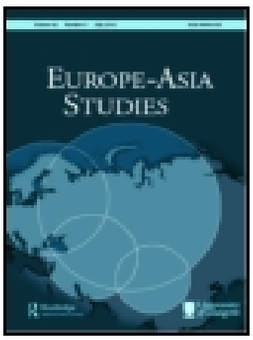

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ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV ON STALINISM: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON *THE FLIGHT OF OUR YOUTH*

By PHILIP HANSON*

IN 1939, when he was seventeen, Alexander Zinoviev was arrested for criticising Stalin.[1] In the late 1950s he was warned by the KGB for publicly defending Stalin. The warning was delivered during the short open season on Stalin which followed Khrushchev's 'secret speech' of 1956. It was then almost *de rigeur* in Moscow intellectual circles to criticise Stalin. At a public defence of a dissertation, when somebody had made some anti-Stalinist remarks, Zinoviev (who was then an up-and-coming mathematical logician) observed that 'Even a donkey can kick a dead lion'. For this, he tells us, he was taken to task by the Organs.

The impulse to object to safe, retrospective anti-Stalinism is, I think, the main emotional force behind Zinoviev's meditation on the Stalin era, *Nashei yunosti polet (The Flight of Our Youth)*. That impulse is reinforced by his characteristic belief that everyone else has got the subject wrong. 'I was an anti-Stalinist right up until Khrushchev's report'. (p. 13) 'After Khrushchev's report my anti-Stalinism lost all its meaning. Everyone began to criticise Stalin and his henchmen right, left and centre.' (p. 14) He explains that he does not now want to justify the Stalin era but to defend it 'from the superficiality and the triviality of the judgements [made upon it]'. (p. 27).

In this book Zinoviev assembles thoughts about the experience of living under Stalin. The thoughts are presented in his narrator's memoirs (which seem to be roughly his own); in the memoirs of characters labelled Official, Stalinist, Humanist and so on (Humanist is an executioner); in poems and in a dialogue between God, the Devil and a recently deceased Soviet citizen born in 1917. In one way and another—and there are not many ways left—he gives a full account of ideas about Stalinism which he has referred to only briefly and gnomically elsewhere. These passing remarks have included the description of Stalinism as a form of 'people's power',[2] and an insistence on the benefits of the Nazi–Soviet Pact and of the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture.[3] Statements like these have led some of his former admirers to conclude that he is confused; others to hope that he is joking; and others to agree with the KGB that he is, after all, a Stalinist.[4]

Nashei yunosti polet contains reflections on the Stalin era which are illuminating. They are not in any ordinary sense apologetics. They nonetheless offer, for all Zinoviev's assertions to the contrary, a kind of defence of the Stalin era. Zinoviev maintains that he is not justifying anything; he is merely trying to show what it was like, 'from inside'. But his insiders are busy, in the usual human

way, justifying themselves, and the author insists on the illegitimacy of any judgement from outside; the result is a text which closely resembles a defence. It is not, I think, a defence which stands up.

Zinoviev has, as always, an escape prepared against any criticism. He has said of this book: 'I am not a historian. *The Flight of Our Youth* is not a scientific study of Stalinism. You can only say: Zinoviev's hero is wrong. It is a literary work. You cannot say: Zinoviev is wrong'.[5] I shall therefore consider what Zinoviev's hero says about Stalinism; in what sense it is a defence; and whether it contains an original and persuasive interpretation.

The Psychological Basis of the Apologia

The defence which the narrator offers is a mixture of standard Soviet official views and a vividly expressed nostalgia for a time of extremes and dangers. He never asserts that Stalinism was good, but he does assert that the Stalin era was a good time to be alive, even if the chances of staying alive were less than in normal times. And he asserts that it achieved something—by implication, something worthwhile.

I hated Stalinism, the narrator says, but I helped to create it, and wished to create it. 'I know that my words are irrational. But then human history is irrational in general.' (p. 27) All the voices in the book convey a similar ambivalence about the informing, terrorising and liquidating on which they all comment.

The most striking example is Stalinist. (pp. 102–31) He accounts for his active part in persecuting other citizens as follows. As a schoolboy he tore up Stalin's portrait out of hatred (presumably because he perceived Stalin as the source of great suffering). Then he was terrified that this act would be discovered and reported by his brother, parents, neighbours, anyone. When he had finally disposed of all the torn-up bits of Stalin's portrait, he was overcome by a feeling of relief and happiness—and of love for Stalin. Later he became an informer and took part in destroying others. 'Just you try and get by without doing that! Would you have lasted long? Would you have done much? There was no other way. If you didn't get him, he would get you'. (p. 107) He asserts that he never believed in the 'Marxist fairy stories about a radiant future'. (p. 111) He continued to experience periods of hatred for Stalin, but what he seeks mainly to convey is the exhilaration of living dangerously. The Stalin era was 'a great historical process in which everything was new, everything was an experiment, everything was a discovery!' (p. 121)

The sudden and complete reversal of feeling on the part of the schoolboy anti-Stalinist is pure Dostoevsky. Zinoviev insists that the world he is dealing with is a communist, not a Russian, world. All the same, it takes a certain Russian literary tradition to describe such a switch of sentiment without any attempt to explain it: a tradition of deference to hysteria. Reverence for the exhilaration that comes from living dangerously, on the other hand, is a familiar, and not especially Russian, romantic sentiment. Sartre's Mathieu, in *Iron in the Soul*, found that killing somebody made him feel significant. Michael Herr, at the end

of *Despatches,* confesses to missing the excitement of the fighting in Vietnam. It is in this vein that Zinoviev's Stalinist, and all the other voices in the book, are dismayed that they no longer live in interesting times. Perhaps this is how many Soviet citizens have felt. Perhaps Zinoviev's vivid expression of the feeling helps people who did not live under Stalin to understand better what Stalinism means to Zinoviev's contemporaries. But it provides no reason why those active participants who survived should not feel ashamed.

The Justifications put forward by Zinoviev's Characters

The narrator, Official, Stalinist and the rest all in fact offer justifications and extenuating circumstances, in addition to the sheer excitement of turmoil. The main defences of their life and times are the following:

> The great majority of informers' reports were true. (pp. 18, 67)
>
> Everybody was at risk; everybody had to join in the denouncing and informing in order to survive; and everybody did do so. (pp. 65, 69, 107, 153)
>
> Those arrested felt guilty, not indignant; those who voted to punish others believed they were acting justly; there were at that time none of the conditions for proper courts and judgements. (pp. 17, 82–84).
>
> Terror was necessary to stir people up to do something; nowadays in the USSR, in the absence of terror, there is no drive (*pod"em*); it was the only way in which the society created by the revolution could survive and develop; without Stalinism, no dams, factories, space flights, and no victory over Nazi Germany would have been created. (pp. 9, 107, 159)

Each of these defences is put forward vehemently, and most of them by two or more of the voices in the book. In general, the voices harmonise. Official, Stalinist, Humanist and narrator tell different anecdotes about different sorts of experience of the Stalin era, but their views do not conflict. Yet they also provide statements which undermine their own defences. Official, two pages after asserting that the great majority of denunciations were truthful, also says (p. 69): 'In addition, every conceivable denunciation was levelled at everybody: espionage, sabotage, attempts at assassination, anti-Soviet agitation, attempting to form an anti-Party group'. The second statement is what reasonable people, including survivors, long ago concluded from the evidence. The assertion that nearly all denunciations were truthful carries a certain intellectual excitement because of its novelty; it is also untrue, and is unobtrusively cancelled by the implication of something said later—a typical Zinoviev trick.

The defence that everybody had to connive in order to survive is hard for any outsider to discuss. One can at least say, however, that this defence of the behaviour of individuals is not a defence of the social order in which they lived. The Stalin era cannot be defended against Roy Medvedev's or Solzhenitsyn's condemnations of it by the claim that it was impossible to survive it with honour. That is why it is condemned.

In fact Zinoviev's narrator, or one of his early drinking partners (their voices are merged in this section), points out another weakness in this defence when

one of them says (p. 34) that ordinary 'simple' people did not fear the organs of state security; it was the intelligentsia and the official strata who were at risk. The difference was in fact—in the worst periods—only one of degree, but many witnesses from the 1930s refer to the possibility of an intellectual escaping arrest by abandoning a white-collar, big-city career and seeking refuge in the anonymous mass of the population. Nadezhda Mandelshtam, in *Hope against Hope,* recalls her surprise when she found that the regime was freely criticised inside a worker household—a risk that nobody in the Moscow intelligentsia would take. Evgeniya Ginzburg *(Into the Whirlwind)* was advised by relatives to escape arrest by becoming a vagrant. Zinoviev himself tells us that he did just that when he escaped from arrest in 1939; he survived until the war gave him a chance to re-enter official society without being punished. His official says that only nonentities never informed. (p. 65) In other words, any young intellectual who could bear to take the opportunity of becoming a nonentity might be able to avoid informing.

Official also says something else, however, which in effect re-establishes the conventional, heroic view of anti-Stalinism that Zinoviev finds so irritating: 'Of course there are rare occasions when an individual refuses to cooperate. But in such cases the individual is accorded great trust and allowed to refuse, or at least to consider himself as having refused'. (p. 65) The idea that refusals, however rare, were always safe, is peculiar. The first sentence just quoted nonetheless contradicts the flat assertion by the same speaker which immediately precedes it: 'Ask any staff member of the Organs and they will say the same thing: all individuals of the slightest significance whatever, when invited to cooperate with the Organs, gave their consent voluntarily'.

Zinoviev often makes categorical generalizations of this sort in his own voice (in interviews and in *Kommunizm kak real'nost'*). They appear to admit of no exceptions, but exceptions are then usually allowed for later on (sometimes hundreds of pages later on). He has a defence of his generalizations which goes as follows: scientific laws are statements of general tendencies; they hold strictly only under certain narrowly prescribed conditions (eg. the rate of acceleration of falling objects conforms exactly to the standard formula of 32 feet per second per second only in a vacuum). If some observations appear to contradict a general law, this is only because other influences are intruding, and the narrowly prescribed conditions for exact fulfilment of the general law are not present. It is therefore merely naive and pettifogging to draw attention to exceptions to his general propositions.

This is all very well for falling objects, but it is no way to dispose of heroes. If there were people who refused to inform in the 1930s, then Solzhenitsyn's prescription that others should do likewise is not—as Zinoviev often implies—merely sentimental. Solzhenitsyn is not, in this instance, being 'unscientific' while Zinoviev is being 'scientific'.

In happier days, when he was still writing from inside the Soviet Union, Zinoviev allowed one of the characters in his *Yawning Heights* to envisage a change from the normal, amoral behaviour of Ibanskian (Soviet) society. This would happen if the sum of the moral actions of individuals could reach a certain

critical mass which would show the whole society that more generally moral behaviour could confer social benefits.[6] That was an argument about the possible long-run effectiveness for society as a whole of calling for individuals to behave as Solzhenitsyn prescribes. The tiny glimmers of light which Zinoviev allows into *Yawning Heights* are blacked out more or less completely in his later works. In *Nashei yunosti polet* his characters insist that under Stalin everybody took part in the repressions. This is amended to virtually everyone of 'significance'; the exceptions are made to seem trivial (which perhaps, in their influence on events, they were) and in some obscure way illusory (the recalcitrant individual was allowed 'at least to consider himself as having refused'). Zinoviev's characters are admitting the possibility of heroic resistance, however futile; but they are doing so as grudgingly as possible.

The assertion that people arrested under Stalin felt guilty, not indignant, is made by the narrator and by Stalinist. It sounds at first like the psychology of the purged revolutionary in Koestler's *Darkness at Noon,* but Zinoviev is in fact imputing to arrested Soviet citizens thoughts that are both cruder and less intellectually neat than those suggested by Koestler. One explanation he is putting forward is that the society was not yet 'up to' the level of comfort and orderliness at which concepts of rights and due legal process are understood at all; authority was simply expected to be arbitrary.

It is often said—by Russian intellectuals as well as Westerners—that uneducated or poorly educated Russians have little or no sense of any personal, civil rights in the face of state authority. Some historians of Russia would dispute this, but it is at all events a widely held view, and it seems to be all that the narrator and Stalinist are claiming. But Zinoviev displays his gift for making a commonplace view seem strange and momentous. The narrator says: 'Rehabilitation! Some little word they dreamed up. It is not one of our little words, not Russian. For us, if a man was convicted, that means he was guilty. . . . Kulak, for example, considered he had got into trouble for good reason: he should not have shown the letter to anyone. His fault (*vina*) was that of declaring publicly a well known secret about the state of affairs in the collective farms'. (p. 83) And the narrator goes on to say that in Stalin's time even a person convicted of being a Japanese spy, who did not know where Japan was and had never set eyes on a Japanese, did not feel innocent. (p. 83)

There is some sleight of hand in this. The guilt or sense of being at fault that is referred to turns out later to be nothing to do with any profound moral sense of wrong-doing. People who had been arrested simply felt like kicking themselves for not being more careful: 'Kulak reckoned that the cause of his misfortune was his own stupidity'. (p. 84) Stalinist observes that nobody bothered to consider, when an acquaintance was arrested, the possible justice or injustice of the charge. 'It was simply, "They got him".' (p. 108) This is vivid and convincing, but not new. Zinoviev believes that he is telling the world about the mentality of human beings in general in the early stages of the social order which he half hopes and half fears will inherit the earth. I suspect he is telling us more about the historical backwardness of Russia.

What is said in *Nashei yunosti polet* about informing and being arrested is

always in the nature of a defence of the Stalin era. At the same time language is used which often implies that the individual acts of informing, denouncing, etc. are felt to be wrong. Official refers (p. 65) to the knowledge that one has been an informer as a 'fatal secret' (*rokovaya taina*). A sequence of fraternising with someone and then denouncing him is described sympathetically: there is an abrupt and convenient switch in perception of the person one is betraying: 'How did I fail to see that he was not our man?' But the section is entitled (by Zinoviev? Or do his characters also write the chapter titles?) 'The Art of Baseness'. (pp. 72–74) It appears that Zinoviev is showing the tricks of self-deception that most of us would employ if forced to choose between our own skin and somebody else's, and also noting that the behaviour involved is squalid. If so, his judgement is in the last resort the same as that of the conventional anti-Stalinists against whom he is so fierce.

The final kind of defence of Stalinism which his characters offer is the good old standard defence that it got the USSR industrialised fast and enabled it to beat Nazi Germany. Stalinist says that terror was needed to produce the drive to get things done. (p. 107) It was 'the only way to keep order in the country and ensure progress'. (p. 108) That, of course, is exactly what a character called Stalinist would say. Another character says that without the Stalin regime 'There would have been no dams, no factories, canals, records, long-distance flights, military victories, sputniks and all the rest . . .'. (p. 159) That character is called God, and He is not, presumably, intended to be a product of Stalinism. It is true that God goes on to say, '. . . but the main thing is that there would not have been that, at the expense of which critics of "the regime" could exist'. Here He appears, however, to be talking through His Delphic oracle: the meaning is optional.

It looks as though even God, in Zinoviev's version, buys the argument that Stalin industrialised the Soviet Union and made it a powerful modern state; that there was no other way it could have happened and that this was a desirable achievement. There is a huge and contentious literature for and against the second step in this argument; it is an issue which, in fact, an omniscient being capable of running all the alternative scenarios could resolve, so perhaps Zinoviev's God knows best. He will also be aware, however, that the Soviet Union is no closer to catching up with American and West European levels of prosperity and productivity now than Russia was in 1905.

For anyone trying to understand Zinoviev's vision of Stalinism it is the third element of the argument that is most intriguing: the view that the emergence of the Soviet Union as a powerful modern state amounts to progress. That is a natural view for a patriotic Soviet citizen to hold. It could be that, for Zinoviev, God is a patriotic Soviet citizen. Zinoviev himself can certainly sound like one. He was asked by Georges Nivat, in his interview for *L'Express*, if he saw any problems for the USSR in the sphere of the new information technology. He replied: 'None at all. The day she wants it, the USSR will have all the computers, the best. *We* made the hydrogen bomb. The USSR will start directly with tenth-generation computers and leave the rest of the world behind. This country will degenerate only if it takes over the entire universe (emphasis

added). This extravagant expression of the author's views is similar, in its tone of belonging irremediably to the USSR, to the sort of things his characters say in *Nashei yunosti polet.* The characters offer a defence of the Stalin era which rests in part on loyalty to the Soviet Union: the country became a great power under Stalin, so Stalin cannot have been all bad. Among Zinoviev's own mixed and complicated feelings about the USSR there is also, it seems, a natural sense of loyalty: not at all to the party or the leadership, and not exactly to the people, but to the society in which he grew up. He ridicules it, tries to analyse it, presents it as a threat to civilization, and takes pride in its achievements.

The Interpretation of the Rise and Fall of Stalinism

Whether *Nashei yunosti polet* conveys something new and important about the Stalin era is another matter. It is unique in Soviet truth-telling literature in offering an apologia for those who survived Stalinism outside the camps, including those who took an active part in repressing others. Novels, stories and memoirs about the victims of Stalinist terror, by Evgeniya Ginzburg, Nadezhda Mandelshtam, Victor Serge, Varlam Shalamov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn make a more powerful impression. Perhaps the most striking element in Zinoviev's vision of the era is his account of why it ended—which underlies his frequent and usually unexplained assertions that Stalinism cannot return; that it is the youth of Soviet society and has been outgrown.

This rests on his definition of the Stalin era as a time of genuine 'people's power' (*narodovlastie*). The term is deployed with Zinoviev's usual flair for mystification, and supported by some more or less contentious propositions. The new regime had real enemies, and the people came voluntarily to its aid by reporting those who spoke against it. (p. 18) Stalinist people's power provided a control on a corrupt and inadequately staffed bureaucratic machine. (p. 33) The broad masses of simple people did not fear the organs of state security. (p. 34) Arrests, oppression and physical hardship did not lead to protests against the new social order; it may not have been loved, but it was accepted as part of the order of things. (p. 84) Stalinist claims that 'the voluntarism of leaders of the Stalin period was only a personification of the people's will'. (p. 123)

When Stalinist finally says what he means by people's power, however, (p. 125) the effect is one which is common in Zinoviev's writings: an idea which had appeared novel and paradoxical in several oblique, resonant and unexplained remarks, is reduced—if that is the word—to something sensible and not particularly unorthodox when it is actually explained. People's power is a state of affairs, it turns out, in which (a) a great many people rise from the bottom of society to positions of authority, even if few of them stay there for long, and (b) these new leaders (regional party secretaries, factory directors, senior army officers and the like) deal directly and in familiar language with ordinary people; there is a minimum of formal, general rules and a great deal of arbitrary, personal action. This corresponds to what Zinoviev has said in *Kommunizm kak real'nost'* about mass activism:[7] that in practice it can only mean that each 'collective' is dominated by its little group of activists, who get on to all the

committees, compile dossiers on everybody else and in general have a lovely time throwing their weight about. This view—which is sensible—is of a piece with Zinoviev's more general conception, in *Kommunizm kak real'nost'*, of communist society as something natural, and of the rules and procedures of civilised society as something which is artificial: achieved and maintained only with difficulty. In *Nashei yunosti polet* Zinoviev (or Stalinist) explains that Stalinism ended when it was realised how horrible people's power was, and authority was gradually transferred to a more rule-governed central party–state bureaucracy. (p. 127) This began to happen, Stalinist says, before the death of Stalin.

This perception about Stalinism and its transformation into something else is an intuitive and general observation for which orthodox scholarship can provide support. A recent study of the administration of criminal justice in the USSR finds that local political authorities interfered extensively and with impunity in the work of the courts in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but that central control and some procedural regularity began to be imposed in the late 1930s and the procuracy and judiciary were professionalised in the late 1940s.[8]

To say, as Stalinist does, that people's power was done away with when its horrors were realised, is a grotesque simplification. Between them, however, the book's characters offer some elements of a more serious explanation. As new, more educated cadres entered the party-state apparatus, they tended to come into conflict with the sergeant major-cum-activist types who embodied people's power. The new breed of specialists and officials sneered both at the Stalinist bosses and at the broad masses of the people. They despised the little groups of activists of the traditional kind and broke up their campaigns. Stalinists began to fail to get themselves elected to the lowest level of party and Komsomol posts. (p. 129) This was a development which gathered force before Stalin died, and which entailed a gradual accretion of power by the central apparatus at the expense of the local *mafiosi* with whom Stalinist (presumably) identifies himself.

These changes fitted in with requirements of the top leadership. The narrator characterises the Soviet regime in its early days as weak and ill-educated, understanding nothing and having 'no confidence in anything'. (p. 18) If it did not need informers and terror, it thought it did. Stalinist reflects that Stalinism will not return because today's leaders are secure and comfortable. (p. 130)

The changes also fitted in with changes in ordinary people's perceptions of what they could claim. The narrator says: 'When even the guilty began to feel that they had been treated unjustly, that meant that the epoch of Stalin had ended'. (p. 83) The notion that Soviet people had become more conscious of their rights is echoed in the so-called 'Novosibirsk report' of 1983, a Soviet paper on political and social aspects of economic reform which was apparently not intended for publication but was passed to the *Washington Post* correspondent in Moscow.[9] One of the reasons given in that paper for regarding the highly centralised economic system as no longer appropriate to present-day Soviet society is the higher educational level of Soviet people now than in the 1930s, and the associated increase in their 'rights consciousness' (*pravosoznanie*).

These speculations about the evolution of Stalinism seem to me to be the most striking ideas in *Nashei yunosti polet.* Conventional scholarship could probably do a good deal towards either supporting or refuting them; though it is hard to imagine any cooperation between Zinoviev and Western specialists. Zinoviev is not impressed by or interested in scholarly studies of Soviet society. His narrator asserts (p. 11) that understanding an epoch like that of Stalin does not mean going through its numerous events and identifying causal connections between them. 'It means understanding the essence of the new social organism that grew up in this period.' The use of words like 'essence' causes modern social scientists to classify him as a prophet, and therefore *not serious.* Yet he has things to say about Soviet society which are neither mere word spinning nor re-hashes of ideas that are already familiar. Whatever the best pigeon hole may be for books like *Nashei yunosti polet,* they are not of purely literary interest alone.

Zinoviev's Method and Style

On the other hand, any insight that Zinoviev provides into Soviet society and Soviet history is not achieved by the cool, ruthlessly dispassionate, 'scientific' analysis which he claims so insistently to be undertaking. (Literature, he has said, is something he has been driven to by his isolation. He would prefer science—meaning a science of communist society—but science has to be a collective enterprise.[10] This statement strikes me as the purest romance.) Zinoviev's insights are provided through violent and extreme assertions, modified by inconspicuous qualifications inserted elsewhere in his text—sometimes at a great remove from the original assertion. This is not mere inconsistency, for time and again an apparent conflict between two statements is resolved by a third, which provides a sense in which the earlier statements prove to be less contradictory, or less outrageous, than they seemed at first. This is no way to write a textbook, or to make friends with those who do. It lends itself to the form which Zinoviev often uses, in which conversations—or rather, lengthy monologues by different characters—predominate.

In particular, the use of different voices makes it possible for Zinoviev's books to accommodate the violent conflict between love and hatred of the Soviet Union which the author himself feels. This is done by making some of the voices for and some against. They all tend to express the same conflicting emotions, and they are mostly indistinguishable from one another.[11] The device of having voices or characters frees the author from the boring need to moderate, qualify and otherwise remove the resonance from his writings.

His preference for resonant effects over getting his message across strikes me as a preference for literature over 'science'. When the fictional voices are ebullient, and full of jokes and anecdotes and fantasies, as they are in *Yawning Heights,* the effect is exhilarating. When they are more subdued, and harp on a single theme, as in *Homo Sovieticus* or *Nashei yunosti polet,* the effect is not at all exhilarating. It is more like the effect of Samuel Beckett's later writings, except that—to a Westerner—Zinoviev is not writing about ultimate things but about something to do with the foreign news pages of our papers.

Zinoviev believes that Soviet society is of fundamental importance to everyone because it is liable to spread until it covers the earth. He also believes that the West completely fails to understand that society: 'As for the hundreds of Western Sovietologists, they are operating with totally inadequate concepts: democracy, party, totalitarianism, peasantry, etc. These have to be thrown in the dustbin if you want to understand something'.[12] Personally, I am not disposed to share either of these beliefs, though I think he has a great deal to say about Soviet society that people in the West should listen to. The assertion that I find even less plausible than either of these, however, is Zinoviev's insistence that he is not the product of a Russian tradition. The belief in a Russian destiny, and in the total incomprehension of 'the West' about Russia are nearly compulsory elements in that tradition. With Zinoviev, one has only to substitute 'Russia' for 'Soviet Union' in his writings to see his affinity with earlier Russian intellectuals.

Nashei yunosti polet also follows a traditional tendency of the Russian intelligentsia in exile: as the length of time in exile increases, so does nostalgia for the homeland, and so does distaste for the narrow, bourgeois character of Western civilization.

E. H. Carr described Alexander Herzen's state of mind as it was in 1857, ten years after he had left Russia: 'The Russian peasant, the Russian intelligentsia, even the Russian autocracy, were wrapped in a haze of sentimental retrospect; and there were many moments when their broad incalculable diversity seemed to him better than the narrow, crushing uniformity of Western civilization'.[13]

Zinoviev's ambiguous, illuminating account of the Stalin era combines in the most curious way an apologia for Stalinism with a condemnation of it. That is probably as near as Zinoviev can get to a haze of sentimental retrospect about the Soviet autocracy.

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[1] This he has put on record in *Nashei yunosti polet,* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1983) and in a short autobiographical sketch supplied to me in 1985. He survived, he says, because he was accidentally mislaid by the secret police: a good start in life for a designer of paradoxes. The later criticism for what was taken to be pro-Stalinism is referred to in *Nashei yunosti polet,* p. 14.

[2] In *Kommunizm kak real'nost',* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1981), p. 148. (Translated as *The Reality of Communism,* London: Gollancz, 1984).

[3] In an interview with Georges Nivat in *L'Express,* 12 April 1985.

[4] The most notorious example of Stalinist apologetics ascribed to him is an interview with George Urban in *Encounter* in April and May of 1984 under the title 'Portrait of a Dissenter as a Soviet Man'. Zinoviev repudiates this text, which is apparently based on an interview conducted in English, and which he did not have a chance to vet (see the interview with Georges Nivat, just cited).

[5] Interview with Georges Nivat. The published text is in French, but the interview was probably conducted in Russian. If so, the Russian word translated as 'scientifique' (*nauchnyi*) could have been translated into English as 'scholarly'.

[6] Chatterer, on p. 800 of the Penguin edition. Shortly afterwards he commits suicide. *Yawning heights (Ziyayushchie vysoty)* was written in Moscow in 1974, published in Lausanne in Russian by L'Age d'Homme in 1976, and in English by Bodley Head in 1979.

[7] pp. 147–8.

[8] Peter H. Solomon, Jr, 'Local Political Power and Soviet Criminal Justice, 1922–41', *Soviet Studies*, XXXVII No. 3 (July 1985), pp. 305–30.

[9] The text is published in *Survey*, Winter 1984. The author was Academician Tatyana Zaslavskaya. She seems to continue in good political health.

[10] *L'Express*, 12 April 1985 (interview with Georges Nivat). 'Si je suis devenu écrivain, c'est que j'étais seul et qu'en science on ne peut [pas] être seul. Mon passage à la littérature, en un sens, est ma capitulation scientifique.'

[11] This is not true of the identifiably different characters in *The Radiant Future*, which is almost a conventional novel. And in *The Reality of Communism*. Zinoviev sticks to his own voice and produces quirky but unmixed social theorising.

[12] *L'Express*, 12 April 1985.

[13] E. H. Carr, *The Romantic Exiles*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968) (first published 1933), p. 184.