic (Ottoman, Chagatai, and what was post factum identified as Azerbaijani Turkic), these did not divide neatly along ethnic or national lines.<sup>86</sup> The choice of literary language largely reflected the court language where a writer lived. Writers using any of these languages were familiar with literature in all three – as well as Arabic and Persian – and could change register if appropriate. All of these languages changed over time, as well, further complicating divisions between them. The national divisions were made roughly as follows: Chagatai writers were/became Uzbek, Turkic writers were/became Azerbaijani, and Ottoman writers were/became either Turkish or were claimed by any culture that could produce an ethnic lineage for a given writer. Family trumped language, unless that family was “foreign” and the writer used Turkic or Chagatai.

Drawing direct lines from Turkic literature to Azerbaijani, and from Chagatai to Uzbek left Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Kara-Kalpak with little or no pre-Revolutionary literary traditions. Alekberli successfully claimed the *Book of Dede Korkut* (or *Dada Qorqud*, or *Gorkut-ata*), a collection of epic tales common across Turkic cultures, for Azerbaijan. In a rare moment of miscoordination, Majidi condemned an Uzbek scholar, Alimuhamedov, for working to idealize the Uzbek past and create a nationalist literature: “Ради этого он не отказывается даже от негодного, низкого приема – ложно выдать персидских и арабских поэтов и ученых за узбеков, за тюрков.”<sup>87</sup> [For this he is even willing to stoop to the inappropriate, base devise of falsely giving Persian and Arabic poets and scholars as Uzbeks, as Tiurks.] Majidi included Fuzuli in the list of writers Alimukhamedov used. This example of dangerous bourgeois nationalism, unfortunately, essentially repeated Alekberli’s claim about Fuzuli from the previous day. By correcting Alimuhamedov’s apparent misappropriation, Majidi also contradicted Alekberli’s purportedly accurate appropriation. Since the Soviet Turkic nationalities could all reasonably lay claim to elements of early Turkic culture, however, it was safer for Majidi to deny that Fuzuli was Turkic at all than to try to explain how he was proto-Azerbaijani rather than, as Alimuhamedov suggested, proto-Uzbek.

The Turkic nationalities were hindered by a model of national development that treated national identity as innate, extending backward almost infinitely into the past. Only national

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<sup>86</sup> Many scholars would divide this into two groups: Chagatai and Ottoman.

<sup>87</sup> *PVSSP*, 129. For reasons discussed in chapter 4, I distinguish between Turk/Turkish and Tiurk/Turkic, with the later referring to the nationality/language subsequently claimed as Azerbaijani.

consciousness was historically determined. Thus, ethnically Turkic writers who wrote in Persian, Arabic, or a Turkic language were intrinsically proto-Uzbek, or proto-Azeri, or (rarely) proto-Turkmen. If Fuzuli was an Azerbaijani Turk, then he could not be an Uzbek Turk and it was safer not to acknowledge him as Turkic at all. A different model of national development might have acknowledged the late growth of national existence, not just national consciousness, and granted all of the Turkic nationalities access to pre-national Turkic literature. This would have impoverished select national canons, but enriched the region's literature as a whole and eased cultural progress in the comparatively backward Turkic nations. In effect, the Soviet view of nations prevented them from collectivizing the nationalities' private cultural capital.

The main danger of this collectivization was pan-Turkism. If the Turkic nationalities were united in any form, even literary, they might be tempted to take that union still further. The policy of linguistic differentiation allowed the Soviets to divide and conquer. Once the new national languages were proclaimed, it became anti-Soviet to continue using one of the established literary languages. Azerbaijani writers were severely criticized for writing in Ottoman Turkish (whether they intended to or not), while Uzbekistan officially replaced the living Chagatai literature with Uzbek. Any connection to Turkey was especially threatening. Majidi condemned the Bukharan poet Abdal Rauf Fitrat for labeling the Uzbek language Turkish and insisting Chagatai was part of Turkish, not Turkic, literature: “Фитрат пишет: «Самый богатый из языков мира – наш, турецкий, язык... В турецкой литературе занимает первое место чагатайский язык.»”<sup>88</sup> [Fitrat writes, “The richest of the world's languages is our, Turkish language.... In Turkish literature, the Chagatai language occupies first place.”] Turkish had no place in the Soviet canons, even in service of national goals.<sup>89</sup> Like the Turkic cases, Tajik's national and linguistic discreteness was more important than its shared cultural heritage. However, pan-Turkism posed a greater threat to Soviet control than Persian identity, and so Lahuti's formulation was able to acknowledge Tajik culture's access to the classical Persian canon.

Although Moscow and local officials introduced borrowed Russian terms into the Caucasian and Central Asian languages, this process didn't directly threaten the national identity of those languages, any more than previous Persian and Arabic terms had corrupted them. For Belorussian and Ukrainian, however, this process was more difficult. Accepting Russian terms, even if those terms were themselves European in origin, reduced the gaps between the Slavic languages. Since the Russian empire had long minimized or denied those gaps, a distinct national language was a major point of pride for Belorussia and Ukraine, as well as a political strategy. But insisting on local terms for Soviet concepts led dangerously towards anti-Russian nationalism. While there were certainly sensible vocabulary alternatives in circulation, the Belorussian and Ukrainian delegates tended to give the most ridiculous examples possible to demonstrate their commitment to friendly relations with Moscow. Klimkovich's examples of Belorussian linguistic chauvinism undermined the gravity of the linguistic debates, since three of his examples were borrowings in Russian and the fourth had at least as much legitimacy in Belorussian as in Russian:

До чего доходили нацдемы в ненависти к Советам, показывает их перевод на белорусский язык таких понятий, как пролетариат (переводилось словом «галота»), барикады (переводилось словом «загородка»), диалектика (переводилось словом

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<sup>88</sup> *PVSSP*, 128-29.

<sup>89</sup> Turkish literature was included in the international literatures represented at the Congress, but as a separate and independently developing culture.



«пустословие»), даже слово «белорусс» из-за корня «рус» (русский) заменялось словом «кривич».<sup>90</sup>

To what lengths the national-democrats went in their hatred of the Soviets is shown by their Belorussian translation of such concepts, as proletariat (translated with the word “the poor”), barricades (translated with the word “fence”), dialectic (translated with the word “rant,” [or by morphemes, “empty.wordness”]), and even the word “Belorussian” because of its root “Rus” (Russian) was replaced by the word “Krivich” [a mythic tribe, literally meaning “crooked one”].

These examples alleviated the need to discuss how, precisely, Belorussian differed from Russian. As a national language, Belorussian needed defense against nationalists, but not against its Soviet brothers.

### ***National Populations***

Linguistic consistency was only part of the struggle with the nationalists. The nationalists’ supposed desire for a national territory entirely populated by members of that nationality conflicted with the realities of the Soviet map. To demonstrate their appropriate brotherly relation to other Soviet nationalities – and by extension, their satisfaction with the territorial redistribution as a whole – national representatives stressed the progress made by minorities within their national territories. Just as the Congress grouped the national reports together, the national reports grouped minority national writers together, rather than interspersing them among writers of the dominant nationality according to genre or subject matter. Klimkovich’s mention of the Belorussian Yiddish poet Izi Kharik was a rare exception to this.<sup>91</sup>

Generally speaking, extraterritorial national literatures had healthy sections in the republics where they were a minority – Russian writers in Ukraine, Russian and Polish writers in Belorussia, Russian and Armenians in Azerbaijan. Yiddish also did well, with exemplary writers in Ukraine and Belorussia. The position of smaller nationalities was more difficult. They were frequently less literate, and thus in need of more resources than the primary nationality, while the Russian section alone fulfilled the demand to be seen as non-nationalist and required fewer resources. Simonian reported the creation of a Kurdish alphabet and textbooks, with a folklore-based Kurdish literature now emerging. This literature was a triumph for the former shepherds and peasants and it had “огромное значение не только для курдских масс закавказских республик, но и для находящихся за пределами Советского союза.”<sup>92</sup> [...great significance not only for the Kurdish masses of the Transcaucasian republics, but also for those beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.] No specific authors, however, bore mention. Toroshelidze acknowledged that the Georgian organizing committee had made little progress with Abkhazia, Ajaristan, and Southern Ossetia.<sup>93</sup> Majidi named a list of Russian comrades who were publishing new works in Uzbekistan, whereas the Uighurs and local Jews were only developing national writers.<sup>94</sup> Although the national minorities were essential to show the thriving state of

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<sup>90</sup> *PVSSP*, 52.

<sup>91</sup> *PVSSP*, 52.

<sup>92</sup> *PVSSP*, 112.

<sup>93</sup> *PVSSP*, 103.

<sup>94</sup> *PVSSP*, 131.

Soviet literary production, they were not included in the historical narrative: they were part of the cadres, but not part of the canon.

### ***National Form***

Although the slogan “national in form, socialist in content” would seem to indicate the opposite, the Congress focused more on national topics than national forms. National forms, such as the Turkic *dastan* or Kumyk *yir*, were treated as folk structures. Folk culture was important, but as Lelevich explained with regard to Dagestani literature, it was an insufficient base:

Разрешите пояснить эту сложность аналогией. Вообразите, что в русской литературе имеются только былины и «Слово о полку Игореве», но нет ни Пушкина, ни Лермонтова, ни Толстого, ни Тургенева, ни Гоголя, ни Некрасова, ни Чернышевского, ни Щедрина. И вот от этих былин и от «Слова о полку Игореве» надо непосредственно переходить ко всему богатству литературы социализма.”<sup>95</sup>

Allow me to clarify this complexity with an analogy. Imagine that Russian literature had only *bylinas* and “The Lay of Igor’s Campaign,” but no Pushkin, no Lermontov, no Tolstoy, no Turgenev, no Gogol, no Nekrasov, no Chernyshevskii, no Shchedrin. And from these *bylinas* and “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign,” we had to immediately pass over to the full richness of socialist literature.

These folk works were historically important and part of the canon, but the forms were outmoded for a Soviet audience. Thus the contemporary national forms were the same as in Russian, with the production or collectivization novel at the apex. National representatives reported their literatures’ development towards the novel, or for advanced literatures, the national novel’s development towards Gorky’s model. This suggested that national forms were lower stages of literature, ones which had to be embraced in order to move through them to the international forms Moscow championed. Akper Aliev described this process in Turkmen literature, charging that established writers insisted on traditional forms of poetry. When Il-Ogly, a national minority writer writing in Turkmen, tried to follow Vladimir Mayakovsky’s model, critics attacked his poems, “как будто это не «родные» формы, как будто это формы только русской литературы.” [...as if these weren’t “native” forms, as if these forms were only those of Russian literature.] These attacks on Il-Ogly and other progressive writers were fundamentally wrong, because they assumed that national writers were restricted in method or form. Instead, Aliev stated, “Новое содержание нужно укладывать в новые формы.”<sup>96</sup> [New content must be put into new forms.]

National identity, called form, was primarily expressed through national language, references to the canon, and nationally specified topics. For example, the Belorussian critic Khaizekil’ Dunets explained how Andrei Aleksandrovich’s Soviet drama was superior to nationalist works: “Где же тут национальная форма? Она и в мелодике письма, и в трансформировании белорусского фольклора, и в образах (переделках сырого человеческого материала из отсталой деревни).”<sup>97</sup> [Where here is national form? It is in the writing’s melody, in the transformation of Belorussian folklore, and in the images (the

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<sup>95</sup> *PVSSP*, 266.

<sup>96</sup> *PVSSP*, 523.

<sup>97</sup> *PVSSP*, 446.

reformation of raw human material from backward villages.] Aleksandrovich gave national color to a form adapted from the Moscow stage through the musicality of his language, folkloric motifs, and subject matter.

One way to show progress was to cite the new range of literary topics. Klimkovich listed the standard elements: industrialization, the Red Army, and collectivization.<sup>98</sup> Najmi praised Tatar literature's breadth, citing works on the revolutionary youth of Mongolia, re-education of the petty bourgeoisie, border guards, the unveiling campaign, and transport.<sup>99</sup> Alekberli sadly reported that Azerbaijani literature had yet to properly portray the specificity of its industrial cultural life: "В течение двух лет написано лишь два незначительных произведения, отражающих борьбу за нефть. А борьба за хлопок почти совсем не показана."<sup>100</sup> [Over the course of two years, only two insignificant works were written portraying the battle for oil. And the battle for cotton is almost entirely unshown.] Every sector of the national economy needed its own literary representation, especially if that sector lacked a Russian parallel. Complaining that Uzbek writers needed to better develop their themes, Majidi explained the difference between a nationalist and Soviet national approach to a topic like cotton:

В произведениях о хлопке также царит чрезмерная поверхностность. Имеется мелкобуржуазное, поверхностное, отвлеченное расхваливание хлопка как растения; хлопок постоянно называется «белым золотом», «цветком», «радостью», «восторгом» и т. п. словами, превращающими его в какой-то фетиш. Но хлопок как культура, необходимая нашему социалистическому хозяйству, задача повышения его урожайности, вопрос овладения техникой обработки находят очень слабое выражение в литературе.<sup>101</sup>

An excessive superficiality likewise reigns in works about cotton. There is a petty bourgeois, superficial, abstract fawning over cotton as a plant; cotton is constantly called "white gold," a "little flower," "joy," "rapture" and other such words, transforming it into some sort of fetish. But cotton as a culture essential to our socialist agriculture, the task of increasing its harvest output, the question of mastering the production technology – these find a very weak reflection in literature.

The superficial portrait of cotton came too close to "tractor meets nightingale" – a symbol that functioned independently from the labor process surrounding it. The nationalist literature was thus too lyrical or romantic.

Literary categories served as another way to label nationalist tendencies. The tension between works glorifying the past and the present was encoded as romanticism versus realism, with romanticism – unless explicitly revolutionary romanticism – smuggling nationalism under its decorative cloak. Conflating romanticism and nationalism gave national writers a method for applying the Russian model to their national literary histories. Both terms stretched to encompass works and writers that were suspicious to Soviet readers, although not necessarily because they were either romantic or nationalist. Romanticism encompassed past-oriented

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<sup>98</sup> *PVSSP*, 54-5.

<sup>99</sup> *PVSSP*, 69.

<sup>100</sup> *PVSSP*, 123.

<sup>101</sup> *PVSSP*, 133.

literature, but could also apply to poetry seemingly devoid of national or political content – and therefore obviously nationalist. Visions of national identity influenced by Western romanticism were especially dangerous, since they suggested a revival of the golden age, a period when the nation invariably had larger borders than in its Soviet incarnation. Simonian described how writers “культивировали националистические идеи и в романтических красках рисовали будущую «великую Армению».”<sup>102</sup> [cultivated nationalist ideas and painted the future “Greater Armenia” in romantic colors.] Soviet national writers needed a national identity derived from romantic concepts of national spirit, but stripped of romantic political sentiments like national independence.

### ***Gender and National Relations***

National identity was frequently illustrated through feminine tropes. Klimkovich identified the outdated nationalist image of Belorussia: “Националистическому образу «матери Белоруссии» в нашей литературе противопоставлен образ советской индустриально-колхозной Белорусской социалистической республики, не отъемлемой части Советского союза.”<sup>103</sup> [Opposing the nationalist image of “Mother Belorussia” in our literature is the image of the Soviet Belorussian socialist republic of industry and collective farms, an inalienable part of the Soviet Union.] Klimkovich’s list of works that fulfill the republic’s Soviet image provides an alternative to the maternal image of Belorussia through Petrus Brovka’s poem, “Наше отечество – СССР” [Our fatherland is the USSR], and Chornii’s novel and play, “Отечество” [Fatherland]. The national motherland thus stands in implicit opposition to the Soviet fatherland. Romanticism, the past, and the feminized homeland similarly combined in Toroshelidze’s analysis of the Georgian poet Akaki Tsereteli. Tsereteli’s poems revolved around a mythologized past for Georgia, destroyed by the Russians. In his works, Toroshelidze explained, “Родина была единственной идеей, которой жила старая Грузия...” [Homeland was the only idea, by which old Georgia lived...] This commitment took on religious forms, but was fundamentally a way to escape the imperial present. Romantic imagery connected the mythic past to Tsereteli’s lyrical poetry, such that “Роза, соловей, майская ночь, луна, Крцанисское поле, Мтацминдская гора – все это напоминает ему об одном, все это вдохновляет его на беззаветную любовь к родине, которая является уделом божьей матери...”<sup>104</sup> [The rose, nightingale, May night, moon, the field of Krtsanisi, Mount Mtatsminda – all of this reminds him of one thing, all of this inspires in him unconditional love for the homeland, which is the realm of the Holy Mother...] This description linked poetic tropes with the late eighteenth-century battle of Krtsanisi and the cultural and religious landmark of Mount Mtatsminda, which in 1929 had become an official cemetery housing Griboedov, his Georgian wife, and a pantheon of Georgian cultural figures. Toroshelidze’s account reduces Tsereteli’s national liberation poetry to its romantic (in both senses of the word) imagery, suggesting an Oedipal devotion towards the motherland. Directed towards the Soviet fatherland, such unconditional love would be productive and transformative, but directed towards a maternal homeland, this love essentially kept Tsereteli in a childlike state. To move forward, by implication, the national literatures needed to grow up.

Engendering the Soviet as masculine and the national as feminine built upon widespread imagery from before and after the Revolution. Imperial discourse, reinforced by Western models

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<sup>102</sup> *PVSSP*, 106.

<sup>103</sup> *PVSSP*, 54.

<sup>104</sup> *PVSSP*, 88.

of Orientalism applied to the Caucasus and Central Asia, represented the center as masculine, the periphery as feminine. From the 1920s, Soviet visual artists symbolized the intersection of industry and agriculture, proletariat and peasant through male-female couples. Since Ukraine and Belorussia were major agricultural regions, with industry centered in Russian-populated cities, the feminized peasant was frequently national. Stalin's epithet as the Father of the Soviet peoples asserted a generational divide, not just a gendered one, but this divide was visually represented by surrounding Stalin with groups of children or women from the various nationalities.

The gendered categories also reflected the sociological realities of nineteenth-century imperial practice. In colonially governed regions, the Russian men sent there to enforce and administer state control vastly outnumbered the Russian women they brought with them. Russian romanticism presented a host of national women dying for the love of Russian men. The romantic image of local woman passionately in love with a Russian helped to justify and hide the violence implicit in that encounter, displacing it onto "savage" nationals. In fact, many of these encounters were non-consensual. The gender imbalance was exacerbated by the unequal opportunities and consequences for mixed Russian-local relationships. Russian men paid little social price for relationships with locals, whereas Russian women paid a very high price. Due to the unequal power dynamic, the cultural forces on the local end were less important. National enforcement of unacceptable relationships heavily punished local women for their transgressions, but this only fueled the Russian imagination.

When alluded to in Soviet national literature, however, this power and gender imbalance was offensive. Najmi denounced the nationalist depiction of a Tatar woman in this situation: "Так истеричная героиня Исхакова – Зулейха – проклинает своего родного сына только потому, что отец его был русским." [Thus Iskhakov's hysterical heroine, Zuleiha, curses her own son just because his father was Russian.] He quoted Gaiiaz Iskhaki's heroine bewailing her son, crying, "От мусульманки родился враг мусульман..."<sup>105</sup> [From a Muslim woman was born the enemy of the Muslims.] Rather than reading this as a sad legacy of colonialism and thus criticizing tsarist policy, Najmi interpreted it as national antagonism towards the Russians as a whole.

Correct representations of women as a national topic – and women were always an appropriate national topic – focused on women's lives as a symbol of progress. Kulik cites the Ukrainian writer Aleksandr Kopylenko's *A City is Born* as correctly showing "процесс освобождения советской женщины от мещанского, мелкобуржуазного быта"<sup>106</sup> [the process of liberating the Soviet woman from philistine, petty bourgeois life]. Like children and poor peasants, women were an oppressed category. Successful literature on women showed them overthrowing religious and/or national mores that bound them to the home and entering the public sphere. For already backward nationalities, women's liberation – from the veil, from religion, from the home – was a way to prove the speed with which they were achieving the Soviet standard. As Douglas Northrop clearly tracks in his work *Veiled Empire*, unveiling became an especially powerful symbolic substitute for more difficult processes of Sovietization.<sup>107</sup>

The Congress presented women primarily as national literary topics and symbolic representatives of Soviet nationalities, and only rarely as national writers. National delegates

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<sup>105</sup> *PVSSP*, 65.

<sup>106</sup> *PVSSP*, 45.

<sup>107</sup> Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire*.

reported on the development of female writers, but in the same way they reported on factory writing circles and minor national minorities. In fact, national delegates included female writers much the same way Russian delegates included the national writers – in their own section, after covering the speech’s primary topic. Vladimir Stavskii’s report “On the Literary Youth of Our Country” analyzed different types of Soviet Russian literature by young writers, categorizing them by genre and subject, before briefly turning to the nationalities. These were grouped by nationality, with considerably less attention to subject. His description of Azerbaijani young writers typifies this process, but with the addition of female writers. He first lists a string of authors, then singles out two to describe their work. Finally, he adds: “Появляются в литературе и молодые поэтессы-тюрчанки. Таковы М. Гильбази и Р. Нигяр, воспевающие в своих произведениях победу пролетарской революции и освобождение женщин Востока. Сборник стихов Нигяр и Гильбази выходит в Азгизе.”<sup>108</sup> [Young (Azerbaijani) Tiurkic poetesses are also appearing in literature. Such are M. Gulbazi and R. Nigiar, who celebrate the victory of the proletarian revolution and the liberation of women of the East. Azgiz is publishing a collection of poems by Nigiar and Gulbazi.] The rare national female writers, who apparently deserved mention precisely because they were rare, were both subordinate to the question of national literature as a whole and, like national writers, read primarily as representatives of their category. While this is hardly unusual, it placed an additional burden on female writers.

The delegations themselves were overwhelmingly male. Much of this points to the restrictions women still faced; the female writers mentioned tended to be young. But many of the national delegations included several young writers, just not female ones. More importantly, delegations made an effort to represent the multiple nationalities from each territory, so it wasn’t a question of insularity. The lack of female national writers also suggests that Soviet discourse lacked ways to communicate multiple modes of marginal identity – delegates could be national, or female, but not both. Identities were nested, not overlapping. If this is true, then it may be precisely the celebration of Soviet literature as multinational and the resulting focus on national literatures that limited female representation at the Congress. Over half the delegates were non-Russian; less than four percent were female. National diversity meant that the Congress included only the most dominant figures from each national community, and those figures were male.<sup>109</sup>

From this perspective, Marietta Shaginian is especially interesting. Shaginian was one of the few Russian speakers to focus on the Soviet national literatures in their speech and one of the only female writers to speak at all. Despite her multi-ethnic (Russian and Armenian) heritage and writings on Soviet Armenia, Shaginian positioned herself as Russian writer at the Congress. Like the other Russian speakers, she used the pronoun “us” in ways that implicitly excluded national writers. She announced that the Congress was “совершенно неожиданно для нас открывает нам абсолютно новый путь...”<sup>110</sup> [completely unexpectedly opening an absolutely new path for us...] This path was that of the national literatures, which was hardly new or unexpected to national writers. Continuing, Shaginian explained, “Съезд поставил нас лицом к лицу с нашими товарищами по перу, пишущими на десятках языков, отличных от

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<sup>108</sup> *PVSSP*, 594.

<sup>109</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s concept of *kyriarchy* has helped me theorize the intersections between gender and nationality at the Congress and, indeed, in Soviet culture as a whole. Schüssler Fiorenza used *kyriarchy* to discuss how mono-hierarchical systems like patriarchy, religious structures, and heteronormativity interact. When in conflict, individuals tend to invoke the systems in which they have the highest relative power, so that while they may be devoted to dismantling one of those systems, their actions result in reinforcing the *kyriarchy* as a whole. Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (1992).

<sup>110</sup> *PVSSP*, 206.

русского.”<sup>111</sup> [The Congress has placed us face to face with our comrades by the pen, who write in dozens of languages other than Russian.] Establishing her rhetorical claims to the Russian center allowed Shaginian to lobby for the importance of the national literatures from a purportedly unbiased position. She argued that Soviet literature needed the national literatures: “Когда-то враги и предатели нашего дела утверждали, что невозможно построить социализм в одной стране. Но помимо всего прочего они забыли тот факт, что наша страна сама, *внутри себя*, располагает сравнительными единицами культур, состоит из целого ряда народностей...”<sup>112</sup> [Enemies and traitors of our project once insisted that it’s impossible to build socialism in one country. But apart from everything else, they forgot the fact that our country itself, *in itself*, has at its disposal comparative instances of culture, consists of an entire array of nationalities...] National diversity was key to Soviet literature’s strength and Russian writers ignored it at their peril. The pressing question of national languages meant that national writers, like Pavlo Tychina, had developed sophisticated strategies for modernizing and popularizing their literary language, while maintaining its beauty. Studying these works could only improve Russian. Second, Shaginian argued, even the less successful aspects of national literature had something to contribute to the center. Because national writers were following central models, their failures revealed problems with critical directives. She cited the Georgian writer Niko Lordkipanidze’s intention to write a sequel to his novel *Down with the Corn Republic!* as an example of Soviet writers’ attempt to fit all of Soviet history into one work. “Мы видим и тут, что литература националов, подхватив и обнажив наш прием, помогла нам осознать и увидеть его ненужность.”<sup>113</sup> [We see here that national literature, having taken and laid bare our literary device, has helped us to recognize and perceive its uselessness.] Healthy theory should produce healthy literature even at the margins. Finally, she argued that the national literatures better tackled the question of international brotherhood. Fascist Germany, Shaginian explained, was writing works that illustrated its national ideals “на идеале любви в пределах чистой расы, на идеале любви белокурого немца к белокурой немке.”<sup>114</sup> [in the ideal of love within the bounds of the pure race, in the ideal love of German blonds and blondes.] Soviet literature was still having trouble conceptualizing and representing properly socialist love, but the answer lay in relations *between* Soviet nationalities. Children at Pioneer camp, she explained, formed tender relationships across national boundaries. “Когда наши дети вырастут и станут сознательными, они эту расширенную нежность, эту инстинктивную любовь сделают *новой формой гуманизма*, новой формой эроса.”<sup>115</sup> [When our children grow up and become conscious members of society, they will make this broadened affection, this instinctive love the new form of humanism, the new form of eros.] National literature would awaken this humanism in the reader and help all Soviet writers represent it. Shaginian concluded her speech by calling for a permanent commission “для собирания и сравнительного изучения материалов всех национальных литератур нашего Союза с привлечением в нее крупнейших филологов, историков, лингвистов и лучших наших критиков и литературоведов.”<sup>116</sup> [...to collect and compare materials from all the national literatures of

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<sup>111</sup> *PVSSP*, 207.

<sup>112</sup> *PVSSP*, 207. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>113</sup> *PVSSP*, 208.

<sup>114</sup> *PVSSP*, 208.

<sup>115</sup> *PVSSP*, 209. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>116</sup> *PVSSP*, 209. Emphasis in the original.

our Union with the participation of major philologists, historians, linguists, and the best of our critics and literary critics.]

Shaginian's pragmatic defense sidestepped questions of comparative development to argue that national literatures were valuable regardless of their aesthetic merit, not because they represented the nationalities, but because they advanced Soviet literature as a whole. She herself spoke not as a national representative, but as a reader, writer, and critic – and thus instantiated the very argument she was making. However, the success of that argument relied on her authoritative relation to Russian literature.

### *Children's Language*

Although most of the first two full days of the Congress were filled with national reports, one ostensibly multinational report began those two days. Samuil Marshak, a poet and children's writer from Leningrad, gave a report on the state of children's literature. Situating this report between Gorky's opening speech on Soviet literature and the reports on specific Soviet national literatures furthered the developmentalist narrative in which national literatures needed to grow up and attain adult status. Since Marshak was Jewish, it also provided a way to acknowledge one of the largest "national" presences at the Congress without giving them a national report that would need to engage with question of Jewish assimilation into Russian and the national literatures. Marshak's Jewish identity was subsumed by his position as a Russian writer, but he began his pre-Revolutionary career as an explicitly Jewish writer and was an active participant in post-Revolutionary Jewish causes. His Jewishness may well have escaped notice by most of the audience, but those concerned with Jewish representation would have noted it.<sup>117</sup> Marshak acknowledged children's writers, including Yiddish writers, from several republics before focusing his report on Russian children's literature.

Marshak's report had another, more intriguing relationship to the national reports. When describing the ideal form of Soviet children's literature, Marshak introduced a curious phrase. Children, he said, want books in children's language:

Если в книге есть четкая и законченная фабула, если автор не равнодушный регистратор событий, а сторонник одних своих героев и враг других, если в книге есть ритмическое движение, а не сухая рассудочная последовательность, если выход из книги не бесплатное приложение, а естественное следствие всего хода фактов, да еще если ко всему этому книгу можно разыграть как пьесу или превратить в бесконечную эпопею, придумывая для нее все новые и новые предложения, то это значит, что книга написана *на настоящем детском языке*. Поиски этого языка – трудный путь для писателя. Ни собирание отдельных детских словечек и выражений, ни кропотливая запись особенностей поведения ребят, ни коллекционирование анекдотов из жизни очага и школы еще не могут научить писателя *говорить на «детском языке»*.

Во всяком случае это будет не тот язык, который имеют в виду ребята, когда просят: «дайте нам книгу про гражданскую войну или про звезды – *на детском языке*».<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Kornei Chukovskii spoke later at the Congress, so Marshak was obviously not the only delegate who could have been chosen for this report. However Kornei Chukovskii's mixed heritage was considerably less marked to a Russian audience than Samuil Yakovlevich Marshak's.

<sup>118</sup> *PVSSP*, 25. Emphasis added.



If a book has a clear and completed fabula; if the author is not an indifferent recorder of events, but a supporter of one of his characters and an enemy of others; if a book has rhythmic movement, not a dry, logical sequence; if the book's conclusion isn't a free rider, but the facts' natural consequence; and further, if you can act out this book like a play or turn it into an endless epic, imagining more and more new propositions; it means that the book was written *in real children's language*. Finding this language is a difficult path for a writer. No collection of random children's words and expressions, no painstaking recording of the specificities of children's behavior, no collecting anecdotes from the life of the hearth and the school will teach the writer *to speak children's language*.

In any case, it won't be the language the kids mean, when they ask: "Give us a book about the Civil War or the stars – *in children's language*."

His repetition of "детский язык" [children's language] in the context of the national reports suggested that children's language could be seen as somehow equivalent at the Congress to the Ukrainian language, Georgian language, Uzbek language and so on. The developmentalist narrative for national literatures, in which they were seen as Russia's younger siblings, furthers this connection. While Marshak may have been primarily interested in reaching his multinational audience through this image, his definition of children's language parallels the usage of "national in form" as linguistically marked and didactic in purpose.

### **The Role of Russian**

The assumed centrality of Russian literature ran through the entire Congress. This assumption began with Gorky's opening speech. Gorky quoted a letter from an unnamed Tatar writer on the importance, not of national literatures, but precisely of Soviet Russian literature. First, the Tatar wrote, "советскую литературу на русском языке читают теперь не только русские массы, но и трудящиеся всех народов нашего Советского союза..." [Not only the Russian masses are reading Soviet literature in Russian, but also the workers of all the people of our Soviet Union.] Because it was so widely received, Russophone Soviet literature was becoming truly international. "Таким образом советско-пролетарская художественная литература на русском языке уже перестает быть литературой исключительно людей, говорящих на русском и имеющих русское происхождение, а постепенно приобретает интернациональный характер и по своей форме."<sup>119</sup> [In this manner, Soviet proletarian literature in Russian has already ceased to be the literature exclusively of those people speaking in Russian and of Russian origin, and is gradually acquiring an international character even in its form.] Yet Soviet publishers and writers, he continued, were resisting this international transformation. They insisted on treating national writers writing in Russian as second-class members of the collective, to be incorporated only because the government's nationalities policy dictated their inclusion: "Поэтому так называемая апробированная литературная общественность в центре продолжает смотреть на нас как на «этнографический экспонат»."<sup>120</sup> [Thus the so-called approved literary society in the center continues to look at us as an "ethnographic exhibit."] The unnamed writer's letter thus upheld Russian literature as the

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<sup>119</sup> *PVSSP*, 15.

<sup>120</sup> *PVSSP*, 15.

model, while criticizing its practitioners for failing its multinational promise. Russian literature could only fulfill its universal position by being Russian in language only, not in national identity.

Although Soviet literature was all-Union, Gorky named no national writers. His pre-Revolutionary history included only Europeans and Russians. Since Gorky emphasized the importance of national literatures but gave only one national writer to personify them, the unnamed Tatar provided an implicit model for Soviet national literatures. Gorky validated this equivalence, saying “Вероятно под этим письмом готовы подписаться представители литературы всех союзных республик и автономных областей.”<sup>121</sup> [The representatives from the literatures of all the union republics and autonomous regions are probably willing to sign that letter.] In this context, the gaps in the unnamed Tatar’s letter are significant. He asserts his right to respect, publishing opportunities, and critical attention equal to his Russian counterparts, but doesn’t indicate how his work is national, as opposed to Russian. It is tempting to conclude, as many did, that national literatures’ national identity lay exclusively in their writers’ passports. Gorky’s unnamed correspondent supports this analysis because he writes in Russian, not Tatar. In fact, he claims, “Нас, писателей-националов, печатающихся на русском языке, как вам известно, уже десятки и даже сотни.”<sup>122</sup> [There are already tens or even hundreds of us national writers publishing in Russian, as you are well aware.] This grand population was considerably smaller than the number of national writers publishing in their native languages. In fact, of the nineteen Tatar delegates at the Congress, only two wrote in Russian. But by citing a national writer publishing in Russian, Gorky glosses over one of the Congress’ greatest sleights-of-hand: Except for one prominent and deliberate exception, all of the national writers presenting at the Congress speak Russian. Gorky’s Tatar personifies the tension between the celebration of national literatures and demands for increased attention, on the one hand, and the pervasiveness of the Russian language on the other.

Of the 582 delegates, under 35% were Russian, but over 55% wrote in Russian.<sup>123</sup> Much of the difference comes from the delegates with Jewish nationality (113 delegates, or almost 20%), since few of them wrote in their ‘national’ language (24, or 4%). 75% of national delegates wrote in their national language, with the vast majority of the rest writing in Russian. Forty-six delegates (8%) registered as bilingual (or trilingual/quadrilingual) writers, of which the vast majority again wrote in Russian in addition to their native language. These statistics aren’t surprising, given Russian’s central status in education before and during the Soviet period. Still, the 45% of delegates who didn’t write in Russian were expected to speak in Russian for their voices to be heard at the lectern. For all of the discussion *about* national languages, there was surprisingly little *in* national languages.

One notable exception was Suleiman Stal’skii, an illiterate, *ashug* poet from Dagestan who performed a work about the Congress in Lezgian, followed by a Russian translation. Stal’skii was a vivid illustration of national literature, standing at the lectern in his national costume and intoning in a language few in the hall could hope to understand. He physically embodied the Soviet other through an appearance that could have come out of Lermontov or

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<sup>121</sup> *PVSSP*, 16.

<sup>122</sup> *PVSSP*, 15.

<sup>123</sup> These statistics are based on information collected at the Congress and printed in *PVSSP*, 696-708. (See note 2 in this chapter on the number of delegates.) The variation in the exact number of delegates is small enough that the indeterminacy doesn’t undermine these statistics ( $24/570 = 4.21\%$ ;  $24/597 = 4.02\%$ ) unless all of the unidentified delegates wrote in Yiddish, which I doubt.

Tolstoy, while the translation of his song/poem revealed the modern Soviet content within the national form. Stal'skii repeated the image of the delegates coming to Moscow to see or address, in order, Lenin, Stalin, Gorky, and the working class. He then evoked Soviet history in vague symbolic terms: the storm of war, the clean garden of today, approaching the century of youth in purple robes, and his great country awakening from slavery. In the final two quatrains, Stal'skii returned to the image of the writers gathering to conclude with himself at the podium singing in greeting. Bezymenskii read a translation of his poem previously prepared by a translator, then another interpreter summarized Stal'skii's speech.

While the *ashug* performance addressed the delegates as fellow writers, Stal'skii's speech followed the pattern of the various non-delegate greetings throughout the Congress. He praised Soviet achievements in Dagestan: education, the tractor, and liberation from khan-feudalism. The closest thing to a mention of literature was the sentence: “У нас есть школы, есть своя письменность – пишем на родном языке, у нас есть дороги, есть автобусы.”<sup>124</sup> [We have schools, have our own writing – we write in our native language, we have roads, have buses.] More than any other speaker, Stal'skii was meant to be seen and appreciated aesthetically, not critically. He evoked the figure of the mountaineer from Russian literature, deeply infused with the Orientalist and primitivist myth of the noble savage, and that of the folk artist, the naïve genius who produces art without a critical framework. Lelevich gave his biography later in the Congress, including an almost stereotypical anecdote about Stal'skii proving himself to a better educated and mistrustful audience: “Когда несколько десятков лет назад этот бедняк из лезгинского аула сочинил свою первую песню, богачи, заправили аула, не хотели поверить, что голодранец способен творить. Ему пришлось написать специальную песню на заданную местную тему, чтобы доказать, что он вообще способен заниматься поэтическим творчеством.”<sup>125</sup> [A few decades ago, when this poor man from a Lezgian village composed his first song, the rich who ran the village didn't want to believe that this pauper could compose. He had to write a special song on a given local theme to prove that he was capable of engaging in poetic creation.] Stal'skii's image combined the oral tradition with a frequently praised level of aesthetics. In Gorky's concluding speech, he singled out Stal'skii to illustrate the potential of national literatures. “На меня, и — я знаю — не только на меня, произвел потрясающее впечатление ашуг Сулейман Стальский. Я видел, как этот старец, безграмотный, но мудрый, сидя в президиуме, шептал, создавая свои стихи, затем он, Гомер XX века, изумительно прочел их.”<sup>126</sup> [The *ashug* Suleiman Stal'skii made an amazing impression on me, and I know, not just on me. I saw how this elder, illiterate but wise, sat at the presidium and whispers, composing his verses, and then he, the Homer of the twentieth century, brilliantly recited them.] The illiterate elder, both precocious and venerable, collapsed centuries of development, bringing Homer into the age of collectivization. Gorky thus bypassed the problems of modernizing national literatures. Stal'skii's performance was also one of the few moments in the Congress that fully suited the slogan: “national in form, socialist in content.” Both Stal'skii's performance and Gorky's praise met with enthusiastic applause.

Apart from Stal'skii's performance, the only Congress speeches in languages other than Russian were in languages perceived as non-Soviet: French, Danish, German, English, Czech, Japanese, Swedish, Slovak, and Spanish. Only three Soviet delegates gave non-Russian speeches: Stal'skii, an Armenian delegate who gave her speech in French, and a Volga German

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<sup>124</sup> *PVSSP*, 224.

<sup>125</sup> *PVSSP*, 265.

<sup>126</sup> *PVSSP*, 676.

delegate. Since the Armenian delegate spoke on behalf of the Armenian diaspora and the Volga German spoke about the suffering of writers in Fascist Germany, only Stal'skii gave an entire speech as a Soviet national writer in a national language.

Even within their Russian speeches, national delegates only reverted to their native language in isolated phrases that were clearly defined by context. National languages were used for local color, with words that frequently appeared in Russian well before the Revolution, like *aul* and *kishlak* for local villages. Cultural terms with no Russian equivalent were also acceptable, like literary forms and the Kumyk “йыр,” glossed as a *bylina*, which was performed “под аккомпанемент национального инструмента ахачкомуза.”<sup>127</sup> [to the accompaniment of the national instrument *agach kumuz* (a three-stringed wooden instrument)] Literary groups kept their local names, like the Azerbaijani Кзыл калям [Red Pen] and Uzbek “Кзыл юлдус” [Red Star].<sup>128</sup> Newspaper and journal titles similarly remained in the original languages, as did international publications like the “Дейли уоркер”<sup>129</sup> [*Daily Worker*]. Occasionally, speakers also mentioned the titles of literary works in the original language.

Ukrainian and Belorussian appeared in slightly broader usage, presumably because they were the easiest languages for the Russophone audience to assimilate. Kolas concluded his short speech on Belorussian literature with the cry, “Нехай живе дружба народов и шчыльная культурная сувязь всего Советского союза! Нехай живе великая советская литература!”<sup>130</sup> [Long live the friendship of peoples and the close cultural connections of the entire Soviet Union! Long live the great Soviet literature!] Arkadii Liubcheko quoted the enemy poet Malaniuk in Ukrainian without translation.<sup>131</sup> This verse, which Liubchenko condemned as a reactionary defense of a bloodthirsty philosophy, reached the Russian ear through the religious language Ukrainian and Russian shared. The quote thus rang not as specifically Ukrainian, but rather as the voice of a common enemy: their religious past.

Although many delegates discussed the quality of translation and the need for more translators, this issue was never connected to the specific literature quoted in the speeches. Most national speakers quoted their literatures in Russian translation without openly mentioning that fact. Valerii Briusov's translation of the Armenian poet Naapet Kuchak and Gorky's translation of Kupala from the Belorussian were rare instances when the translator was cited, and in each case, the translator's celebrity served to reinforce the work's importance and was thus the probably reason for citing him.<sup>132</sup> While it may seem pedantic to cite unknown translators, the Congress delegates went to the other extreme. They elided the specific acts of translation necessary for the Congress while calling translation necessary in general. This elision rendered the quotations transparent in Russian, as though the translations gave perfect access to the original work.

Soviet translation had to balance national specificity with the assumption that any concept could be equally translated into all languages. After all, if the foundational texts of Marxism-Leninism were more accurate or truer in Russian (or worse, German!) than in the national languages, then either their universal claims were suspect or Soviet claims to internationalism were. The demand for linguistic equivalency collided with the argument for

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<sup>127</sup> *PVSSP*, 265.

<sup>128</sup> *PVSSP*, 130, 164.

<sup>129</sup> *PVSSP*, 341.

<sup>130</sup> *PVSSP*, 161.

<sup>131</sup> *PVSSP*, 353.

<sup>132</sup> *PVSSP*, 105, 160.

linguistic and cultural specificity. Maintaining the national languages assumed a relationship between language and culture: national literatures are important to the extent that they are non-equivalent, and thus cannot be replaced by translations of Russian-language Soviet classics or widespread literacy in Russian itself. The Congress kept this balance by ignoring most specific instances of translation in favor of equivalency, while calling for general translation on the grounds of specificity. While it was acceptable to bemoan the quality of a translation, it was unacceptable to describe a concept or a literary work as untranslatable. Soviet discourse made this approach almost as invisible as the order of speakers or interweaving of ideological praise, but it may leave the Congress as one of the largest comparative literature conferences to ever go without the phrase: “better in the original.” The closest anyone came was a Northern Ossetian delegate, Sarmat Koserati, who described his problems editing the Ossetian translation of Stalin’s report at the Seventeenth Party Congress. He found sixteen different words translating the word “честь” or “честный” [honor, honest]. “Это не оттого, что у нас нет честных людей,” Koserati assured his audience, “а дело в том, что в слово «честь» в языках горцев вкладываются совершенно другие оттенки понятия, и это бы не соответствовало слову, сказанному т. Сталиным.”<sup>133</sup> [This isn’t because we have no honest people, but the problem is that the word “honor” carries completely different shades of meaning in the languages of the mountain peoples, and this wouldn’t correspond with the word uttered by Comrade Stalin.] Koserati described Stalin’s speech as more straightforward and stronger than the options available in Ossetian, which made his anecdote acceptable. Leonid Pervomaiskii quoted some excerpts from Shevchenko, Petefi, and his own translation of Heine into Ukrainian to discuss poetic rhythm and musicality, but he avoided qualitative comparisons.<sup>134</sup>

Toroshelidze’s report on Georgian literature was another noteworthy exception to the general invisibility of translation. When presenting Rustaveli’s “The Knight in Panther Skin,” Toroshelidze first gave the title in Georgian, introduced Georgian terms for the meter, and illustrated Rustaveli’s use of alliteration with two untranslated quotes from the Georgian.<sup>135</sup> This was possible because he emphasized the sound of the lines, not the meaning, but this focus suggested the linguistic specificity of Rustaveli’s work. Even three lines of Georgian stood out from the Congress’ flow of Russian. Toroshelidze’s subsequent discussion of how the Georgians read Russian literature went still further. He talked seriously about the quality of specific translations, retranslating multiple translations of a passage from Lermontov’s “Demon” back into Russian to show how the translators corrected Lermontov’s portrait of Georgia. Although he carefully selected an example from pre-Revolutionary literature that obviously denigrated Georgians, this discussion as a whole implied that, just as the Georgian view of Russian literature was skewed by translation, so too might the Russian view of national literatures be limited or even completely redefined through translation.

Gorky’s speech, with its unnamed Russophone Tatar, thus serves to both encompass and obscure the true breadth of Soviet national literatures at the Congress. The reports on national literatures, which took up most of the next two full days, acknowledged their linguistic complexity. Except for Toroshelidze’s brief quotation of Rustaveli, however, they did so in Russian. National writers spoke about Bashkir drama, Kazakh poetry, Yiddish children’s literature, Tajik criticism... in Russian. The speeches by foreign guests were translated, of course, into Russian. The three levels at the Congress – international, Russian, national –

<sup>133</sup> *PVSSP*, 625.

<sup>134</sup> *PVSSP*, 541.

<sup>135</sup> *PVSSP*, 76. Thanks to Mary Childs for reviewing these lines with me.

thereby enacted the same Russian universality that Gorky's speech proclaimed. By correlating the development of international (predominantly Western) and Russian-language literature, Gorky's speech subtly connected the international representatives to the Russian narrative, while excluding the national literatures.

### ***Between the National and International***

Throughout the Congress, delegates referred or deferred to the international guests, especially those from Western Europe and North America, as though they were there to judge Soviet literature's merit. The international writers confirmed the world importance of Soviet literature through their speeches and their very presence. Although they purportedly helped carry the Congress' message to an international audience, they were more important as a way to communicate to the Soviet audience. Not surprisingly, the organizing committee invited more international writers than came, including literary luminaries like Bertolt Brecht, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Langston Hughes, Upton Sinclair, Stefan Zweig, and Bernard Shaw.<sup>136</sup> André Malraux was probably the best-known of the foreign writers who accepted the invitation. Most of the others were known primarily as socialist writers, a sub-category that bore a similar relation to international literature as a whole, as that of a national literature to Soviet literature as a whole. The American poet Robert Gessner, for example, has left little mark on world literature. The international speeches focused on two things: Soviet (Russian) literature's international prestige and the growth of socialist writers within their national cultures. The Turkish representative Yakub Karaosmanoğlu's speech stood out because he used the national development narrative to introduce Turkish literature to the Congress, instead of assuming that they were already familiar with his national tradition.<sup>137</sup> (To be fair, many of the delegates *were* more familiar with Western European literatures than with the national or Eastern literatures at the Congress, just as they were more likely to know French, English, or German than a – or another – national language. For example, when Willi Bredel gave his speech in German, scattered audience members applauded at appropriate points during the speech, showing their comprehension.<sup>138</sup>) Karaosmanoğlu's speech implicitly affiliated Turkey with the Soviet national cultures, instead of with international authority. The other international speeches took their literature's status as a given.

Soviet national delegates acknowledged this when they used international readership as evidence for their literatures' status. Speakers regularly vaunted their readers beyond Soviet borders. Regional influence had some credibility, but recognition from writers the Russians themselves couldn't recognize was a poor second to the Western European and North American audience. Thus, for example, when Alekberli was explaining that the classical writers Nizami and Fuzuli were in fact Azerbaijani, he used their European and Russian readers to establish their value.<sup>139</sup> Nobody reversed this pattern to boast about a Russian or Asian public reading Western literature; they didn't need to. The status international readership conferred could trump political concerns. Multiple speakers boasted about the broad international audience for Soviet Yiddish writers, without bothering to acknowledge the Jewish diaspora as the primary reason Yiddish writers found such a welcome reception abroad. For example, Klimkovich proclaimed that "... стихи нашего еврейского пролетарского поэта Харика, переведены на десятки языков и

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<sup>136</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 563, l. 25. Orgburo approval of the international invitees, June 2, 1934.

<sup>137</sup> *PVSSP*, 342.

<sup>138</sup> *PVSSP*, 327.

<sup>139</sup> *PVSSP*, 114-5.

печатаются не только у нас, но и за границами Советского союза.”<sup>140</sup> [The poems of our Yiddish proletarian poet Kharik, are translated into dozens of languages and published not only at home, but also beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.] Fefer repeated this formula when discussing Yiddish drama, proclaiming: “Товарищи, нашу литературу читают и любят не только в пределах, но и за пределами Советского союза.”<sup>141</sup> [Comrades, our literature is read and loved not only within the boundaries, but also beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union.] Soviet Yiddish plays were popular in world capitals like New York, Paris, and Buenos Aires, showing the status Yiddish had in world literature, and thus, implicitly, should have in Soviet literature.

The projected hierarchy, with Western European writers at the top and newly emerging national literatures at the bottom, reinforced Russian’s centrality. Although the individual national literatures gave international claims when possible, Russian language was the mode of cross-cultural communication at the Congress and Soviet (Russian) literature mediated between the national and international levels. National delegates had to acknowledge Russian, whereas the other national literatures were frequently invoked only through a vague slogan. Ukrainian delegates were especially prone to illustrating their talks with only Ukrainian and Russian writers, as though the brotherhood of nations were a Russian-Ukrainian duality.<sup>142</sup> Although the Central Asian literatures could have local influence across their borders, Moscow was the Soviet periphery’s window onto Europe. Russian was almost never considered as a national language in its own right, any more than French was invoked as the language of the French nation rather than that of European modernity. One scholar, Ivan Luppol, did raise the possibility of Russian national character, but a character that developed towards Marxism: “Радлов, ныне покойный историк философии, писал, что национальной чертой русских является склонность в сторону этико-религиозных вопросов и мистического их решения. ... Белинский и Чернышевский настаивали на реализме русской мысли. Писарев говорил, что материализм является характерной чертой русских.”<sup>143</sup> [Radlov, the late historian of philosophy, wrote that the Russians’ national characteristic is their tendency toward ethical-religious questions and their mystical solutions... Belinskii and Chernyshevskii insisted on the realism of Russian thought. Pisarev said that materialism is the characteristic trait of the Russians.] By defining Russian national character through Soviet values – realism and materialism – Luppol justified Russian’s culture’s pervasive status. The Russian national character was Soviet: materialist, realist, and ultimately multinational. The equivalency between Russian and Soviet did not negate Soviet national literatures; the Congress incorporated them into one Soviet multinational and multilinguistic literature that could be presented to the international audience through a solely Russian performance.

### **Looking to the Future**

The representation of national literatures reveals a fundamental tension prevalent not only at the Congress, but throughout Soviet culture. The Soviet Union was a bold experiment which allowed for only one set of results: since Marxism was axiomatically correct, socialism had to prove more advantageous for the masses than capitalism. The new Soviet state must, therefore, inevitably better conditions for the proletariat and, as other classes were assimilated, for the

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<sup>140</sup> *PVSSP*, 52.

<sup>141</sup> *PVSSP*, 167.

<sup>142</sup> *PVSSP*, 163, 198, 251-2, 267-9.

<sup>143</sup> *PVSSP*, 259.

country as a whole. If not, then Marxism was fallible, which contradicted the foundation of the state. Simply put, the Soviet Union needed success to confirm the Revolution's rightness. However, the Soviets inherited a low economic baseline, which was soon compounded by a devastating civil war, an inefficiently centralized economy, and the violently destructive process of collectivization. The promised plenty fell far short. Scarce resources could either be directed to the bottom, in accordance with egalitarian principles, or to the top, producing a limited model for what Soviet daily life *should* look like. This meant bureaucrats were continually faced with the difficult decision of whether to improve conditions minimally for the greatest number or maximally for the smallest number. Provide limited access to electricity across the countryside or produce a model mechanized collective farm? Build more barracks to solve the housing crisis or build modern apartments for the lucky few? Improve working conditions for everyone or reward shock workers? Concentrating resources created more effective propaganda, but if the gap between image and reality grew too vast, that propaganda lost impact. Moreover, concentrating resources on those already fortunate contravened the egalitarian principles on which the Party was based. Ideally, of course, there was no tension between focusing on the masses and focusing on the best. In practice, Soviet culture focused on the best within a discursive paradigm that conflated the two, making the best representative of the masses. But since the best was also marked as such, this created a gap in the discourse which could be used to demand resources for both sides.

The Congress can consequently be read as an ongoing debate between established and beginning writers, Russian and national literatures, and advanced and backward cultures within the national literatures over who properly deserves the attention and resources of Soviet literature. As the opening argument in this debate, Gorky's speech suggested that national literatures should get attention, but not necessarily because they had earned it. Literatures that could claim attention through international acknowledgment and/or classical canons did so, while other national literatures fell back on the demands of Soviet political practice to justify their presence. Whatever the position within the Soviet hierarchies, however, national literatures agreed on the need for more attention and resources from the Soviet center. They acknowledged the help of the organizing committee's brigades, but argued that this limited attention was insufficient to fulfill Soviet literature's multinational promise. Moscow needed to promote national literary development; it could do so by becoming an attentive audience.

Throughout the Congress, national writers (and the occasional Russian writer like Shaginian) called for a national section within the central Writers' Union to focus on issues affecting the national literatures and to produce a theoretical framework to help them develop. As Majidi pointed out, "В Союзе имеется более 50 национальностей, у которых только после революции появилась письменность. Только после революции они начали понимать, что такое литература! Разве им не нужна помощь по принципиальным вопросам литературы?"<sup>144</sup> [There are over fifty nationalities in the Union that gained a written language only after the Revolution. Only after the Revolution did they begin to understand what literature is! Don't they need help with the principal questions of literature?] He was far from alone in suggesting that central Soviet criticism needed to turn towards the periphery. Yakov Bronshtein complained that "[Н]аша руководящая, центральная критика определенно сужает диапазон своего анализа, снижает уровень своей критики, игнорируя богатейший опыт литературного движения СССР."<sup>145</sup> [...our leading, central critics definitely narrow the

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<sup>144</sup> *PVSSP*, 136.

<sup>145</sup> *PVSSP*, 219.



range of their analysis and lower the level of their criticism, ignoring the rich experience of literary movement in the USSR.] As he aptly explained, the Soviet (Russian) critics wanted the nationalities to bear the responsibility for making Soviet literature multinational:

Всесоюзные производственные совещания, которые предшествовали нашему съезду, почти совершенно не учитывали многообразного богатейшего опыта литературной практики в республиках. Обычно в таких случаях что-то лепечут невнятное про национальную форму, при этом кивают на нас, «националов», — дескать этим делом должны заниматься мы. А почему, смею спросить, руководящую московскую критику, почему этим делом именно мы должны заниматься?

Белинский говорил, что чем литературное произведение выше в художественном отношении, тем оно «национальнее». Но ставила ли когда-нибудь наша руководящая критика проблемы национальной формы в свете проблеме художественности? Нет, товарищи, не ставила.<sup>146</sup>

The All-Union production meetings, which preceded our Congress, almost completely ignored the diverse and rich experience of literary practice in the republics. Usually in such cases they babble something jumbled about national form, with a nod at us, “the nationals,” as if to say that we should deal with this. And why, may I be so bold as to ask the leading Moscow critics, why should we specifically be the ones to deal with this issue?

Belinsky said that the better a literary work is artistically, the more “national” it is. But have our leading critics ever considered the problem of national form in the realm of the problem of artistic merit? No, comrades, they have not.

Questions of national literature, Bronshtein argued, were too important to be relegated to national writers. Criticism was Moscow’s responsibility and it needed to rise to meet it. Bruno Yasenskii furthered the question of how critics should approach the national literatures, explaining that although the center needed to work on this topic, viewing it *from* the center was inadequate. Writers, he explained, accepted as axiomatic the need to do local research before writing about the Far East or Far North. “В отличие от этого мне ни разу не случилось встретить критика, который, собираясь дать критическую оценку произведению, скажем о Дальнем Севере, поехал бы туда сверить на месте систему образов художника с действительностью.”<sup>147</sup> [In contrast, I have never met a critic who, when preparing to critically assess a work about, say, the Far North, went there to compare the artist’s imagery with reality on site.] To properly respond to literature by and about the periphery, critics needed to travel.

Even local experience was no substitute for language. Throughout the Congress, writers called for greater language study to facilitate translation and critical engagement with fraternal literatures. Sergei Tretiakov’s call for education was typical and structured like an ideological slogan. “[X]очу сделать конкретное предложение: *каждому писателю – второй язык*. Надо было по существу предложить каждому писателю три языка: один – кроме родного — внутрисоюзный и один зарубежный язык.”<sup>148</sup> [...I want to make a concrete proposal: *a*

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<sup>146</sup> *PVSSP*, 219.

<sup>147</sup> *PVSSP*, 277.

<sup>148</sup> *PVSSP*, 345.

*second language for every writer.* In principle, every writer should have three languages: in addition to the native one, one intra-union and one foreign language.] This would create a population capable of appreciating and responding to works in the original, as well as translating them for the broader (Russian-speaking) public. Although there were calls for translation routes bypassing the center, particularly among the Caucasian languages, the primary focus on translation was still into and out of Russian.

In his closing speech, Gorky called for three new additions to Moscow's literary scene. One, a theater that would perform classical dramas, expressed the international status the Congress hoped to achieve. The other two responded to the needs of the national writers: "Для начала нужно бы организовать в Москве «Всесоюзный театр», который показал бы на сцене, в драме и комедии жизнь и быт национальных республик в их историческом прошлом и героическом настоящем."<sup>149</sup> [First of all we need to organize in Moscow an All-Union Theater, which would show on the stage, in drama and comedy, the life and *byt* of the national republics in their historical past and heroic present.] This would help national literatures continue their education of the public through performance. "Далее: необходимо издавать на русском языке сборники текущей прозы и поэзии национальных республик и областей, в хороших переводах."<sup>150</sup> [Further: it is essential to publish in Russian collections of current prose and poetry from the national republics and regions, in good translations.] Both proposals were met with applause. When concluding his speech, Gorky returned to these proposals, specifying that the anthologies should be published "не менее четырех книг в год, и дать альманахам титул «Союз» или «Братство» с подзаголовком: «Сборники современной художественной литературы Союза социалистических советских республик»."<sup>151</sup> [no less than four books a year, and give the almanacs the title "Union" or "Brotherhood" with the subtitle "Collections of contemporary literature of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."] These anthologies, like the theater, had the benefit of both increasing the audience for national literatures, and increasing their funding through royalties and Russian-publication stipends. Ultimately, Gorky's vision of the new union incorporated national writers into the Moscow center via Russian.

The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers was a celebration of ideological and theoretical discourse, actual literary production, and the symbolic codification of the many literatures comprising Soviet literature as a whole. Focusing on its homogenizing proclamations of socialist realism as a literary method obscures the variety of ways in which writers adapted, negotiated, and even ignored the official categories to represent their national traditions and cohorts. Gorky and, by extension, Moscow saw the Congress as ritualizing the performance and expression of national identity through literature and endorsing national specificity while retaining Russian as the paradigmatic center. The span of Soviet national literatures replaced creative diversity to prove the health and progress of Soviet literature as a whole. This goal never wholly coincided with those of the national writers, who sought greater attention and justification of their national literary projects, not just acknowledgment and validation. The negotiation between these forces created a polyvalent performance, and left space for multiple voices within an apparently seamless discourse. The Congress' duration further enabled the complex polyphony of individual literatures within the presentation of Soviet multinational

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<sup>149</sup> *PVSSP*, 676.

<sup>150</sup> *PVSSP*, 676-7.

<sup>151</sup> *PVSSP*, 681.

literature, as different speakers aimed their messages at a diverse and frequently conflicting set of audiences.

In his speech to the Congress, the Georgian poet Mitsishvili proclaimed that national writers had a great responsibility: “В наш героический век писатель и поэт как служители своего класса быть может обязаны завоевать свое место не только в истории литературы своего народа, но и в истории этого народа вообще; быть может литератор станет и Ахиллом и Гомером одновременно...”<sup>152</sup> [In our heroic century the writer and poet, as servants of their class, may be required to win their place not only in the literary history of their people, but in the general history of that people; perhaps the writer will become simultaneously Achilles and Homer...] This dual role was essential for most national writers. For many of them, becoming part of Soviet literary history *was* earning a place in their nation’s history. The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers provided a historic stage for presenting both their national literatures and themselves as writers.

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<sup>152</sup> *PVSSP*, 156.

### THE AZERBAIJANI DELEGATION

Çox keçmişəm bu dağlardan,  
Durna gözlü bulaqlardan;  
Eşitmişəm uzaqlardan  
Sakit axan arazları;  
Sınamışam dostu, yarı...

El bilir ki, sən mənimsən,  
Yurdu, yuvam, məskənim sən!  
Anam, doğma vətənim sən!  
Ayrılarımı könül candan?  
Azərbaycan, Azərbaycan!

[...]

Dağlarının başı qardır,  
Ağ örpəyin buludlardır.  
Böyük bir keçmişin vardır;  
Bilinməyir yaşın sənin,  
Nələr çəkmiş başın sənin.

Düşdün uğursuz dillərə,  
Nəs aylara, nəs illərə.  
Nəsillərdən nəsillərə  
Keçən bir şöhrətin vardır;  
Oğlun, qızın bəxtiyardır...

Hey baxıram bu düzlərə,  
Ala gözlü gündüzlərə;  
Qara xallı ağ üzlərə.  
Könül istər şer yazsa;  
Gəncləşirəm yazsa-yaza...

I have often traversed these hills  
And passed these springs with crane-blue eyes  
From a distance I can make out  
The Aras river's quiet surge;  
My calling friend and lover is...

The people know that you are mine,  
You are my home, my nest, my hearth!  
You are my mother, my homeland!  
Can the heart be split from its soul?  
Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!

[...]

There is snow capping the mountains,  
The clouds wrap them in a white veil.  
You have a mighty history;  
Nobody knows what you have lived,  
Or what has befallen your head.

Ugly tongues have fallen on you,  
How many months, how many years.  
From generations to the next  
There is a glory handed down;  
Your son, daughter are fortunate...

So, with daylight's hazel eyes  
I watch over the steppes and plains,  
The white faces speckled with black.  
The heart wants to write poetry;  
I will grow youthful by writing...

– Samed Vurghun<sup>1</sup>  
from “Azərbaycan,” 1935

<sup>1</sup> Vurğun, Səməd. *Seçilmiş əsərləri: beş cildə* (Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, 2005), 1:176-77.

The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers presented a vast array of nationalities. Within the overwhelmingly repeated common narrative, each delegation had its own history, just as each individual delegate had his or her own personal trajectory. In fact, it is difficult to limit each delegation and delegate to one narrative. Individuals and institutions craft narratives to explain and define themselves and each other. The resulting explanations borrow from cultural and literary models, obscure or emphasize certain aspects, compete, and overlap. The delegations expanded substantially in the summer before the Congress because individuals were jockeying for position, but one of the main ways to claim a seat was by offering a competing narrative of national literature to represent. The history of one delegation can by no means represent the full breadth of experiences at the Congress, let alone within Soviet literature as a whole. But it is precisely the failure to represent that breadth which allows a case study to inform our reading of the Congress as a polyphonic event where the common narrative fails to subsume the national and individual voices. The subset of issues offered within one national delegation confirms the complexity of the larger event, without reducing it to that subset.

For this purpose, Azerbaijan is an excellent case study. Much of the work done on Soviet national literatures focuses on Ukraine, for several reasons: it was the largest nationality after Russian; partly because of this, it led the campaign to include the national literatures; it is relatively accessible for Slavists, coinciding with traditional academic field divisions; its literary history conforms to the Russian model in a way convenient for Soviet-era scholarship; and its primary identity narratives conflict with Russian ones, making it an excellent example of marginal discourse for post-Soviet scholars. There is also some interesting recent scholarship on Jewish identity, but the tensions between Russian and Soviet discourse of Jewish national and religious identity, Yiddish culture, varying degrees of assimilation, and antisemitism make it an unusual case and one which, in any event, did not have an independent delegation at the Congress. Georgia and Armenia offer relatively discrete identities, with clear national histories and literary canons stretching back to antiquity, and a crossroads position between European and Middle Eastern modes of thought. However, precisely their clarity and antiquity make them exceptional in the Soviet spectrum of nationalities. Azerbaijan occupies a more intermediate position. Although it could and did claim writers from its territory working through the centuries, its national and literary identity were substantially less developed and less discrete than its Transcaucasian counterparts. At the same time, Azerbaijan had a literate and literary history to incorporate into its Soviet identity, unlike the fledgling nationalities whose representatives could only point to folklore and post-Revolutionary literacy.

From a cultural perspective, Azerbaijan was a crossroads – a substantially multiethnic and multiconfessional population, set in the Caucasus, but Turkic and thus linguistically and culturally aligned with Central Asia. Azerbaijan was economically valuable to the Soviet Union for its agricultural zone for cotton production and, of course, its oil fields. The region's very name refers to its oil deposits and the flare-ups resulting from occasional vents: the land of fire. The literary creation of Soviet Azerbaijan was the process of refining raw historical material, only some of which fit the national story, into Soviet fuel without losing its power or specificity.

This chapter will read the Azerbaijani delegation as the product of this process: a full, national literature with an official literary community and acceptable literary past. By 1934, Soviet Azerbaijani literature had established its canons and its cadres, and was therefore capable of representing itself in ways that reinforced the all-Union and local power structures, allowed complex position-takings, and enabled writers (although, of course, not all of them) to produce works that intersected multiple discourses. This does not mean the literary establishment had

resolved *any* of the tensions underlying Azerbaijani literature, merely that it had resolved how to present or mask those tensions so that it could fulfill its mandate of cultural production and national representation. On the contrary, the delegation to the All-Union Congress personified many of the tensions animating Azerbaijani literature.

It is misleading to read the works from the 1930s as either Azerbaijani literature during its Soviet period or as Soviet literature in its Azerbaijani iteration, without considering the continual interplay between these two modes. Most scholarship, however, focuses on one or the other paradigm. Azerbaijani and Turkish scholars tend, understandably, towards the former: reading the 1930s as a stage in Azerbaijani literature that preceded and survived Soviet control. This is the problem with the only English-language monograph on Soviet Azerbaijani literature, Maliheh Tyrrell's highly informative *Aesopian Literary Dimensions of Azerbaijani Literature of the Soviet Period, 1920-1990*.<sup>2</sup> Tyrrell provides a politically-oriented survey of Soviet Azerbaijani literature, consistently identifying two modes of interpreting Azerbaijani texts and presenting the pro-Soviet interpretation as the surface level and the anti-Soviet interpretation as the deep level. This position is a familiar one to contemporary Azerbaijanis, who would prefer to include their Soviet era writers into Azerbaijani literature as heroic oppositional figures. It assumes a continuous Azerbaijani literary identity that was masked with Soviet characteristics designed to fool Moscow, but not Baku. But this position ignores the extent to which writers used Soviet discourse to take positions relative to each other and to incorporate an attractive view of literary history, one which made them the pinnacle of Azerbaijani cultural achievement. By treating one discourse as deeper, and thus presumably more central to the works' meaning, Tyrrell presumes that Soviet Azerbaijani literature was Azerbaijani first, Soviet second.

Soviet scholars, and – to the limited extent they have acknowledged it at all – post-Soviet Western scholars incline towards an opposing framework: viewing Azerbaijani literature as derivative of Soviet (Russian) literature, or tacitly including Azerbaijan in the list of nations forged on the Soviet anvil and thus a Soviet product. Most common of all, of course, is for scholars of Soviet literature to ignore national cases entirely, especially those like Azerbaijan which didn't produce a writer embraced on an All-Union level.<sup>3</sup> Yet Soviet literature needs to acknowledge the complexity of its national literatures. Soviet Azerbaijani literature was Azerbaijani Soviet literature – both fully Soviet and fully Azerbaijani. These modes do not form concentric or even overlapping symbolic networks within individual works; they coincide to create a new mode of signification.

The best-known of Soviet Azerbaijani writers – as measured by his status in Moscow, which granted him the first Russian-language academic edition of collected works for any Azerbaijani writer – Samed Vurghun gained his prominence by mastering this new mode.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Maliheh Tyrrell, *Aesopian Literary Dimensions of Azerbaijani Literature of the Soviet Period, 1920-1990* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000). There are several English-language books about Azerbaijani literature published in Baku, but they are not academic monographs. Instead, they follow a textbook format, anthologize translated works, or translate monographs originally published in Azerbaijani.

<sup>3</sup> Most national writers famous on the all-Union level were, in fact, part a group of national writers writing in Russian in the late Soviet period. This group included the Azerbaijani writer Chingiz Huseinov, but the only real scholarship on his role in this movement is his own and the entire phenomenon deserves more attention than I can grant here. Erika Haber's *The Myth of the Non-Russian: Iskander and Aitmatov's Magical Universe* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003) delves into this phenomenon. Although I disagree with some of her conclusions, her book gives an excellent framework for national literary adaptation in the 1970s and later.

<sup>4</sup> In Azerbaijani, Səməd Vurğun. Where possible, I have conformed to established English names, like Jafar Jabbarly (Cəfər Cəbbarlı). Other writers discussed in this chapter include: Zibeydə xanım, Xaqani Şirvani, Nizami Gəncəvi, Məhəmməd Füzuli, Mirzə Şəfi Vazeh, Əli Nazim, Mehdi Hüseyn, Süleyman Rüstəm, Məmməd Ələkbərli,

Vurghun's poetry built upon earlier efforts to fuse Soviet and Azerbaijani elements, working within the newly possible unified framework of Soviet Azerbaijani identity. In his 1935 poem "Azerbaijan," the "tractor and nightingale" of Abu al-Qasim Lahuti's complaint at the Congress work in harmony. This twenty-two stanza poem, which Vurghun originally envisioned as the prologue to a longer work, is widely considered one of Vurghun's masterpieces and was one of the main works representing Azerbaijani literature at the all-Union level. "Azerbaijan" combines Vurghun's three main themes: the land, his love, and his role as a poet. The landscape it depicts is both idyllic and dynamic, one that produces cotton and young writers:

Hey baxıram bu düzlərə,  
Ala gözlü gündüzlərə;  
Qara xallı ağ üzlərə.  
Könül istər şer yaza;  
Gəncləşirəm yaza-yaza...<sup>5</sup>

So, with daylight's hazel eyes  
I watch over the steppes and plains,  
The white faces speckled with black.  
The heart wants to write poetry;  
I will grow youthful by writing...

The poem moves around the country, but primarily juxtaposes the mountains (including Karabagh) with Baku. Baku's power and electricity flow out into the nature surrounding it, flooding it with light and productivity:

Bir dön bizim Bakıya bax,  
Sahilləri çıraq-çıraq,  
Buruqların hayqıraraq  
Nərə salır boz çöllərə,  
İşıqlanır hər dağ, dərə.<sup>6</sup>

Now turn and look towards Baku  
Its coasts illuminated bright,  
The oil derricks crying out,  
Carpeting the dull, empty steppe,  
Lighting each mountain, each valley.

The bucolic landscape of heavy industry is, of course, a Soviet literary trope, as is the poet's sublime position as he surveys the entwined processes of industrialization and collectivization. But Vurghun maintains an Azerbaijani voice within the Soviet discourse, using the glories of the Caucasus and, especially, classical literary figures to ground the poem in Azerbaijani soil:

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Salman Mümtaz, Əhməd Triniç, Əli Səbri Qasımov, Mikayıl Rəfilı, Qantəmir (Qafur Əfəndiyev), Abdülbaki Yusuf, Simurğ (Tağı Şahbazi), Mikayıl Müşfiq, and Seid Ordubadı. The Turkish poet's real name is Nâzım Hikmet.

<sup>5</sup> Vurğun, *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 1:178. My poor translations are intended only to make the works discussable for a non-Azerbaijani reading audience, not to properly convey the imagery, musicality, or structure of the original. The published English translations of "Azerbaijan" all change some of the images I would like to discuss and are thus unsuitable for my primary task.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 1:179.

Ölməz könül, ölməz əsər,  
Nizamilər, Füzulilər!  
Əlin qələm, sinən dəftər,  
De gəlsin hər nəyin vardır,  
Deyilən söz yadigardır.<sup>7</sup>

Immortal heart, immortal works,  
The Nizamis, the Fuzulis!  
Your hand a pen, your breast notebook  
To receive everything there is,  
The spoken word is a memorial.

“Azerbaijan” resolves the tension between native love that Azerbaijan inspires and the progressive narrative that Sovietization inspires. This is the gaze Vurghun turns on Baku – one informed by all of Azerbaijan’s literary heritage. Deliberately taking up the mantle of past generations and employing their forms, their symbols, and their references helps Vurghun present himself as not just Soviet, and not just Azerbaijani, but explicitly both. Literature, Vurghun suggests, will solve the problem of Soviet national identities.

This chapter will examine the cultural forces shaping Soviet Azerbaijani literary identity, look at some of the ways the delegation to the 1934 Congress in Moscow expressed the tensions and syntheses animating that identity, and finally return to read “Azerbaijan” within Samed Vurghun’s oeuvre as a model for Soviet Azerbaijani literature after the Congress. Although a comprehensive review of Soviet Azerbaijani literature would require another dissertation, I hope that this survey will nevertheless illustrate my call for reading Soviet national literatures specifically, not just as part of the broader Soviet project.

### **Azerbaijani Culture**

For most of its history, Azerbaijan was best understood as a region, not a nation or nationality. Divided and united through various empires, the region’s people were shaped both by migration and by cultural transmission into a mix of Turkic and local ethnicities. Control of the region volleyed between the Islamic caliphate, Iran, the Mongolian khans, Turkic and Ottoman empires, the Russian empire, and brief periods of divided local self-governance. Russia’s late eighteenth and early nineteenth century expansion into the region met with fierce resistance, so that even outside the official periods of outright war, colonial governance was little different from battle. Russia ruled what became Soviet Azerbaijan (as opposed to Iranian Azerbaijan) under martial law until the 1840s, and continued strict policies until the Revolution.

The 1870s saw an oil rush in the Baku oil-fields, bringing Russian and foreign businesses to the region. These businesses were not limited to drilling and refineries; the oil boom fueled an explosion of construction, banks, and shipping firms. These industries needed both skilled and unskilled labor, drawing a small but potentially powerful international proletariat from surrounding areas. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a clear cultural divide between Baku and the rest of Azerbaijan, which remained largely agricultural. The Russian vision for Baku transformed certain realms of culture, while restricting others. At the same time, a small Turkic intelligentsia was exploring nationalist, pan-Turkic, and jadidist theories with the hope that Azerbaijan could eventually shape its own future. This group shared Turkic cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 1:178.



values, an aesthetic derived from Persian and Ottoman models, and a politics informed by the Russian colonial experience.

When the Russian Revolution hit, Azerbaijan's government went through several iterations. The Russian Provisional Government named a Transcaucasian administrative unit in March, 1917. After the Bolsheviks seized control in October (or November, depending on the calendar), the Transcaucasian Commissariat was in control of the region, with the Baku City Council governing cosmopolitan Baku.<sup>8</sup> Various factions armed themselves, with tensions increasing until March, 1918, when a violent battle (Azerbaijan currently refers to these events as genocide) established the pro-Soviet Baku Commune. Numerous local political and ethnic groups were fighting for control of the area, including the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, Armenian Dashnak revolutionaries, liberal Muslim parties (Musavat, Ahrar), conservative Muslims (Ittihad), and Muslim communists. Larger powers were also interested in acquiring the Baku oilfields, including the Ottomans, Germans, and British, and they used both direct military force and strategic support of local movements to advance their claims. Azerbaijan declared independence in May, 1918, regaining control of Baku later that year. The Azerbaijan People's Republic, more commonly translated as the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to distinguish it from various Communist "people's republics," was constantly under military threat from all sides. The liberal Musavat Party, named for equality (*müsavat*) won a majority in parliament, leading later Soviets to refer to the brief period of Azerbaijani independence as Musavatism. The Musavat Party was founded on pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic principles, with the former seen as a necessary step towards the latter, but by 1918, it emphasized national and cultural autonomy and liberal modernization. The Musavat government was officially secular. It worked to build a modern state, granted women the vote, and focused on education as the path to a strong independent Azerbaijan.

Independent Azerbaijan's fledgling army was no match for violent territorial battles with Armenia (and Armenians, who weren't always the same force or working for the same goals as "Armenia"), the Caucasian front of the broader war between the Red and White Armies, and international interest in Baku's resources. The Red Army invaded Azerbaijan in April, 1920, under the guise of protecting the interests of the international proletariat working in the oil fields. Once Soviet control stabilized, new concepts of national identity flooded Azerbaijan.

### ***Defining Azerbaijani National Identity***

Azerbaijani national identity was complicated by overlapping forms of affiliation that often took priority. Under the Russian empire, anti-imperial sentiment largely manifested within broader social movements committed, at least in theory, to modernizing the region beyond Azerbaijan's borders. The jadidist movement, named after the Arabic word for "new" because they advocated new teaching methods, was devoted to modernizing Islamic education and, by extension, culture as a whole. Originating in Volgan and Crimean Tatar regions, it quickly spread throughout the Russian Empire as both a pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic movement, and as series of national movements.<sup>9</sup> There was, in fact, rarely a clear distinction between pan-Turkic, pan-Turanist and

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<sup>8</sup>Audrey Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 82-3. Altstadt provides a much more detailed account of Azerbaijan's complicated history.

<sup>9</sup>Adeeb Khalid's *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998) makes a more sophisticated analysis of this movement's intersection with nationality in his chapter "Imagining the Nation," 184-215. Although this work focuses (as the title suggests) on Uzbekistan, much of Khalid's analysis fits the Azerbaijani case.

pan-Islamist efforts. The terms have different connotations: pan-Islamism emphasizes religion, pan-Turanism includes the non-Turkic peoples of Central Asia, and pan-Turkism ostensibly supports an ethnic or linguistic identity. In practice, however, reformist intellectuals throughout the region pursued similar programs: cultural modernization, education, moderate religious reform, and increased autonomy from Russian rule. The question of what form their modern, independent state would take was secondary to the immediate problems of a predominantly illiterate and rural society. None of these movements engaged a large base, but they were conceptually influential and many of the individuals involved in pre-Soviet Azerbaijani reform were by necessity included in the early process of Soviet modernization.<sup>10</sup>

For the proverbial masses, as opposed to the thin swath of educated Azerbaijanis who drove the reform movements, religious and rural/urban identities were more important. There was a vast cultural gulf between the peasant majority of Azerbaijan and multicultural, trade and industry-fueled Baku, despite the regular influx of rural Azerbaijanis as unskilled labor. Whether the Turkic, Muslim Azerbaijani population viewed itself as through ethnic, national, religious, cultural, economic, or geographic lenses rarely impacted the ongoing tensions between the various cultural groups in the region, especially under Russian rule. Although the tsarist government promoted Russification, this was rarely successful in the Caucasus. Russia exacerbated the conflicts between religious groups, and thus ethnic ones, by treating them unequally and imposing additional restrictions on Muslims. In 1857, Russian regulations allowed Georgians and Armenians to oversee censorship in their languages, but not the Muslim population. Apart from the official preference for Orthodox Christians, the possibility of enemy influence also dictated a stricter approach to Turkic language materials. Texts published in the Ottoman empire had to go through Odessa for censorship, substantially reducing the works available.<sup>11</sup> Under Alexander II, only half the seats in the newly instituted local parliament (Duma) could be held by non-Christians although Muslims comprised over 80% of the population. Their allotment was subsequently reduced to one third of the seats.<sup>12</sup> Turkic-language press was banned until 1905.<sup>13</sup> Azerbaijani-Armenian conflicts, which frequently provoked bloodshed, were religious, socio-economic, national, and occasionally the result of Russian pressure. As Audrey Altstadt explains it, “Both communities wished to alter the status quo but in different ways. The Azerbaijanis wished to alter it at the Russians’ expense; the Armenians, at the Azerbaijanis’.”<sup>14</sup> This wasn’t because of an intrinsic alliance between the Russians and Armenians. Rather, the Azerbaijanis stood to gain from independence in a Muslim region, while the Armenians needed Russian support against the Ottomans and Iranians. During the war period (1917-1920), Armenians also held Azerbaijanis responsible for Turkish atrocities against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, which was one of the forces fueling brutal attacks against Azerbaijani Muslims. When Azerbaijanis took revenge for these attacks by targeting Armenians, it further fueled ethnic tensions between these two groups.

The Bolsheviks exacerbated this divide. Industrial Baku was their regional power base. By the 1913 census, there were more Russians registered in Baku than any other ethnic group, but they comprised only around 35% of the population. There were almost as many Muslims in

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<sup>10</sup> Once Soviet control solidified and newly educated cadres were available, of course, a jadidist or Musavat background was cause for suspicion and persecution.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 43.

the city as Russians, although the census tried to distinguish between Turks and Iranians. Many of those counted as Iranians were Turkic speakers from the region in Iran named Azerbaijan, making this a difficult and misleading distinction. Armenians made up the next largest group, at just under 20%, with Jews, Georgians, Germans, and other nationalities filling out the rest.<sup>15</sup> Since the Muslim workers were mostly unskilled, and thus easily replaced, the pre-Revolutionary politicized proletariat was primarily Russian, Armenian, or Georgian. Muslim workers tended to be more conservative. During the civil war and early Soviet years, the Communist Party and the Red Army contained proportionally few Muslims (or their atheist descendants). The Soviet vision of internationalism conflicted with the version of Islamic cultural modernity that independent Azerbaijan promoted; what the Soviets saw as a political division, Azerbaijanis experienced as an ethnic one.

The Muslim Azerbaijani population thus refined its national identity in opposition to ethnically, religiously, linguistically, and now nationally identified others: the Russians, Armenians, and Iranians. Defining Azerbaijani identity in relation to other Turkic peoples was more complex, which undoubtedly added to pan-Turkism's appeal. Azerbaijanis could distinguish themselves from Iranians linguistically, and from Turkey's Turks religiously. As ethnically and linguistically defined, however, the Azerbaijani nation had more members living in Iran than in Soviet Azerbaijan. Turkey was predominantly Sunni, while Azerbaijan adopted Shi'ism under Iranian shahs several centuries earlier. But since both Soviet Azerbaijan and the newly-founded Republic of Turkey were building modernist, secular states, this wasn't that important a basis for Azerbaijani difference. Indeed, Azerbaijan's colonial oppression under the Russians meant that Azerbaijanis saw themselves as Muslims in contrast to Orthodox Christians, not as Shi'ites in contrast to Sunni Muslims. The atheist Soviet government, meanwhile, could hardly attempt to resurrect this religious division as a source of national identity.

Baku retained a different symbolic register from that of Azerbaijan as a whole. It was an inescapably multicultural city, one that the Soviets claimed as their own conceptually. The Baku Commune entered Russian revolutionary mythology in the form of the twenty-six Baku commissars, only a few of whom were actually commissars. When the Bolsheviks lost control of Baku in July, 1918, this group fled and were ultimately executed by the Whites. Their death was memorialized in Soviet culture as an example of revolutionary martyrdom. They were ceremonially reburied in a Baku monument in 1920, and popularized in Soviet Russian culture through, among other works, a poem by Sergei Esenin and Vladimir Kirshon's 1928 play "City of Winds." However, the commissars were not useful for building Soviet Azerbaijani identity, because only two of them could be claimed as Azerbaijani nationals. Soviet historiography generally overstated the role of the Ottomans in ending the Baku Commune, as a substitute for acknowledging the local, primarily Azerbaijani opposition to Soviet power. This allowed the Soviets to project an image of the Baku Commune potentially allied with Azerbaijani identity, but it couldn't merge these elements.

The Soviet project of nation-building in Azerbaijan was an attempt to create a national identity that would be greater than the sum of regional (Caucasian), ethnic (Turkic), and religious (Muslim) allegiances. Since the Soviets were dedicated to eliminating the latter allegiance, Soviet Azerbaijani national identity had two main elements: the physical land and the symbolic nexus of overlapping larger Caucasian and Turkic identities, each of which was shared with a broader community. Both elements represented Azerbaijan as a crossroads – yet another identity it shared with many regional nationalities. The geographic aspect incorporated economic

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<sup>15</sup> Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 32.

aspects, since by land, Soviet discourse primarily meant the subjugation of nature and territorial distinctness. Azerbaijan fulfilled this trope by incorporating oil and cotton as emblems of the national marriage of worker and peasant, industry and agriculture – a national adaptation of the hammer and sickle.

### **Soviet Azerbaijani Literature**

Throughout the process of building Soviet Azerbaijan, political and literary elites overlapped. Conceptually distinct forces like “the Soviets,” “the Russians,” “pro-Soviet Azerbaijanis,” and “Musavatists” were in fact positions that agents could take within the cultural field, but definitions shifted according to perspective. I use the term “the Soviets” to refer to the collective working towards a strong Soviet identity for Azerbaijan, figures who would all come to define themselves as Soviet by the 1930s, although individual members of that group frequently had other primary goals and allegiances along the way. “Soviet” is thus a discursive position here, not a discreet element of Azerbaijani or all-Union culture. Azerbaijani writers could not ignore the relationships between ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation even if they wanted to, and few wanted to. The liberal intelligentsia that supported independent Azerbaijan from 1918 to 1920 was politically suspect under Soviet rule, but eliminating everyone active during independence would have meant decimating already struggling cultural movements. To encourage Azerbaijani national development as the Marxist-Leninist nationalities policy required, the Soviets had to accommodate those willing to work with the new regime, at least until a generation of purely Soviet writers could replace them. The first writers’ organization essentially continued the Musavat-era organizations and focused on literary production in general, as opposed to explicitly Soviet literature. In 1924, the *Kommunist* newspaper organized a proletarian writers group, Red Pen, named partly in opposition to the Green Pen, a Musavat-era organization that used green as a symbol of Islam. Red Pen subsequently merged with the liberal writers organization, creating a general Association of Azerbaijani Writers, but the two branches failed to reconcile. As RAPP/VOAPP gained power in Moscow in the late 1920s, the proletarian faction of what was now AzAPP increased its attacks. It attacked both obvious targets who were active before Sovietization, like Jjafar Jabbarly, and leftist proletarian writers like Mikail Mushfik. After the April 23, 1932 resolution, the Azerbaijani organizing committee for the new writers’ union was tasked with ending these disputes, but it was only feasible insofar as the committee had something to offer both sides: publishing opportunities, funding, benefits, critical attention. Not surprisingly, political maneuvering, critical disagreements, and personality conflicts continued under the Union of Soviet Writers of Azerbaijan.<sup>16</sup>

Like writers throughout the Soviet Union, Azerbaijani writers had to reconcile their cultural education, with its shared map of literary and historical references; their personal creative desires; a rapidly and painfully evolving society; authority’s demands for useful literary output; and fundamental questions about Azerbaijani literature as a whole. Tyrrell argues that while Russian writers viewed the Soviet project as modernizing and collectivizing, and thus tackled those questions in literature, most Azerbaijani writers experienced Soviet domination as a continuation of Russian imperialism. Their main goal was thus “to preserve and protect their collective culture against Soviet control.”<sup>17</sup> Russian oppositional literature, she suggests, focused on the individual’s relation to the state, while the need to create and represent a clear

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<sup>16</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, ll. 1-3. Alekberli’s September, 1935 report on Soviet Azerbaijani literature to the All-Union Section on Nationalities.

<sup>17</sup> Tyrrell, *Aesopian Literary Dimensions of Azerbaijani Literature*, 32.

national identity superseded the luxury of individualized self-representation for Azerbaijani writers. This is a compelling argument, but Tyrrell consequently underestimates the importance of individual identity within Soviet Azerbaijani literature. The peripheral relation to Moscow didn't replace the question of the individual's position in a mass world; writers still asserted their individual creativity and place within the literary field. However, that field was complicated by national issues. The Azerbaijani field combined many of the issues confronting Soviet national literatures: the need to define a literary language, changing alphabets, confusion over national identity, questions about literary form, and the need to create a cohesive canon integrating multiple languages and multilingual writers and sharing canonical figures with competing nationalities on both sides of the Soviet border. Writers' answers to these issues had to be acceptably Soviet.

### ***What Language Is Azerbaijani?***

The Soviets put substantial effort into completing (or, in some places, beginning) the division of Turkic speech into discrete, internally homogenous languages that coincided with national identity. But this process of national linguistic differentiation took time. While Russian had different terms for Turk (Turkish speaker, from Ottoman lands) and Tjurk (Turkic speaker, from Azerbaijan or Central Asia), Azerbaijani did not. Instead, the term "türk" referred generically to both populations and "türk dili" described the language, with the modifier "osmanlı" [Ottoman] making the distinction explicit as needed. The republic took the regional name, Azerbaijan, but its language was more difficult to identify, let alone standardize. The name of the nation (and thus its correlated language) was indistinct and took decades to settle, with some distinguishing between Azerbaijani and Azeri/Tjurk, which ostensibly included the population living in Iran. (Even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan first declared its language Turkic, then Azerbaijani, so this is by no means settled.) Speakers distinguished the historic language of the Azerbaijani population from Ottoman Turkish because the latter was a formal register that incorporated more Arabic and Persian vocabulary.<sup>18</sup> Language reformers tried to expand this difference by purging Arabic and Persian influences from Azerbaijani Turkic. At the same time as the Soviet language reforms, however, the new Republic of Turkey was also purifying Turkish by replacing Arabic and Persian roots with Turkic ones. Azerbaijani linguists formally rejected unification with Turkish because the Soviet government saw pan-Turkism as a major threat to Soviet authority in Central Asia, but the parallels made the process of modernizing Azerbaijani Turkic more complicated. Further, too strong a shift risked abandoning hopes of persuading the Azeri population across the border to join the revolution. The balance between the proselytizing and centralizing impulses shifted according to the demands of Soviet power in the region.

One of the main debates around Azerbaijani was over the alphabet. Nineteenth century cultural modernizers had pushed for Latinization, but this movement gained steam under the Soviet government. Supporters claimed the Latin alphabet was easier to teach than the Arabic alphabet then in use, could better represent Turkic phonetic distinctions like vowel harmony, would simplify and thus increase publishing, and was a scientific, forward-thinking system. Detractors argued that changing the alphabet would cost a substantial amount of time and money

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<sup>18</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 8. "...язык тогдашней интеллигенции был турецким языком. Безусловно он богаче, чем тюркский язык, который начал оформляться после 20 года. Тюркский язык это крестьянский язык. У тюрков не было письменности, ничего. Турецкий же язык считался литературным." [The language of that era's intelligentsia was Turkish. It is unarguably richer than Turkic, which began to take shape after 1920. Turkic is a peasant language. The Tjurks didn't have a written culture at all. Turkish was considered literary.]

to implement, and would invalidate existing educational and cultural materials, thus impeding literacy at all levels. Both sides used Soviet internationalism to back their claims: the Latin alphabet was truly international, and would give Azerbaijan greater access to world culture; while the Arabic alphabet increased communication with (and thus conversion of) other Turkic peoples, including the Azeri population in Iran. However, newly literate populations were adopting the Latin alphabet in the 1920s, lessening this justification.<sup>19</sup> Detractors asserted that Latinization would divorce Azerbaijani culture from its cultural heritage. Latinizers argued that the resulting increases in book production would quickly surpass the small libraries of works to which few Azerbaijanis had access, anyway.

Altstadt suggests that the primary reason Bolsheviks supported Latinization was to further separate Azerbaijan from the new Republic of Turkey rising out of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup> Ayça Ergun shows that the Azerbaijanis promoting this policy assumed that Cyrillic was the eventual goal. However, an immediate transition to the Cyrillic alphabet would have triggered too much national resistance, whereas the Latin alphabet could fulfill many of the goals of alphabet reform without looking like Russian chauvinism.<sup>21</sup> This pragmatic approach matched the overarching pattern of Soviet nationalities policy, but that doesn't mean those pushing Latinization were united in their purpose. Many supporters were genuinely advocating a progressive, not strategic, decision. The political position may have been nominally the same, but the positions within the cultural field were vastly different. In 1923, Azerbaijan made the Latin and Arabic alphabets officially equal, to give people time to adapt before the state made Latin the official alphabet in June, 1924. Just under a year later, the Arabic alphabet was banned for newspapers and government correspondence. In 1929, however, the Republic of Turkey followed suit, undermining the distance that Latinizing Azerbaijani provided.

The alphabet reform gave the Soviets an excellent opportunity to further linguistic and cultural reforms as well. Many Arabic or Persian words were dropped in favor of “international” or vernacular terms. Every word under debate was a new opportunity to advocate cultural values, so this process rarely went smoothly. For example, one side defended the borrowing “aeroplan” as an international word, while others argued for translating it into Arabic, claiming it was a richer language, and nativists produced “uç-kuç” from Turkic roots.<sup>22</sup> The argument for “aeroplan” gave the Russian usage of that term as evidence, which was unfortunately undermined when the Soviet Russians produced the calque “самолет.” The term for Transcaucasia followed a similar route, except that Azerbaijanis were choosing between a transliteration from the Russian (*Zaqafqaziya*) and an Azerbaijani translation. (Adopting a name that decentered Russia, as opposed to describing Transcaucasia in its peripheral relation, was not an option.) Again, similar processes in multiple republics and countries meant that available positions were constantly shifting – a wide array of scholars, writers, and bureaucrats were trying to solve the same problems, but each solution nudged the others out of alignment.

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<sup>19</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 186.

<sup>20</sup> Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 124.

<sup>21</sup> Ayça Ergun, “Politics of Romanisation in Azerbaijan (1921-1992)” (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3*, 20:1, 2010), 38-9.

<sup>22</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 9.

### *Azerbaijani in Form*

Until the late nineteenth century, in Azerbaijan, literature meant poetry. Turkic poetry primarily adapted forms from the intersecting Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Divan traditions.<sup>23</sup> These categories combined specific metrical and rhyme patterns with subject matter, so that the *ghazal* focused on love, for example, and the *qasida* on praise. The formal range tended to be narrower than that for Western odes or lyric poetry, continuing the classical association of form and content, but there was some variation in rhyme scheme and line length. One of the major clashes among Soviet Azerbaijani writers was over whether to adapt these forms to new content or use revolutionary new forms, which in practice meant adapting Russian forms. Since both positions were defensible, this debate was a vehicle for personal antagonisms and other issues, but the question was still a valid one. Across Soviet literature, the relationship between socialist realism and poetry was more loosely defined than it was for prose and drama. Since most national literatures boasted well-established poetic traditions that long predated the Revolution, it was a field where national writers could exploit the slippage between traditional and Stalinist discourses to carve out a small piece of their own territory. Because Azerbaijani prose and drama were newer genres, developing only in the second half of the nineteenth century, their forms carried less cultural significance, but consequently also had less opportunity for national expression. Instead, the questions shifted to manner of representation and choice of topic.

Soviet critics applied familiar terms from Russian literary criticism to these questions. In general, these terms only incidentally referred to aesthetic qualities, instead of political ones. Romanticism encoded the Musavat-era liberal writers as having nationalist politics and a romantic literary style. The favored term of attack on proletarian writers was revolutionary romanticism, implying an idealized mode of representation partially redeemed by its correct political orientation. Some critics used accusations of revolutionary romanticism to try to rein in young writers, such as Mikael Rafili, whom they saw as overly enthusiastic in their assimilation of Soviet Russian models like Mayakovsky. Linguistic choices were marked as pan-Turkic, pan-Islamic, or nationalist, depending on whether they strayed too close to Ottoman influences, Arabic and Persian vocabulary, or the non-Sovietized vernacular. Most of these categories are only marginally useful to post-Soviet scholarship, with romanticism in particular obscuring a fundamental question about literary allusions.

Pre-Revolutionary Azerbaijani writers (however the Soviets defined that camp) used a system of symbols common to Arabic, Persian, and Divan poetry. Images were saturated with established meanings, so that, for example, the nightingale evoked a lover's devotion and the rose garden functioned as an escape from the imperfect world into the divine. These symbols operated as essential markers of a text's poetic status, literary allusions, and religious-philosophical concepts. Without them, Azerbaijani poetry looked neither poetic nor Azerbaijani, but using them reinforced regional discourses that the Soviets opposed. Writers who rejected this symbolic vocabulary had to find other ways to culturally mark their texts, either by referring to canonized writers by name or history instead of their literary tropes, or by providing geographic detail.

Across Soviet literature, the relationship between socialist realism and poetry was more loosely defined than it was for prose and drama. Since poetry also had the strongest pre-Revolutionary movements in many national literatures, it was a field where national writers could exploit the slippage between traditional and Stalinist discourses to carve out a small piece of their own territory.

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<sup>23</sup> Divan poetry was the dominant, Persian and Arabic-influenced court poetry of the Ottoman Empire.

### *The Azerbaijani Canon*

As mentioned in chapter 3, Azerbaijani writers constructed their national canon by sifting through a millennium of poets, philosophers, and historians for biographic and linguistic clues that could support classifying them as Azerbaijani. There were clear regional variations in Turkic long before the twentieth century, but it is almost impossible to trace specific contemporary languages back to discrete cultures in antiquity. Nevertheless, this was an essential component of the Soviet project in Central Asia, and thus a central component of Azerbaijan's campaign to be recognized as a major Soviet literature. Mamed Alekberli's speech at the 1934 Congress is an excellent example of this process, as he named classical writer after writer, claiming each in turn for Azerbaijan.

First among these figures was Zibeyda, an eighth-century poet who appears as a character in *Thousand and One Nights*. After acknowledging that she wrote in Persian, Arabic, and Turkic, Alekberli announced, “Зибейда Хатун – азербайджанка, она писала преимущественно стихи на тюрском языке.”<sup>24</sup> [Zibeyda Hatun was an Azerbaijani, she wrote predominantly poems in Turkic.] Language also connected the tenth-century poet Fuzuli, who lived in Baghdad under the Safavid and Ottoman empires. “Физули – гордость азербайджанской литературы.”<sup>25</sup> [Fuzuli is the pride of Azerbaijani literature.] Not only was he highly respected in the Persian tradition, he “приковывает к себе внимание европейских, в том числе и русских востоковедов.”<sup>26</sup> [attracts the attention of European orientalists, including Russian ones.] And in one respect, at least, Fuzuli was a proto-Soviet: “Физули впервые в истории Азербайджана поставил вопрос о негодности арабского алфавита. Его стихи являлись агитацией за новый тюркский алфавит.”<sup>27</sup> [Fuzuli first in the history of Azerbaijan raised the question of the Arabic alphabet's unsuitability. His poems agitated for a new Turkic alphabet.] Although Fuzuli was hardly a Latinizer, this reference suggests an alienation from Arabic influence that supports the vision of a proto-Azerbaijani nation waiting for Soviet liberation and the glories of alphabet reform. Fuzuli was from Karbala, but his family was Turkic and he wrote much of his work under the Turkic Safavid empire. His best-known Turkic work is *Leyla and Mejnun*, based on the poet Nizami's Persian version of the tale. Fuzuli's ethnic heritage justified the Soviet claim that Turkic was his “true” literary language, whereas in Arabic he was following spiritual custom, and Persian was just the dominant literary language of his era. Since Fuzuli's Turkic writings were produced for Shah Ismail's court – and Shah Ismail was himself a Turkic poet – this claim is slippery. Soviet scholars also argued that Fuzuli's works were in Turkic, not Ottoman, despite their insistence elsewhere that later Azerbaijani writers wrote in Ottoman only because Turkic was a peasant language without a literary tradition.

Alekberli's speech explicitly invoked the process of identifying figures for the national canon by citing recent Azerbaijani scholarship. He used this work to “prove” the Persian-language poet Nizami was, in fact, Azerbaijani: “Из материалов, находящихся в нашем распоряжении, достаточно ясно видно, что Низами – тюрк из Ганджи, жил и творил в Гандже и там же умер. Его гробница обнаружена там же.”<sup>28</sup> [From materials at our

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<sup>24</sup> *PVSSP*, 113.

<sup>25</sup> *PVSSP*, 115.

<sup>26</sup> *PVSSP*, 115.

<sup>27</sup> *PVSSP*, 115.

<sup>28</sup> *PVSSP*, 114.



disposal, it is sufficiently clear to see that Nizami is a Turk from Ganja. He lived and created in Ganja and died there as well. His grave has also been located there.] Before this material was discovered (and for those who doubted these sources), Nizami had been considered Persian or Iranian. The Azerbaijani claim to Nizami was more tenuous, since he wrote only in Persian. Perhaps predictably, scholarship on him compensates by increasing the rhetorical claims, as shown by the heavy use of the phrase “our Nizami.” By comparison, the phrase “our Fuzuli” occurs, but at perhaps a tenth the rate.

Those who doubted these sources or were unaware of them – which covered most of Nizami's readership – continued to identify Nizami as Persian instead of properly recognizing him as Azerbaijani: “В дореволюционный период ганджинца Ильяса Низами считали иранцем. Даже многие европейские и русские специалисты, продолжая заблуждаться, считают его персом.”<sup>29</sup> [In the pre-Revolutionary period Ilyas Nizami from Ganja was considered Iranian. Even many European and Russian specialists, still confused, consider him Persian.] More important than the national identity they assigned him, however, was that these specialists studied Nizami at all. Even misguided attention was better than none. Translations were another way to measure Nizami's significance. Although his poems were not translated into Russian, Alekberli reported, Russians did have access to them: “Произведения Низами переведены почти на все европейские языки... Интересно, что «Хамсон» Низами переведен на французский язык и издан в Петербурге в 1845 г.”<sup>30</sup> [Nizami's works were translated into almost all European languages... It is interesting that Nizami's “Hamson” was translated into French and published in Petersburg in 1845.] Their European reception was more useful for determining international status than Russian, in any event.

Alekberli presented the more recent Persian-language writer Mirza Shafi Vazeh with similar status via European reception, although this posed a somewhat different threat to his Azerbaijani affiliation. After proclaiming, “Мирза Шафи Вазех – азербайджанец”<sup>31</sup> [Mirza Shafi Vazeh is an Azerbaijani], Alekberli defended this position at length from scholars who claimed that Mirza Shafi was in fact a pseudonym for his German translator. As with Nizami, recent Azerbaijani scholarship proved Azerbaijan's national claims to this established writer. International recognition was especially important for Alekberli's strategy; successfully arguing that major writers were Azerbaijani was predicted on their status. Since most of the Congress audience was poorly versed in Arabic and Persian poetry, European scholarship and translations justified Alekberli's claims that these writers were major and thus that Azerbaijani literature was, too. Despite the importance of writers like Nizami and Fuzuli in classical culture, Alekberli's speech failed to establish Azerbaijani as a major literature. The very need for this rhetorical trick undermined the speech's main argument. It is difficult, after all, to imagine a Russian speaker giving an equivalent speech: “You've heard of Pushkin; he was Russian.”

Not all writers that could be thus incorporated into the canon were, of course. Ideology still played a role, so that the twelfth-century court poet Abul-ula-Ganjavi was acknowledged, then dismissed with the condemnation that: “этот поэт всеми фибрами души был связан с дворцом, свое дарование он посвятил дворцовой знати, и использовать его мы не можем. Он – не наш и нам равным счетом ничего не оставил.”<sup>32</sup> [This poet was connected to the court with all the fibers of his soul, he dedicated his gift to the court elite, and we cannot use

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<sup>29</sup> *PVSSP*, 114.

<sup>30</sup> *PVSSP*, 114.

<sup>31</sup> *PVSSP*, 116.

<sup>32</sup> *PVSSP*, 114.

him. He isn't ours and in our honest assessment left us nothing.] Although Alekberli introduced Abul-ula-Ganjavi as a central figure of Azerbaijani literature, the deliberate confusion of the possessive “ours,” referring to both Azerbaijani-national and Soviet-political affiliation, ultimately redepicted Abul-ula-Ganjavi outside the national canon. His importance lay in his influence on other Azerbaijani writers, although he remained worthy of Alekberli’s mention because it implied a rich, conflicted history for pre-Soviet Azerbaijani literature as a whole.

### *Translating Azerbaijani Writers*

Incorporating figures like Nizami into the national canon required more effort than just identifying their connection to Azerbaijan. A canon only exists if it is read, which for the Azerbaijani canon meant it had to be read in Azerbaijani, and that required translation. Nazarli’s report at the all-Union organizing committee’s third plenum session neatly balanced the three operative categories: “Редакциями поручено специалистам перевести на тюрский язык избранные стихи азербайджанских писателей 12 и 13 веков – Хаганы и Низами, написавшие свои произведения на персидском языке.”<sup>33</sup> [The editorial board has tasked specialists with translating into Turkic selected poems by Azerbaijani writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – Khagani Shirvani and Nizami, who wrote their works in Persian.] Almost immediately after, he mentions translating the classics of Azerbaijani literature into Russian, this time without having to tackle the Turkic-Persian divide.<sup>34</sup>

Canonical writers outside the national language challenged the balance between the beliefs that translations are equivalent and that national literature had value in the Soviet system precisely because it was national. Translating them was thus a delicate process and one that, whether acknowledged or not, differed from other modes of translation. Translating national writers *into* the national language splits linguistic and cultural translation. Most translations engage both paradigms simultaneously, but claiming a work as part of the target language’s national culture theoretically makes the act of translation a purely linguistic exercise. In practice, however, Persian and Arabic provided dense cultural connotations and, more importantly, writers like Fuzuli and Nizami were intentionally participating in those cultural fields when they wrote.

The inherent Azerbaijani-ness of their works relied on the premise that had their choices been made freely, they would have chosen to write in Azerbaijani. Through this reading, their choice to write in another language becomes itself a translation of a nonexistent Azerbaijani original into the source language. Returning that imagined text to its national language is thus the process of locating and realizing a latent national potentiality in the original text. When that potentiality is realized and national identity develops, at least some of the cultural meanings of the text shift into alignment with the target culture, simplifying the problem of cultural translation and asymptotically approaching the fiction that these translations can be purely linguistic. While textual potentialities may be infinite, they are not indiscriminate. The academic evidence – geographic for Nizami, ethnic for Fuzuli – validates their national potentialities.

On the practical level, translation provided another opportunity to reshape the pre-Soviet canon to predict and promote Soviet values and aesthetics. Not only were some works translated more readily than others, translators often shifted the text’s orientation to align properly. Even contemporary Azerbaijani writers underwent this process when translated into Russian, becoming more explicitly ideological in translation. This may have played into Russian

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<sup>33</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 34, l. 10ob.

<sup>34</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 34, l. 11.

misconceptions about the national literatures as a whole, but some national writers (like Vurghun) encouraged this process, viewing it as another way of realizing potentialities in their texts. It was, perhaps, the equivalent of wearing their best clothes when they visited Moscow.

### **To the Congress**

The Azerbaijani delegation to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers represented the breadth of new Soviet Azerbaijan. It combined writers from various earlier factions: AzAPP, the proletarian poets whom AzAPP had attacked, and Jabbarly, who represented both the fellow travelers and had been a member of almost every literary organization along the way.<sup>35</sup> Jabbarly stood out as the oldest of the Turkic writers on the delegation, at a decrepit thirty-five years old. Except for those figures who were on the delegation as non-literary members, the Turkic-writing delegates from Azerbaijan were under thirty. The summer of the Congress was spent reviewing membership applications for the Azerbaijani writers union and determining the governing body, which in turn decided who would go to Moscow.<sup>36</sup> The all-Union organizing committee allocated ten seats to Azerbaijan, eight with voting privileges and two non-voting seats. The voting seats went to Ali Nazim, Mikhail Kamskii, Mehdi Hussein, Suleiman Rustam, Ahmed Trinich, Egishe Chubar, Vurghun, and Alekberli. Abdülbaki Yusuf and Arshavir Darbni rounded out the initial list in the non-voting slots. As the Congress drew nearer and other issues arose that could best be addressed by expanding the delegation, three more members joined with voting rights – Jabbarly, Abdul Hasan, and Salman Mumtaz – and four without – Ali Sabri Kasimov, Mikael Rafili, Kantemir (Kafur Effendiev), and Georgii Stroganov. Ethnically, this meant the seventeen-member delegation had two Armenians, two Russians, one Turk, and twelve Azerbaijani Turks.

Looked at from another perspective, the delegation split somewhere around age thirty. Writers below that age were teenagers during independence and developed their literary identities under Soviet power. Except for Salman Mumtaz, the older figures were either experienced at literary organization or esteemed fellow travellers. Trinich grew up in the Ottoman Empire and ended up in Baku almost by accident during the chaos of Revolution. A Party functionary, he edited *Kommunist*, which sponsored the Red Pen association in the 1920s, and managed a theater, among other assignments related to literature. Kamskii was a Russian prose writer who worked in the Siberian mines before the Revolution, then moved to Baku in 1922. From 1934 on, he was the editor-in-chief of *Literaturnyi Azerbaidzhan*. Egishe Chubar, an Armenian poet and Bolshevik since 1918, was a member of the Armenian organizing committee, but attended the Congress as a delegate from Azerbaijan. Jabbarly and Ali Sabri Kasimov represented the new union's embrace of fellow travelers. Both were liberal writers who reforged their identities after the Revolution with moderate success. Jabbarly was a newspaper literary correspondent during the Musavat era and part of a resistance organization in the 1920s. While he wrote pro-Soviet works, they were routinely accused of revolutionary romanticism.

Mumtaz was the odd man out on the delegation. A pre-Revolutionary merchant, Mumtaz was a scholar and collector, but not a writer. Nor was he politically reliable. Instead, Mumtaz's primary credential was his personal library filled with irreplaceable manuscripts, the best in Azerbaijan. He had devoted years and large amounts of money to tracking down obscure

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<sup>35</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 39-40.

<sup>36</sup> "Kto priniat v soiuз pisatelei." *Vyshka*. June 12, 1934. "Pravlenie Azerbaidzhanskogo soiuza sovetskikh pisatelei." *Bakiinskii rabochii*. June 27, 1934.

antiquities that could establish Azerbaijan's literary presence in the classical period. Mumtaz was the one who proved that Fuzuli was Azerbaijani, based partly on manuscripts in his possession. Nationalizing Mumtaz's library wasn't attractive, because much of the information about his holdings lay in his head, making it difficult to navigate the material without him as a guide. Thus, building the Soviet Azerbaijani canon necessitated placating Mumtaz by prominently including him on the delegation. In a frank and critical report to the Moscow Writers Union, Alekberli explained: "Мы сделали его членом союза не потому, что он является достойным членом Союза, а потому, что его нужно использовать."<sup>37</sup> [We made him a member not because he is a worthy member of the Union, but because we need to use him.] And use him they did. Alekberli made sure that Gorky spent some time with Mumtaz during the Congress, to flatter him into cooperating more fully.

We can read the rest of the delegation as a group of young Tiurks, even though not all of them were Turkic.<sup>38</sup> The majority of the writers in their twenties shared a common narrative: after showing early literary potential, they went to Moscow to study literature and ideology, then returned to Baku to take up the dual task of literature and literary organization. Although they obviously went to Moscow to study Soviet (Russian) models, their academics focused on national literatures. This implied that national writers had to go to Moscow to learn how to write nationally, then return to Azerbaijan as full-fledged national representatives. In essence, the Congress brought these writers back to Moscow to represent the culture that they initially went to Moscow to learn how to produce. Nazim, Rafili, Vurghun, Rustam, Hasan, and Kantemir all followed this model, as did the Armenian writer Darbni, whose stint in Baku as a playwright and organizer authorized postponing his military service.<sup>39</sup> Rafili, who studied in Moscow with the Turkish revolutionary poet Nazim Hikmet, wrote avant-garde poetry. He consistently clashed with Vurghun and the critic Nazim, who defended classical form. Rustam, who had chaired Red Pen, was a poet and dramatist tackling issues like village class warfare, while Hasan was best known for his novels on collectivization and the civil war. Kantemir was working on a novel on collectivization, which was published in 1935 as *Kolkhozostan*.<sup>40</sup> The Russian poet Georgii Stroganov, who worked for *Bakiinskii rabochii*, attempted to follow this pattern, but was caught overstating his Azerbaijani authority when demanding entrance to the Moscow drama schools.<sup>41</sup> Two young delegates broke this model: Mehdi Hussein and Abdalbaki Yusuf. Hussein only studied in Moscow after the Congress, while Yusuf's literary career faded away. Mammedkazim Alekberli was also an exception, but only because he was working in Moscow as a Red professor during the Congress and so did not need to travel to Moscow.

Who wasn't included in the delegation? The most prominent omission was Nazarli, who headed the Azerbaijani organizing committee for most of the process. Nazarli's domineering leadership offended most of the committee's members. His feud with the poet Mushfik ultimately divided the committee to the point that Mir Jafar Baghirov, the Azerbaijani Central Committee Secretary, intervened to remove him from his duties.<sup>42</sup> Neither Nazarli nor Mushfik

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<sup>37</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 21.

<sup>38</sup> From a historical perspective, of course, the jadidists were probably the closest corollary to the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>39</sup> RGASPI f. 74, op. 1, d. 298, ll. 6-7. Letter dated November 7, 1934.

<sup>40</sup> Kantemir did not register at the Congress under his pen name, and was thus untraceable to the editors of the team of Russian scholars, led by S.S. Lenevskii, who compiled the appendix to the reprinted Congress transcripts. He appears in the list of unidentified authors under his birth name, K.S. Effendiev. *PVSSP, Appendix*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 39.

<sup>42</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 22.

were part of the delegation. Seid Ordubady was another notable omission. A Party member since 1918 (before Soviet control of Azerbaijan), Ordubady had published ten books of poetry, plays, and pro-Soviet novels. He ran into conflict with the organizing committee over financial issues, however, leading Alekberli to characterize Ordubady in his 1935 report, “В общем он ведет себя не как писатель коммунист, а как торгаш.”<sup>43</sup> [In general, he doesn’t act like a writer and a communist, but like a petty trader.] Other potential candidates included the poet Rasul Rza, satirist Sabit Rahman, and Tatul Gurian, an Armenian poet who was active part of the Azerbaijani Writers Union Secretariat.<sup>44</sup>

As a whole, the Azerbaijani delegation to the Congress marks 1934 as the tipping point between two eras of Azerbaijani literature. Comparing the pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary generations reveals the continuities and disconnects in the representation of Soviet Azerbaijani identity. Although this oversimplifies their cultural roles, the crossing trajectories of Vurghun and Jabbarly illustrate this relationship. Both writers lost a parent as children, started writing poetry in their teens, and then added dramatic works to their repertoires as they matured artistically. Only seven years separated Jabbarly and Vurghun in age, but this small gap meant Vurghun’s formative literary years were guided by Soviet power. The still controversial Jabbarly died shortly after the Congress, in December 1934, just after Vurghun became the first Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers of Azerbaijan.

### **Jafar Jabbarly: the Women of Azerbaijan**

Although he wrote poetry and short stories, many of them satires, Jabbarly’s main contribution to Soviet literature was a series of plays focusing on the destruction of old Azerbaijan and heralding the coming Soviet world. Like most writers of this period, he was more comfortable depicting the moment of revolutionary conflict than tackling the new society which this conflict had supposedly produced. Jabbarly adapted well to the communal processes of writing for the stage, collaborating closely with Azerbaijani and Russian directors.<sup>45</sup> Although never fully trusted as a pro-Soviet writer, he served in the Azerbaijani organizing committee drama section and spoke on Azerbaijani drama at the Congress in Moscow.<sup>46</sup>

Tyrrell presents a detailed analysis of Jabbarly’s 1924 play *Od gəlini* [Bride of Fire], reading it as a parable of the choices facing Azerbaijanis in the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> The play depicts a skewed triangle between a brave rebel, a beauty, and the local official who wants to send her to the ruling Arab caliph’s harem to secure his own position. It debates whether open resistance or self-sacrifice is more effective, ending with the rebel’s tragic martyrdom. Tyrrell identifies Jabbarly’s Sufi influence for this play, from the characters’ symbolic names to the philosophical debates to the question of masked rebellion, to argue that the beauty everyone desires represents Azerbaijan. This approach is far more productive than trying to shoehorn Jabbarly’s characters into realist, let alone socialist realist categories.<sup>48</sup> However it is worth remembering that

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<sup>43</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 16.

<sup>44</sup> “Oktiabr’ v literature Azerbaidzhana.” *Bakinskii rabochii*. November 7, 1933. RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 41.

<sup>45</sup> E.Dzh. Gezalova discusses these relationships at length in “Dzh. Dzhabarly i ideino-khudozhestvennyye iskaniiia sovetskoi dramaturgii 20 – 30-kh godov,” in *Azerbaidzhansko-russkie literaturnye vzaimosviazi: voprosy teorii, istorii, sovremennoi praktiki* (Edited by A.A. Gadzhiev. Baku: Izdatel’stvo “Elm,” 1988), 188-204.

<sup>46</sup> *Bakinskii rabochii*. February 6, 1934.

<sup>47</sup> Tyrrell, *Aesopian Literary Dimensions of Azerbaijani Literature*, 34-40.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Mamed Arif, *Literatura Azerbaidzhanskogo naroda* (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1958), 50; or Yaşar Qarayev’s chapter on Jabbarly in *Belli Başlı Dönemleri ve Zirve Şahsiyetleriyle: Azərbaycan Edebiyatı* (İstanbul Ötüken Neşriyat, 1999), 327-343.

martyrdom had its pro-Soviet face, as well. The twenty-six Baku commissars were evidence of that.

Jabbarly continues representing Azerbaijan through an embattled female character in *Sevil*. Written in 1927, it was turned into a film in 1929 and an opera in 1953. Set during Azerbaijan's brief period of independence, *Sevil* follows its eponymous heroine, who gets divorced when her banker husband falls in love with another woman. Under sharia law, she loses her son and position in society. Her husband's sister, Gulush (*gülüş* means "laughter"), teaches her about emancipation and when the Soviets come to power, Sevil is one of the first women in Baku to support the new government. Although Gulush presents the arguments for and prospects of liberation, the play focuses on Sevil's suffering, which condemns the supposed liberalism of the Musavat government and justifies the Soviet takeover. Gulush shares her name, which connotes joy, with the Komsomol figure in Jabbarly's 1929 play *Almaz*, Gulverdi (*gül verdi*). Gulverdi's name, which uses a common family name pattern, means "rose given." The rose was a common symbol in Islamic poetry connoting fleeting love, as opposed to the nightingale's eternal devotion. Jabbarly uses it here as a marker for materialism, as opposed to misleading spirituality. He uses the same productive suffix for negative religious characters, like Imamverdi and Allahverdi in *In 1905*, which also features the positive character Gulsun.

Like *Sevil*, *Almaz* focuses on women's liberation as articulated by a strong female character. Eighteen-year-old Almaz, whose name means "diamond," takes pride in her assignment to the backward village of her childhood. When offered an opportunity to return to the city where she was educated, Almaz refuses to leave the village, explaining "Bilirsiniz, bu saat bura bir vuruş meydanıdır. Siz indi meydandan qaçan bir fərarisiniz."<sup>49</sup> [Understand, at this hour, this place is a battlefield. You are now running from the field as a deserter.] She is busy organizing a kolkhoz to help women escape their backward subjugation, dispensing pragmatic advice, and explaining atheism to suspicious villagers. Almaz enrolls a woman in the "New Road" kolkhoz against her family's wishes, provoking the counter-revolutionary powers of the village, who try various tricks to limit Almaz's influence, including buying her off and denouncing her. The married secretary of the village soviet cooperates with the conservative elements in the village to pressure her into an affair. Supported by her schoolchildren and comrades, Almaz protects the woman and her illegitimate child, ultimately claiming the child as her own. When Almaz's fiancé returns to the village, he is appalled that Almaz apparently has a newborn child and demands to know who the father is. Almaz refuses and breaks the engagement. At her trial, the beleaguered kolkhoz woman comes forward and admits that the child is hers, naming the mullah as the father. Although Almaz is vindicated, she confesses that she is still guilty:

Bəli, özümü təqsirli bilirəm, çünki mən bu invalid çuxası geymiş qolçomaq hacı əhmədlərə, şəriflərə, mirzə səməndərlərə qarşı mübarizəyə ancaq Kommunist Partiyasının rəhbərliyi ilə və yoxsul kəndliləri təşkil etmək yolu ilə iş görülmə biləcəyini yaxşı düşünməmişdim. Mən təkbaşına mübarizə aparmışdım. Mən başa düşməmişdim ki, bu mübarizəni ancaq mən aparmıram, fəhlə sinfi partiyanın rəhbərliyi altında aparır. Mən səhvlərimi boynuma alıram. Ancaq bu səhvlərim düşmənlərimi sevindirməsin. Mübarizə davam edir! Səhvlər mənə çox şey öyrətdi.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Cəfər Cabbarlı, *Seçilmiş əsərləri: dörd çildə* (Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, 2005), 3:62.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 3:140.

Yes, I admit that I am guilty, because I did not properly realize that I could organize this path only with the poor villagers and the Communist Party's leadership, and instead I wore this invalid clothing to do battle against the kulak Haji Ahmeds, Sherifs, and Mirza Semenders. I entered into battle as an individual. I failed to understand that I can only enter this battle with the working class under the leadership of the Party. I accept my mistakes. But let these mistakes of mine not gladden my enemies. The battle will continue! I will learn a great deal from my mistakes.

Almaz's confession ensures that the play, despite depicting village Party corruption, maintains its Party-mindedness. Her self assessment follows a well-established Party ritual of self-abasement that internalizes the collective lens to view and correct individual behavior. Erdoğan Uygur reads *Almaz* as Jabbarly's attempt to move into socialist realism, which the play's conclusion fully supports.<sup>51</sup> But it is also telling that Almaz's confession does not mention the gender politics that trapped her into this position. *Almaz* moves the *Sevil* plot into the Soviet era, showing how women can fulfill the promise of liberation. However, it does nothing to resolve the tension between feminine symbolism and female agency.

Jabbarly's works represent Azerbaijan as feminine, suggesting that unveiling campaigns not only work to liberate individual women, but the entire symbolic nation. Azerbaijan is encoded as the object of desire for waves of male invaders, who can control her body, but not touch her soul. Although he has an uneasy relationship with Soviet power, the woman question allows Jabbarly to position himself at the intersection of pre-Revolutionary liberal and Soviet ideals. From the former perspective, as Tyrrell reads him, the Soviets are another invasion that will ultimately fail. From the latter, Soviet liberation allows characters like Gulush and Almaz to fulfill their own destinies, under the benevolent eye of the Party.

### **Samed Vurghun as National Writer in "Azerbaijan"**

Like Jabbarly, Vurghun starts with a feminine Azerbaijan. His depiction of the motherland is correlated with his artist presentation of the mother figure as a whole. Vurghun's own mother died when he was six, a loss he portrays in one of his early poems, "Mother" [Ana]. The first stanza makes the connection explicit:

Pək çocuqdu, yerə gömdülər səni,  
Həyata qanadsız atdılar məni.  
Bax, necə pozulub ömrüm gülşəni,  
Həyat sənsiz mənə zindandır, ana!<sup>52</sup>

When I was a child, you were buried somewhere,  
And thus to life they carried me out wingless.  
Look, how my life is a ruined rose garden,  
Life without you is prison to me, mother!

The early burial ties the poet's biography to the traditional symbols of Azerbaijan's literary canon. Vurghun opposes life to the heavenly rose garden and compares himself to the

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<sup>51</sup> Erdoğan Uygur, "Azerbaycanlı Şair ve Yazar Cafer Cabbarlı" (*Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 8:1, 2004), 11.

<sup>52</sup> Vurğun, *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 1:34.

nightingale. However, he redirects the bird's classical devotion from a romantic love object towards the maternal. This is a first step towards his ultimate love, the motherland. In "Azerbaijan," the key apostrophe echoes Vurghun's depiction in "Mother." The second verse, which repeats to form the poem's triumphant conclusion, returns to the maternal nest:

El bilir ki, sən mənimsən,  
Yurdum, yuvam, məskənim sən!  
Anam, doğma vətənim sən!  
Ayrılarımı könül candan?  
Azərbaycan, Azərbaycan!

The people know that you are mine,  
You are my home, my nest, my hearth!  
You are my mother, my homeland!  
Can the heart be split from its soul?  
Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!

Scholars have interpreted the indivisible heart and soul as Vurghun and Azerbaijan.<sup>53</sup> The rest of the stanza represents Vurghun's love through the same symbols as his young love for the absent – and thus perfect – human mother, on the one hand, and as the traditional poet's devotion to his beloved. He furthers this link in a later poem, "Nightingale" [Bülbül], calling the nightingale forth to sing a new song: "Gel, şeyda bülbülüm, verək səs-səsə, / Qardaşlıq adına min söhbət açaq."<sup>54</sup> [Come, my love-struck nightingale, to give sound to sound, / to start a thousand conversations in the name of brotherhood.] This 1937 poem completes Vurghun's redirection of traditional symbols to create a Soviet Azerbaijani poetic language, but its journey is far more complex than Lahuti's failed example of the nightingale-turned-tractor. Vurghun's nightingale is a Soviet poet.

Vurghun continually returns to the role of the poet, generally proclaiming himself in that role. For example, in his 1931 poem "Thorny words" [Tikanlı sözlər], he announces, "Mən / güneşi yarışa çağırın / böyük günler şairiyəm..."<sup>55</sup> [I / challenging the sun / am the poet of great days...] Both within and beyond his poetry, Vurghun expressed his willingness to step into Soviet literature as the Azerbaijani Pushkin. Alekberli complained that Vurghun's confidence antagonized the other writers: "Он говорит, что является единственным поэтом Азербайджана. – 'До меня не было и после меня никого не будет'. Он талантливый поэт, хотя я никогда не сказал ему лично об этом, а только ругал его. Похвалы его портят."<sup>56</sup> [He says that he is the only poet of Azerbaijan. "There was no one before me and there will be none after." He is a talented poet, but I've never admitted that to him personally, but only scolded him. Praise is spoiling him.] Vurghun began translating Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin* around the same time as the Congress, further connecting himself to the role of great national poet.

Vurghun does not merely write himself into the heart of Azerbaijan, however. He claims authority as the poet of the Caucasus, concluding his 1934 "Caucasus" [Qafqaz]:

Bir zaman göz yaşı içmiş dərələr,

<sup>53</sup> Yaşar Qarayev, "Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatının Vurğun dövrü." In Vurghun, *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 1:5-6.

<sup>54</sup> Vurğun, *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 1:243.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 1:122.

<sup>56</sup> RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, d. 38, l. 24.



Qayalar, silsilələr, məşərələr  
İndi üç qardaşın olmuş vətəni...  
Üçü bir yerdə düşündükcə, məni  
Anacaqlar, sevəcəklər, bilirəm;  
O zaman dağda küləklər, bilirəm,  
Ötəcək bir gələcək şairini,  
Bu günün, bəlkə də, tək şairini!..<sup>57</sup>

Where at one time the valleys and the rock faces,  
the mountain ridges and the copses drank tears  
Now this is the native land of three brothers...  
Thinking of those three united in one place,  
I know they will celebrate, they will love me;  
I know at that time the winds in the mountains  
Will bring hither a poet who perhaps still  
Surpasses today's solitary poet!...

The three brothers obviously represent the Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis. Although Vurghun prophesies a greater poet yet to come, depicting himself as the solitary poet of the Caucasus undermines that modesty.

The relationship between the poet, the mountains, and the winds recalls an earlier, 1929 poem, “Movement” [Hərəkət], in which Vurghun tackles the question of artistic inspiration and inheritance. To a Soviet audience, this poem clearly shows the influence of the Russian avant-garde from its opening lines:

Hərəkət!  
Hərəkət!  
Bu gün damalarimi dolaşan  
bu qan  
Heç də dünənkinə bənzəmir, inan!<sup>58</sup>

Movement!  
Movement!  
This blood wandering through my veins  
today  
No longer resembles yesterday's, believe me!

Both the energetic exclamations and the step-ladder structure (which Russian translations exaggerate) echo Mayakovsky's revolutionary poetry, suggesting a straight conduit from Moscow to Baku. However, Vurghun's dedication complicates this relationship. The poem is dedicated to Hikmet, the Turkish Communist poet who spent much of the 1920s in Moscow. Hikmet, whom many Turks consider the greatest Turkish poet of the twentieth century, was familiar with Mayakovsky's forms, but adapted them to his own purposes. In 1929, Hikmet was

<sup>57</sup> Vurğun, *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 1:163.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 1:73. Like Russian, Azerbaijani has no articles, so there is no difference between “movement” and “the movement.” This poem suggests both dynamism and the spread of Communist ideology, so “hərəkət” should be interpreted in both senses.

back in Turkey and out of prison there. By dedicating his poem to Hikmet, Vurghun triangulates the question of literary influence, suggesting a route between Moscow and Baku by way of Istanbul or Ankara.

The poem itself depicts a poet seeking inspiration. He wanders through the thorny fields, another classical symbol of the real world, as opposed to the divine rose garden without thorns:

Fəqət mən yənə  
enərək gəcənin dərinliyinə,  
Hər gün dolaşdığım ucsuz-bucaqsız,  
odsuz, ozaqsız,  
Tikanlı çöllərin bir yolçusuyam.  
Eşit, ey!  
aradığım şey  
Artıq nə eşqdir və nə də hicran.  
Bu hiss, həyəcan  
qəlbimdən gəlmədi, fikrimdən doğdu:  
Hərəkət!  
Hərəkət!<sup>59</sup>

However I again  
Having descended into night's depths,  
Having wandered every day without end or angle,<sup>60</sup>  
without fire, without hearth,  
Am a traveler of thorny fields.  
Equal, hey!  
the thing I seek  
Is no longer love, nor separation.  
This emotion did not come from  
my throbbing heart, it was born from my thought:  
Movement!  
Movement!

Motivated by cultural demands, not by injustice or personal emotion, the poet's wandering must be directed towards international liberation. Personal movement is insufficient, as opposed to that of all humanity and, especially, the East. The imagery moves from the poet alone with his rushing pen, to collective forces:

İncilin, quranın yarpaqlarını  
Sovurur göylərə şimal yelləri.  
Şərqin elləri  
yazın yazın  
Bu gündən şöhrətli və şanlı bəklər.<sup>61</sup>

The northern winds will blow away  
the leaves of the Gospel and the Koran.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 1:73.

<sup>60</sup> An idiom expressing infinity.

<sup>61</sup> Vurğun, *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 1:74.

The eastern peoples,  
writing and writing,  
Wait for the day of fame and glory.

“Movement” subtly enacts one of the central Soviet plots, directing desperate personal aimlessness into joyful collective action. By referring to “şimal yelləri” [the northern winds], Vurghun evokes Moscow as the movement’s source. The rhymed “şimal yelləri” and “Şərqi elləri” [the eastern peoples], reinforced by the grammatical parallelism and structural anadiplosis, suggests an opposition between the winds and peoples. While the northern wind sweeps away the leaves of the Koran, however, the peoples of the East are not waiting for word from Moscow, but from themselves. The repeated image of the wind also connects the animate energy to Baku itself, the city of winds.

Buludlar qoynunda himalaylar,  
Səssiz gecələrdə ulduzlar, aylar,  
Tənha bir şairin uzaq xəyalı,  
şairlik halı,  
Qüruba yaxın həzin bir mənzərə  
susuz bir dərə,  
Dağlarla qucaqlaşan əlvan buludlar,  
yam-yaşıl otlar  
Uçurar fikrimi dumanlar kimi.

The Himalayas in the clouds’ lap,  
The stars, moons in the soundless evenings,  
One lonely poet’s distant reverie,  
the poetic mood,  
Approaching sunset, a hazy outlook  
a dry ravine,  
Colored clouds embracing the mountains,  
the bright green grasses  
Fly through my mind like vapors.

The poet’s reverie spans the Himalayas and the Taj Mahal, charging the romantic Caucasian landscape with international influence. Vurghun thus evades a simple dyad depicting Moscow’s influence over Baku, instead projecting Baku’s influence eastward. He sites poetic inspiration in the romantic landscape, but instead of individual genius, here proclaims a creative dialogue. The poem concludes with an projected “you,” which the dedication suggests is Hikmet:

Bunlar,  
bu saydıqlarım,  
Sən  
və mən,  
Hər ikimizdən törəyən,  
Həp bu hərəkətdəndir,  
Bu sonsuz surətdəndir.



purges.”<sup>63</sup> Although the representation of power is not always a parable for contemporary authority, it was difficult to write about a show trial in the 1930s without considering the political subtexts. However, Vurghun’s choice of subject reveals a more complicated position with respect to the full cultural field of Soviet literature. By tackling the theme of international Communism in its European manifestation, as opposed to limiting himself to the oppression that Eastern or Turkish figures such as Hikmet faced, Vurghun claims the right to write as a world literary figure on par with his Moscow comrades.<sup>64</sup> The Soviet center in Vurghun’s vision is not Moscow; he lays claim to literary authority *without* geographic centrality.

Vurghun shows how Soviet Azerbaijani literature ultimately defined itself through the negotiation of demands from local, “Asiatic,” and Moscow-based forces. He strategically positioned himself in role Moscow as eager to see filled, that of the national poet. But in order to claim that position, Vurghun had to rewrite the definition away from Russian literary influences and Moscow’s idea of the periphery. Vurghun claimed Soviet Azerbaijan as a literary motherland, foregrounding himself as a son of his nourishing native soils who was nonetheless able, imaginatively speaking, to stride freely across the globe. Vurghun’s success shows what Azerbaijani writers were able to take away from the Congress: a vision of Soviet literature that accommodated problematic aspects of their historical and linguistic specificity, like the relationship to Turkish, through a narrative of triumph over those concerns. This made the Azerbaijani case more complicated than Moscow’s, but did not prevent Azerbaijan from producing a full-fledged literary culture with a variety of voices. The delegation’s presentation of Azerbaijani literature, both in their speeches and through their presence, established a portrait of the nation which has lasted into the present day.

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<sup>63</sup> Tyrrell, *Aesopian Literary Dimensions of Azerbaijani Literature*, 65.

<sup>64</sup> Bulgaria is a particularly interesting choice in this regard because of its earlier position within the Ottoman empire.

## AFTERWORD

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that Soviet literature must be read as a multinational, multiethnic, multilingual literature. This is important not only for scholars of the Soviet period, but for those seeking to understand other supranational or international literary movements. Ultimately, we can only evaluate ideas through their expression, and a national identity is one such idea. Soviet literature provides an intriguing expression of a myriad of national identities, each negotiating a position within a totalizing – but never total – discourse. The cultural field of Soviet literature is thus both broader and richer than it might appear.

The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers inaugurated Soviet literature and was a celebration of its power. Although it closed many doors, and the writers' union it introduced went on to close many more, the Congress presented a multifaceted literary culture that did not always conform its ideological and discursive constraints. Moscow had many enforcement mechanisms, but they were never anywhere near perfect. While even Russian works reveal the gap between the doctrine of socialist realism and Soviet literary practice, the full scope and cultural ambition of Soviet literature are most evident in the national literatures of the non-Russian republics. Writers defined national literatures in ways that preserved some of their cultural treasures and creative autonomy, exploiting the gaps in Soviet discourse and the distance between the center and the periphery. Given the relative scarcity of Russians fluent in a national language, Moscow could only evaluate national literatures in two ways: through translations and through local assessments. Both of these forms required the national writers to participate, as even translation depended on someone's assessment of what work *should* be translated. Texts, writers, and discourse traversed the distance between Moscow and Baku, accumulating complexity as they went.

Soviet materials are frequently painful to read, especially those of the 1930s, a period which saw great violence inflicted upon writers as well as their languages. Nevertheless, I have attempted to preserve the variety of voices involved in the preparations for and performance of the 1934 Congress. The archival materials reveal the ad hoc nature of Soviet practice, the importance of national literatures to the definition of Soviet literature, the extent to which Moscow misread the periphery, and the reduced but crucial discursive and institutional spaces through which national writers were able to invent themselves as Soviet. Like many researchers, I have come to feel great affection for the individuals hiding in brief sentences on a dusty page in a rarely accessed corner of the archives. To read Soviet literature as a handful of canonical or subversive texts misses a point those writers fought so hard to make: this Soviet discourse was theirs, too, not just Stalin's or Gorky's. They spoke Soviet in their native languages and in a Russian varying from fractured to eloquent. Even as they repeated official slogans ad nauseum, they also used Soviet discourse as a vehicle to claim some agency over the narratives of their lives and their imaginations, to insist upon the specificity of their experiences and their literary voices, to write literatures in which national cultures could read their changing identities. Soviet literature embraced all of these voices, at least for a moment.

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## APPENDIX A. SPEAKERS AT THE 1934 CONGRESS OF SOVIET WRITERS

Full names are given for delegates and well-known figures. Non-delegates are italicized. Unfortunately, many of the guests delivering greetings are identified only by their last name and affiliation. Where possible, I have tried to transliterate names from their national languages, rather than from the Russian version.

<b>Session</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lang.</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>August 17, 1934 – Friday evening</b> Chaired by Ivan Kondrat'evich Mikitenko (Ukraine)				
	Maxim Gorky	Moscow	Russian writer	opening words	Russian
	Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov		Party Central Committee member	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Maxim Gorky	Moscow		report on Soviet literature	Russian
	<i>Izotov</i>		<i>shock worker</i>	<i>greetings from the Donbas miners</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>(Gorky, presiding)</i>	<i>Moscow</i>		<i>greetings to Stalin</i>	<i>Russian</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>August 19, 1934 – Sunday morning</b> Chaired by Yanka Kupala (Belorussia)				
	Samuil Marshak	Leningrad	Russian poet, children's writer	report on children's literature	Russian
	<i>Kanshina</i>		<i>young pioneer</i>	<i>greetings from a young pioneer camp in the Far East</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Ivan Iulianovich Kulik	Ukraine	Ukrainian poet	report on Ukrainian literature	Russian
<b>3</b>	<b>August 19, 1934 – Sunday evening</b> Chaired by Vladimir Petrovich Stavskii (Moscow)				
	Mikhail Nikolaevich Klimkovich	Belorussia	Belorussian writer, critic	report on Belorussian literature	Russian
	<i>Otto Schmidt</i>		<i>head of polar steamship expedition</i>	<i>speech on the importance of literature to readers</i>	Russian
	<i>Nekrasov</i>		<i>worker</i>	<i>greetings from the workers of the Moscow Stalin auto factory</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Gurova</i>		<i>worker, fabric manufacturing plant</i>	<i>greetings from the female workers of Moscow, fabric industry</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Arkhangel'skii</i>		<i>engineer</i>	<i>greetings from the Moscow engineers and TsAGI</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Demian Bednyi	Moscow	Russian poet	thanks to the Moscow workers	Russian
	Najmi	Tataria	Tatar writer	report on Tatar literature	Russian

<b>Session</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lang.</b>
<b>3 cont.</b>	<i>Kozhevnikov</i>		<i>Tatar political organizer at a collective farm tractor station</i>	<i>greetings from the first "kolkhoz university," through Kazan University</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Kryndina</i>		<i>village correspondent for Peasants' Paper of Ukraine</i>	<i>greetings from a Kharkov fishing artel</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Gerasimov</i>			<i>greetings from the Lapp people of Kol'skii Peninsula</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Lazareva</i>		<i>dairy farm director, Kashir region (near Moscow)</i>	<i>greetings from the Spark kolkhoz</i>	<i>Russian</i>
<b>August 20, 1934 – Monday morning</b>					
<b>4</b>	Malakiia Toroshelidze	Georgia	Georgian critic	report on Georgian literature	Russian
	<i>Sukhanov</i>		<i>military inventor</i>	<i>greetings from the 5<sup>th</sup> plenum of the Moscow Soc. of Inventors</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Drastamat Simonian	Armenia	Armenian journalist	report on Armenian literature	Russian
<b>August 20, 1934 – Monday evening</b>					
<b>5</b>	Mamed Alekberli	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani writer	report on Azerbaijani literature	Russian
	<i>Kobiakov</i>		<i>member of a workers' lit circle</i>	<i>greetings from Moscow workers' literary circles</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Rahmat Majidi	Uzbekistan	Uzbek critic	report on Uzbek literature	Russian
	Oraz Tash-Nazarov	Turkmenia	Turkmen poet, critic	report on Turkmen literature	Russian
	<i>Abramenko</i>		<i>school director</i>	<i>greetings from the conference of school workers from the Proletarian region of Moscow</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Abolhasem Lahuti	Moscow	Iranian poet	report on Tajik literature	Russian
	<b>August 21, 1934 – Tuesday morning</b> Chaired by Petr Andreevich Pavlenko (Moscow)				
<b>6</b>	Mikhail Javashvili	Georgia	Georgian writer	speech on Soviet style, national literatures, Georgian literature	Russian
	Fedor Vasil'evich Gladkov	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Soviet literature, building on Gorky's points	Russian
	Leonid Maksimovich Leonov	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on world literature, form and purpose	Russian

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>6 cont.</b>	Aleksandr Minasovich Shirvan-Zade	Armenia	Armenian writer, national writer of Armenia & Azerbaijan	speech on non-literary achievements of Red Armenia	Russian
	Viktor Borisovich Shklovskii	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian scholar, writer	speech on Russian literature	Russian
	Nikoloz Iosifovich Mitsishvili	Georgia	Georgian poet	speech on task of national writers, Georgian literature	Russian
	<i>Parodian</i>			<i>greetings from the teachers from the Stalin region of Moscow</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Franz Weiskopf	foreign guest	Czech and German writer	speech on German reception of Soviet literature	German, then broken Russian
	Yakub Kolas	Belorussia	Belorussian poet	speech on Belorussian literature	Russian
	Ivan Kondrat'evich Mikitenko	Ukraine	Ukrainian writer, dramatist	speech on Congress and Gorky's talk	Russian
	Vladimir Vladimirovich Ermilov	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on Soviet tasks (brigade to Uzbekistan)	Russian
	Itsik Fefer	Ukraine	Yiddish poet	speech on Ukrainian literature	Russian
	Mikhail Fedorovich Chumandrin	Leningrad	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian) criticism	Russian
<b>7</b>	<b>August 21, 1934 – Tuesday evening</b> Chaired by Boris Pasternak (Moscow)				
	Lev Avramovich Kassil'	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on children's literature, tasks facing young writers	Russian
	I. Lezhnev	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian scholar, publicist	speech on Soviet (Russian) literary groups	Russian
	<i>Moscow young pioneers</i>			<i>song on the Congress</i>	Russian
	Kornei Ivanovich Chukovskii	Leningrad	Russian critic, children's writer	speech on children's literature in English and Russian	Russian
	Il'ia Grigor'evich Erenburg	Moscow	Russian poet, journalist, writer	speech on Western and Soviet literature	Russian
	<i>Il'ichev</i>			<i>greetings from the Moscow garrison</i>	Russian
<i>Vsevolod Vital'evich Vishnevskii</i>	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Russian dramatist</i>	<i>greetings to Defense Commissar Voroshilov</i>	Russian	

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>7 cont.</b>	<i>delegates</i>		<i>Defense, Aviation, and Chemical Construction (Osoaviakhim)</i>	<i>greetings from Osoaviakhim, report on the battleship M.Gorky, call for defense literature</i>	Russian
	Jean-Richard Bloch	foreign guest	French writer	speech on French literature and Soviet theory	French, Erenburg: Russian
<b>8</b>	<b>August 22, 1934 – Wednesday morning</b> Chaired by Aleksandr Georgievich Malyshkin (Moscow)				
	Vladimir Matveevich Bakhmet'ev	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Soviet literature (brigade to Belorussia)	Russian
	Feoktist Nikolaevich Berezovskii	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Western, Russian, and Soviet literature	Russian
	Petro Panch	Ukraine	Ukrainian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian and Ukrainian) literature	Russian
	Ali Nazim	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani critic	speech on Russian and Azerbaijani literature	Russian
	Anna Aleksandrovna Karavaeva	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature, writers as workers	Russian
	Leonid Sergeevich Sobolev	Leningrad	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature, role of emotion	Russian
	Marietta Sergeevna Shaginian	Moscow	Russian poet, writer	speech on Soviet literature as multinational	Russian
	<i>Novikova- Vashentsova</i>			<i>greetings from female workers, village correspondents, and beginning writers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Aleksandr Serafimovich	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Party and literature	Russian
	Afzal Mukhutdinovich Tagirov	Bashkiria	Bashkir writer, dramatist	greetings from Bashkiria, speech on Bashkir literature	Russian
	Aksel Stefanovich Bakunts	Armenia	Armenian writer	speech on Soviet multinational literature	Russian
	M. Il'in	Leningrad	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) children's literature and science fiction	Russian
<b>9</b>	<b>August 22, 1934 – Wednesday evening</b> Chaired by Abolhasem Lahuti (Moscow, international writer)				
	Vladimir Germanovich Lidin	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) prose genres and styles	Russian

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>9</b> <b>cont.</b>	Yakov Anatol'evich Bronshtein	Azov-Black Sea region	Russian Jewish writer	speech on Soviet literature as multinational	Russian
	Mikhail Efimovich Kol'tsov	Moscow	Russian journalist	speech on Soviet (Russian) satire	Russian
	Suleiman Stal'skii	Dagestan (non-voting)	Lezgian poet- <i>ashug</i>	<i>ashug (trans. read by Bezymenskii) and speech (trans by Ali Sabri)</i>	Lezgian, trans. into Russian
	Konstantin Aleksandrovich Fedin	Leningrad	Russian writer	speech on Soviet multinational literature	Russian
	Maxim Gorky (again)	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Congress to date	Russian
	Zubov			<i>greetings from Palekh lacquer box artists</i>	Russian
	Chaban			<i>greetings from the kolkhozs of the Moscow region</i>	Russian
	Smirnova			<i>greetings from the kolkhoz peasants</i>	Russian
	Vsevolod Ivanov	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on (Russian) fellow travelers	Russian
	Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fadeev	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Yurii Olesha	Moscow	Russian poet, writer, dramatist	speech on personal path in Soviet literature	Russian
	Lidia Nikolaevna Seifullina	Moscow	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature, replies to previous speeches	Russian
	Yaroslavskii			<i>greetings from the presidium of the Society of Old Bolsheviks</i>	Russian
<b>10</b>	<b>August 23, 1934 – Thursday morning</b> Chaired by Aleksandr Fadeev (Moscow)				
	Il'ias Jansugurov	Kazakhstan	Kazakh poet	speech on Kazakh literature	Russian
	Feliks Yakovlevich Kon		Party worker, Russian revolutionary	greetings from the Society of Former Political Prisoners	Russian
	Aleksandr Ostapovich Avdeenko	Sverdlovskii region	Russian writer, screenwriter	speech on personal path in Soviet literature, young Soviet (Russian) writers	Russian
	Arkadii Ivanovich Zolotov	Chuvashia	Chuvash writer, critic	speech on Chuvash literature	Russian



Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>10 cont.</b>	Panteimon Sergeevich Romanov	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian writer	speech on Soviet literature	Russian
	Professor Obratsov		transport engineer	speech on need to write about transportation successes	Russian
	Nikolai Nikandrovich Nakoriakov	Moscow (non-voting)	publisher	greetings from publishing workers, speech on Soviet (Russian) achievements in publishing	Russian
	Ivan Ul'ianovich Kirilenko	Ukraine	Ukrainian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian and Ukrainian) literature	Russian
	I.I. Shabanov	Far Eastern region		speech on (Russian) literature on the Soviet Far East	Russian
	Agniia L'vovna Barto	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian children's writer	speech on Soviet (multinational) children's literature	Russian
	Fedor Markelovich Chesnokov	Mordovskii region (non-voting)	Mordovian writer, dramatist	speech on Mordovian literature	Russian
	Ivan Kapitanovich Luppol	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian scholar, historian	speech on Russian national literature, Soviet literature as multinational	Russian
	Valeriia Anatol'evna Gerasimova	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian writer	speech on heroes in Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
<b>11</b>	<b>August 23, 1934 – Thursday evening</b> Chaired by Drastamat Simonian (Armenia)				
	Mikhas' Lyn'kov	Belorussia	Belorussian writer	speech on bravery in Soviet (Belorussian and Russian) literature	Russian
	G. Lelevich	Dagestan	Russian poet, critic	speech on Soviet (multinational) literature, backward nationalities skipping the capitalist stage	Russian
	Natal'ia L'vovna Zabila	Ukraine	Ukrainian children's writer	speech on Soviet (Russian and Ukrainian) children's literature	Russian
	<i>Grachev</i>		<i>paper factory</i>	<i>greetings from the Okulovskii paper factories</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	David Rafailovich Bergel'son	Moscow	Yiddish writer	speech on Soviet Yiddish literature	Russian
	Ivan Mikhailovich Bepalov	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian critic	speech on socialist in context Soviet literature	Russian

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>11 cont.</b>	Fedor Ivanovich Panferov	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) literary language	Russian
	Bruno Yasenskii	Moscow	Polish and Russian writer	speech on personal path from European literature to Soviet	Russian
	Isaac Babel	Moscow	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on personal path in Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Aleksandr Yakovlevich Arosev	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Paolo Yashvili	Georgia	Georgian poet	speech on Soviet (multinational) literature at the Congress	Russian
	Vsevolod Vital'evich Vishnevskii	Moscow	Russian dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature, Congress, German Communists	Russian
	Andre Malraux	foreign guest	French writer	speech on Western and Soviet (Russian) literature	French, Olesha: Russian
	Yurii Nikolaevich Libedinskii	Leningrad	Russian writer, critic	speech criticizing Olesha	Russian
	<i>Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov</i>	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Russian writer</i>	<i>resolution on the reports by Gorky, Marshak, and on the national literatures</i>	<i>Russian</i>
<b>12</b>	<b>August 24, 1934 – Friday morning</b>				
	Karl Radek	Moscow (non-voting)	Party worker, critic	report on “Contemporary world lit. & the tasks of proletarian art”	Russian
	Hu Lanqi	foreign guest	Chinese writer	speech on Chinese revolutionary literature and Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Martin Andersen Nexø	foreign guest	Danish writer	speech on European literature	Danish, Efros: Russian
	<i>presiding</i>			<i>greetings to Romain Rolland</i>	<i>Russian</i>
<b>13</b>	<b>August 25, 1934 – Saturday morning</b> Chaired by Il'ia Grigor'evich Erenburg (Moscow)				
	Bela Illesh	Moscow	Hungarian writer	speech on European and Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Aleksandr Ignat'evich Tarasov-Rodionov	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian writer	speech on German and Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>13 cont.</b>	Willi Bredel	foreign guest	German writer	speech on German literature	Товарищи!, then German, Tret'iakov: Russian
	Lev Ven'iaminovich Nikulin	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on Western and Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
	Friedrich Wolf	foreign guest	German writer	speech on Western drama	first line. Russian, German, Vishnevskii: Russian
	Andre Malraux (again)	foreign guest	French writer	correcting his position, as quoted by Nikulin	French, Erenburg: Russian
	<i>Gustav Isnard</i>		<i>surviving member of the Paris commune</i>	<i>greetings</i>	<i>French, Erenburg: Russian</i>
	Zapel Nikitichna Esaian	Armenia	Armenian writer	speech on Armenian literature abroad	French, Erenburg: Russian
	Amabel Williams-Ellis	foreign guest	English writer	speech on English revolutionary literature	English, translator: Russian
	Giovanni Germanetto	foreign guest	Italian writer	greetings from MORP, speech on literature in fascist Italy	Russian
	Mikola Bazhan	Ukraine	Ukrainian poet	speech on Western and Soviet (Ukrainian) literature	Russian
	Jef Last	foreign guest	Dutch writer	speech on Dutch literature	Russian
	Robert Gessner	foreign guest	American poet	speech on American revolutionary literature	English, Dinamov: Russian
	<i>(Erenburg, as presiding)</i>			<i>telegram from Tsekher, sec'y of the Uzbek central committee, congratulating Soviet (multinational) writers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
<b>14</b>	<b>August 25, 1934 – Saturday evening</b>				
	Chaired by Erenburg (Moscow)				
	Yakub Kadri Karaosmanoğlu	foreign guest	Turkish writer	speech on Turkish literature	French, Nikulin: Russian
	Sergei Mikhailovich Tret'iakov	Moscow	Russian poet, dramatist	speech on international reception of Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
<i>Korobov</i>		<i>Moscow metro builder</i>	<i>greetings from Moscow construction workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>	

<b>Session</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lang.</b>
<b>14 cont.</b>	<i>delegation of railroad workers</i>			<i>flowers</i>	
	<i>Bakurin</i>		<i>Moscow railroad worker</i>	<i>greetings from the railroad workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Teitlin</i>		<i>Khorvino station supervisor</i>	<i>greetings from the railroads</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Luchin</i>		<i>best Soviet railroad machinist</i>	<i>greetings from the railroad workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Vladimir Borin	foreign guest	Czechoslovakian writer, publicist	speech on Western literature	Czech, Tarasov- Rodionov: Russian
	Mikhail Efimovich Kol'tsov (again)	Moscow	Russian journalist	speech on Soviet reception of Western literature	Russian
	Jean-Richard Bloch (again)	foreign guest	French writer	on French literature and individualism, reply to Radek	French, Erenburg: Russian
	Arkadii Afanas'evich Liubchenko	Ukraine	Ukrainian writer	speech on Western and Ukrainian literature	Russian
	Louis Aragon	foreign guest	French writer	greetings from French branch of MORP, speech on French literature	French, Erenburg: Russian
<b>15</b>	<b>August 26, 1934 – Sunday morning</b> Chaired by Bela Illesh (Moscow, international writer)				
	Linard Petrovich Laitsens	Moscow	Latvian writer	speech on international and Baltic literatures, folklore, and fascism	Russian
	Wieland Herzfelde	foreign guest	German writer	speech replying to Radek's comments on James Joyce	German, Stenich: Russian
	Johannes Robert Becher	Volgan German Republic	German writer	speech on (foreign) German literature	German, Inber: Russian
	Theodor Plievier	foreign guest	German writer	speech on Western anti-war literature	German, Tret'iakov: Russian
	<i>Lomintsev</i>		<i>Tula worker</i>	<i>greetings from the Tula workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Xiao San (Emi Siao)	Far Eastern region	Chinese writer	greetings from the League of Leftist Writers of China, speech on Chinese revolutionary literature	Russian
	<i>Nemtsova</i>		<i>Leningrad worker</i>	<i>greetings from the Stalin turbine factory</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Karl Radek (again)	Moscow (non-voting)	Party worker, Comintern	closing words to international session	
	<i>(Illesh, as presiding)</i>			resolution on Radek's report on international literature	

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
16	<b>August 27, 1934 – Monday morning</b>				
	Valerii Yakovlevich Kirpotin	Moscow	Russian scholar, critic, publicist	report on Soviet drama	Russian
	Nikolai Fedorovich Pogodin	Moscow	Russian dramatist	report on Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	<i>Chupruchenko</i>		<i>Kuban kolkhoznik</i>	<i>greetings from the female kolkhoz shock workers of the Trinity tractor station in the Azov-Black Sea region</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Vladimir Mikhailovich Kirshon	Moscow	Russian dramatist, critic	report “Towards socialist realism in drama,” on Western and Soviet (Russian) literature	Russian
17	<b>August 27, 1934 – Monday evening</b> Chaired by Novikov-Priboi (Moscow)				
	Aleksei Tolstoy	Moscow	Russian writer, poet	report on Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	<i>Tairov</i>		<i>theater artist at the Chamber Theater</i>	<i>greetings from theater workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Samuil Borisovich Shchupak	Ukraine	critic	speech on Ukrainian drama	Russian
	Boris Sergeevich Romashov	Moscow	Russian dramatist, director, critic	speech on Western and Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	Vladimir Naumovich Bill'-Belotserkovskii	Moscow	Russian dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian and Turkmen) drama	Russian
	Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afinogenov	Moscow	Russian dramatist	speech on Western and Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	Boris Andreevich Lavrenev	Leningrad	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on Western and Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
Professor Mikhail Yakovlevich Lapirov-Skoblo		electrical engineer	speech on connection between science and literature	Russian	
18	<b>August 28, 1934 – Tuesday morning</b> Chaired by Mikhail Nikolaevich Klimkovich (Belorussia)				
	Iohann L'vovich Al'tman	Moscow	Russian scholar, critic	speech on Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	Konstantin Andreevich Trenev	Moscow	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	Aleksandr Evdokimovich Korneichuk	Ukraine	Ukrainian writer, dramatist	speech on Soviet drama	Russian
	Khaizekil' Moiseevich Dunets	Belorussia	Belorussian critic	speech on Soviet drama: Belorussian, Yiddish, and Polish drama in Belorussia	Russian

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>18 cont.</b>	Derenik Karapetovich Demirchan	Armenia	Armenian poet, dramatist, writer	speech on Soviet drama	Russian
	Sergei Sergeevich Dinamov	not a delegate	Russian critic, scholar	speech on Shakespearean language	Russian
	Shalva Nikolaevich Dadiani	Georgia	Georgian writer, actor	speech on Georgian drama	Russian
	Nikolai Nikolaevich Nikitin	Leningrad	Russian writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	Ernst Toller	foreign guest	German writer	speech on Soviet and German drama	German, Kozakov: Russian
	Karim Tinchurin	Tataria	Tatar dramatist, actor	speech on Tatar drama	Russian
	Asan Izimovich Begimov	Kara-Kalpakia	Kara-Kalpak writer	speech on Kara-Kalpak literature	Russian
	Ziia Saidov	Uzbekistan	Uzbek dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian and Uzbek) drama	Russian
	Kuz'ma Chorny	Belorussia	Belorussian writer, dramatist	speech on the need for better heroes in Soviet drama	Russian
	Aleksei Mikhailovich Faiko	Moscow	Russian dramatist	speech on heroes in Soviet (Russian) drama	Russian
	Abdulla Gareevich Amantai	Bashkiria	Bashkir poet, critic, dramatist	speech on Bashkir drama	Russian
<b>19</b>	<b>August 28, 1934 – Tuesday evening</b> Chaired by Klimkovich (Belorussia)				
	Natan Abramovich Zarkhi	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian) film	Russian
	Yu. Yuzovskii	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian scholar, critic	speech on heroes in Soviet (Russian) and European drama	Russian
	Ivan Antonovich Kocherga	Ukraine	Ukrainian dramatist	speech on heroes, with example from his own play	Russian
	Nataliia Il'inichna Sats		Russian director	speech on Soviet (Russian) and European children's drama	Russian
	<i>Sulimanov</i>		<i>tractor station political worker</i>	<i>greetings from Uzbek kolkhoz workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Jafar Jabbarly	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani dramatist, actor, director	speech on heroes in Russian and Soviet drama	Russian
	Lev Isaevich Slavin	Moscow	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on drama and criticism	Russian

<b>Session</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lang.</b>
<b>19 cont.</b>	Hijikata Yoshi	foreign guest	Japanese director	speech on Japanese revolutionary literature	Japanese, Seki-Sako: Russian
	Nikolai Bukharin		Party Central Committee member	report on poetry, poetics, and the tasks of poetry in the USSR	Russian
<b>20</b>	<b>August 29, 1934 – Wednesday morning</b> Chaired by Oraz Tash-Nazarov (Turkmenia)				
	Nikolai Semenovich Tikhonov	Leningrad	Russian poet	report on the Leningrad poets	Russian
	Aleksei Aleksandrovich Surkov	Moscow	Russian poet	speech replying to Bukharin, on Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
	Titsian Yustinovich Tabidze	Georgia	Georgian poet	speech on Soviet and European poetry	Russian
	Andrei Ivanovich Aleksandrovich	Belorussia	Belorussian poet	speech on Belorussian poetry	Russian
	Viteslav Nezval	foreign guest	Czech poet	speech on poetry and revolution	Czech, Tarasov-Rodionov: Russian
	Antal Gidash	Moscow	Hungarian writer	speech on Soviet and European poetry	Russian
	Akper Rukhi Aliev	Turkmenia	Turkmen poet, critic	speech on Turkmen poetry	Russian
	Semen Isaakovich Kirsanov	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian poet	speech on Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
	Izi Kharik	Belorussia	Yiddish poet	speech on Soviet (Russian and Yiddish) poetry	Russian
	Mikael Hasanoğlu Rafili	Azerbaijan (non-voting)	Azerbaijani poet, scholar	speech on national form in Soviet literature, Russian assistance to Caucasian writers	Russian
<b>21</b>	<b>August 29, 1934 – Wednesday evening</b>				
	Yakov Zinov'evich Gorodskoi	Ukraine	Russian poet	speech on Soviet poetry and the need for research before writing	Russian
	Sadriddin Ayni	Tajikistan	Tajik writer, poet	speech on Tajik poetry	Russian
	Dmitrii Vasil'evich Petrovskii	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian poet, writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
	Aleksandr Alekseevich Zharov	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
Aaly Tokombaev	Kyrgyzia	Kyrgyz poet	speech on Kyrgyz literature	Russian	

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>21</b> <b>cont.</b>	Leonid Solomonovich Pervomaiskii	Ukraine	Ukrainian poet, dramatist	speech on translating Russian poetry	Russian, examples in Ukrainian
	Vladimir Aleksandrovich Lugovskoi	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on European and Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
	<i>Igor Grabar'</i>		<i>graphic artist</i>	<i>greetings from workers in the graphic arts</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Vera Mikhailovna Inber	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on Soviet (Russian) and European literature	Russian
	<i>(presiding)</i>			<i>telegram from Romain Rolland</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Boris Leonidovich Pasternak	Moscow	Russian poet, writer	speech on poetic language	Russian
	Aleksandr Il'ich Bezymenskii	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
	<i>Bratanovskii</i>		<i>technical writer</i>	<i>greetings from technical writers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Il'ia L'vovich Sel'vinskii	Moscow	Russian poet, dramatist	speech on Russian poetry	Russian
	Demian Bednyi (again)	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on Russian poetry (and Lahuti)	Russian
	Egishe Abgarovich Charents	Armenia	Armenian poet	speech on Soviet literature and national culture	Russian
Moa Martinson	foreign guest	Swedish writer	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature	Swedish, Pasternak: Russian	
<b>22</b>	<b>August 30, 1934 – Thursday morning</b> Chaired by Jafar Jabbarly (Azerbaijan)				
	Sandro Euli	Georgia	Georgian poet	speech on Soviet poetry	Russian
	Kornei Ivanovich Chukovskii (again)	Leningrad	Russian critic, children's writer	speech on translating Russian, Soviet national, and European poetry	Russian
	Nikolai Nikolaevich Aseev	Moscow	Russian poet	speech on formal aspects of Soviet (Russian) poetry	Russian
	Aleksandr Andreevich Prokof'ev	Leningrad	Russian poet	speech on Soviet (Russian) poetry and translations into Russian	Russian
	Latso Novomeskii	foreign guest	Slovak poet	speech on the international importance of Soviet (Russian) poetry	Slovak, Panch: Russian
	Rafael Alberti	foreign guest	Spanish poet	speech on Spanish revolutionary literature	Spanish, Lugovskii: Russian
	Nikolai Bukharin (again)		Party Central Committee member	closing words (to the poetry sessions)	Russian



Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
<b>22</b> <b>cont.</b>	<i>Glazov</i>		<i>Bolshevskaiia commune representative</i>	<i>greetings from NKVD Bolshevskaiia and Liuberetskaia labor communes</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Vladimir Petrovich Stavskii	Moscow	Russian journalist, literary functionary	report "On the literary youth of our country"	Russian
<b>23</b>	<b>August 30, 1934 – Thursday evening</b> Chaired by Fadeev (Moscow)				
	Kuz'ma Yakovlevich Gorbunov	Moscow	Russian writer	report on publishers' work with beginning writers	Russian
	Boris Nikolaevich Agapov	Moscow	Russian writer	speech on the speed of literary production, with Soviet (Russian) and American examples	Russian
	Lidia Nikolaevna Seifullina (again)	Moscow	Russian writer	speech criticizing Russian representations of the nationalities	Russian
	Petr Polikarpovich Petrov (Skital'ts)	Eastern Siberia	Russian poet	speech	Russian
	<i>Zhislin</i>		<i>evening student writer</i>	<i>greetings from the students of the Workers' Evening Literary University</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Safronov</i>		<i>worker writer</i>	<i>greetings from workers' literary circles organized by Profizdat publishers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Otto Luihn	foreign guest	Norwegian writer, journalist	speech on revolutionary Norwegian literature	Norwegian, Kassil': Russian
	Aleksei Ivanovich Stetskii		Party Central Committee member and head of Proletkul't	speech on Soviet literature's responsibility to the country and the Party	Russian
<b>24</b>	<b>August 31, 1934 – Friday morning</b> Chaired by Tash-Nazarov (Turkmenia)				
	Grigorii Mikhailovich Katz	Azov-Black Sea region	Russian journalist, writer	speech on Russian literature	Russian
	Aleksandr Fedorovich Filatov	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian poet	speech on writing circles and young writers	Russian
	Irgat Kadyr	Crimea	Crimean Tatar poet	speech on Crimean literature	Russian
	Vladimir Mikhailovich Tolstoy	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian writer	speech comparing Soviet (Russian) and Western literature	Russian
	Bruno Ivanovich Zernit	Tataria (non-voting)	Tatar poet	speech on young Tatar writers and writing circles	Russian

<b>Session</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lang.</b>
<b>24 cont.</b>	Sarmat Urusbievich Kosirati	Northern Ossetia	Ossetian writer	speech on Ossetian literature, translation, and Soviet national literatures	Russian
	F.M. Soloveichik	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian proletarian writer	speech on factory literary circles	Russian
	Vivian Azar'evich Itin	Western Siberia	Russian writer	speech on Siberian literature	Russian
	Nairi Zar'ian	Armenia	Armenian poet	speech on Soviet and European literature	Russian
	Samuil Rivinovich Lehtsir	Ukraine	Moldavian writer	speech on European, Moldavian, and Romanian literature	Russian
	Shamsuddin Kattaevich Aiskhanov	Chechnya-Ingushetia	Chechen writer	speech on Chechen literature	Russian
	Ivan Le	Ukraine	Ukrainian writer	speech on young writers	Russian
	D.A. Marchenko	Moscow (non-voting)	Party secretary of the Moscow branch	speech on literary circles and professional unions	Russian
	Nikolai Alekseevich Kushtum	Sverdlovskii region	Russian poet, writer	speech on Urals poetry	Russian
	Vladimir Efremovich Torin	Ukraine	Russian and Ukrainian writer	speech on Donbass literature	Russian
	Nikolai Egorovich Mordinov	Yakutia	Yakut writer, dramatist	speech on Yakut literature	Russian
	K.Yu. Yukov	Moscow (non-voting)	Sovnarkom film sector worker	speech on Soviet (Russian) literature and film	Russian
	Albert Erenstein		Austrian writer	speech on German literature and fascism	German, Sobolev: Russian
Dimitris Glinos	foreign guest	Greek writer and education specialist	speech on revolutionary world literature	Greek, Efros: Russian	
<b>25</b>	<b>August 31, 1934 – Friday evening</b>				
	Nikolai Ognev	Moscow	Russian writer, dramatist	speech on Soviet (Russian) young writers	Russian
	Note Lur'e	Ukraine (non-voting)	Yiddish writer	speech on international and Soviet Yiddish young writers	Russian
	Nikolai Leopoldovich Braun	Leningrad (non-voting)	Russian poet	speech on tasks facing Soviet (Russian) young poets	Russian
	Nikolai Vladimirovich Bogdanov	Moscow (non-voting)	Russian writer	speech on tasks facing Soviet (Russian) young prose writers	Russian

Session	Speaker	Delegation	Identity	Topic	Lang.
25	<i>Kubrikov</i>		<i>village correspondent</i>	<i>greetings from beginning kolkhoz writers, united by Peasant Newspaper (Krest'ianskaia gazeta)</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Viktor Mikhailovich Gusev	Moscow	Russian poet, dramatist	speech on young poetry	Russian
	Noraich Arutiunovich Dabagian	Armenia	Armenian critic, scholar	speech on Soviet (Armenian and Russian) young writers	Russian
	Aleksandr Isbakh	not a delegate	Russian poet, critic	speech on the need to make literature about labor interesting	Russian
	Mariia Mikhailovna Shkapskaia	Leningrad	Russian writer	speech on labor in European and Russian literature	Russian
	Franz Ivanovich Bakh	Volgan German Republic	German writer	speech on Volgan German writers	Russian
	<i>Margolis</i>		<i>young writer</i>	<i>greetings from the young writers association at the journal "Growth"</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Mikhail Golodnyi	Belorussia	Russian poet	speech on Soviet young poets	Russian
	<i>Belyi</i>		<i>composer</i>	<i>greetings from the Moscow union of composers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Burmistrov</i>		<i>worker</i>	<i>greetings from the workers at the Stalin factory</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Novikov-Priboi</i>	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Russian writer</i>	<i>greetings to writers in Japan and China</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Pavel Fedorovich Yudin	Moscow	Party worker	report on the Soviet Writers' Union statutes	Russian
	<i>Karpukhin</i>		<i>former soldier and partisan</i>	<i>greetings from the fraternity of Red Army and Civil War veterans</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Ivan Ul'ianovich Kirilenko</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Ukrainian writer</i>	<i>commission elections following Yudin's report</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	Vsevolod Vital'evich Vishnevskii (again)	Moscow	Russian dramatist	report on the commission's working mandates	Russian
<i>Potemkin</i>		<i>transport engineering student</i>	<i>greetings from the transport institutes</i>	<i>Russian</i>	
26	<b>September 1, 1934 – Saturday evening</b> Chaired by Fadeev (Moscow)				
	<i>(Fadeev, as presiding)</i>	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Russian writer</i>	<i>reading a letter from Nikolai Bukharin</i>	<i>Russian</i>

<b>Session</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Identity</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lang.</b>
<b>26 cont.</b>	<i>Aleksandr Nikandrovich Zuev</i>	<i>Moscow (non-voting)</i>	<i>Russian writer</i>	<i>commission report on the statutes language</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Yurii Olesha (again)</i>	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Russian writer</i>	<i>approving the statutes</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Ivan Kondrat'evich Mikitenko (again)</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Ukrainian writer, dramatist</i>	<i>greetings to the Central Committee</i>	<i>Russian</i>
				<i>greetings to the Soviet of People's Commissars</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Nikolai Semenovich Tikhonov (again)</i>	<i>Leningrad</i>	<i>Russian poet</i>	<i>letter in support of Ernst Thälmann</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Leonid Solomonovich Pervomaiskii</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Ukrainian poet, dramatist</i>	<i>letter to paper factory workers</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Andre Malraux (again)</i>	<i>foreign guest</i>	<i>French writer</i>	<i>speech expressing sympathy and solidarity with Hijikato</i>	<i>French, Erenburg: Russian</i>
	<i>Ivan Iulianovich Kulik (again)</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Ukrainian poet</i>	<i>election results for the union's organs</i>	<i>Russian</i>
	<i>Maxim Gorky (again)</i>	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Russian writer</i>	<i>closing words</i>	<i>Russian</i>