

## **Russian Poets and the October Revolution: Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Mikhail Kuzmin and Others**

**Русские поэты и Октябрьская революция:  
Александр Блок, Сергей Есенин, Михаил Кузьмин и другие**

**Poetas rusos y la revolución de octubre:  
Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Mikhail Kuzmin y otros**

Received: January 22, 2020

Accepted: March 21, 2020

Written by:

**Oleksandr Sylaiev<sup>151</sup>**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2388-5951

**Iryna Razumenko<sup>152</sup>**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3221-4340

**Oleksandr Tararak<sup>153</sup>**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9740-0750

**Viktoriia Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk<sup>154</sup>**

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5138-9226

**Inna Prokopchuk<sup>155</sup>**

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9353-2169

**Abstract**

The article considers the question of the ideological and creative evolution of famous Russian poets at a turning point in the history of the twentieth century - during the years of the active formation of a totalitarian state system and its aesthetic socialist-realist doctrine. Revolutionary maximalism, the idea of a complete renewal of all being, came not only from Marxism and the Bolsheviks, but was also prepared by literature, long before the revolution, it had already "artistically matured" in the poetry of Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Osip Mandelstam, Vladimir Mayakovsky and many others. There is every reason to assert that the sources of Soviet literature as a cultural phenomenon were not only party leaders, not only so called proletarian culture and commissaries, but also honest artists who were ready to see in the cruelty of the

**Аннотация**

В статье рассматривается вопрос об идейно-творческой эволюции известных русских поэтов на переломном этапе истории XX столетия – в годы активного формирования тоталитарного государственного устройства и его эстетической соцреалистической доктрины. Революционный максимализм, идея полного обновления всего бытия шла не только от марксизма и большевиков, но подготавливалась и литературой, задолго до революции уже «вызрела» художественно в поэзии Александра Блока, Сергея Есенина, Осипа Мандельштама, Владимира Маяковского и многих других. Есть все основания утверждать, что у истоков советской литературы как культурного явления стояли не только партийные руководители, не только пролеткульты и наркомпросы, но и честные художники, готовые увидеть в жестокости

<sup>151</sup> Doctor hab. in Philology, Full Professor, Department of World literature, H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

<sup>152</sup> Candidate of Philological Sciences, Full Professor, Department of World literature, H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

<sup>153</sup> Doctor hab. in Philology, Professor, Department of German Philology, H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

<sup>154</sup> Doctor hab. in Pedagogy, Professor, Professor of History of Pedagogy and Comparative Pedagogy Department, H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

<sup>155</sup> Senior lecturer, Department of Design of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Woodworking and Computer Technologies and Designers of the National Forestry University of Ukraine.

revolution the right path to the cardinal renewal of life that their soul, which was full of angry denial of the world. The authors of the article argue that, having survived “belated insight”, Russian poetry in the person of Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Andrey Bely, Mickhail Kuzmin and others began a dramatic struggle for humanistic ideals and creative freedom.

**Keywords:** Russian poetry, literary process of the 1920s, totalitarian regime, Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Mickhail Kuzmin.

революции правый путь к кардинальному обновлению жизни, которого жаждала их душа, переполненная гневным мироотрицанием. Авторы статьи доказывают, что, пережив «запоздалое прозрение», российская поэзия в лице Александра Блока, Сергея Есенина, Андрея Белого, Михаила Кузмина и др. начала драматическую творческую борьбу за гуманистические идеалы и свободу творчества.

**Ключевые слова:** русская поэзия, литературный процесс 1920-х годов, тоталитарный режим, Александр Блок, Сергей Есенин, Михаил Кузмин.

## Resumen

El artículo considera la cuestión de la evolución ideológica y creativa de los poetas rusos famosos en un punto de inflexión en la historia del siglo XX, durante los años de la formación activa de un sistema estatal totalitario y su doctrina estética socialista-realista. El maximalismo revolucionario, la idea de una renovación completa de todo ser, vino no solo del marxismo y los bolcheviques, sino que también fue preparado por la literatura, mucho antes de la revolución, ya había “madurado artísticamente” en la poesía de Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Osip Mandelstam, Vladimir Mayakovsky y muchos otros. Hay muchas razones para afirmar que las fuentes de la literatura soviética como fenómeno cultural no fueron solo los líderes del partido, no solo la llamada cultura proletaria y los comisarios, sino también artistas honestos que estaban listos para ver en la crueldad de la revolución el camino correcto hacia La renovación cardinal de la vida que su alma, que estaba llena de enojo de negación del mundo. Los autores del artículo argumentan que, después de haber sobrevivido a la “visión tardía”, la poesía rusa en la persona de Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Andrey Bely, Mickhail Kuzmin y otros comenzó una lucha dramática por los ideales humanistas y la libertad creativa.

**Palabras clave:** poesía rusa, proceso literario de los años veinte, régimen totalitario, Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Mickhail Kuzmin.

## Introduction

One of the first literary scholars in the post-Soviet space who set the task to trace “the through movement of strong, organic, artistic thought, developing according to internal laws, and not adapting to external circumstances” in the history of Russian literature of the beginning of the 20th century, was V. Pertsovsky. He came to the extremely important conclusion that revolutionary maximalism, the idea of a “complete and absolute renewal of all being” came not only from Marxism and the Bolsheviks, but was also prepared by literature, long before the revolution had already “artistically matured” in the poetry of Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Osip Mandelstam, Maximilian Voloshin, Vladimir Mayakovsky and many others. He defined this idea and this line in Russian literature as anti-humanistic and anti-Christian (“demonic”), through which these poets “entered” the revolution. At the same time,

however, V. Pertsovsky noted the dual nature of the revolutionary anti-humanistic artistic idea, emphasizing that “the origins of Soviet literature as a cultural phenomenon were not party bosses, not Proletcult (working-class culture) with Narkompros (People’s Commissariat for Education), but honest artists who fully felt the despotism of the revolution, <...> but those who are ready to see in this cruelty the right path to the absolute renewal of life that their soul really hungered for, overwhelmed with angry world-denial” (Pertsovsky, 1992).

## Methods

The article used the method of comparative analysis of various literary trends that dominated Russian literature in the first half of the 20th century (symbolism, acmeism, peasant poetry, etc.). The analysis of the poetic text was carried

out using structural, historical, literary and typological research methods. These methods made it possible to consider the development of literature at several levels, to analyze the methods of interaction between history and literature, isolating the main and secondary lines in the literary process of the 1920s.

## Results

Analyzing today the literary situation of the turning 20s of the 20th century, we ascertain the dominant presence of writers and poets in it, whose position was characterized by an initially loyal, romantically idealized perception of the socialist revolution or as a truly popular revolution of the Russian lower classes (Sergey Yesenin, Nikolai Klyuev and other representatives of the so-called “new peasant” poets), or as an universal revolutionary whirlwind designed to bring to life and spiritualize the “decrepit” global civilization (symbolist poets Alexander Blok, Andrej Bely and others).

The evolution of Sergei Yesenin is especially indicative for the mood of the peasant representatives of Russian literature in connection with the events of October 1917.

The ecstatic and romantic perception by Yesenin of both Russian revolutions in the verses and poems of 1917 - 1919 (“Transfiguration”, “Inonia”, “Jordanian Pigeon”, “Otchar” (“Father”), etc.) had a deeply specific character, which essence was correctly defined by St. Kunyaev: “Sergei Yesenin and his companions deeply concerned about the collapse of the old village, which began shortly after the abolition of serfdom and especially intensified at the beginning the 20th century. Maybe that is why they enthusiastically accepted both Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, because they hoped and believed that so close to their hearts a living future for peasant life was contained in revolutionary transformations” (Kunyaev, 1988). The special quality of Yesenin’s “village revolutionism” was noted by contemporaries of the poet. “The singer of the revolution wants to merge the Easter ringing of temples with the red ringing of the revolution, the passionate bearer of Christ brings Easter songs to the selfless hero of the revolution, he wants to marry the religious with the revolutionary,” critic V. Lvov-Rogachevsky wrote with a certain degree of irony (Lvov-Rogachevsky, 1926).

In a detailed analysis Yesenin’s works of 1917-1918, O. Lekmanov and M. Sverdlov note the rapid growth of the poet’s revolutionary mood from February to October. “It is enough to compare the works written before and after the Bolshevik revolution,” we read in their article, “to see how the October events changed the direction of Yesenin’s work. <...> If Yesenin still quite in a Christian way connected his “faith” with “love” glorifying February:

*We came not to destroy in the world,  
But to love and believe!*<sup>156</sup> (“Pevushij zov” (“Singing Call”))

then he came to October with the anti-Christian assertion of “faith” in “power”, which very accurately conveys the self-consciousness of the new government:

*New on the mare  
Savior goes to the world.  
Our faith is in force.  
Our truth is in us!*

The poem “Jordanian Dove” with the famous Yesenin declaration was defiantly published by the poet in August 1918 in the literary supplement of *Izvestia (News of the Central Executive Committee)*, the official organ of the Soviet press, although before that, since March 1917, he had printed his works exclusively in the Socialist Revolutionary newspapers *Delo Naroda (People's Cause)*, *Znamia Truda (Labor's Banner)*, *Znamya bor'by (Banner of struggle)*, *Golos trudovogo krest'yanstva (Voice of the laboring peasantry)*, etc:

*The sky is like a bell  
A moon is a tongue  
Mother is my native land  
I am a Bolshevik!*

However, it is easy to verify that Yesenin’s revolutionism in its ideological and moral basis rather opposed the class-collectivist aggressiveness of the revolution than corresponded to it. Already in the “Keys of Mary” (1918), Yesenin resolutely rejected the principle of class art and the methods of administrative management of literature, putting forward universal values and complete freedom of creativity: “That is why we are so disgusted with the hands of Marxist guardianship in the ideology of the essence of art. It builds a monument to Marx with the hands of the workers but the peasants want to build it to a cow”

<sup>156</sup> Hereinafter, the article gave an interlinear translation of poems by Russian poets to accurately convey meaning.

(Yesenin, 1979). Yesenin is convinced that there will be no place left for class art in the ark. The future, according to him, lies in “an image whose wings are soldered by the faith of a man not from class awareness, but from the awareness of his temple of eternity” (Yesenin, 1979).

After 1919, Yesenin more and more decisively departed from his early revolutionary mood. The religious and romantic perception of the revolution as a “bright message” about the advent of a new era of “universal brotherhood” of working people, which predetermined the special poetic system of the so-called “red” poems and songs of the end of 1917-1919, is very quickly replaced by the poet’s insight and disappointment in existence and the true nature of the October Revolution, which was expressed both in Yesenin’s works and his personal correspondence.

The famous Yesenin’s poem “Sorokoust” (“Forty days’ requiem”) (1920) expresses this idea in the best way. In this work, according to F. Abramov, “all philosophy and tragedy of his poetry” is concentrated: “Unthinkable. In the early 1920s, immediately after the Civil War, when it was impossible to find a nail, he curses of the iron machine. Yes! Yes! The country screams: iron, iron! Machines, tractors! This is our salvation. And the puppy-poet sends curses to iron. The puppy-poet sees the main threat to life in iron. Delirium! Prophecy of a person poisoned by alcohol, chimeras generated by delirium tremens. No. A poet, a true poet, is the most delicate seismograph, which alone is given the chance to hear the rumble of an impending catastrophe. <...> Maybe all Yesenin’s poetry is a fight, a doomed struggle of a golden-headed young man, a lover of life, with a soulless age of iron, with a robot age?” (Abramov, 1987).

However, it seems that F. Abramov wrongly defined the content vector of the poem as “doomed struggle” of the “golden-haired man”, who defied the soulless but historically inevitable “age-robot”. We think that Yesenin is sad not only about the “iron” tendencies of the era. After all, Western civilization was able to take the path of a reasonable combination of “iron” and “living,” in other words, the achievements of technological progress and the interests of an individual human being. No, Yesenin does not think in global historical categories and does not play the role of an inveterate cosmopolitan unusual for him. The ideological and social range of his poetic thought does not lose its national and historical specificity: Yesenin reflects on the dangerous trends that are fraught with Russian

revolution and Bolshevik socialism. It is no coincidence that E.I. Livshits telling about the creative history of Yesenin’s poem summarizes in his letter to Kharkiv citizen on August 12, 1920: “I am very sad now that history is going through a difficult era of killing a living person, because it’s not that socialism I was thinking about, it is specific and deliberate, like an island of Elena, without glory and without dreams. There is no room in it for the living being, for that who builds bridge to the invisible world, because they cut down and blow up bridges from under the feet of future generations” (Yesenin, 1980).

“Killing the person – that is the worst thing for Yesenin. And this is the reason for his rejection of the iron-killing personality”, comes L. Aizerman to a fair conclusion (Aizerman, 1990), not daring, however, to bring his thought to its logical result. We add that socialism, which already by 1920 definitely showed its anti-personal, anti-human nature, raised the iron to a level much higher than human life.

Yesenin’s letters written in 1922 - 1923 from abroad testify that the poet not only had a strong fear of political persecution, but he also was disappointed with revolutionary reality. Yesenin, in particular, writes in a letter from America (February 1923) to his friend, the poet-imaginist A. Kusikov: “And now - now just evil gloom hangs over me. Now, when only the hell and the pipe (a hint of Stalin? - Authors) were left from the revolution, now when they shake hands with those who were shot before (obviously, this means the new Soviet bourgeoisie - Authors), it became clear that you and I were and will be that scum that could be blamed for all mortal sins. I no longer understand what revolution I belonged to. I see only one thing: neither to February nor to October. Apparently, some November hid is hiding in us” (Yesenin, 1980).

Perhaps, Mayakovsky was right in evaluating Yesenin’s ideological and creative evolution of the last period of his work as an evolution “from imagism to VAPP (All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers)”, but we should not forget that the eloquent result of this Yesenin’s “clear craving for the new” (V. Mayakovsky) were verses filled with the deepest inner disharmony:

*I accept everything.  
I accept everything as is.  
Ready to follow the beaten track.  
I’ll give my whole soul to October and May  
But I won’t give them my sweet lyre...*  
 (“Soviet Russia”, 1925)

In any case, to consider these lines following I. Erenburg as evidence of recognition by the poet of “his spiritual defeat” (Erenburg’s memoirs “People. Years. Life”) is hardly possible. “The highest point of poetic deed is the fusion of the reality of poetry with the reality of life. The fact that Yesenin reached such a level in his work, has long been a scientific fact and the basis of the methodology of Yeseninology” (Pashchenko, 2011), - M. Pashchenko summarizes his observations on the myth of the city of Kitezh and the Kitezh text in Yesenin's poem “Inonia”. Guided by this methodology, we want to conclude our thoughts with the assertion that the cited lines from the poem “Soviet Russia” are just such deep fusion of reality and poetry and the highest point of poetic deed.

Along with Yesenin, other new peasant poets also became to see clearly, and this insight was not based on emotional feelings and moods, but rather deep and sober awareness of the harsh reality that turned out for the people (and especially for the peasant majority) not only the collapse of faith in bright revolutionary ideals (“For the Earth, for Will, for Bread of Labor!” - N. Klyuyev), but also with innumerable human victims.

Nikolai Klyuyev’s works vividly confirm this evolution of new peasant poetry. The poet’s entire odic attitude towards the Bolshevik revolution and the “homespun Soviet authorities”, which was expressed by pub journalistic means in the poem “From the Red Newspaper” (1918):

*Glory to the martyrs and the Red Army,  
And to the homespun Soviet government!  
Russian boys, girls, respond:  
Remember Razin and Sofya Perovskaya!  
Baptize in the lion red faith  
In death, praise the bride - Russia!*

These lines are replaced by a tragic reflection on the “remains of Great Russia” and the causes of popular longing in the poem “Lenin”:

*There are dark slums in Smolny  
And the taste of pine needles,  
There is a beggarly decks coffin  
With the remains of great Russia...  
Their raven fate guards  
In the deaf hellish graves...  
What is the people yearning for  
In the dull tunes of the Tatar?*

And, finally, it pours out into chased and solemn lines of philosophical and historical

generalizations and gloomy prophecies of a poem addressed to the proletarian poet VI. Kirillov:

*Life tree is chopped,  
Not the fruit on it, but the heads...  
Arakcheev’s whip and shako,  
As in the past, on the throne of the letter.  
Koltsov’s dream, Meev’s tower-room  
Drowned in a cranberry sea...*

Today we know for certain about the tragic fate of N. Klyuyev (Klyuyev, 1988).

Another poet of the Yesenin circle, Pimen Karpov, whose work was very favorably addressed by Leo Tolstoy and Alexander Blok, wrote a poem in 1925, which social acuteness and desperate courage, perhaps, has no equal in Soviet poetry of the 1920s. In it, he curses Trotsky and the “assassin of the people’s commissar” Dzhugashvili (Stalin's real name), as well as himself and his compatriots, who fell into the trap of clever political adventurers and those who followed them, not knowing how to keep themselves from abusing their native land. We are talking about the poem “The Story of a Fool” (Kunyaev, 1990), which only after seven decades came to a reader:

*Slaves, we do it yourself  
With killers and fools  
They drove Russia into the coffin.  
You are alive - so triumph, serf!..*

A dramatic change in the poet’s mood becomes especially evident if we compare this poem with the poem “Star Pilot” (1918):

*I will load the gun with ammunition,  
I will sharpen a rusty bayonet  
And right after the flaming banners  
I will run – reckless man!..*

In 1926, P. Karpov wrote a poem dedicated to the memory of Alexey Ganin, who was executed in the case of the ‘Order of Russian Fascists’:

*Walled up from the daylight,  
Dying in the claws of iron,  
You recognized that you can’t give  
Your native clan to the dogs to be torn to pieces...*

And in the late 1920s, he writes a poem, in the final lines of which he puts a gloomy, visionary point in the assessment of the contemporary epoch:

*Puddling about neck-deep in blood,  
Dragging the vents of cast-iron cannons  
Behind the chariot of the prince of darkness, -  
We crowned the she-devil ...  
And the devil glorified himself  
And he put the smerds on the throne,  
But he didn't save anyone  
From the shroud and the funeral...*

This poem left untitled. Obviously, the writer understood that offering it to magazines was not only pointless, but also life-threatening. Avoiding the tragic fate of many of his friends, P. Karpov lived to old age in poverty and complete oblivion.

Thus, the neo-peasant poetry, having paid a certain tribute (different for each of the representatives of this literary direction) to the creation of a poetic cult of the revolution, but being most closely connected with the real life of the people, managed to recognize quite early the inadequacy of its revolutionary romantic moods, deceit and perniciousness of such a perception of reality and resolutely turn from this path to the path of civic honesty and realism. It became, we emphasize, the principled position of the peasant poets, which, presumably, played a fatal role both in their personal destinies and in the future of the entire literary trend.

“Peasant poets understood much more than writers who praised the need for terror in the struggle against the peasantry,” St. Kunyayev rightly states. “But because in the 1920s and 1930s, ideologists and critics like Bukharin, Averbakh, Sosnovsky, Lelevich and others created such an atmosphere of persecution, false accusations of kulak moods, nationalism and chauvinism, they inevitably had to perish. And they perished. This was a deliberate destruction of precisely the national-peasant “branch” of our culture” (Kunyayev, 1988).

The prominent representative of another social stratum – the Russian intelligentsia – and the main spokesman for a different mood in Russian literature in the post-October period, Alexander Blok, in his report “The Collapse of Humanism”, read on April 9, 1919 in the publishing house “World Literature”, came to the following, far from unequivocal conclusion:

“The bell of anti-humanism is ringing all over the world ... This music is a wild choir, an inconsistent cry for civilized hearing. It is almost unbearable for many of us, and now it will not seem ridiculous if I say that it is deadly to many of us. It is destructive to those gains of

civilization that seemed unshakable; it is the opposite of our usual melodies about “truth, goodness and beauty”; it is directly hostile to what has been introduced into us by the upbringing and formation of the humane Europe of the last century” (Blok, 1982).

Blok felt in its own way the historical predetermination of the destructive revolution. He heard the music of the historical element, which is pointless to resist, although you are the most “civilized humanist”. Blok understood the barbaric nature of the masses, their foreignness to European culture, but he believed that these masses are the personification of the highest truth of “uncountable, musical history”. As we see, there is no political acceptance of Bolshevism; before us is a rather tragic attitude of the humanist, who has risen above his own “ego” in the name of some higher truth of the world - perpetual movement and renewal even through catastrophe and revolution.

In his gloomy foresight (“it is fatal for many of us”), Blok was not mistaken. He himself also turned out to be intrinsically alien to the music of anti-humanism. The sincere and creative upsurge that Blok experienced in 1918-1919, since the mid-1920s was replaced by a deep spiritual depression and physical extinction. “Since the summer of 1920,” says Andrey Bely, “he already gloomily fell silent and did not utter the word “revolution” (Bely, 1990b).

The “memorial notes” by Andrey Bely, whom Blok shortly before his death called “the closest person”, contains, in our opinion, a very deep and important thought. “...Neither Balmont, nor Bryusov, nor Ivanov, nor Mayakovsky, nor Klyuyev, nor Akhmatova, no one else,” reflects Andrey Bely, “were in their poetry the sons of *the whole of Russia*, but were the spokesmen of circles, spheres, castes, classes; Blok is a poet of *the whole of Russia*” Bely, 1990b).

If we accept, together with Bely's notes, the statement of the liberal Marxist critic V. Lvov-Rogachevsky, who wrote: “The music of the era was not embodied these days by the poet Maxim Gorky, but by the poet Alexander Blok... The petrel, the prophet of the revolution of 1905, loses its prophetic gift - to hear the future of the country, since 1906 more and more associating himself with the directives of political leaders” (Lvov-Rogachevsky, 1926), it will become quite obvious that as a “poet of the whole of Russia”, who most fully embodied the “music of the era”, Blok remained during his lifetime a kind of national symbol in a country torn by class

confrontation. This, of course, did not understand and could not understand the new government, for which Blok was only the author of the poem *Twelve*. However, Blok, as it were, transferred his symbolic meaning to the country to his death, which even then the most penetrating contemporaries of the poet understood. "If only the leaders of the atmosphere of our lives knew that the death of Blok is a terrible condemnation to them," Andrey Bely transfers R. Ivanov-Razumnik's words, which he said during the days of parting with Blok.

Andrey Bely, in his extremely deep and conceptual article "Revolution and Culture" (1917), warned against drawing direct analogies between art and the "streams of revolutions", warned of the immense danger of simplifying literary plots about the revolution, urging his contemporaries, poets and artists to keep "chaste" silence, thanks to which the "revolution, spilling into the souls of poets", will become the source and guarantee of not superficially-photographic "verse of poets in rhymed lines", but truly organic, inwardly matured artistic images and words. "To take a revolution as a literary plot is almost impossible in the era of revolution," he argued, "and it is impossible to require poets, artists, musicians to praise it in hymns; I do not believe these hymns, instantly written and printed tomorrow; shock, joy, delight immerse us in silence; that is why I am chastely silent about the sacred events of my inner life; and therefore, all those who now pour out their souls in very smoothly rhymed lines about the world event will never say their true word about it; perhaps the one who is silent will say his word about it not now, but then" (Bely, 1917).

Very perspicaciously in 1917, Andrey Bely pointed to the special, initially reduced character of the Bolshevik revolution as a "revolution of the material conditions of everyday life", a revolution of "production relations". "The modern revolution," he wrote, "rushes to the bread. But the soul of a person does not care about bread alone. Neither in bread nor in stones is the living flesh of life". Such a revolution is only a "warning impulse", only a reflection of the revolution itself – the "revolution of the spirit", which is still coming from the mists of the future era of spiritual freedom. And therefore, argues Bely, "Ibsen, Stirner, and Nietzsche are truly revolutionary, not Engels, not Marx at all; huge revolutionary explosions are thundering in the depths of their consciousness; and they really tear the enemy apart; the enemy is our mental inertia; and heroes from the kingdom of freedom are

unclear to us in their titanic appearance on the peaks of art" (Bely, 1917).

It is obvious now, that the largest Russian Symbolists, who were embodied the highest spirituality and intellect of the nation, came quite early to insight, but, alas, alas, it was too late...

One of the largest representatives of the Silver Age, an outstanding poet and composer Mikhail Kuzmin enthusiastically received the February and then the October Revolutions. His poetic evolution developed along the path of complication, which allowed researchers to consider his poems in the context of symbolist poetry. Then for some time he was close to acmeism and its "beautiful clarity". In the end, these two qualities – mystery and simplicity – were combined in Kuzmin's works. His poetic manifesto says: "The darker and thicker it is for the mind, the easier it is for a light soul".

His sympathetic attitude to the revolution caused him to gain the reputation of a "Bolshevik" in the literary circles of Petrograd.

After the revolution, he lived in St. Petersburg, did not participate in political life. Unable to imagine his life without a homeland, Kuzmin did not become an emigrant, but most of his five poetic books, prose and critical works written after 1917 were not published, since, according to the ideologists of that time, they did not correspond to the "spirit of revolutionary changes".

In March 1917, after the army took the side of the rebels in Petrograd, the ministers were arrested, and Tsar Nicholas II abdicated, Kuzmin writes with admiration:

Russian revolution, youthful, chaste, good,  
Does not repeat, only his brother sees in French,  
And walks along the sidewalks, simple  
Like an angel in a work blouse.

In 1920, Kuzmin experienced the bitterness of exile, comparing himself and such writers as he, with the associate of Peter I, Alexander Menshikov, who during the reign of Tsar Peter II fell into disgrace and was exiled with his family to the small village of Berezov: "And we, like Menshikov in Berezov, reading the Bible and waiting". However, his expectations and hopes were never destined to come true. Left to everyone, having spent the last years in oblivion and poverty, he left the mortal world in 1936.

On the whole, the 1920s were a time of unprecedented involvement of literature in the political realities. In the literary and historical process, these boundaries shifted, deformed, disappeared altogether, subjecting ultimately to “too deep and heavy dynamics of the ebbs and flows of the revolution”, according to Trotsky.

Such dynamics of the political “tides” and “ebbs” of the revolution, which contributed to a sharp demarcation of literature in the post-revolutionary period, subsequently led to the emergence of a reverse process of rapprochement and assimilation of the two poles of national consciousness and national culture. The violent essence of this rapprochement predetermined the maximum dramatic fate of the fate of Russian literature of the 1920s, primarily in the person of the most honest and talented representatives of both non-Marxist and Marxist camps. In this regard, the general vector of Russian poetry of this period, outlined by the famous French specialist in Russian literature V. Weidle, is very indicative. “The twenties,” he writes, “moved in a very definite direction: from natural disasters and unsystematic ferocities to the systematic eradication of all attempts to think in one’s own way and every opportunity to do one’s own writing. Symbolically and quite accurately by date, this can be expressed as follows: the twenties went from the execution of Gumilyov to the suicide of Mayakovsky. And the middle of them can also be very accurately determined: this is the year when Yesenin hanged himself. The fading of Blok was a forerunner. Three weeks after his death, they shot Gumilyov: as a political enemy; poetry disagreeing with the revolution was killed in his face. In the person of Yesenin, the revolutionary, but deceived by the revolution, peasant, albeit unrealizable dream committed suicide. In the person of Mayakovsky, poetry, most closely associated with the revolution, but completely exhausted and hiding in a dead end, killed itself” (Seleznev, Terekhina, 1992).

In this picture, which is completely true in its gloomy-symbolic essence, there is, however, one important detail, without which the idea of the literary and artistic process of the 1920s would not only be incomplete, but also incorrect, distorted in its very essence. G. Belaya was one of the first scholars in modern literary criticism who pointed to this important “detail”: “It would be wrong to think that the new canons of art were introduced into the public and artistic consciousness without a struggle. *Art resisted*. In the distant time of the early 20s, we can easily see the tense opposition between artistic and political criteria” (Bely, 1990a).

This idea of the struggle and resistance of “organic” art to the political and cultural pressure of the new government is extremely important, since it reflects the objective picture of the literary process of the 1920s, fills it with real dialectic content, internal significance and depth. It is on this point that the literary and historical concept of G. Belaya fundamentally diverges from the concept of E. Dobrenko. According to his literary and historical concept, such a struggle was in any case not a significant factor in the literary process, since the October literature was doomed to socialist realism from the very beginning. The revolutionary subculture, doctrines of the proletarian culture, and the theory and practice of “left” art were in the Procrustean bed of socialist realism. “When looking from a historical distance,” E. Dobrenko muses, “the disputes of the 1920s are filled with a new meaning: the lower classes of the subculture rise up to become a *high culture* in socialist realism” (Dobrenko, 1992). Thus, behind a new, meaningful, but still external side of the process, the researcher is hiding the inner, deepest sense - the presence of a persistent internal literary confrontation, which the official history of Soviet literature was silent about for many years just to present the process of formation of socialist-realist culture as a systematic, progressive and non-stop process of the arrival of all hesitant and “lost” in the bosom of Soviet power and socialist realism. The involuntary ignoring of this fact leads E. Dobrenko to the erroneous, in our opinion, conclusion that “in the literary struggle of the 1920s there were neither “right” nor “guilty”, because everything was fatally predetermined.

At the same time and in parallel with the false and therefore dead-end anti-humanistic, anti-Christian line in literature, it courageously pulsed, conquering more and more “lost” ones into its ranks, the alternative line – “personality-Christian” (in the terminology of V. Pertzovsky), filled with religious worship. In the “old” Russian literature, according to the researcher, this line and this direction were most clearly represented by Pushkin and Chekhov, and in the new Soviet literature, first of all B. Pasternak and his novel *Doctor Zhivago*. “It can be said,” writes Pertzovsky, “that in Pasternak’s novel the tragic pathos of literature in the first years of the revolution lives as an object of overcoming and resolving” (Pertzovsky, 1992).

It is easy to see that from a formal chronological point of view, the personality-Christian (humanistic) trend in the history of Russian literature from Pushkin to Pasternak appears in



such an interpretation as open or even torn, because Pushkin and Chekhov are very far apart links of the “golden” century, and Pasternak, as is known, worked on his novel three decades after the revolution, already in the post-war years. However, the general conclusion of the researcher is entirely fair and fundamental: the humanistic line of the great Russian literature, although it did not always remain the dominant constant in it, was never interrupted. It really did not interrupt, as eloquently testified by the facts of literary history. As for the turning 1920s, this humanistic line was continued - long before the Pasternak novel - by the artistic work of E. Zamyatin (*We*), I. Erenburg (*The extraordinary adventures of Julio Jurenito and his students*), V. Veresaev (*At a dead end, Sisters*), S. Yesenin (*Anna Snegina*), M. Bulgakov (*The White Guard*), M. Sholokhov (*Quietly Flows the Don*), A. Platonov (*Chevengur, The Foundation Pit*), A. Mariengof (*Cynics*) and others. These works of the post-revolutionary 20s that organically continued the truly humanistic direction of Russian literature of the nineteenth - the first quarter of the twentieth century. These works, created at various stages of the transitional decade, provide an affirmative answer to the truly “Hamletian” question: “Is culture capable of maintaining a certain aesthetic sovereignty under the conditions of a totalitarian regime without simultaneously abandoning the main goals of cultural activity, without going into the dead underground?” (V. Kovsky).

### Conclusions

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize it, that it is precisely in this struggle and resistance of literature to the Bolshevik dictate another symbolic vector of our literary history lies, giving it not so much tragic as high heroic meaning. Today we have every reason to assert that because of this, the line of great Russian literature, without interruption, went through all the trials of cruel time and literature did not fully become what Stalin wanted to do, an obedient servant of totalitarian power.

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