

# A COLLECTIVE FARM RECEIVES GUESTS

By Donald Seager

**J**UST after the war I visited the Soviet Union as a member of the British Youth Delegation. In the time that has elapsed since then we have seen the tremendous fund of goodwill which the courage of the Red Army had built up in the minds of British people slowly but surely squandered.

The time has come, we are told, to "stand up" to Russia, to cry halt to her policy of nationalist expansion. The Marshall Plan and a new Western European *bloc* are realities which three years ago few of us dreamed could happen . . . would need to happen.

To-day Russia is front page news. But do we know any more about the Russian *people* than we knew during the dark days before Stalingrad? I doubt it. We think in terms of Russia, the cold, impersonal factor at the conference table, rather than of the one hundred and eighty million flesh-and-blood individuals who live their lives within her borders. It is because of this that I think it worthwhile telling of some Russians I met on a visit to the Red October Collective Farm, a visit I shall long remember.

One January evening I was on a hill looking down at the frozen Dnieper. It was 20 degrees below freezing, and my thick leather gloves stuck to the low iron railings against which I leaned. Somewhere along that broad frozen mass of water, reddening now with the pale glow of a Ukrainian sun, beyond the low flat horizon with its scrubby trees, was the Dnieper Dam.

And the magnitude of the scene, the generous scale of all natural things, made it suddenly hard to realise that behind me was the shattered city of Kiev, then with families living in wooden huts and what had once been the basements of tall houses. Hard to remember that among the trees on my left the simple grave of General Vatutin, who died in the liberation of Kiev, lay new and cold, and that from these same trees were hanged a score of partisans.

Two days later we crossed the Dnieper over a temporary wooden bridge which had been built in an energetic fortnight. Past unhappy-looking groups of German prisoners working among the debris, bumping along to the musical clatter of the chains on the rear wheels of the coach, we jolted out of the town. Across the railway, still margined with upturned and burnt-out wagons, through a small clump of grey trees, and we met the vast plain I had seen from Kiev two days before. It was a broad plain of brown and grey, hollowed here and there

with snow, and only the bare trees broke the dead frozen line of the horizon.

**A**FTER driving for nearly two hours, we pulled to a halt at a small group of low houses, and a plump, smiling young woman climbed in. Her name was Natasha. With her fair hair and blue eyes, she looked very much like an English girl, but the long brown coat with its Astrakhan collar, and the white hood drawn over her head reminded us that this was the Ukraine. We soon realised why she had climbed aboard. We needed a guide. What had been a rough road soon became an even rougher, and scarcely discernible, cart track, until finally it seemed to me we were steering from landmark to landmark over the hard fields.

Soon we reached our village, the village of Rogossovski, and Natasha led us, past intensely curious and friendly peasants, into the house of the chairman of the farm.

If we had been visitors from another planet there could hardly have been a greater focus of attention upon that tiny house. It was small, simply furnished with wooden benches and tables, and the whitewashed walls threw the brightness of the outside sky across the faces of our hosts. They were fine, kindly faces. I felt immediately these men were peasants rather than politicians, that the force of the patriotic posters on the walls, though not lost to them, did not override their awareness of the more fundamental challenges which their stock had faced for generations. Every line on those hard, brown hands, every wrinkle in the keen-eyed faces told of their struggle, their work, and of their lives.

War and Fascism seemed for a moment words that could not have the same meaning as in the ruined city we had left. Not so. For in telling the story of his farm, the Chairman referred, without emphasis or sign of bitterness, to the legacy of destruction left them by the war. The way he spoke, Fascism might have been a bad drought or a plague of insects.

An old man to whom I spoke afterwards seemed to sum up this attitude. "The Fascists," he said, with utter scorn in his cracked voice, "they did not know how to use the land." This was his only comment. That the invading armies had killed his cattle, stolen his grain, driven away his horses, and burned his house—all this amounted to less than the fact that they had not known how to use the land—*his* land.

It became clear as we went round the farm that the primitive agriculture from which these peasants had begun to free themselves had returned in the aftermath of war.

With their 850,000 kilogram grain store destroyed, without the three motor trucks, the oil engine at the mill, the small sewing factory, all significant and personal parts of their economy, this community of 700 men and women were back where they had started, even further back.

But hope was there; it was in every bright face. There was a plan, too—a plan which all could see, pinned on the wall of the Chairman's office. The farm comprised 1,984 hectares, and the multi-coloured wall diagram showed 726 of these given over to wheat, oats, barley, clover, potatoes, and peas for the coming year, and 456 hectares were earmarked for pasture. The agronomist explained the farm's part in the national plan, flicking the wall chart with his long fingers. He was paid a fixed salary by the State, and advised the farm committee on all technical matters.

**T**HERE were 290 collective farmers here, 130 of them women. They elected their own committee of five, including the Chairman, and any of these could be removed from office at a month's notice by popular vote. Their job was to integrate the production of this farm with the overall State Plan.

Each farmer was allowed 3,000—6,000 square metres of "personal" land according to his needs and capabilities. He was also allowed to keep, for his family requirements, one cow, one sow, and as many chickens as he cared to feed. The cow, during more normal times, could be bought at a specially favourable price.

The method of running a collective farm has been so often misrepresented, often through confusion with State Farms, where the workers receive a fixed wage, that it may be worthwhile going into some detail, bearing in mind that this aspect of their lives contributes very largely to the outlook, independence, and very real sense of community of people such as these I met on this raw January day.

In the first place, there is an attempt by the State to level up the inequalities of nature so that the farmer in less productive areas has as strong an incentive as his fellow in the richer parts of the U.S.S.R. This may take the form of ploughing the land with tractors from State tractor stations on specially cheap terms, of gifts of seed or fertiliser, or even money subsidies. Again, the State decides a provisional "norm" of production according to the fertility of the soil; approximately 40 per cent. of the total yield is given up to the State, but each farm is allowed to retain all extra produce resulting from its own working efficiency.

Payment to individual farmers is made locally on a "man-day" basis, again using a system of norms. The ploughing of a hectare of land, for example, may be valued as one "man-day," and harvesting will earn so many "man-days" according to the nature of the crop and the amount har-

vested. Routine jobs such as minding of the beasts—and on the "October" farm this meant sleeping in the sheds with them to prevent possible thefts—are taken in turn by the farmers.

At the end of each year every farmer will be credited with so many "man-days" according to his own capacity for work and that of his working family. The total profits of the farm are divided by the total number of "man-days" worked, and shared out proportionately. Each share will consist of produce and money. Thus, in a rich area like the Ukraine each "man-day" may be worth as much as 17 kilograms of corn, 5 kilograms of vegetables, 250 grams of honey, and 1 rouble 50 kopecks in money, whereas a backward farm may distribute only 2 kilograms of corn and 1 rouble per "man-day."

The farmer can sell any surplus from his "acre" plot in the free market at the nearest town, and a leading Soviet economist admitted that during times of scarcity this had the undesirable effect of creating two widely differing price levels, for often during the war produce would cost ten or even twenty times the rationed price when bought in the open market. "But," he pointed out, "in more normal times the price in the open market may fall below the shop price. In 1938, for example, butter costing 24 roubles a kilogram in the shops, could be bought for 18 roubles on the collective farm market."

**T**HIS is the economic background against which these simple people plough their land, feed their beasts, and reap the abundance of Russian harvests. It helped to colour the still picture which I saw around me now. For the fields were indeterminate, iron-hard shapes, and the ponds frozen. The beasts came out from their warm stalls only for water. Only the women looking after the cattle, newly arrived to make good war losses, seemed to be active.

I watched some nondescript poultry pecking their meal from an upturned German helmet. Truly were the swords turned into ploughshares, the horror of the past five years disappearing before the promise of another spring.

I looked around at the simple white houses—all newly built—and felt sorry I could not be here to watch the changing seasons, to wait while the hard tracks softened into mud, to hear the farm tractors as they broke into the soil with the plough; and finally, in the dust of a Ukrainian summer, watch the heavily-laden carts lumber over the fields with their rich burden.

But there was a promise of the new crop in the last year's harvest, and we went into a great barn in which the seed for next year's planting was kept. I let the corn run through my fingers and noticed the agronomist, long since familiar with its every detail and possibilities, doing the same, a look of pleasure and interest turning up the corners of his mouth.

In the evening came the celebration, and if there had been a faint suspicion of formal hospitality flavouring the goodwill of some parties which we had already attended, there was a warmth, a spontaneity and a friendliness here which made it a unique, an unforgettable experience.

As we crowded into the tiny parlour of the largest house in the village, the sun was going down; the fields seemed to close in, and this simple white house became the focal point of the community. Children, men and women, all who could walk, peered in at the windows, and pressed in at the low door. The room was simply furnished with plain wooden chairs and long trestle tables and benches which had been borrowed for the occasion. In the corner an Icon nestled on its brick shelf, from the ceiling, oil lamps were hanging; a few pictures, a bricked-in stove running down one side of the room, and that was all. But the people!

In the centre of the room stood our host, wearing a colourful waistcoat and beaming happily at everyone. There must have been 50 of us in this tiny room.

As soon as we were seated, the toasts began—those formal, extravagant little speeches which all Russians seem to love so much and yet which this time seemed to have an added sincerity and quality of the heart. The decanters of local vodka, a pale pinkish brew with a rooty taste, were pushed insistently around. We started on the cold meat, eating slowly and carefully.

In the far corner, sat the women of the village, bright and buxom in their traditional costume. They began to sing. It was unforgettable music. In haunting unison they sang of the rich Ukrainian soil, of the harvests and of their lives. This informal choir, with a powerful sense of joy, brought the heat of the summer, the passions of season and youth into the tiny room. And so it went on. We exchanged song after song. When we could, we sang together. Soon the meat dishes were empty. In the fashion of Russian meals, we had been nearly two hours at table, but the party had only just begun.

Into this hot, noisy room came the women of the household bearing plates of fish. We blinked, paused, and began to eat. The atmosphere, both in temperature and sociability, grew steadily warmer. The toasts became fewer and less coherent, the music—aided now by a wheezy accordion—wilder and more enthusiastic. At last the fish plates were cleared, but there was more to follow. Roast chickens, one to each plate, were brought in. When even the most capable had at length put aside the chicken, the *piece de resistance* was borne in by our host—a crinkly brown suckling pig, garnished and garlanded, with a lemon corked in its solemn mouth.

AND now the traditional dancing began. Tables were pushed aside, partners thrust on each other by the crush, the accordion pulsed out one of those gay tunes which whip the tiredst

legs into activity, and with a young Red Army soldier beating the rhythm on a tambourine, the whole room went into a mad riotous dance. Heads bobbed so close and quickly that nationality was lost in a frenzy of movement and colour; legs and arms were at all angles in the tight, time-oblivious mass, the pictures rattled, the oil lamps swung to the rhythm which vibrated the whole house.

The dance was the signal for a general invasion of that already overcrowded room and, somehow, old men and women as dark as they were wrinkled, forced their way in, and sat solemnly smiling as the dancers swept past, skirts brushing them, faces moist and shining in the heat of that joyful room.

And so it went on, until there was no breath, no knowledge of place or time, only a knowing of exhausted exhilaration and a tremendous feeling of oneness with all who stood breathless and smiling in that stifling room.

An old man in the corner sang a shrill, toothless solo, and with renewed energy the dancing began again. But the time was coming for our departure. Despite the many invitations to stay the night in that snug, wonderful village, we knew we must go. And we stood, dancers clasped tightly, the older people chatting as they beamed and nodded, and everyone talking excitedly, until the poor interpreters, who had long since lost control of the situation, finally gave up, and the conversation, only understood by sheer wanting, bubbled and eddied in the hazy atmosphere.

The English have never been considered an emotional race, but the affection and sentiment of those tender farewells must have overturned that opinion in the hearts of many Ukrainian and Russian people that night. As the motor-coach drew away into the darkness we could hear the fading strains of *Dosfeedanya*—the song of farewell—carried across the snow, and for a few moments, the bright faces and waving hands of these kindly people showed in the light of the open doorway, before night closed down and all was silent inside and outside the jolting bus.

Tired and yet strangely without tiredness, happy and yet without words full enough to express the magic of the moment, we travelled the bumpy road back to Kiev.

And, whenever I think of the Soviet Union, I shall not linger long in the shadow of the battlement walls of the Kremlin or loiter even in the beauty of the Byzantine churches, nor shall I rest for many moments on the quiet edge of the Black Sea, before I am back among the people whom in one short, unforgettable day, I came to know and to love. These toilers on the rich Ukrainian plains, through the years of struggle, have retained, and will—I believe—always retain, a charm and a beauty that make them a living testament to the potential greatness of human kind.

The white expanse of the Dnieper came into view and, rising sheer above it, the black edge of ruined Kiev.

# Problems of Soviet Aesthetics

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The discussions which have taken place in the pages of "Oktyabr" about whether Soviet man should be drawn psychologically, or from the point of view of his actions, are splitting hairs. The task facing Soviet writers, artists, and musicians is to direct their efforts to realism, and to do this we must work out the aesthetics of socialist realism. One of its main new concepts is the fact that work has become the "hero" of artistic creation for the first time in the history of art.

The form of a work of art must be accessible to (and understandable by) the mass of the people—in other words realistic—which is why the great Russian critics have always so closely linked with realism an understanding of the people. This link between the popular basis of art, and artistic realism, must be strengthened now by our Marxist aesthetics. The Communist Party resolution directed against formalist tendencies in Soviet music calls formalism an anti-democratic, anti-popular trend in art. The popular aspect of Soviet art has a clear and definite social content, which makes it a powerful weapon for the transformation of society to communism. It also means a change in the type of hero. A new hero has come into history—the working class, the peasantry, the people, actively and consciously creating socialist reality.

*Rosenthal's paper was followed by a general discussion, summarised below.*

## GLAGOLEV

**B**OURGEOIS conceptions have not vanished from treatment of the history of literature or, in large measure, from aesthetics and the theory of literature. The views of Veselovsky are still powerful as, for example, in Professor Zhurumsky's work, Kirpotin's book on Dostoyevsky and in the work of Sheitling and Petrov. It is not possible to regard the development of critical realism as a simple and consistent change of one direction for another.

The difference between critical realism and Marxist-Leninist interpretations constitutes the difference between critical realism and socialist realism. The correlation between realism and romanticism cannot be solved mechanically (as Padeyev has done), since romanticism was linked with the idea of a socialist Utopia. To say to-day that romanticism stands above reality, or that it is not part of reality, is a grave mistake, since our reality is both romantic and heroic. Herein lies the qualitative difference between romanticism in the past and romanticism to-day.

## BYALIK

Rosenthal's speech had one "new" idea—his objection to the idea of correlating

realism and revolutionary romanticism. Nevertheless this conception was the one guiding Gorki's aesthetic ideals. Lenin defended Gorki in this stand, and Zhdanov has developed this idea in his speeches. Rosenthal criticised Vera Panova\* for not developing sufficiently the psychology of Soviet people. But she, curiously enough, propagates a theory which exactly corresponds to that put forward by Rosenthal. She does not depict reality from the viewpoint of to-morrow. This lowers the realism. In attacking the idea of the correlation of realism and revolutionary romanticism, Rosenthal failed to take into account the ideological struggle in progress abroad. The one thing that made the French "personalistes" furious was Zhdanov's statement that one must look at to-day from the viewpoint of to-morrow. Blanchard and his supporters stated that this constituted a departure from realism. To-day, when world reaction is trying to attack the principle of socialist realism, it attacks revolutionary romanticism first of all.

It is true that many profound and correct ideas are contained in the works of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, but it seems to me that the re-coining of old ideas is a strange method of advancing aesthetic theory. Rosenthal has forgotten that writers are "the engineers of the soul," in Stalin's phrase, and that to-day one can no longer be content with the definition that "art is a mirror of life." A new definition must be sought.

Rosenthal considers that Socialist realism differs from the realism of the past in that we have welded together realism and ideology, which was impossible in the past. But did not Saltykov-Shchedrin do just this? Rosenthal defines Socialist realism as the most consistent realism because it is the most ideological. What does that mean? It is the realism at the foundation of which there lies the principle of a Communist spirit. All this is true, but it has been known for a long time, and it fails to answer the question as to what constitutes Socialist realism. It is clear to me that one

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\*Vera Panova. Stalin prize-winner for her war novel "Fellow-Travellers" (1946), and her novel on factory life "Kruzhilikh" (1947).

"Fellow-Travellers" available in shortened translation in "Soviet Literature" Nos. 6 and 8, 1946, and "Kruzhilikh" in "Soviet Literature" Nos. 2 and 3, 1948. Articles in Russian on her work appear in "Znamya" No. 6, 1947, "Oktyabr" No. 2, 1948, "Zvezda" No. 4, 1948, and "Znamya" No. 7, 1948. A brief article on her appears in the "Anglo-Soviet Journal," Vol. IX, No. 3 (Autumn, 1948).

cannot advance æsthetic theory in this manner. We have documents from the Party in which the most fundamental and important things have been said. We have the Party resolutions, and Zhdanov's great speeches, we have Gorki's theory of æsthetics. We must look at everything that takes place round us, in literature and life, in the light of these statements, and also play an active part ourselves. This is a more difficult task than the refurbishing of old principles, but it is the only path along which we can collectively fulfil the call of the Party and really advance our æsthetic theory.

#### ABALKIN

THE discussion on the mutual relations and connections between realism and romanticism is being carried on divorced, to some extent, from reality. If you think about some of the best 19th century Russian national culture, you will see that it connected romanticism and realism. Rosenthal's mistake is that, in defining socialist realism, he has forgotten about our own reality and the art and literature which reflects this reality.

Instead of a description of how romanticism runs counter to realism, he should have given a definition of romanticism in our contemporary and socialist sense. Such a definition would have shown that romanticism can perfectly well exist side by side with realism, naturally and organically, and with no conflict. A definition of socialist realism must be based on the generalisation of the concrete experience of artistic creation. Only thus can we advance our philosophical thought.

The problem of socialist realism cannot be solved outside that of the freedom of artistic creation. This freedom consists in service to Socialism and in freely serving the people. In socialist reality the Party directs the spontaneous development of art, and the spontaneous creation of the artist, into an organised channel. This organisational factor does not, in any way, limit the freedom of artistic creation, a fact which must be made clear in our æsthetic theory, exposing as we do so the untruth and hypocrisy of the bourgeois battle-cry about the freedom of artistic creation. The practice of Soviet art has shown that in the development of Soviet culture, new principles have arisen, principles non-existent up to now in the history of world culture. The problem of the freedom of artistic creation in a socialist society must be worked out in a philosophical form, taking into account the enrichment that reality has brought to our art.

#### MATZ

The national features of our art were not touched on at all in Rosenthal's speech. A further shortcoming was his failure to make concrete applications of æsthetics in the various branches of art. Only one aspect was in fact dealt with—realism and romanticism—and even this aspect was not fully

discussed. He said that romanticism is "thought." This definition is totally insufficient and inadequate in any branch of art. If one agrees with his definition, then Utopian novels can be classed with the romantics, which is incorrect. Utopianism and romanticism are not one and the same thing. As we understand it, revolutionary romanticism is not a yearning for unattainable ideals, nor mystical exaltation, nor an embellishment of reality. What is it, then? Revolutionary romanticism springs from the very foundations of socialist realism and, when we are clear about this, it will be necessary to call romanticism something else.

Terminology is still very poor in æsthetics. Romanticism, realism, the classical are understood in many ways. But the problem with which we are faced is not to render terminology more accurate, but to get at the essence of the problem.

A battle is raging in the Union of Architects against formalism, against the group of architects known as the "Zholtovsky school." According to Zholtovsky\* nature, as it was understood by the natural philosophers of the Renaissance, is the foundation of æsthetics. There are many supporters of this view, but unfortunately the battle is not being fought on the correct theoretical ground, since many architects cannot distinguish between materialist and idealist æsthetics. Zholtovsky offers us an abstract, speculative understanding of form, as though it were a materialist understanding of art and architecture. True, this is a special problem, but the solving of such special æsthetic problems has a political as well as a theoretical importance.

#### NEDOSHIVIN

The question of the connection between realism and romanticism, round which the main discussion has developed, is far from being the only question in Marxist æsthetics upon which we must concentrate our attention. Byalik's statement has still not made clear to us what socialist realism is. Rosenthal only touched on one tendency in bourgeois art, and one which is an expression of the collapse of that art, the tendency towards the destruction of objective graphic forms. Nevertheless, particular danger exists in those trends of contemporary bourgeois æsthetics, which claim that their art and their æsthetics are realistic. It is very significant that the reactionary tendencies in contemporary bourgeois art try to depict themselves in a realistic light. The attempt of the bourgeoisie to revert to realistic forms is also evidence of the fact that the demand for realistic art is strong among the masses of the people, who can be influenced by realistic forms.

\*I. V. Zholtovsky. Born 1866. Designer of the Supreme Court building in Moscow, pavilions for the 1923 All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition, the State Bank in Moscow, &c. Doyen of lecturers and teachers at the Moscow Architects' School

Rosenthal's development of the theme of the correlation of romanticism and realism was correct, because it would be extremely naive to imagine that socialist realism is some sort of, if not arithmetical, at least chemical, synthesis of realism and romanticism. From this viewpoint arises the whole mistaken and dangerous tendency of regarding realism as an incompletely developed form of art.

Such an understanding of realism bases itself, in essence, on the bourgeois understanding of the beautiful. There is an unavoidable separation in bourgeois art between the depiction of reality and the understanding of beauty. The art of socialist realism does not demand that the beautiful be brought into art from outside. It proposes the discovery of the beautiful in reality itself.

What, then, is beautiful? It is, in the first place, the new man, his creative work; it is the creative activities of the people, directed towards the construction of a Communist society, and the defence of the achievements of Socialism. Revolutionary romanticism in our art is the discovery of the idea brought to life. The fundamental difference between the methods of socialist and bourgeois realism lies in their application of the principle of the changing of reality. Rosenthal's speech implies that the only difference between bourgeois and socialist realism lies in the subject of art. This is incorrect, since we must seek this difference, not only in the subject, but in the method. To make clear our understanding of socialist realism, we must base ourselves on the practice of our Soviet art and, at the same time, draw conclusions from and make generalisations on, not the average work of art, but on that aesthetic ideal towards which our art is striving. In Soviet society this ideal corresponds to reality.

If we understand that our art has no task other than that which faces the entire Soviet people, other than the struggle for Communism, then it will become clear why it is that the question of a Communist outlook is so important.

#### SARABYANOV

I HAVE nothing to quarrel with in Rosenthal's speech, but he failed to tell his audience about the situation which exists to-day in different fields of Soviet art. The artistic theories which assert that the object of art is the beautiful are a thing of the past. The object of art is life, and we must demand of art that it reflects life and our times in the forms of art. How does Soviet art reflect our times? At one time the constructivists held the field in architecture. An end was put to their tricks. But other types of formalism in architectural practice took their place.

In the Institute of Architecture the majority of the teachers come from the Zholtovsky school and, it must be admitted, among them are some of the cleverest and most talented architects—people like

Zakharov and Chernishova. Their entire attention is, unfortunately, turned on the past. They take the best architecture of past periods and think that they can mechanically adapt it to the present. Classical forms can sometimes be adapted for a museum or a theatre, but can one build a Soviet village hall in the Gothic style? The formalists completely fail to understand that a form must be found which corresponds to the content. These young architects from Zholtovsky's school genuinely want to adopt a Marxist view of aesthetics, and they must be helped in every way.

There are other architects, such as Konstantinov, who think that the greatness of our period can only be expressed in gigantic buildings. He plans gigantic, many-storeyed buildings, forgetting that size is not greatness. The theory of architecture, both abroad and at home, has so far been formalist in outlook. Since the Communist Party resolution on art, architects must start taking note not only of form but of content also.

#### LESUCHEVSKY

The shortcomings in Rosenthal's speech result from his examining the problems of the method of socialist realism without taking into account practice or the living development of Soviet art, and of literature in particular. If he had taken into account, and generalised from, the rich experience of our literature, this alone would have prevented his giving such a narrow, insufficient, and therefore incorrect, definition of socialist realism as a reflection only of Soviet life. Such a definition excludes from socialist realism works depicting past and present bourgeois reality—as, for example: A. Tolstoy's "Peter I," Elmar Green's "Wind From the South," K. Simonov's "Russian Question," and others. The methods of socialist realism develop on the basis of a new, socialist reality, but this does not mean that it is simply realism "added" to a new reality. The method itself contains within it something qualitatively new, something new in a revolutionary sense by comparison with previous realism.

#### KOLPINSKY

Rosenthal's speech did not mention national forms of art, wherein there develops a definite socialist content in popular cultures. This is an important problem not only for the Soviet Union, but also for the new democracies. Another aspect of the same problem can show how the formulation of a national artistic culture makes this same national culture international, worldwide in its application. Rosenthal's description is deficient, because he does not link up his theoretical formulation with what is actually happening in art.

It is wrong to measure socialist realism only by the amount of reality which it depicts. It is insufficient to say that the particular characteristic of socialist realism is only the content of our own reality. It is insufficient because socialist realism im-

plies not only content but the very method and æsthetic form which arises out of socialist reality. Socialist realism can take as its subject non-socialist reality, and can depict this more profoundly and completely than can any other art form. The great scope of the method of socialist realism lies also in its ability to depict æsthetically the further development of society and to distinguish between that which is transitory and that which is developing and moving forward. It is on this basis that one must solve the problem of the connection between realism and romanticism, which was solved in a one-sided manner by both Rosenthal and Byalik—the former because he denied that any positive elements had been contributed to socialist realism, and the latter because of his mechanical addition of the realism and romanticism of the past, which allegedly existed independently.

Romanticism is one of the most direct forms of the realist method. The particular characteristic of our socialist realism is that romanticism makes possible the artistic idealisation of our reality, instead of just creating romantic thoughts about our reality's future.

#### OZEROV

In essence the problem of the connection between realism and romanticism has been solved by Zhdanov on the basis of Lenin's definitions. The problem now is to put the theory to practical use in uniting realism and romanticism in the various arts and in literature. This connection must be based on the living practice of the arts, and not on a purely logical analysis of the romantic and realistic art forms, nor from previously laid down æsthetic forms.

An important problem in the æsthetics of socialist realism is that of the ideal, of the positive hero. Russian classical literature is filled with the search for an ideal, for a positive hero, and this search is particularly marked in revolutionary democratic literature, which found the solution in depicting the revolutionary man trying to transform society. The difficulty was that heroes of the pre-revolutionary period could not be representatives of the politically-conscious working class and remained solitary figures, out-of-the-ordinary people. Only Gorki found the hero among those to whom the future belongs—among the revolutionary proletariat.

Soviet literature must depict our contemporary positive hero, which will be a concrete formulation of the beautiful in the æsthetic sense. Those forms which most fully embody our socialist life and the new socialist qualities of the many millions of Soviet people are beautiful for us.

#### GROSHEV

**D**URING the years 1921-1926, formalism, under the guise of "innovation," was present in the Soviet cinema, and this similar "innovation" is evident at the present time

among several comrades who, it is claimed<sup>\*</sup> played a big part in the formation of Soviet cinema. An incorrect evaluation is given, for example, in Lebedev's "History of the U.S.S.R. Cinema,"<sup>\*</sup> although the book has many good points. Lebedev underestimates the part played by the realist actors of the Moscow Art Theatre. Such a formulation implies that the roots of Soviet film art go back into western decadent cinema art. In fact, the roots of Soviet cinema art can be traced back into Russian graphic and theatrical art, into Russian classical literature. The best films made during the rise of Soviet cinema, "Battleship Potemkin" (Eisenstein), "Mother" (Pudovkin), were confirmations of realism and linked with the realistic traditions of Russian art, and, in particular, with the school of the Moscow Art Theatre, linked with the destruction of formalism on which both Eisenstein and Pudovkin wrote.

The danger at the present time is not in the resurrection of the formalism of the '20's, the ugliness of which is obvious to all, but in the rise of a new kind of formalism. Our script writers and directors, instead of unfolding and showing the conflicts which arise from the particular characteristics of our socialist society, take another line, and only depict the general situation without developing the essence of the relationship between people in our country. The possibility of mechanically transferring dramatic situations from bourgeois art to Soviet art is justified by the bourgeois theory of dramaturgy which considers that a dramatic subject is independent of the nature of social relations, and that this subject can be adapted to any society as long as the external forms are altered.

The harmfulness of this theory is self-evident. Despite this fact, the bourgeois theories of cinema art are not only not criticised in some published books, but are even praised. An example is the collection of articles on D. W. Griffith, edited by Eisenstein and Yutkevich, in which there is no criticism of the reactionary ideology of this bourgeois film producer, but only praise of the form of his art, viewed apart from its reactionary content.

#### TRAPEZNIKOV

The fact that the theory of architecture is in a sorry state is evidenced by the recent discussion which has taken place on the book "Gradostroitelstvo." Shkvarikov, Bunin, Polyakov, and others demonstrated the formalist approach of the book; a plenary session of leading Moscow architects, following on the resolution on the Muradeli Opera, was called. The problem of the fight against formalism in architecture was raised at this plenary session but was not solved, since

<sup>\*</sup>N. A. Lebedev. Author of a "History of the Cinema in the U.S.S.R." Vol. I, on the silent cinema, appearing late in 1947, has been criticised among film workers and in cultural journals. Available in S.C.R. Reference Library.

the discussion was on a low theoretical level.

While incorrect theories are propagated by Matz, Zholtovsky develops his idealistic viewpoint on architecture, and there are many students steeped in the latter's ideas, which ignore entirely the social role of architecture. Zholtovsky's supporters hold to the belief of the "eternal" significance of principles in building, which apparently exist independently of their times. Zholtovsky considers that building develops not in time but in space. It is, therefore, no accident that Zholtovsky's students seek their inspiration from long dead-and-gone masters, with the result that their practical work is far divorced from our own times.

#### KUZNETSOV

The discussion has wandered away from the most important problems—the Communist spirit and popular art, the problems of the correlation of the national and the international in art, the struggle against homeless cosmopolitanism, and has become concentrated mainly on the connection between realism and romanticism.

The science of Soviet aesthetics at the present time is in a most unsatisfactory state—there are no chairs of aesthetics, no aesthetic courses in higher educational institutions, nor any serious theoretical work on these problems. The question of the artistic representation of work in a socialist society and our attitude towards pre-socialist realism, are most important problems for our aesthetics. Pre-socialist realism was not single and unchanging—it developed in history. The history of art is the history of the increasingly profound development of an artistic knowledge of the world. The problem of labour remained unsolved by writers of the past, including the Russian critical realists. Only socialist realism can solve this problem. Soviet writers and artists try to depict the world of the hero from within, when our socialist man masters by labour the surrounding world and performs great deeds. That is the fundamental new quality of realism which the old realism did not possess.

#### LUKANOV

Where aesthetics has not been worked out as a science, all spheres of art are held back. The scientific study of aesthetic problems must not lead to the development of abstract aesthetics which seek to force all aspects and forms of socialist art into a single, static frame. This study should lead to the discovery of the new qualitative content which the aesthetic ideals of our society contain. Side by side with the problem of beauty arises the problems of that which elevates, the tragic and the comic, which Rosenthal omitted entirely from his speech. The main shortcoming in Rosenthal's speech was the fact that he drew his conclusions not so much from life as from previously-thought-out schemes and categories.

It is imperative that a distinction be made between socialist and pre-socialist roman-

ticism. Rosenthal's mistake in this respect lies in the fact that when he deals with revolutionary romanticism as the creative beginning of socialist realism, he is influenced by the traditional literary conception that romanticism is indissolubly linked with philosophical idealism. He also failed to deal with the important question of the link between aesthetics and ethics.

*M. M. Rosenthal replied to the discussion as follows:—*

THOSE who have spoken in the discussion have criticised my speech for its failure to review the situation in various branches of the Soviet arts. I would say, firstly, that it is impossible in a single speech to cover all branches of the arts; and, secondly, it is difficult to have a knowledge of all the arts sufficient to criticise and speak of them all.

The second criticism levelled against the speech was its failure to contain sufficient concrete material to bear out the theoretical principles put forward. I accept this criticism, although it was a difficult task to furnish a large number of practical examples in a speech designed to cover general problems of Marxist aesthetics.

The central feature of the discussion was the problem of socialist realism which is fundamental to our Soviet aesthetics. Soviet art and literature are faced with the depiction of a new stage in the history of human society, the depiction of new social relations, and the new men of Soviet society. In such circumstances the methods of Soviet art are of primary importance.

The essence of our differences, expressed during the discussion, does not lie in the fact that B. Byalik and others recognise revolutionary romanticism as a foundation, while I and others reject it. The fact of the matter is that B. Byalik and others, bringing everything down to romanticism, draw the artist away from reality and fail to see that socialist realism is the most consistent and profound form of realism.

Our reality, the struggle of our Party, our world outlook explain why revolutionary romanticism is an indissoluble part of socialist realism.

The tasks which face us came out in the discussion. They are:—(1) Struggle against bourgeois decadent art and bourgeois aesthetics; struggle against formalism and naturalism, against the remnants of bourgeois ideology and aesthetics in Soviet literature and art, struggle against liberalism, objectivism, and so on. (2) A positive formulation of the problems of Soviet aesthetics, of the classical heritage and its relationship to Soviet art: a positive formulation of socialist realism as the method of Soviet art, of the part which labour plays in Soviet art, and of the national content in the latter; and finally a positive formulation of the national character of Soviet art in its indissoluble connection with Soviet patriotism.

# PAUL JABLOCHKOFF—A PIONEER OF ELECTRIC LIGHTING

By Hugh P. Vowles, M.I.Mech.E.

PAUL JABLOCHKOFF was born on September 14th, 1847, the year in which Thomas Alva Edison and Alexander Graham Bell also were born. He became an engineer-officer in the Russian Army, and was entrusted in 1869 with various electrical investigations at the Ecole Galvanotechnique in St. Petersburg. A little later his duties were extended to include the supervision of the telegraph lines from Moscow.

Towards the end of 1875, Jablochkoff left Russia on a visit to the exhibition at Philadelphia, but got no further than Paris, where he proceeded to develop an entirely novel type of electric arc lamp, which soon became widely known as "Jablochkoff's Electric Candle."

At that time the only practicable way of producing electric light was by means of arc lamps, connected with a direct current source of supply. There were many types of arc lamp, but in general they consisted essentially of two opposed carbon rods or electrodes, actuated by mechanism which first brought them into contact for a moment and then drew them apart a short way for the current to arc across between the ends of the rods, thus producing the light.

The clockwork or other mechanism employed had also to keep the ends of the rods a fixed distance one from the other, neither separating them too far apart nor bringing them into contact. Automatic regulation was all the more difficult to achieve because the positive electrode burned away much faster than the negative, whilst the rate of burning in both electrodes was affected by irregularities in the composition of the carbons.

In consequence it was very rarely that a light could be produced which was both uniform and continuous. There was a good deal of flickering, hissing, and spluttering, and from time to time the light was liable to go out altogether. Rules for the prevention of fire drew attention to the danger due to falling pieces of incandescent carbon and to ascending sparks. It was to eliminate such defects and to dispense altogether with the need for adjusting mechanism that Jablochkoff introduced his simple but highly ingenious and successful "candle," for which he secured his first patent on March 23rd, 1876.

The official history of the Institution for Electrical Engineers contains the following

note:—"In April, 1877, there appeared in a Paris newspaper, *La France*, a notice that caused the electricians of the world to think and to wonder." The notice was worded as follows:—

"A Russian engineer-officer has found the means of keeping the carbon points together in electric lamps without the use of electric regulators. M. Jablochkoff substituted for this costly and delicate apparatus a candle composed of two carbons placed side by side, and separated by, and enveloped in, an insulating and fusible substance. It is already known that not only is the Jablochkoff candle better than any clockwork regulator, but that it is also possible to get several lights from an electrical machine.

AN account of Jablochkoff's invention had already been presented to the Académie des Sciences by the President (M. Dumas), who characterised the invention as a great step in the problem of electric lighting.

Before 1880, apart from street and shop lighting in Paris, Jablochkoff's candles were installed in various parts of London, notably along the Thames Embankment from Westminster to Waterloo Bridge, along Holborn Viaduct, and other thoroughfares of the City of London, in Billingsgate Market and the West India Docks, whilst a considerable number of private firms in London, Liverpool, and elsewhere adopted this form of lighting.

Popular enthusiasm was before long diverted to the incandescent filament lamps of Swann, Lane-Fox, and Edison. But though the candle was superseded, in improving it Jablochkoff was led to make a pioneer and permanent contribution to modern methods of electricity generation and distribution.

For, finding at an early stage that his candle was unsuitable for use in direct current circuits, owing to the uneven burning of the positive and negative carbons, he turned his attention in 1877 to the possibilities of the alternator. It is on record that the Gramme alternator, itself a landmark in electrical engineering history, was specially designed by Gramme to suit the Jablochkoff candle, whilst Jablochkoff himself evolved and made use of transformers in his system of electrical distribution, at the same time advocating the use of high-voltage transmission.

Jablochkoff eventually returned to Russia, where he died on March 19th, 1894.