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From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism:

Stalin and the Impact of the “Anti-Cosmopolitan”
Campaigns on Soviet Culture

❖ Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov

In the Soviet Union the “anti-cosmopolitan” campaigns of the late 1940s and early 1950s were a taboo subject for many years afterward. Even during the “thaw” under Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet publications made no mention of the campaigns. Only with the advent of glasnost under Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s was the topic finally discussed in Soviet newspapers and journals, beginning with an article in the journal *Zvezda*.¹ This initial article was followed by numerous other articles and discussions on Soviet television, which brought to light new information about the events of 1948–1949. Those events, spurred initially by the anti-Western thrust of Soviet policy during the early Cold War, are the subject of this article. The article will trace the origins and evolution of the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns and will then recount the purge of the Philological Faculty at Leningrad State University in 1948–1949. The events in Leningrad provided a microcosm of what was occurring in the Soviet Union at large.

This episode is useful in showing how the external demands on Soviet foreign policy during the opening years of the Cold War contributed to changes in Soviet internal policy and an intensification of domestic repression.

The Inception of an Anti-Western Campaign

During the final stages of World War II, Soviet troops advanced far into Central Europe as they repulsed the German forces and captured Berlin. Before

1. Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov, “O nizkopoklonstve i kosmopolitizme: 1948–1949,” *Zvezda* (Leningrad), No. 6 (1989), pp. 157–176.

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the war Soviet citizens had not been permitted to travel to Europe, but troops returning from the front lines had been “contaminated” by significant exposure to Western mores. To prevent Western ideas from spreading within Soviet society after the war, the authorities undertook anti-Western propaganda campaigns and continued to promote Russian nationalist images and themes. Josif Stalin’s willingness to emphasize Russian nationalism over class-based considerations had been evident in the 1920s and 1930s, but it took on new dimensions after World War II. Earlier on, Stalin had invoked national categories only when they facilitated his political battles. After World War II his nationalist pronouncements became more sweeping and virulent. A decree issued in the name of the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (VKP) on 10 February 1948 claimed that the opera “The Great Friendship,” by V. Muradelli, had given

the misleading impression that peoples from the Caucasus such as Georgians and Ossetes were at war with the Russian people back then [i.e., during the civil war and consolidation of Soviet power in 1918–1920], which is historically false. The main obstacle to the establishment of friendship between these peoples [and Russia] during that period in the Northern Caucasus was posed by the Ingushetians and the Chechens.²

This decree and its connection with Russian nationalism were of special significance at this point because both the Chechens and the Ingush had been deported en masse in 1944 and were still living in exile. The decree revealed the worrisome side of Russian nationalism in the Stalin era: that it could be directed against other groups and nations within the multinational Soviet state.

In line with the revival of nationalist sentiment, the notion of *patriotism* was redefined. The word *patriot* was increasingly conflated with the word *Russian*. Those of non-Russian nationality began to be accused of a lack of devotion to the “socialist motherland,” a shift of policy that had distinctly anti-Western overtones. Attacks against “anti-patriots,” including those deemed to be favorably disposed toward the West and toward bourgeois culture, was the central element of all the ideological campaigns from 1946 through 1953. These campaigns were initiated in August 1946 with a decree issued by the VKP Central Committee regarding the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*.³ The decree was followed by a series of other decrees—on the repertoire of dramatic theaters (August 1946), on the film “Big Life” (September 1946), and on other cultural topics.

2. “Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) Ob opere ‘Velikaya Druzhba’ V. Moradelli,” *Pravda* (Moscow), 11 February 1948, p. 1.

3. “Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) o zhurnalakh ‘Zvezda’ i ‘Leningrad,’” *Pravda* (Moscow), 14 August 1946, p. 1.

The decrees of 1946 marked the beginning of a patriotic and antibourgeois campaign in the cultural sphere. Stalin and two of his closest aides, Vyacheslav Molotov and Andrei Zhdanov, met with the leaders of the Soviet Writers' Union (Anatolii Fadeev, Boris Gorbato, and Konstantin Simonov) on 14 May 1947 in the Kremlin. The discussion focused primarily on "Soviet patriotism." Stalin presented the writers with a written document "advising" them to struggle against the "spirit of self-abasement among many of our intellectuals." The document referred specifically to the cases of N. G. Klyuev and G. I. Roskin. "The appearance of this document in print," remembers Roskin, "was the beginning of the struggle against self-abasement, feelings of inadequacy, and unwarranted groveling before foreign culture, which Stalin had said would require many years of chiseling away at a single point."⁴ The emphasis on "patriotism" and "groveling before the West" was indicative of Stalin's political objectives at that time.

The connection between the new ideological doctrine and Soviet foreign policy was underscored by Molotov (who was still Soviet foreign minister) at a special session of the Moscow City Council (Mossovet) on 6 November 1947. At the session, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik rise to power, Molotov declared that

the Soviet people are resolute in their determination to bring an end to the remnants of the past as soon as possible and to launch unrelenting attacks on all manifestations of groveling before and slavish imitation of the West and its capitalist culture.⁵

Over the next few years almost every area of science and culture was embroiled in grandiose campaigns to do away with "groveling before the West," "anti-patriotism" (later "anticosmopolitanism"), and generally anything "non-Russian."

The demarcation of Soviet society into "Russian" and "non-Russian" as well as "patriots" and "antipatriots" sparked tension, caused neighbors to be suspicious of one another, and evoked the specter of the "enemy." Newly available evidence confirms that this is precisely what Stalin sought. Public fear of an "enemy" suited his goals in the Cold War. Unlike in World War II, when the main enemy was unmistakably Germany, the anti-Western/anticosmopolitan campaigns were directed against abstract foreign foes on the one hand (e.g., global imperialism,) and against specific groups and nations within the USSR on the other. This policy had been adumbrated by the mass

4. Konstantin Simonov, "Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniya (razmyslenie o I. V. Staline)," *Znamya* (Moscow), No. 3 (1988), pp. 59–60.

5. "Rech' tov. V. M. Molotova," *Pravda* (Moscow), 7 November 1947, p. 3.

deportations that Stalin ordered during the war and the imprisonment or execution of all those who supposedly had collaborated with the Germans or had found themselves in occupied territory and been repatriated. The campaign in the late 1940s against internal enemies was intended to place the blame for the continued enormous hardships of Soviet life on “fascists,” “American imperialists,” and other “alien elements” and to keep the populace in a constant state of tension.

Increasingly, as discussed below, the antic cosmopolitan campaigns took on an overtly anti-Semitic tone. There is no longer any doubt that Stalin himself was directly responsible for this policy. In private conversations he had openly expressed his desire to eliminate “Jewish influence” and to help a “native” (i.e., non-Jewish) intelligentsia gain sway in the Soviet Union.⁶ Stalin’s daughter, Svetlana Allilueva, later acknowledged that the murder of the eminent Jewish actor Solomon Mikhoels in Minsk in January 1948 was undoubtedly sparked by “[her] father’s well-known tendency to see ‘Zionism’ and plots everywhere.”⁷ Konstantin Simonov, one of the writers who had met with Stalin in 1947, recalls that “in the very last years of his life Stalin held a position on the Jewish question diametrically opposed to the position he espoused in public.”⁸ At Stalin’s behest, Jewish writers, artists, and academics came under attack in 1949. Everything possible was done to “expose” them, remove them, and ultimately replace them with “real” Russians of known loyalty to the regime.

The Veselovskii “Discussions”

The campaign against foreign influences escalated sharply in June 1947 when accusations were lodged against scholars of literature and other fields of the humanities. Of particular importance was the “discussion” regarding Aleksandr Veselovskii, a literary scholar at Petersburg University during the nineteenth century. Veselovskii, who had died in 1906, became the subject of ideological battles in 1947 because he had sought to construct a scientifically

6. See for example G. Piker, *Zastol'nye razgovory Gitlera* (Smolensk: Rusich, 1993), p. 456. This book recounts the conversations between Stalin and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop in 1939.

7. Svetlana Allilueva, *Tol'ko odin god* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), p. 134. In another book, *Dvadsat' pisem k drugu* (St. Petersburg: Vsy Moskva, 1994), p. 138, Allilueva tells about the tragic fate of the film director Aleksei Kapler, with whom she was in love in 1942–1943. Kapler’s Jewish background was unacceptable to Stalin.

8. Simonov, “Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniya,” p. 93.

based history of general literature, drawing on the plots and forms that prevailed in various national cultures. He believed that this approach would reveal the links between tradition and innovation, between folklore and literature, and between collective and individual creativity. Initially, he was held in high esteem by many of the leading Soviet literary scholars. In 1938 the jubilee session of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, dedicated to Veselovskii's centennial, was conducted with great festivity. The publication in 1940 of his famous *Historical Poetics*, edited by V. M. Zhirmunskii, who also wrote an extensive introduction, became a major literary event.⁹ In anticipation of the approaching 110th anniversary of Veselovskii's birth, material about him continued to appear in 1946 and 1947.

The discussion that focused on Veselovskii in June 1947, as the anti-foreign campaign was getting under way, involved some degree of confusion with his brother Aleksei, who was also a literary scholar and the author of a boo on Western influence in Russian literature, published in 1883.¹⁰ The attacks on Aleksandr Veselovskii were launched by Anatolii Fadeev at the 11th plenary session of the Governing Board of the Soviet Writers' Union. In a report entitled "Soviet Literature After the Decree of the VKP Central Committee of 14 August 1946 on the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*," Fadeev (who headed the Governing Board) raised the question of "the Veselovskii School." Fadeev claimed that Veselovskii was at odds with the revolutionary-democratic tradition of other nineteenth-century literary critics and was "the chief proponent of the obsequiousness before the West that characterized a certain portion of Russian literary scholarship in the past and present."¹¹

Fadeev then castigated a recent book by Isaak Nusinov, *Pushkin and World Literature*, which had come out to favorable reviews when it was published in 1941.¹² According to Fadeev, Nusinov claimed that "all light comes from the West, while Russia is an Eastern country" and that Pushkin was a "West European writer" and a "universalist," not a Russian.¹³ These allegations intensified a campaign against Nusinov that had begun the previous month. Fadeev noted that despite fierce criticism of Nusinov in print and at

9. Another pre-World War II publication should also be mentioned: *A. N. Veselovskii, Izbrannye Stat'i* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1939).

10. Valerii Kirpotin, "Ob otnoshenii russkoi literaturoi," *Oktyabr'* (Moscow), No. 9 (1947), pp. 161, 163.

11. "O sovetskom patriotizme i nizkopoklonstve pered zagranitsej," *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 29 June 1947, p. 1.

12. I. M. Nusinov, *Pushkin i mirovaya literatura* (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1941).

13. "O sovetskom patriotizme i nizkopoklonstve pered zagranitsej," p. 1.

department meetings of the Moscow Pedagogical Institute and the Pedagogical Institute for Foreign Languages, the latter had refused to acknowledge that he had behaved in an “un-Party-like manner” and had “distorted the bright image of the great Russian poet.”

Fadeev also condemned Vladimir Shishmarev, the director of the Institute for World Literature, for his recent work on Veselovskii.¹⁴ Fadeev expressed dismay that “all matters of literary education for young people at the Gorky Institute of World Literature, as well as at the Moscow and Leningrad Universities, are headed by parrots of Veselovskii and his blind apologists.” He called on the Soviet Academy of Sciences and Ministry of Higher Education to rectify the situation.¹⁵ In the subsequent discussion, all the participants voiced approval of Fadeev’s report and denounced the “Western school of philological and literary scholars, whom A. Fadeev very accurately described in his report.”¹⁶

Over the next few months, writers and scholars amplified on Fadeev’s remarks, publishing commentaries in the journal *Oktyabr*. In an article titled “On the Relationship of Russian Literature and Russian Criticism to the Capitalist West,” Valerii Kirpotin, a well-known critic and literary scholar, emphasized the importance of nineteenth-century Russian realism, which, in his words, was “the bravest, the most consistent, and the loftiest realism.” Kirpotin denounced those who, like Veselovskii, “are conspiring to dismantle the entire edifice of Russian literature stone by stone [and] who are giving away our legacy, which is uniquely original in its challenges and forms, to foreigners.”¹⁷

Faced with this onslaught of criticism, almost no one was ready to defend Veselovskii. One of the few exceptions was Shishmarev, who responded to the attacks of Fadeev. Shishmarev said that it was a “scholarly error” and a “political mistake” to regard Veselovskii as having “groveled before the West.” He declared that “the new evaluation of Veselovskii has provoked enormous bewilderment throughout our Union and among the members of various generations and national cultures.”¹⁸ Another defense of Veselovskii came from the

14. A. A. Fadeev, “Sovetskaya literatura na pod’eme,” *Pravda* (Moscow), 29 June 1947, p. 4. See V. F. Shishmarev, *Aleksandr Veselovskii i russkaya literatura* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1946).

15. A. A. Fadeev, “Sovetskaya literatura posle Postanovleniya TsK VKP(b) ot 14-ogo avgusta 1946 g. o zhurnalakh Zvezda i Leningrad,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 29 June 1947, p. 2.

16. Remarks by M. Shaganyan, transcribed in *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 8 July 1947, p. 2.

17. V. Y. Kirpotin, “Ob otnoshenii russkoi literatury i russkoi kritike k kapitalisticheskomu zapadu,” *Oktyabr* (Moscow), No. 9 (1947), pp. 173, 169, and passim.

18. Vladimir Shishmarev, “Aleksandr Veselovskii i ego kritiki,” *Oktyabr* (Moscow), No. 12 (1947), p. 158.

critic Viktor Shklovskii, who praised Veselovskii as a “great scholar” and “patriot.” Although Shklovskii claimed that Veselovskii had not always behaved properly, he insisted that the attacks on Veselovskii “are clearly based on a misunderstanding. . . . Much in the work of Veselovskii may be denied, but it cannot be rejected completely; it is a part of our legacy.”¹⁹

The defenses of Veselovskii, however, were few and far between. Criticism of the nineteenth-century scholar intensified, and well-known intellectuals in Moscow were accused of “groveling before the West” and of disparaging Russia at the expense of “foreigners, particularly Germans.”²⁰ Others were accused of being “under the sway of bourgeois scholarship.” All fields of the humanities—philosophy, history, foreign languages, and others—were affected. Scholars were attacked for having used foreign words and “overly clever” scholarly terms.²¹ These criticisms, though vulgar, were intended to bolster the VKP’s claims that the Soviet Union was once again under threat from the “bourgeois West.”

Stalin’s drive to isolate the country from foreign influences proved highly detrimental for all fields of academic research. Scholars studying foreign countries, foreign literatures, or foreign languages were deemed suspect. Anything smacking of Western influence was potentially grounds for criticism and expulsion—and even arrest. The bizarre nature of the process was evident when a well-known military historian, P. A. Zhilin (who later was elevated to the rank of Lieutenant-General and appointed head of the Institute of Military History), was asked publicly “why he does not use French sources in his work.” To thunderous applause, Zhilin responded, “I do not use enemy materials.”²²

After several months of “discussion,” the results of the anti-Veselovskii campaign were summed up in March 1948 by the newspaper *Kul'tura i zhizn'* (Culture and life), an organ of the VKP Agitation and Propaganda Department. In an editorial titled “Against Bourgeois Liberalism in Literary Scholarship,” the newspaper denounced Veselovskii as a “liberal positivist” who denied the uniqueness of Russian culture and Russia’s reliance on the West. According to the editorial, “the Veselovskii school’s ‘activity’ consists solely of groveling before all things foreign, a trait that is one of the most repulsive vestiges of capitalism in the consciousness of some of the backward

19. Viktor Shklovskii, “Aleksandr Veselovskii—istorik i teoretik,” *Oktyabr'* (Moscow), No. 12 (1947), p. 182.

20. “V. Sidel'nikov, “Protiv izvetasheniya i nizkopoklonstva v sovetskoii folkloristike,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 29 June 1947, p. 3.

21. “Neterpimost' k kritike,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 10 December 1947, p. 3.

22. See V. A. Dines, ed., *K 75-letiyu professora Vl. Vl. Pugacheva* (Saratov, Russia: Izdatel'skii tsentr Saratovskoi ekonomicheskoi akademii, 1998), p. 5.

elements of our intelligentsia.”²³ The editorial singled out Shishmarev, Nusinov, and others for condemnation, and it castigated the undue laxness shown during the

unnecessary, unprincipled, and thoroughly misguided discussion of Veselovskii. What is necessary is not to discuss Veselovskii, but to expose the bourgeois-liberal essence of his work and the ideological harm caused by literary apologists for the reactionary views of Veselovskii.²⁴

The appearance of this editorial sent an unmistakable signal. From then on, the struggle against Veselovskii “apologists” and “parrots” took on a more ominous tone. The hysteria that surrounded the name of Veselovskii, and the tense atmosphere it engendered in the scholarly community, compelled the most eminent researchers not only to conceal their true reactions to the events around them, but also to recant and atone for their supposedly misguided opinions. The humiliating process of public self-criticism had by that point become pervasive. Since the mid-1930s self-criticism had been an integral part of all high-profile political proceedings, and most people had accepted—both then and later on—that it was necessary to play by the rules of the game. The ritual of self-criticism was intended to forestall and, if necessary, eradicate dissent. Anyone who was forced to confess in public to a non-existent crime and to repent for it was bound to be a morally crushed individual—humiliated and devastated.

This practice served Stalin’s interests well, but it exacted an onerous toll on the Soviet academic community. Leading scholars were compelled to offer their “total endorsement of the ideas expressed by *Kul’tura i zhizn’* regarding cosmopolitanism and groveling before the West.” A resolution adopted “unanimously” by the Academic Council of the Philology Faculty at Leningrad State University (LGU) in April 1948 left no doubt about the prevailing line:

The effort by a group of scholars to revive the teachings of Veselovskii is an attempt to impose on our scholarship the principles of a foreign and hostile bourgeois-liberal approach to literature, with its typically cosmopolitan and ideologically empty cult of pure philology. The political harm of such efforts becomes clear if we take into account that it is precisely under this banner that scholars representing American and Western reaction, in the predatory interests of their owners, are now promoting the idea of a purely non-national, non-class driven world scholarship.²⁵

23. “Protiv burzhuaznogo liberalizma v literaturovedenii (po povodu diskussii ob A. Veselovskom),” *Kul’tura i zhizn’* (Moscow), 11 March 1948, p. 3.

24. *Ibid.*

25. “Rezolyutsiya zasedaniya Uchenogo soveta Filologicheskogo fakulteta,” *Vestnik Leningradskogo*

Prominent literary and linguistic scholars who only recently had defied the unfounded accusations leveled against them were unwilling by this point to say even a word in their own defense. To avoid being deemed ideologically and politically hostile, they voluntarily began to acknowledge and repent for their allegedly uncritical attitudes toward the works of Veselovskii.²⁶

Two days after the Academic Council adopted its resolution, a Communist Party meeting was convened by the LGU Philology Faculty under the slogans “Against Bourgeois Liberalism in the Study of Literature” and “In Support of Bolshevik Party Loyalty in Literary Scholarship.” The featured speaker was Aleksandr Dement’ev, who reaffirmed the harsh stance against “admirers” and “disciples” of Veselovskii and mentioned specific scholars who were guilty of espousing “grossly erroneous” views. The criticism was directed not only against “putrid intellectuals” outside the VKP, but also against Communists whose pronouncements were deemed “insufficiently principled.”²⁷ In the climate of the late 1940s, expectations of punitive measures against these scholars were widespread.

The Anti-Semitic Campaign

Up to this point the campaign of 1947–1948 had not been directed against specific nationalities. The charges leveled against individuals pertained solely to their alleged “groveling before and slavish imitation of liberalism, formalism, and cosmopolitanism.” Those attacked were of various nationalities, including ethnic Russians, Belorussians, Poles, and Germans.

In 1949, however, the attacks on cosmopolitans (*kosmopolity*) acquired a markedly anti-Semitic character. The very term *cosmopolitan*, which began to appear ever more frequently in newspaper headlines, was increasingly paired in the lexicon of the time with the word *rootless* (*bezrodnye*).²⁸ The practice of

Universiteta (Leningrad), No. 4 (1948), p. 132. See also “Za bolshevistkoe literaturovedenie (na zasedaniya Uchenogo soveta Filologicheskogo fakulteta Leningradskogo universiteta,” *Leningradskaya pravda* (Leningrad), 6 April 1948, p. 3.

26. The statue of Veselovskii at Pushkin House presented several ideological difficulties. It could not simply be discarded because it was too large and heavy to move. The high cost of the statue also made disposal unattractive. Ultimately, it was covered with canvas, and bookshelves were placed in front of it.

27. Aleksandr G. Dement’ev, “Protiv burzhuaznogo liberalizma v literaturovedenii, za bolshevistkuyu partiinost’ v nauke o literature,” *Leningradskii Universitet* (Leningrad), 7 April 1948, p. 2.

28. This new word was uttered for the first time in January 1948 by Andrei Zhdanov during a speech at a Congress of Soviet Musicians at the VKP Central Committee. The Soviet press used a number of variations. For example, E. Kovalchik, “Bezrodnye kosmopolity,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 12 February 1949, p. 2; and S. Ivanov, “Naglye propovedi bezrodnogo kosmopolita,” *Vechernyaya Moskva* (Moscow), 14 March 1949, p. 3.

equating cosmopolitans with Jews was heralded by a speech delivered in late December 1948 by Anatolii Fadeev at a plenary session of the board of the Soviet Writers' Union.²⁹ His speech, titled "On Several Reasons for the Lag in Soviet Dramaturgy," was followed a month later by a prominent editorial in *Pravda*, "On an Anti-Patriotic Group of Theater Critics."³⁰ The "anti-patriotic group of theater critics" consisted of Aleksandr Borshchagovskii, Abram Gurvich, Efim Kholodov, Yulii Yuzovskii, and a few others also of Jewish origin. In all subsequent articles and speeches the anti-patriotism of the theater and literary critics (and later of literary scholars) was unequivocally connected with their Jewish nationality.³¹

The backdrop for this campaign was the recent murder of Solomon Mikhoels and the arrests in early 1949 of the prominent Jewish authors David Bergelson, Lev Kvitko, Perets Markish, and Itzik Feffer along with other members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Newly available evidence leaves no doubt that Stalin himself orchestrated these events.³² Although the attacks soon spread to other professions, the chief target of the campaign in early 1949 was the theater world, which had been ravaged in earlier years by severe purges.³³ The Soviet press highlighted the new "threat" posed by cosmopolitans and "anti-patriots."³⁴ Strident articles featuring long lists of the "guilty" appeared in the journal *Oktyabr'*, including Vasilii Ivanov's "The Sabotage of the Cosmopolitan Holtzman," Aleksandr Belik's "The Anti-Patriot Brovman," and Pavel Izmet'ev's "We Will Destroy the Rootless Cosmopolitans Once and for All!"³⁵

29. See "A. Fadeev: O nekotorykh prichinakh ostavaniia sovetskoi dramaturgii," *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 22 December 1948, p. 1.

30. "Ob odnoi antipatrioticheskoi gruppe teatral'nykh kritikov," *Pravda* (Moscow), 28 January 1949, p. 3. See also Aleksandr Borshchagovskii, *Zapiski balovnyia sudby* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991), p. 4.

31. It was also at this time that the practice began of indicating the Jewish origins of a person by including his or her original surname in parentheses; for example, E. Kholodov (Meerovich).

32. See the declassified documents and commentaries in Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Naumov, eds., *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Aleksandr Borshchagovskii has written extensively about the decimation of groups of theater critics and repressions relating to members of EAK (Evreiskii Antifashistskii Komitet) in the documentary books *Zapiski balovnyia sudby* (cited above) and *Obvinyaietsia krov': Dokumental'naya povest'* (Moscow: Kul'tura, 1994).

33. The first was the decree issued by the VKP Politburo on 26 August 1946, "On the Repertoire of Dramatic Theaters and Measures for Their Improvement," published in *Pravda* (Moscow), 31 August 1946, p. 1.

34. V. Ozerov, "Protiv estestvuyushchikh kosmopolitov," *Oktyabr'* (Moscow) No. 2 (1949), pp. 183–189; A. Sofronov, "Za sovetskii patriotizm v literature i kritike," *Znamya* (Moscow), No. 2 (1949), pp. 168–176; and K. Simonov, "Zadachi sovetskoi dramaturgii i teatral'naya kritika," *Novyi mir* (Moscow), No. 3 (1949), pp. 182–207. An abbreviated version of Simonov's article was published in *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 2 March 1949, p. 2.

35. Vasilii Ivanov, "Diversiya kosmopolita Holtsmana," *Oktyabr'* (Moscow), No. 3 (1949), p. 101;

Within weeks, the focus of the campaign shifted to the field of literary studies. In mid-March 1949 the Academic Council of the Institute of World Literature held meetings that led to charges of “ideological deviations” and “cosmopolitanism” against numerous scholars. Valerii Kirpotin was accused of “political mistakes” despite his recent denunciations of the “agents of Veselovskii.”³⁶ The Academic Council passed a resolution denouncing the “gross perversions and mistakes” of a “clique” led by Kirpotin and decrying “with anger and contempt” the attempts of the rootless cosmopolitans “to corrupt our great Soviet culture.”³⁷ Shortly thereafter, the journal *Oktyabr'* carried an article titled “On Mistakes and Perversions in Aesthetics and Literary Scholarship,” which again fiercely lashed out at the scholars who had been “ideologically perverse” and “morally deficient.”³⁸

Simultaneously, many of the Moscow cosmopolitans were dismissed from their jobs. An article by Georgii Margvelashvili, “Cosmopolitans and Aesthetes in the Role of Teacher,” in the main literary newspaper, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, reported on the purge of Jews in academia:

Now that the exposed [Abram] Brovman, [Fedor] Levin, and [Lev] Subotskii have been expelled from the Institute of Literature, the atmosphere has become healthier. The steadfast collective of students and instructors is purifying the Institute's atmosphere and getting rid of unhealthy influences.³⁹

The foremost theatrical college in Moscow and Moscow State University also released their Jewish faculty, including some who had already been driven out of the Institute of World Literature.⁴⁰ Isaak Nusinov, who had been a victim of the “first wave” of repression in 1947, was arrested in 1949, and he died soon thereafter in Lefortovo Prison.

Terms such as *rootless cosmopolitans*, *bourgeois cosmopolitans*, and *individuals devoid of nation or tribe* continually appeared in newspaper articles. All of these were codewords for Jews and were understood as such by people at that

Aleksandr Belik, “Antipatriot Brovman,” *Oktyabr'* (Moscow), No. 3 (1949), p. 167; and Pavel Izmet'sev, “Do kontsa razgromim bezrodnykh kosmopolitov!” *Oktyabr'* (Moscow), No. 3 (1949), p. 184.

36. See D. Zaslavskii, “Protiv idealizatsii reaktsionnykh vzglyadov Dostoevskogo,” *Kul'tura i zhizn'* (Moscow), 20 December 1949, pp. 3–4.

37. “Protiv burzhuaznoi kosmopolitizma v literaturovedenii,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 19 March 1949, p. 3.

38. “A. Belik and N. Parsadanov, “Ob oshibkakh i izvrashcheniyakh v estetike i literaturovedenii” *Oktyabr'*, (Moscow), No. 4 (1949), pp. 166–173.

39. Georgii Margvelashvili, “Kosmopolity i estety v roli nastavnikov,” *Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow), 12 March 1949, p. 3.

40. See “Kollazh—Portrait GITIC. Golden Age,” *Teatral'naya zhizn'* (Moscow), No. 6 (1998), pp. 14–17.

time.⁴¹ (One non-Jew, Aleksandr Veselovskii, was also officially consigned to the rootless.) Of the many crimes attributed to Jews/cosmopolitans in the Soviet press, the most malevolent were “groveling before the West,” aiding “American imperialism,” “slavish imitation of bourgeois culture,” and the catch-all misdeed of “bourgeois aestheticism.” Stalin’s policies of anti-Westernism and anti-Semitism reinforced one another and joined together in the notion of cosmopolitanism. One of the victims of the campaign, Aleksandr Borshchagovskii, later wrote that “the epithet ‘rootless cosmopolitan’ was sufficiently transparent that it eliminated any doubt about the [background of] the addressee.”⁴²

The Campaign in Leningrad

Although Moscow was the initial site of anti-Semitic persecutions, the campaign soon spread to Leningrad. In February 1949, at the initiative of Stalin, Georgii Malenkov, and Lavrentii Beria, the “Leningrad Affair” was set in motion. Several prominent officials, including a VKP Secretary; Aleksei Kuznetsov, who formerly headed the Leningrad Party organization; Mikhail Rodionov, the prime minister of the Soviet Russian Republic; and Petr Popkov, the First Secretary of the Leningrad oblast and municipal Party committees, were accused of conspiring against the VKP to establish a separate Communist Party in Russia. Rumors soon began to circulate about British intelligence agents and other such foreign influences. At joint meetings of the bureaus and plenary committees of the Leningrad regional and municipal councils, all of the highest officials were dismissed. Within days, hundreds of other officials were also fired. Arrests, trials, and executions followed. Repressive actions related to the “Leningrad Case” continued for nearly three years, until late 1952.⁴³

Against this backdrop, a campaign to eliminate Leningrad’s cosmopolitans began. Prominent editorials and articles in *Leningradskaya Pravda* emphasized the need “to unmask the acolytes of bourgeois cosmopolitanism and aestheticism.”⁴⁴ Numerous theater critics of Jewish origin, including Ilia

41. See the documents in Rubenstein and Naumov, eds., *Stalin’s Secret Pogrom*. In everyday parlance the word *kike* was replaced by *cosmopolitan*.

42. Borshchagovskii, *Zapiski balovnya sudby*; pp. 178–179.

43. See the collection of declassified documents in *Leningradskoe delo: Dokumental’naya povest’* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1990).

44. See for example A. Andreev and G. Efimov, “Vospityvat’ nauchnye kadry v dukhe bol’shevistskoi partiinosti,” *Leningradskaya pravda*, 20 February 1948, p. 2.

Berezark, Simon Dreiden, Isaak Shneiderman, and Mark Yankovskii, were condemned.⁴⁵ The antic cosmopolitan drive spread quickly to other professions, notably literary scholarship. Particularly hard hit were the universities and Pushkin House (the Institute for Russian Literature). Newly declassified materials reveal that the practice of informing on one's colleagues was pervasive in university life at that time. Every student group had its own informers who reported on their classmates' and professors' sentiments and opinions. Many professors, upon realizing that informers were in their midst, became increasingly reserved and careful in their teaching, especially if "new" students suddenly showed up for lectures.⁴⁶ Even these precautions, however, were not always enough to fend off accusations. Those who were deemed suspect were subjected to relentless criticism at well-orchestrated meetings.

Four scholars at LGU—Boris Eikhenbaum, the former chair of the Russian literature department; Vladimir Zhirmunskii, the chair of the West European literature department; Mark Azadovskii, the chair of the folklore department; and Grigorii Gukovskii, the chair of the Russian literature department—were targeted for especially severe attacks. Eikhenbaum was accused of "kowtowing to the West," "using a comparativist methodology," and waging an "anti-patriotic campaign to destroy the national distinctiveness of great Russian writers." Zhirmunskii was condemned for "disparaging Russian literature's accomplishments" and "speaking like a devoted mystic and a German Idealist." Azadovskii was denounced as a "standard-bearer of the ideas of cosmopolitanism who mercilessly slandered the great Russian poet Pushkin" with the suggestion that West European literature may have influenced Pushkin's work. Gukovskii was charged with "promoting bourgeois cosmopolitanism and formalism in their worst and most noxious sense."⁴⁷

At a meeting convened in April 1949 to lay out the charges against these four scholars, everyone who spoke emphasized that the four had been "fighting against the Party and against literary scholarship" and had been seeking to "disarm the Soviet people ideologically and to eviscerate the Communist education of the young." Although some of the LGU faculty attending the meeting knew that the charges against the four scholars were spurious, they were aware that any attempt to speak in defense of the accused would be

45. A. Dement'ev and V. Druzin, "Razoblachat' posledyshei burzhuaznogo kosmopolitizma i estetsva," *Zvezda* (Leningrad), No. 2 (1949), pp. 168–171.

46. For a telling example of this, see the first hand account in P. S. Reifman, "Dela davno minuvshikh dnei," *Vys'gorod* (Tallinn), No. 3 (1998), p. 30.

47. "Protiv kosmopolitizma i formalizma v literaturnovedenii" (Leningrad: Leningradskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 7 April 1949), p. 2. A large volume of declassified documents pertaining to this meeting are now available in Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Istoriko-Politicheskikh Dokumentov Sankt-Peterburga, Fond 984, Opis' 3, Dela 99 and 100.

grounds for similar reprisals. In a few cities outside Leningrad, notably Rostov-on-Don, some scholars did try to speak on behalf of the four, but they were immediately silenced, and appropriate measures were meted out against them.

All four of the scholars were dismissed from LGU. Their written work was expunged from journals and anthologies—even ones that had already been edited, collected, and sent to press.⁴⁸ Their names were deleted from indexes in academic libraries, and references to their works vanished from footnotes and citations. Every effort was made to turn the four into non-persons. Some of the other LGU faculty were ready to appropriate the ideas and unpublished work of the four scholars, passing them off as their own.

Of the four, Grigorii Gukovskii met the worst fate. Arrested in August 1949, he died in Lefortovo Prison. Boris Eikhenbaum had been in the hospital for an unrelated condition during the denunciations, but he learned about the accusations almost immediately, while he was still in the hospital. For the next few years he was forbidden to publish anything, and by the time he died in 1959 his spirit had been crushed. Mark Azadovskii was fired from both Leningrad University and Pushkin House in 1949, and he began experiencing grave and untreatable problems with his heart, which led to his death in 1954. Vladimir Zhirmunskii was somewhat more fortunate. Although he was fired from the university, he was able to keep his position as Senior Fellow at Pushkin House. After Stalin's death in 1953, Zhirmunskii was able to return to LGU. In 1966 he was elected a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He died in 1971.

Conclusion

The events of 1949 in Leningrad marked a new stage in the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns, which persisted for another few years until Stalin finally died. Eventually, the victims of the anti-Semitic purges were rehabilitated, but this almost always occurred posthumously and in a perfunctory manner. As for those who perpetrated the repressions, most of them (like Stalin) died without suffering any reprisals. The great literary scholar and diarist Lidia Ginzburg once reflected on the nature of those who had participated enthusiastically in the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns:

48. Not only the works of these scholars, but also articles and books that were not responsive to the "spirit of the time" were cut or, in the best cases, shelved. This happened, for example, with M. P. Alekseeva, *Russkaya literatura na zapade* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970); and a dissertation by G. Ya. Chechel'nitska, "Russkaya Literatura v tvorchestve Ril'ke."

Precisely what kind of human material was relied on for this kind of action? Naturally, there were sadists among them, misanthropes, cold- and hot-blooded killers by nature. But this was merely a pathology and was not the typical case. . . . At that time, the main goal of scholarship in the humanities was not to uncover truth, but to do something completely different. Accordingly, such scholarship was assigned to people adapted to other things who were completely ungifted in humanities scholarship and were therefore utterly indifferent to the accomplishments of these tasks. This was an inviolable law—gifted scholars would certainly have brought to the process an undesirable interest in the essence of what they were doing. Talent goes hand in hand with self-sacrifice and stubbornness. Thus did lack of talent become a prerequisite of vast and principled social importance.⁴⁹

The adverse effect of this episode on Soviet academia was immense. Entire fields of study, especially in the humanities, were corrupted and destroyed. Intellectual life never fully recovered from the shock. Many of those who carried out the repression remained in high academic posts for years or even decades afterward.

The overt anti-Semitism of the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns and of other events in Stalin's final years left its own poisonous effects on Soviet society—effects that continue to this day, at least in some measure, in post-Soviet Russia. Although the phrase *rootless cosmopolitans* has not yet been revived in Russia, other slurs and codewords for Jews have been routinely invoked by ultranationalist and Communist Party officials over the past several years. The transformation of the campaign under Stalin from an anti-Western orientation to an ugly form of anti-Semitism—just a few years after the Holocaust—set a dangerous precedent. The whitewashing of the anti-cosmopolitan campaigns for several decades afterward left a gap in our understanding of the domestic context of Soviet foreign policy in the late 1940s. As more about these events becomes known, the link between Stalin's increasingly belligerent policy abroad and his violent repression at home seems ever stronger.

Note

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49. L. Ya. Ginzburg, *Pretvorenie opyta* (Leningrad: Novaya Literatura, 1992), pp. 138–139, 144.