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## **The “Soft” Line on Culture and Its Enemies: Soviet Cultural Policy, 1922–1927**

The year 1928 was a turning point not only for Soviet cultural policy but for policy in all fields. It was the beginning of a new revolution which overturned everything but the Stalinist leadership, an upheaval so violent that it seemed that the ruling party had revolted simultaneously against the society it governed and its own governing institutions. Among these institutions was the Commissariat of Enlightenment, headed by A. V. Lunacharsky and responsible for implementing policy in the sphere of education and the arts. In 1928 the Commissariat was accused of “softness” in its dealings with the intelligentsia, lack of “Communist vigilance,” and failure to understand the significance of “class war on the cultural front.” This “softness” was not peculiar to the Commissariat, except in degree. Right deviation in the party, it was said, had led a bureaucratized government *apparatus* in retreat from true communism to liberalism; and the essence of this retreat was conciliation of the bourgeois peasantry and intelligentsia.

The “soft” line, in other words, was the official government and party line before 1928. I will argue in this article that the line was neither liberal nor non-Communist, as its opponents believed, but the product of a policy of *expedient accommodation with the intelligentsia, on non-negotiable terms laid down by the party leadership and without institutional guarantees.*

Cultural policy in the 1920s rested on the premise that the Soviet state needed the services of “bourgeois specialists” and would have to pay for them. The state’s interest was in securing the cooperation of the intelligentsia rather than further antagonizing it. The value of inherited culture and inherited technical skills must be recognized. Those who possessed such skills must be encouraged to work for the Soviet state and rewarded for doing so. Specialists must be supervised but not harassed. *Komchvanstvo* (Communist conceit) and *spetsēdstvo* (specialist-baiting) were repudiated. It was assumed that in the course of time the Soviet state would develop its own intelligentsia, and that to facilitate this process some degree of preferential access to education must be given to “proletarians.”<sup>1</sup> Education could not be ideologically neutral,

1. In discussion of educational problems the term “proletarian” was often loosely used to cover not only workers and workers’ children but Communist Party members, *Komsomols*, and poor peasants and their children. However, statistical breakdowns of social composition (*sotsial’nyi sostav*) in the 1920s usually distinguished between “proletarian”

therefore its ideological content must be Communist. The same applied to art; but in both cases the speed of ideological transformation would be within the limits imposed by a working relationship with the old intelligentsia.

The “soft” line was not liberal. It operated within a framework of ideological control through censorship, security police, state monopoly of the press, and restriction of private publishing. There was room for difference of opinion among Communists on the proper scope of activity of these institutions; and their conduct could be criticized by Communists. But this license was not extended to the non-Communist intelligentsia, since it was the object of control. According to the conventions of the 1920s, members of the intelligentsia might petition for the redress of individual grievances, but in doing so they were appealing for favor and not invoking rights.

Similarly, the “soft” line made it possible for the intelligentsia to form associations—but as a matter of privilege, not of right. Some cultural institutions were described as autonomous (the Academy of Sciences, the old imperial theaters), but this was an act of favor which might be revoked, as happened in the cases of Proletkult and the universities. The autonomous label was in fact a warning against harassment directed at hardline Communists, not a legal category. No association was autonomous in the sense that it could exclude Communists or protest against the organization of a Communist fraction within. The “soft” line might permit non-Communist leadership of an association, but it did not guarantee it.

In the 1920s official cultural policies were carried out as a rule by government agencies, not by the party. The cultural responsibilities of party agitprop and press departments were narrowly interpreted—press departments being largely concerned with the party press, and agitprop departments with party schools and recommendation of party members for higher education. Only convention limited the activity of these departments; and the convention could be broken, as it was in 1924 when agitprops supervised the university purge. But it was assumed that a “soft” line on culture was more appropriate to the Communist government than the Communist Party, and that party intervention meant at least threatened suspension of the “soft” line.

If this seems paradoxical, it was part of the general paradox of party and government relations. The party leadership was, on the one hand, formulator of the policies which the government executed. On the other, it was protector of the special party or “proletarian” interest. It was possible—though politically tactless—for Lunacharsky to imagine a situation in which the party leadership would be obliged to dissociate itself from policies which Lunacharsky, a party member of the government, would continue to implement. The 1924

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and “poor peasants,” sometimes with separate categories for children of proletarians and children of poor peasants, and gave a separate listing for party and Komsomol members.

party discussion on literature, Lunacharsky thought, might turn up an "overwhelming majority" in favor of a "hard" line on culture. The government was bound to follow a policy of the "utmost neutrality" in art, and not to discriminate in favor of groups representing the Communist or proletarian interest. But a position "completely inappropriate for the state may be more or less decent for the party"; and in the case of a hardline party majority "it would be natural for party journals and newspapers and party critics to come out in defense of their own trends, to subject persons of other views to severe criticism, and in short to conduct a quite specific cultural line. The party would put its authority, its talent, and its culture behind [this line], but of course it could not for a moment expect the state power as such to support it. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Given that government policy was formulated by the party leadership and that Lunacharsky himself was bound by party discipline, he could only have been assuming that in this situation the party leadership would consciously separate its two roles, and that this separation would be dictated by constituency pressure from the party rank and file for a "hard" line.

The "hard" line was the line of "class war" against internal enemies. It meant militant and repressive policies against the bourgeoisie, broadly interpreted to include the great mass of the peasantry and nonparty intelligentsia; and in culture it meant active intervention of the party to protect the "proletarian" interest.

No member of the party leadership consistently advocated a "hard" line on culture before 1928. Its support appears to have come from the lower ranks of the party, the Komsomol, and Communist vigilante groups such as the proletarian writers<sup>3</sup> and the militant atheists (Militant Godless). It was the line of radical youth and provincial isolation. Its supporters looked back to the Civil War and talked of politics in military terms, seeing the "soft" line as a kind of civilian deviation. The hardliners in the capitals were restless, quarrelsome, jealous, and infatuated with the idea of power and political intrigue. In the provinces they were hard-pressed by the hostility of the local population, and fearful for their own authority whenever central directives pushed them toward conciliation. "Surely, comrades, you shouldn't forget that during the whole of the Civil War the teachers were hand in glove with the kulaks," protested a delegate to the Thirteenth Party Congress at the suggestion that the local party organization should cooperate with the rural intelligentsia: "We must never forget that they went hand in hand with the kulak

2. A. V. Lunacharsky, "Khudozhestvennaia politika sovetskogo gosudarstva," *Zhizn' iskusstva* (Leningrad), 1924, no. 10, Mar. 4, p. 1.

3. They were organized in the Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP, later RAPP) and were often referred to in the mid-twenties as *napostovtsy*, from their journal *Na postu*.

for the whole revolution and that about 50 percent of our rural teachers are offspring of the clergy. . . . Our rural party forces . . . will be threatened if we invite the teachers into the party, if we begin to draw them in. The teacher will get more authority in the village than our Communists. And, comrades, you know what that means, when the teacher has greater authority and greater trust than our rural Communists. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

The “hard” line on culture—the line of *komchvanstvo* and *spetséedstvo*—was discriminatory and coercive, ignorant or contemptuous of inherited cultural tradition, enthusiastic for “proletarian culture” and especially the dominance of proletarian cultural institutions, and relatively indifferent to the state’s need for the services of technical experts. Its watchword was “vigilance in the face of the class enemy,” which to some supporters meant simply *bei intelligentov*. Its tactics ranged from local administrative bullying, through polemical journalism, to backstairs intrigue against vulnerable softliners in the leadership.

I want to illustrate these general statements with three examples of policy in specific areas—university enrollment, policy toward rural teachers, and literature—where we can observe a shifting and evolving balance between policies of accommodation with the intelligentsia (“soft” line) and pressures toward coercion and protection of the proletarian interest (“hard” line).

The “soft” line was at its most illiberal on the issue of university enrollment in the early 1920s. This was in part a reaction to the events of the Civil War period.<sup>5</sup> The Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros) had originally allowed the universities to retain the autonomy they had received from the Provisional Government; but at the same time it had declared university entrance open to all and created “workers’ faculties” (*rabfaks*) for adult workers without the necessary educational qualifications. The universities resented the *rabfaks*, along with Narkompros and the Bolshevik government as a whole, and refused to cooperate. At the end of 1920 they were formally deprived of autonomy, and Communist rectors were appointed by Narkompros. The intentions of Narkompros were still, within the limits of this situation, conciliatory; but the behavior of some of its officials and appointees was not, and probably accurately reflected the generally belligerent temper of the party in 1921. D. P. Bogolepov took up the rectorship of Moscow University with the uncompro-

4. S. Bergavinov (Kiev party organization), *XIII s'ezd RKP(b): Mai 1924 g.* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 469–70.

5. Policy toward universities in the Civil War period is discussed in my book, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts Under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (London and New York, 1970), and by James C. McClelland in “Bolshevik Approaches to Higher Education, 1917–1921,” *Slavic Review*, 30, no. 4 (December 1971): 818–31.

misgiving statement that it was time "to put a most definite end to every kind of university autonomy and freedom of teaching, and not to give the professoriate any greater rights than other Soviet employees," and to fill the universities with worker-Communists through the *rabfaks*, since "only Communist *spetsy* can put the economy of the country on other rails and build life anew."<sup>6</sup> E. A. Preobrazhensky, appointed to Narkompros as head of the technical education administration, was another hardliner. "At the moment," he wrote in 1921, "there is a genuine class war at the doors of the higher school between the worker-peasant majority of the country which wants to have specialists from among its own kind in its own state and the [ex-]governing classes and strata linked with them. The proletarian state openly takes the side of its own people."<sup>7</sup>

But Bogolepov was quickly dismissed, as was Preobrazhensky after a wave of university strikes and conciliatory intervention from the Central Committee. When Preobrazhensky protested that the Central Committee had retreated too far and injured the proletarian cause, he found no supporters in the leadership. Lenin criticized his administrative naïveté and the *komchvanstvo* of the *rabfak* students who supported him.<sup>8</sup> The policy of the Soviet government at this time was to avoid open conflict at all costs except that of loss of political control. The old professors kept their jobs, a fair part of their freedom of teaching, and a share in university administration; the appointed rectors were mild. The Communist thrust of policy was in recruitment of the student body: from the early 1920s there was a very small "free enrollment" to university, and the majority of places went to nominees of party, Soviet, and trade union organizations who entered either directly or through the *rabfak*, depending on educational standard.

The system of *komandirovanie* was supposed to fill the universities with reliable proletarian and Communist students without the upheaval and provocation of a major university purge. It had the considerable disadvantage of lowering academic standards and removing the *raison d'être* of the general secondary school. But the status of the secondary school was controversial. Many Communists thought of it as an irredeemably bourgeois school which needed to be radically reorganized as a technical school without access to university: in fact, a rather arbitrarily constituted party meeting on education had passed a resolution to this effect at the beginning of 1921. But Narkompros, with some support from Lenin, ignored the resolution; and only the Komsomol protested.

6. *Pravda*, Feb. 27, 1921, p. 1: D. Bogolepov, "Vysshaia shkola i kommunizm."

7. E. A. Preobrazhensky, "O professional'no-tekhnicheskome obrazovanii," *Pravda*, Sept. 10, 1921, p. 2.

8. *Odinnadtsatyi s'ezd RKP(b): Mart-aprel' 1922 g.* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 85–86, 142.

The party's aim, as stated by Bukharin at the 1924 Party Congress, was to turn the universities into training schools for a new proletarian and Communist governing class by enrolling workers and Communists as students.<sup>9</sup> But they were to be trained, for the time being, by the old "bourgeois" professors under "soft" (in Bukharin's view, excessively soft) Narkompros supervision. It turned out that the system of *komandirovanie* was an unsatisfactory one, being ill-coordinated and indiscriminate in its selection even from the sociopolitical point of view. Academic standards dropped sharply. The universities were overcrowded, and their graduates of such poor quality that employers complained—particularly Vesenkha, the Supreme Council of the National Economy. The last straw came with the leadership struggle of 1923-24, when the future governing class in the university party cells came out almost solidly for Trotsky. The party leadership decided to purge the student body (not the faculty) of academically unsuccessful students and those of "alien social origin," and at the same time to conduct a separate purge to rid the university cells of Trotskyites.<sup>10</sup> The general university purge was conducted in the summer of 1924 by Narkompros and the agitprop departments of the party, under the supervision of Zinoviev for the Politburo.<sup>11</sup>

The purge as an instrument of policy was incompatible with the "soft" line, for it meant both direct party intervention and revitalization of the concept of "class war" in cultural and intellectual life. Narkompros was not in a position to resist the purging impulse, having no support for this in the party leadership, but it did its best to defuse it. Not only did it reinstate students expelled by local agitprop departments<sup>12</sup> and secure the right of later re-entry for those expelled, it actually published a denial that "alien" students expelled for their social origin were really alien: "Owing to oversights on the part of some commissions for the review of the student body, the comment 'alien ele-

9. Resolution on work among youth, Thirteenth Congress. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1970), p. 109.

10. Zinoviev discussed the general university purge with the collegium of Narkompros at its meeting of March 26, 1924 (Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii i sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva [TsGAOR], Moscow, fond 2306, op. 1, d. 2945). On Trotskyism, see N. Akimov, *Krasnoe studenchestvo*, 1928-29, no. 14, p. 4: "Everyone remembers the Trotskyite fever from which the university cells especially suffered in 1923-24. The partial purge of the party at that time affected primarily the university organizations, more than 25 percent of whose members were purged as decadent and ideologically hostile elements."

11. As a result of the purge about 18,000 students (13-14 percent of total) were expelled, "of which three-fourths were removed for completely unjustified academic failure and the rest for various other reasons" (*Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1925, no. 4, p. 118). But as I. I. Khodorovsky of Narkompros had made clear, academic requirements varied according to the social origin of the student (*Pravda*, May 17, 1924, p. 6).

12. See, for example, protest from Smolensk gubkom and agitprop to Central Committee agitprop department, Sept. 27, 1924 (Smolensk Archives, WKP 518, p. 71).

ment’ was written on the documents of some of those expelled. . . . It is obvious that in these cases the description ‘alien element’ meant persons who under the present straitened circumstances of higher educational institutions are the least suitable to go through university. . . . The persons expelled from university are not disgraced, and their expulsion from university does not carry any limitations of their rights.”<sup>13</sup>

A side effect of the purge was hardline resurgence in other areas. The Komsomol took the opportunity to press its charges against the “bourgeois” secondary school in discussion of Bukharin’s paper at the Thirteenth Party Congress; and Narkompros was subsequently obliged to reorganize the secondary schools on a semitechnical basis and formally to acknowledge that the rabfak had replaced the secondary school as a channel to the university.<sup>14</sup>

In the provinces the purge generated a momentum which not only Narkompros but the party leadership found difficult to control: it was as if local authorities had been only waiting for the moment to settle accounts with universities, schools, teachers, and the whole alien body of the intelligentsia. The experience may have been sobering for the party leadership.<sup>15</sup> It was not, at any rate, repeated during the remaining years of NEP, and the vocabulary of class war tended in these years to drop out of official use.

There were other factors encouraging re-establishment of the “soft” line, notably pressure from the economic commissariats for better quality graduates and softline initiatives from Rykov and Sovnarkom. In the summer of 1925 Vesenkha asked the Central Committee to allow some thousands of engineering students to study abroad because of the low standards of Soviet universities. The request was refused, but provoked a re-examination of the situation in universities and the training of specialists led by Rykov, president of Sovnarkom.<sup>16</sup> As a result a number of measures were taken to raise academic standards. A revised system of *komandirovanie* was still in force in university enrollment, but it was modified in the autumn enrollment of 1925 by the addition of two special quotas: one of 2,500 for graduates of secondary and technical schools, another of 1,000 for distribution by trade unions among the “toiling intelligentsia” (otherwise known as “bourgeois specialists”). This was surely a move to conciliate the intelligentsia as well as to raise academic standards, since specialists were unlikely to work with enthusiasm for a government which denied their children access to university at a time of extremely

13. Resolution of collegium of Narkompros, Sept. 23, 1924 (TsGAOR 2306/1/3328), published in *Ezhenedel'nik NKP*, 1924, no. 21 (41), p. 2.

14. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1924, no. 8, pp. 5, 51, and 73. The secondary school reorganization added a “professional bias” (*profuklon*) to the two senior classes, but the school was still classified as general-educational, not technical, to university-entrance level.

15. See Bukharin’s comments in *Partiia i vospitanie smeny* (Moscow, 1924), p. 108.

16. A. V. Lunacharsky, *Prosveshchenie i revoliutsiia* (Moscow, 1926), pp. 415–16.

high adolescent unemployment. "The policy and aims of the Soviet government," explained Lunacharsky's deputy in 1925 when the new quotas were announced, "are not at all directed toward closing access to higher school to all except workers and peasants. Each year the government will further widen the paths by which children of the toiling intelligentsia and white-collar workers can enter the school. . . . Soviet power is concerned that its social base should become wider, not narrower."<sup>17</sup>

This promise was kept. In 1926 the system of *komandirovanie* was abandoned, and university enrollment was thrown open to free competitive enrollment. A secondary process of social selection was still operative, but it discriminated against only a part of the intelligentsia, since children of specialists in state employment were declared "equal" in social status to children of workers.<sup>18</sup> But the main emphasis was on the establishment of academic criteria in university entrance. After all, as Lunacharsky cheerfully remarked, it was no good admitting unqualified workers and peasants to be made "martyrs and eyesores [*bel'mo na glazu*] in the university, as often happens."<sup>19</sup>

As had been expected, the percentage of workers and party members in the 1926 enrollment dropped, while the numbers of secondary school graduates going directly to university rose sharply. The effect of the new enrollment policy was to re-establish a normal progression from secondary school to university and to cut back adult enrollment. Even the *rabfaks*, which continued to supply between a quarter and a third of the enrollment, were increasingly training adolescents rather than adult workers. In other words, they were evolving into a subsidiary type of secondary school. The number of workers' children showed an improvement in the worker percentage in the 1927 enrollment.

Hardline criticism of the new policy was muted. L. Milkh, of the Central Committee *apparatus*, told Communist students in 1927 that "the new conditions of enrollment in universities are a retreat from the policy of proletarianization."<sup>20</sup> But his published comments in the Central Committee agitprop journal avoided direct criticism of the policy, while suggesting that Narkompros was giving it an unnecessarily "soft" interpretation.<sup>21</sup> It was always permissible to attack Narkompros for "softness," and particularly so in this context: Vesenkha, which provided powerful backing for academic criteria in enrollment, was at the same time mounting a campaign to have the technical faculties of universities removed from Narkompros control to its own. But the issue of

17. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1925, no. 7-8, pp. 102-3.

18. *Izvestiia*, May 26, 1926, p. 3, and July 30, p. 5.

19. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1927, no. 4, p. 14.

20. TsGAOR 5574/5/2, conference of Proletstud, January 1927, p. 9.

21. *Kommunisticheskaia revoliutsiia*, 1927, no. 8, p. 46.

proletarianization and class war had, by 1927, been appropriated by the Party Opposition.

To all appearances the “soft” line not only was in the ascendant at the Fifteenth Party Congress of December 1927 but was likely to remain so. According to Stalin, “hundreds and thousands of the toiling intelligentsia” and the industrial specialists in particular were eager and willing to cooperate with the Soviet government in achieving the Five-Year Plan. Bukharin congratulated Molotov on his new understanding of the need for educational expansion. Nobody mentioned class war in the universities or took the opportunity to criticize Narkompros (a sure sign that the “hard” line was under constraint), and the Narkompros journal, for the first and only time, published the relevant debates of a party congress verbatim.<sup>22</sup>

The status of rural teachers was a question on which Soviet attitudes were straightforward and policy not a matter of controversy in the leadership. The policy was “soft.” Stalin, concluding his remarks on changing attitudes of the intelligentsia at the Fifteenth Party Congress, said: “I don’t even speak of the rural laboring intelligentsia, especially the rural teacher, who has long turned toward Soviet power and cannot but welcome the development of education in the countryside.”<sup>23</sup> Rural teachers provided no potential political threat as far as the center was concerned, so the “soft” line encountered no obstacle—except that local authorities persistently ignored it. It is this central/local dichotomy which I want to examine.

The local “hard” line on teachers was rooted in Civil War memories<sup>24</sup> and Communist isolation in the countryside. In 1918 the anti-Bolshevik teachers’ union had gone on strike in the capitals, and local branches had cooperated with the White Armies. This briefly provoked a hardline tendency at the center, represented by the Communist splinter group of “teacher-internationalists” which claimed right of succession to the teachers’ union. But neither Narkompros nor the Central Council of Trade Unions would recognize the teacher-internationalists, and the new union which was established in 1919 was a mass professional union<sup>25</sup> with no restrictions on entry and nonmilitant

22. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1928, no. 1, pp. 1 ff.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

24. Relations between teachers and the Soviet government in the early years are described in detail in Ronald Hideo Hayashida, “The Third Front: The Politics of Soviet Mass Education, 1917–1918” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973), and briefly in Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment*, pp. 34–43. The major Western work on Soviet schools in the 1920s is Oskar Anweiler, *Geschichte der Schule und Pädagogik in Russland vom Ende des Zarenreiches bis zum Beginn der Stalin-Ära* (Berlin, 1964).

25. “Union of workers in education and socialist culture” (Rabpros). The trade unions objected to Narkompros’ choice of the “political” word “socialist” in the title, and it dropped out of use in the early 1920s.

Communist leadership—a typical softline conception. The attitude of Narkompros was that teachers, especially rural teachers, were potential allies of the Soviet government and deserved sympathetic treatment. This was confirmed by a Central Committee directive in 1921 that “local party organizations must give up the attitude that they have so far commonly held that educational workers are saboteurs, for they have long ceased to be so if they ever were.”<sup>26</sup>

Old Bolsheviks like Lenin, Krupskaja, Zinoviev, and Kalinin had an emotional attachment to the rural teacher as a humble and underpaid bearer of enlightenment to the people.<sup>27</sup> But the leadership was also bearing in mind the practical consideration that rural Communists were few and needed support in the countryside. At the Thirteenth Party Congress in May 1924 Zinoviev sponsored an official welcome to teachers as rural allies of Soviet power; and Krupskaja gave a moving account of their miserable conditions of life. The teachers were promised improvement in material conditions, higher wages, considerate treatment from local officials, and even the opportunity to join the party. Some party members saw this as capitulation to the class enemy.<sup>28</sup>

In January 1925 an All-Union Teachers' Congress—genuinely representative of the nonparty teacher, as Narkompros somewhat defensively claimed—was held in Moscow. It was given maximum publicity and was attended by no fewer than six Politburo members and candidates, all endorsing a policy of conciliation and deploring harassment of teachers by local authorities. Rykov promised the teachers protection from arbitrary dismissal and transfer. Zinoviev, “without sinning against the tenets of Marxism,” rejected the idea of class war against the rural intelligentsia, since “the majority of teachers are part of the toiling masses led by the proletariat, and must be accepted into our milieu as toilers having equal rights,” and staked the authority of the Central Committee on his claim that local party officials would cooperate.<sup>29</sup>

They did not. Arbitrary dismissals and transfers and (as Narkompros put it) “mockery” of teachers continued to be reported in 1926 and 1927. Cases were cited of local authorities depriving teachers of the vote as “alien elements,” taxing them like Nepmen. A summary of letters from the provinces concluded that party officials treated teachers badly, using “command methods,” and Komsomols were even worse.<sup>30</sup> The buoyant mood which had been ob-

26. *Direktivny VKP(b) po voprosam prosveshcheniia* (Moscow, 1931), p. 180.

27. For an emotional statement on the situation of teachers, their services to the people, and the identity of their cause of popular enlightenment and that of the Communists see Zinov'ev, “Proletarskaia revoliutsiia i uchitel'stvo,” *Pravda*, Apr. 24, 1924, pp. 2–4.

28. See V. Kolokolkin, “O sel'skoi intelligentsii” (discussion of comrade Kalinin's theses), *Pravda*, May 20, 1924, p. 6.

29. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1925, no. 2, pp. 39 (Rykov) and 72–73 (Zinoviev).

30. *Ibid.*, 1927, no. 4, p. 43; 1926, no. 1, p. 34; 1926, no. 9, pp. 85–86.

served among teachers after the 1925 congress gave way to "dissatisfaction, a feeling of burden, apathy, apprehension, fears, and hopelessness" in the years following.<sup>31</sup>

Central party policy was not without responsibility for this, despite the "soft" line. First, Zinoviev's welcome to teachers had coincided exactly with preparations for the university purge (and may have been intended to prevent a backlash in the schools). Local officials took the purge as an indication that a general hardline campaign against the intelligentsia had begun, and accordingly undertook to purge the schools of socially alien elements—expelling children, dismissing teachers, often closing secondary schools altogether as "bourgeois."<sup>32</sup> Repeated Narkompros prohibitions, backed up by a "party instruction signed by comrade Andreev," were ignored or perhaps even misunderstood: a reply received from Tomsk stated reassuringly, "A purge has not been conducted [in the schools], but it is proposed to conduct one before the beginning of the school year."<sup>33</sup> A year later the impact of the purge was still being felt in the provinces.

Second, the teachers were in constant conflict with Pioneer organizations and their Komsomol leaders in the schools. This was not because the party directed young Communists to attack the teachers: on the contrary, the Central Committee in 1925 decreed that the Komsomol must draw the teachers into Pioneer work, and that "the chief duty of a Pioneer is to be an exemplary pupil in school."<sup>34</sup> It was simply because the teachers, with very few exceptions, were not Communists and the Pioneers, in their own understanding, were. Neither the Komsomol nor the Pioneers were mass movements in the twenties, and those school children who joined did so with the purest and most primitive enthusiasm for revolution and class war. How could they fight the class war except in the school, against bourgeois *intelligentshchina*, against their teachers? Party calls for moderation were either unheard or taken as evidence that the party leadership had become "degenerate" and incapable of militant leadership.<sup>35</sup>

It is also true that party calls for moderation were often ambiguous, being addressed to both sides. Bukharin, speaking at the 1925 teachers' congress, said that teachers should defer to Komsomols on political matters, avoid "cultural superciliousness," and acknowledge Komsomol pre-eminence in leadership

31. *Ibid.*, 1929, no. 8–9, p. 103 (of the period 1926–28).

32. *Ezhenedel'nik NKP*, 1924, no. 18(39), p. 12, and no. 21(41), pp. 8–9; TsGAOR 2306/1/3328, presidium of NKP collegium, Sept. 29, 1924; Smolensk Archives WKP 11, agitprop collegium of Sychevsky Ukom, Aug. 12, 1924.

33. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1924, no. 8, p. 9.

34. *Direktivny VKP (b) po voprosam prosveshcheniia*, p. 194.

35. See Bukharin's remarks on Komsomol and Pioneer "avantgardism," *XIV s'ezd VKP (b)*, 18–31 dek. 1926 g. (Moscow, 1926), p. 824.

of the Pioneers, while the Komsomol should behave tactfully to the teachers and acknowledge their pre-eminence as leaders in the school.<sup>36</sup> After the congress there were reports from the provinces that this formulation had not improved the teachers' position: "The Pioneers and their [Komsomol] leaders isolate themselves from school life as a whole, and the teacher is afraid to meddle in their affairs because 'Bukharin did not order it at the teachers' congress'" (though there were also teachers "who were not afraid of Bukharin" and continued to attack the Pioneer leaders for disorganizing school life).<sup>37</sup>

Finally, the "soft" line offered the teacher good will but no weapons of his own: the teachers' union, at both central and local levels, was neither strong nor professional enough to fight the teachers' battles. The branch secretaries recommended by local party organizations were often not teachers by profession but "candidate members of the party or experienced administrators"; and their election was a formality to which "ordinary voters are not accustomed to object openly, confining themselves to indignant whispers and ironical smiles."<sup>38</sup> The union had no influence on the appointment or dismissal of teachers, which was conducted by the education department of the local soviet; and victimized teachers rarely appealed to the union for support, since its officials "often act with the administrative organs . . . against the teachers instead of defending them." In cases of arbitrary dismissal or transfer, "the trade union organs remain completely indifferent," and only the *sel'kory* (rural newspaper correspondents) sometimes defended the teachers.<sup>39</sup>

The conflict of "soft" and "hard" lines in literature is remarkable both for its intensity and its apparent triviality—its peripheral relation both to the real concerns of literature and to those of government. It is as an exercise in pure politics that it deserves attention in this article.<sup>40</sup>

The proletarian literary movement, protagonist of the "hard" line, emerged in the first years of NEP as a product of postwar demobilization and Komsomol

36. *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1925, no. 2, p. 140.

37. *Ibid.*, 1926, no. 9, p. 77.

38. *Ibid.*, 1926, no. 6, pp. 108–9.

39. *Ibid.*, 1926, no. 9, p. 82.

40. Literary policy, unlike its educational counterpart, has been admirably documented by both Western and Soviet research, notably in Robert A. Maguire's *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920's* (Princeton, 1968), Edward J. Brown's *Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928–1932* (New York, 1953), and S. I. Sheshukov's *Neistovnye revmiteli: Iz istorii literaturnoi bor'by 20-kh godov* (Moscow, 1970). Since literature is only one of the three contexts in which I discuss the opposition of "hard" and "soft" lines in this article, I have not attempted a thorough treatment: I have assumed that the relative familiarity of the material allows me to be more selective here than in the earlier sections of the article dealing with educational problems on which there is little published work.

activism. It was young, brash, aggressive, self-consciously Communist, and "proletarian" in the sense that it was hostile to the old literary intelligentsia. Its first center—before the formation of VAPP and the founding of *Na postu*—was the editorial office of the Komsomol journal *Molodaia gvardiia*, then edited by Leopold Averbakh. Its original members, almost all under twenty-five, had typically joined the party as adolescents just out of (or running away from) gymnasium, fought with the Red Army in the Civil War, briefly held a junior party administrative position, and then drifted into political journalism.<sup>41</sup> Almost all came from families of the intelligentsia; some, like Averbakh, were well connected in party circles. The young proletarians affected a military style of dress and speech, and felt instinctive antipathy to the "civilian" Communists active in the literary field—Voronky, editor of the Communist journal *Krasnaia nov'*, Lunacharsky at Narkompros, Meshcheriakov at the State Publishing House, Gosizdat. Their consuming interest was literary politics rather than the actual production of literature. VAPP, nominally an association of proletarian writers (and actually acquiring in the course of time a mass membership of aspiring working-class writers), was originally and essentially a vigilante group of young Communist journalists proposing for itself the function of literary arm of the Party Central Committee.

Official literary policy at the beginning of NEP was "soft," insofar as it existed at all. Apart from publishers and censorship, Narkompros was the Soviet institution in closest contact with writers, and its policies were invariably conciliatory and, in regard to the cultural heritage, conservationist. Private publishing was permitted, although it existed on a fairly small scale; state publishing was not restricted to the publication of Communist authors. Neither party nor government had chosen to play an active interventionist role on behalf of Communist or proletarian groups: the only claims which had been made for special privileges—by Proletkult and the Futurists—had been sharply rejected by the Central Committee at the end of 1920.<sup>42</sup>

The aim of the proletarians was to force the party into active intervention in support of the Communist literary movement; to replace the existing softline leadership with a "hard" line implemented by their organization on behalf of the party; and to enforce a "proletarian dictatorship" in literature by strict exercise of the censorship and exclusive Communist control and access to publishing and the literary press.

One of the most striking facts of VAPP's political career is that at no time did it enjoy the wholehearted support of any member of the party leadership. Trotsky, whom the young proletarians most admired ("loved," to use

41. See Sheshukov, *Neistovye revniteli*, p. 114 and passim.

42. Letter of the Central Committee RKP(b), "O Proletkul'takh," *Pravda*, Dec. 1, 1920, p. 1.

Averbakh's word), rejected the whole notion of proletarian culture. Kamenev, whose name was listed among *sotrudniki* of *Na postu* in its first issues, melted away. Stalin and Zinoviev were simply not interested. The one member of the leadership who seemed to be in sympathy with the proletarians was Bukharin: cultural iconoclast and Proletkult supporter of the Civil War period, old opponent of the *bien-pensant* Lunacharsky on artistic questions,<sup>43</sup> patron of the Komsomol. But Bukharin, suffering a change of heart after Lenin's death, became VAPP's most energetic opponent in the leadership.

Nor could it be said that VAPP won favor by toadying to the Central Committee, or by unswerving loyalty to Stalin. Its early relationship with the Central Committee press department was intense, on the proletarian side, but intensely hostile. In April 1925 Furmanov reported in his diary that his colleagues in VAPP were saying, "Furmanov is a traitor, because he went to the alien (as far as literature goes) and hostile Central Committee, to the enemy of proletarian literature Vareikis, and talked to him about our affairs." In general, Furmanov commented, "a tradition has been established that the people in the Central Committee, in the press department, are (except for the late Kanatchikov) beyond hope, and not only should one not maintain or establish any sort of contact with them but one should attack and irritate them continually . . . 'in the interests of literature.'" <sup>44</sup>

As for political reliability, the young proletarians—like the Komsomol—were notoriously susceptible to outbreaks of oppositionism, since as a vigilante group they were constantly on guard against signs of party "degeneration." Of the early leaders, Averbakh and Lelevich were Trotskyites until the autumn of 1924. They felt, Averbakh explained, that the Central Committee was following a "degenerate" line while Trotsky, although also "degenerate" on literary policy, was politically Leninist.<sup>45</sup> Even when Averbakh inherited VAPP leadership from the now Zinovievite Lelevich and Vardin in 1926, he did not become a devoted Stalinist: we find him in 1929 supporting Shatskin's Komsomol deviation. VAPP's sheer political arrogance, its unflinching suspicion

43. See, for example, Bukharin's call to "smash the old theater" in *Pravda* articles of October 16 and December 16, 1919, and Lunacharsky's protest circulated to party leaders (Lunacharsky, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 [Moscow, 1964], pp. 100–105); his clash with Lunacharsky at the 1922 Komsomol Congress (*V Vserossiiskii s'ezd RKSM* [Moscow and Leningrad, 1927], pp. 127 and 141).

44. Dmitrii Furmanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1961), pp. 352–53. S. I. Kanatchikov (who was in fact still alive in 1925) had headed the Central Committee press department at the beginning of the twenties; I. M. Vareikis was its head in 1924–26.

45. Trotsky's low assessment of the achievement of proletarian writers and rejection on principle of the possibility of true "proletarian culture" developing in the transitional period to socialism were made known in his *Literatura i revoliutsiia*, written in 1923 and published as articles in *Pravda* toward the end of that year. See Leopold Averbakh, *Nashi literaturnye raznoglasiia* (Leningrad, 1927), p. 34.

of the motives and intentions of the party leadership, astonished contemporaries. What other organization would have "demanded" that the Central Committee forbid *Pravda* and *Bol'shevik* to criticize it, as Averbakh did in 1927?<sup>46</sup> And that was at a time when VAPP's position was dangerously close to the Opposition's.

Among the softliners, Voronsky of *Krasnaia nov'* was the main target of the proletarians' attack, because, in their view, he denied proletarian writers access to the main Communist literary journal and published instead the work of "bourgeois specialists"—the loyal non-Communist writers whom Trotsky described as "fellow travelers." We must assume their campaign provoked some sympathy, or at least attention, in the Central Committee *apparat*,<sup>47</sup> since Vardin was allowed to put the proletarian case against Voronsky at a special meeting in the press department of the Central Committee in May 1924. But the public response was wholly negative: among the speakers against VAPP were Trotsky, Bukharin, Lunacharsky, Meshcheriakov, and Iakovlev, representing the press department. Only the Bolshevik Kerzhentsev, a former Proletkultist, and the poet Demian Bedny supported the proletarian line.<sup>48</sup>

But with an opponent like Trotsky, VAPP hardly needed friends; and to its great good fortune Voronsky was both politically associated with the Trotskyites and a supporter of Trotsky's literary views.<sup>49</sup> Because of his

46. Sheshukov, *Neistovye revniteli*, p. 207.

47. For evidence of pre-1923 Central Committee interest in literary politics see A. F. Ermakov in *Obogashchenie metoda sotsialisticheskogo realizma i problema mnogoobraziia sovetskogo iskusstva* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 356–62.

48. A stenogram of the debate was published in *K voprosu o politike RKP(b) v khudozhestvennoi literature* (Moscow, 1924).

49. Maguire (*Red Virgin Soil*, pp. 417 ff.) concludes that Voronsky's actual participation in the Trotskyite opposition remains unproved, pointing out that the label of "Trotskyism" was often indiscriminately and vindictively applied. The same suggestion has been made by some post-1956 Soviet writers on Voronsky. There is, in fact, no hard evidence of Voronsky's active membership in the post-1923 opposition; but it should be remembered that unfounded accusations of actual opposition membership are characteristic of the late thirties and not of any period of RAPP's activity. The most scholarly of Voronsky's Soviet rehabilitators—A. G. Dement'ev in *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1962), p. 1046, Sheshukov, *Neistovye revniteli*, p. 43, M. M. Kuznetsov in "Krasnaia nov'," *Ocherki istorii russkoi sovetskoi zhurnalistiki, 1917–1932* (Moscow, 1966), p. 229—agree that Voronsky belonged to the 1926–28 opposition and was expelled from the party in 1928 for that reason. Their common (unidentified) source is probably the entry in *Deiateli revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii*, 5 vols. (Moscow, 1927–33): "In 1926–28 Voronsky belonged to the Trotskyite Opposition and conducted active fractional work, in connection with which he was expelled from the ranks of the VKP(b); however, later he broke with the Opposition and was reinstated as a member of the party. He now works in Moscow as a senior editor of Russian and foreign classics" (vol. 5, pt. 2, p. 1030). My own impression is that this entry is probably accurate. Real opposition membership was clearly embarrassing to Voronsky's post-1956 Soviet rehabilitators, and this could explain the hinted doubts to which Maguire refers. But, if we take it that

opposition connections, Voronsky's position on *Krasnaia nov'* was under constant threat from 1924 to 1927, when he was finally ousted. VAPP—in spite of former Trotskyite associations of its own—did not neglect this weapon. It made a strong bid “to equate Trotsky's political position with Voronsky's line [on literature] and even with the line of all the party comrades who do not support VAPP's point of view.”<sup>50</sup> What worried Lunacharsky was that VAPP's smear tactics might finally discredit the “soft” line on culture altogether. He therefore moved toward quasi-alliance with VAPP, declaring himself a literary “proletarian”<sup>51</sup> prepared to concede to the VAPPists everything but organizational control. This caused great offense to Voronsky, who rightly believed that the softliners were offering him up as a sacrifice: “Anatolii Vasilevich!” he addressed Lunacharsky. “You have entered into the *Na postu* abode, and it would seem that you are quite at home there. . . . But if it is fated that I must accept the end, then let it not be from the hand of Averbakh.”<sup>52</sup>

Voronsky, who had lost control of *Krasnaia nov'* in the autumn of 1924 with the appointment of Raskolnikov (an Old Bolshevik and VAPP sympathizer) as coeditor, regained it early in 1925; and it was probably because of the controversy surrounding him that the issue of proletarian culture remained on the Central Committee agenda. A Politburo commission headed by Vareikis and including Bukharin and Lunacharsky among its members worked through the spring of 1925 on the resolution finally passed in June: “On the Policy of the Party in the Field of Artistic Literature.” Why such extended deliberation was necessary is not clear, as no disagreement among members of the commission is recorded; but we do know that Trotsky submitted a written memorandum setting out his views.<sup>53</sup> It is worth noting that while no influential person *appears* to be arguing the case of the proletarians, the official attitude toward them becomes consistently more sympathetic through the resolution of the press department in May 1924, its adoption in slightly edited form in the Thirteenth Party Congress's resolution “On the Press,” the reported statements of members of the Politburo commission, and the eventual Central Committee resolution of June 1925—which acknowledged, in direct opposition to Trotsky, the “historic right” of the proletariat to “hegemony” in literature, but proposed

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Voronsky was expelled from the party as a Trotskyite in 1928 and readmitted about 1930, what plausible explanation is there except the obvious one—that he had belonged to the 1926–28 opposition?

50. Lunacharsky, early 1925, published *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 64, p. 35.

51. See, for example, his article in *Na postu*, 1925, no. 1(6), June. Lunacharsky was not insincere, in that he had always been an advocate on principle of proletarian culture and really did object to Trotsky's views on it. But he disliked VAPP's *modus operandi*, and the rapprochement was primarily tactical.

52. Voronsky, “Mr. Britling Drinks the Cup to the Dregs,” *Krasnaia nov'*, 1926, no. 5, pp. 202–3.

53. Ermakov, *Obogashchenie metoda*, pp. 276–77.

that proletarian writers should earn it for themselves without the "bureaucratic" solution of party intervention on their behalf.<sup>54</sup>

In fact the party bureaucracy was already involving itself deeply in VAPP's affairs, though not altogether in token of approval. One outcome of the 1925 discussion on literature was the decision to create a Federation of Soviet Writers (FOSP), including both proletarian and fellow-traveling groups. The Central Committee press department, which was responsible for organizing FOSP, passed the organizational initiative to VAPP,<sup>55</sup> which, under the leadership of Vardin, Lelevich, and Rodov, refused to take it on the grounds that VAPP was not guaranteed "hegemony" in the federation. For more than a year VAPP and the press department wrestled together with the demons of Zinovievism and "left deviation."<sup>56</sup> As a result, VAPP emerged with a new leader (Averbakh) and a new relationship with the press department—which, from the spring of 1926, was headed by Gusev, an Old Bolshevik and old enemy of Trotsky from the army political administration.<sup>57</sup>

The new VAPP was willing to organize the federation of writers, and the new press department was anxious to support it in this undertaking. "VAPP is mechanically acquiring—evidently, comrade Gusev, with your permission—a predominant influence in the federation," protested Voronsky. "Were there or were there not, comrade Gusev, attempts to organize the federation in such a way that VAPP and its supporters were in fact handed two-thirds of the votes? . . . I will say frankly that you have unleashed the young VAPP comrades, given them such rights and such privileges that they have lost a sense of proportion, lost humility. . . . You have unleashed them, comrade Gusev."<sup>58</sup>

On April 18, 1927, Voronsky's editorship of *Krasnaia nov'* was discussed in the Central Committee press department, with reports by Gusev and Voronsky: "The question of *Krasnaia nov'* and the Trotskyite opposition was quite sharply raised. It was said that the journal could not be called oppositionist, but it was noticeable that Voronsky's membership in the opposition had left its mark. . . ."<sup>59</sup> Raskolnikov was once again appointed to the editorial board, and Voronsky left shortly afterwards.

54. Published in *Pravda*, July 1, 1925.

55. Sheshukov, *Neistovye revmiteli*, p. 197.

56. See, for example, the speech by Bliakhin of the press department to the VAPP conference, *Biulleten' V.A.P.P.*, no. 1, Apr. 10, 1926, in Smolensk Archives, WKP 257.

57. Trotsky, writing in 1930 on the occasion of Mayakovsky's suicide, described Gusev as Molotov's right-hand man in the sphere of cultural repression (*Biulleten' Oppositsii*, 1930, no. 11, p. 40).

58. Voronsky, "Open Letter to Comrade Gusev," *Krasnaia nov'*, 1927, no. 6, pp. 241–42.

59. Kuznetsov, "Krasnaia nov'," p. 229. Since *Krasnaia nov'* was a journal of political and social comment as well as a literary journal, the Stalinist/Bukharinist anxiety over its control by an oppositionist is neither surprising nor misplaced.

With Voronsky gone, the respective strengths of “hard” and “soft” line emerged more clearly. VAPP had brought the Central Committee press department into day-to-day literary politics, but for the specific purpose of uprooting political oppositionism. It had not achieved “hegemony,” since FOSP simply collapsed as a working institution under the weight of internal bickering; Gosizdat, Narkompros, and the thick journals *Pechat' i revoliutsiia* and *Novyi mir* remained under “soft” control; and even *Krasnaia nov'* did not function after Voronsky's departure as a VAPP organ. The censoring organs, Glavlit and the theatrical Glavrepertkom, included many hardliners and always had, but VAPP did not control them. Lunacharsky kept his grip on theatrical affairs, though continually subject to hardline harassment which VAPP did not initiate or lead. Gorky's return, rumored at least from the autumn of 1927, represented a potentially powerful reinforcement for the “soft” line.

But above all, VAPP was embarrassed in 1927 by the virtual identity of its “hard” line on culture and that of the political opposition. The chief opposition spokesman on culture was Preobrazhensky, supported by Sosnovsky, Vaganian, and the former VAPP leaders Vardin and Lelevich.<sup>60</sup> The opposition claimed that the party had degenerated, and this degeneration was reflected in its inability to meet the bourgeois challenge in culture. The bourgeoisie remained supreme in literature and the arts, and kept its monopoly of technical expertise and consequent control of higher education. Bukharin had explicitly disclaimed the concept of cultural class war,<sup>61</sup> and the party had adopted a policy of “stabilization” in culture, which meant that it had given up the attempt to raise the cultural level of the proletariat to a point where it could effectively compete with the old intelligentsia. The party had succumbed to “right deviation,” with Bukharin offering a “classic image of cultural

60. The opposition made no reference to cultural policy in its theses to the Fifteenth Party Congress (Averbakh, *Na literaturnom postu*, 1927, no. 22–23, p. 21). The *locus classicus* is Preobrazhensky's speech on the phenomenon of “Eseninshchina,” or disillusionment and decadence of youth, in the Communist Academy debate in the spring of 1927: comment on this speech is to be found in Knorin's article in *Kommunisticheskaia revoliutsiia*, 1927, no. 6, pp. 3 ff., and in Averbakh, “Oppozitsiia i voprosy kul'turnoi revoliutsii,” *Na literaturnom postu*, 1928, no. 8, p. 10; the text is in the stenogram published by the Communist Academy as *Upadochnoe nastroenie sredi molodezhi* (Moscow, 1927). The literary implications are developed by Lelevich, with acknowledgment to Preobrazhensky, in the Saratov gubkom journal *Kommunisticheskii put'*, 1927, no. 21 (84), pp. 37 ff., and in his contribution to the almanac *Udar*, ed. A. I. Bezymensky (Moscow, 1927), pp. 94 ff.

61. See Bukharin, “The Proletariat and Questions of Artistic Policy,” *Krasnaia nov'*, 1925, no. 4, p. 266: “Our society has two levels of conflict, internal and external. Externally it stands face to face with the bourgeois world, and there the class war becomes sharper. . . . Inside the country our policy in general does not follow the line of fanning class war but, on the contrary, goes some way to dampen it down. . . .”

*Struivism*."<sup>62</sup> Hence the contemporary "crisis in culture" (Preobrazhensky's phrase), and the prevalent mood of decadence and disillusionment among Communist youth.

A change of tone can be observed very shortly after Voronsky's condemnation by the Central Committee press department in April 1927. In May the agitprop department held a meeting on theatrical affairs at which the main speakers were Knorin, head of agitprop, and Lunacharsky. Knorin (who had joined in the attack on Voronsky) now put his weight strongly behind Lunacharsky and the "soft" line, which in this context meant repudiation of a belligerent policy of "proletarianization" directed against the traditional theaters. The "hard" line had considerable support at the meeting from members of the agitprop departments of the Central and Moscow Committees of the party, the Moscow education department, Glavrepertkom, and other bodies. But, as one speaker noted, the hardliners were intimidated by Knorin's paper and did not feel free to attack him as they habitually attacked Lunacharsky.<sup>63</sup> Averbakh tried the smear tactic of associating some minor softliners with Trotsky and Voronsky, and delicately raised the question of why Knorin and Lunacharsky should both perceive the main enemy to the left and not the right.<sup>64</sup> To that Lunacharsky replied (against interjections from Averbakh and the head of Glavrepertkom) that one hits hard in the direction from which trouble is coming: "We have to strike a blow at you so that you don't interfere with us." He also confirmed the assertion of another speaker that the policies of the present VAPP leadership were identical with those of its oppositionist predecessor.<sup>65</sup> Knorin in his concluding speech stated firmly that so long as Averbakh put himself with the ultra-left, "we cannot agree with him."<sup>66</sup>

NEP in culture ended abruptly in the spring of 1928, when the trial of the Shakhty engineers put the loyalty of the whole intelligentsia in doubt. Conclusions were drawn by Krinitsky, the new head of agitprop, at a meeting at the end of May.<sup>67</sup> The new line was the "hard" line of class war against the bourgeois intelligentsia, struggle against "danger from the right" in party and government cultural policy.

In the course of 1928, the "soft" line was repudiated in all areas. A new

62. Lelevich, *Kommunisticheskii put'*, 1927, no. 21 (84), p. 40.

63. S. N. Krylov, ed., *Puti razvitiia teatra* (stenogram of debate in agitprop, May 1927), [M] 1927, p. 202 (Sapozhnikov).

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21.

65. *Ibid.*, Lunacharsky's closing speech, pp. 227 ff.

66. *Ibid.*, Knorin's closing speech, pp. 245 ff.

67. Stenogram published in B. Olkhovy, ed., *Zadachi agitatsii, propagandy i kulturnogo stroitel'stva* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1928).

policy of massive proletarian and party enrollment to the university came into force with the autumn enrollment of 1928. Rykov protested unavailingly in the Central Committee that the class issue was irrelevant to the main task of expanding technical education to meet industrial needs.<sup>68</sup> The secondary schools were exposed in the party press as bourgeois centers of potential juvenile counterrevolution. Local authorities, reacting as they had done in the university purge in 1924, took this as a directive to conduct “social purges” of both pupils and teachers (although no explicit directive was ever issued, and Narkompros and the government continued to condemn the purges). Komsomol activists harried the teachers; the militant atheists attacked them for their religious beliefs; and even Narkompros was forced to withdraw the tolerance it had previously extended to individual faith. “My teacher in junior class, meeting me sixteen years after I left school, wept and told me that she is even afraid to live and work at the present time,” wrote a Voronezh reader to the teachers’ newspaper. “She has no regrets for the tsar—he drove her fiance into the grave and so she is still unmarried at forty. But the icons which they threw out of the school—this was more than she could bear. . . .”<sup>69</sup>

VAPP received effective powers to scourge and chastise in the name of the party, mounted a successful campaign against “rightism” in Narkompros’ arts administration and had Raskolnikov (again!) appointed to its head, and began a fierce struggle with a competing group of hardliners from the Communist Academy for control of the literary press.

Lunacharsky resigned from the Commissariat in 1929; Bukharin and Rykov were identified as leaders of a “Right Opposition” in the party. The “soft” line on culture was described as right deviationist, and the government institutions which had carried it out were extensively purged.

The victory of the “hard” line of cultural class war over the “soft” line of conciliation coincided in time with Stalin’s victory over his opponents in the party leadership. Should we conclude that the policy of class war was Stalin’s own? I think not. There is no evidence to suggest that Stalin had any fixed opinions on cultural policy in the twenties, and his interventions in cultural or educational debates were remarkably few. The story (repeated to me in Moscow) that in 1928 Stalin approached Lunacharsky with an offer of support for the “soft” line in exchange for Lunacharsky’s later denunciation of the Bukharin/Rykov “Right Opposition” appears to have at least apocryphal truth as far as Stalin’s political tactics are concerned. From 1932, Stalin reverted to policies which in outward form closely resemble those of the twenties: re-establishment of academic criteria in university enrollment, revival of the general secondary school, verbal encouragement and practical neglect

68. Lutchenko, *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1966, no. 2, p. 33.

69. Quoted in *Narodnoe prosveshchenie*, 1928, no. 10, p. 140.

of the rural teacher, reinstatement of "bourgeois" (now "Soviet") specialists purged as class enemies, dissolution and condemnation of the proletarian writers' association, and formation of a new Union of Soviet Writers under Gorky's leadership, including both Communist and nonparty writers. Of course these policies were *in effect* vastly different from those of the twenties—not only because, as Stalin said, "cadres decide everything" and the old softline Bolshevik administrators had disappeared, but because the proletarian attack had fragmented the intelligentsia and destroyed its old patterns of association.

If Stalin had no interest in class war policies as such, why did he let the hardliners win? The answer, in political terms, must be that they were a convenient weapon to use against his opponents in party and government and (if we assume that Stalin had a general concern for the extension of party control) to intimidate the intelligentsia. But this formulation may suggest a wider area of choice than Stalin in fact had. The proletarian "hard" line was already identified as the political alternative: it was understood by the party and had known support within it. Probably its strength in the party was not so great as to force Stalin, or any party leader in 1928, to accept it (though this notion of overwhelming constituency pressure cannot be discounted, given the incomplete evidence we have on local party opinion and its interpretation by the leadership). But it was strong enough not to be overlooked; and coherent enough to make any selective use—such as the deal which Stalin is reported to have offered Lunacharsky—extremely difficult to carry through.

As I understand the situation, Stalin accepted a predefined opposition platform and support when he moved against his colleagues in the leadership in 1928, just as a hypothetical challenger to Stalin in (say) 1934 would have had to do. His choice was, given the platform and its presumptive supporters, whether or not to make the move. When he did, the "soft" line on culture was automatically canceled.