CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES IN SOVIET LITERATURE
(1964-1982)

i) Russian Writers’ Commitment Towards Ideological Issues And Their Attitude Towards Social Problems

(A) Boris Pasternak

Born in 1890 of a painter father and a musician mother, Boris Pasternak belongs to the tall generation of Block, Essenin, Mayakovsky, Zamayatin, Pil’nyak and Babel. His first two volumes of poems were published in 1917 and 1922, establishing him as one of the major poets of his age. He enjoyed great prestige as a poet in the twenties. But the establishment of the totalitarian state under Stalin completely altered the situation. In April 1954, the magazine “Znamya” published ten magnificent poems, and announced as forming part of the novel in Prose “Dr. Zhivago”. But due to heavy censorship, publication of the novel was not possible in the Soviet Union. Later in 1957, Italian publisher Feltrinelli published “Dr. Zhivago” in Milan.

“Dr. Zhivago” is a long work of some 700 pages, which tells the story of its Russian hero from the beginning of the century until about 1930, when he dies. This span of history covers the thirty decisive years
during which Russian saw such important events as the Revolution of 1905, the First World War, the Revolution of 1917, the Civil War, the famines, the N.E.P, and the consolidation of the communist dictatorship.

The Novel focuses on one of the protagonists, Dr. Zhivago, who is both the main hero and almost the narrator of the novel. Yury Zhivago, a doctor and poet, is appalled at the social chaos brought by the Revolution. So he and his family leave Moscow for a village in the Urals, where they manage to make ends meet by tilling the land. While here, Yury encounters an old sweetheart called Lara, who revives in him his love of life. She is the one who makes Yury’s tribulations worthwhile. When he finds her, she is married to a non-party revolutionary called Strelinikov. During the Civil War, Yury is kidnapped by the Reds, and has to stay with them for some years. His family returns to Moscow. Yury eventually finds Lara again and realizes to the full his love and its futility, for Lara has to escape to Eastern Siberia; and Yury goes back to Moscow. He dies of a heart-attack in a street-car, and Lara returns to Russia only to vanish into a concentration-camp. The story is not an attack on any particular political creed; it serves to show how all mass movements whether in ideas, in politics in history, in industry, in agriculture, disrupt the life of the individual. Yury can achieve very little. He ends up a broken man, haunted by the memory of a brief, perfect love, the many wasted years, his exiled family and the prospect of
his own redundancy. Between the mere causality of history and the idiocy of revolutionary and post-revolutionary politics, he has little chance. Dr. Zhivago is an account of personal experience, and the unity of vision achieved by Pasternak is not conditioned by a theoretical approach to historical data. It is the unity of personal reminiscence and of poetical perception.

Zhivago’s character develops against the background of the dissolution of Russian Society which culminated in the revolution of 1917. Although the problems of the historical destiny and of the social development of Russia were present in his mind from early youth, Zhivago never thought he could influence them directly by his actions. He did not see contact with those who believed they could do so, and it is clear from his casual encounters with them that his attitude towards their belief was, at the best, pity for ignorant enthusiasts.

“It turns out that those who inspired the revolution are not at home in anything except change and turmoil; that is their native element; they are not happy with anything that is less than on a world scale. For them, transitional periods, worlds in the making, are an end in themselves. They are not trained for anything else, they do not know about anything except that. And do you know why there is this incessant whirl of never ending preparations? It is because they have not any real capacities, they are ungifted. Man is born to live, not to prepare for life. Life itself - the gift of life - is such a breathtakingly serious thing.”

This does not mean that he was indifferent to the Revolution. It affected him most profoundly and his attitude towards political events is stated in the novel with extreme clarity. Zhivago philosophies about the political conditions in Russia in the high summer of 1917. That was the scene with Lara, long before their relationship had developed in a liaison. He sees that old Mother Russia is on the move. she cannot stop walking; she talks and cannot stop talking; the speakers who are speaking in a public meeting are not only the people around but the stars and trees have come together and are holding discussion; the flowers of the night are philosophising, stone buildings are taking part in public meetings. Lara agrees with Yury and says that she understands the trees and the stars who take part in meeting. She knows what he means to convey to her. His attitude towards the social and revolutionary turmoil establishes the first intimate link between Zhivago and Lara, which then develops into the great love story of their lives.

Personalist and Marxist concepts of history are in continued conflict throughout the novel. Confronted with the Revolution, Zhivago first admires its freshness, the ruthlessness with which the old world has been destroyed, and he sees it as a product of the creative spirit:

The revolution broke out willy-nilly, like a breath that has been held too long. Everyone was revived, reborn, changed, transformed. You might say that everyone has been through two revolutions - his own personal revolution as well as the general one. It seems to me that socialism is the sea, and all these separate streams, these private,
individual revolutions are flowing into it - the sea of life, of life in its own right. I said life, but I mean life as you see it in a work of art, transformed by genius, creativity enriched. Only now people have decided to experience it not in books and pictures but in themselves, not in theory but in practice.²

The greatness of the revolutionary events and Zhivago’s enthusiasm about them does not mean, however, that he approved of any of the intentions of the Revolution. For him Revolution falls, by its own dynamic, into the hands of the hard men, who are incapable of experiencing real creativity through their own private revolutions, but merely abuse the public revolution to clear the way for their own assumption of power. Among them are even some fine people, like Pasha Antipov (he is also called Sterl’nikov). Zhivago is, more concerned about the old and new orders in Russia. The old one though, he feels, unjust and repressive, it made possible some civilised, even humane, conduct; and the new order which induces intolerance and savagery. We come to know his attitude towards the Revolution through his references to the first decrees of the Bolshevik government and the New Economic Policy; description of the workers’ rising in Moscow at the end of the 1905, of the fighting in the Carpathians during the second autumn of the First World War, and of charred villages and untended fields after the civil war had passed over them.

² Ibid., p.148.
Pasha Antipov who loves Lara, goes into war and then revolution in order to avenge her sufferings and to make the world a more worthy place for her and their little daughter to live in, Zhivago expresses his feelings about him:

He had an unusual power of clear and logical reasoning, and he was endowed with great moral purity and sense of justice: he was ardent and honourable.

But to the task of a scientist breaking new ground, his mind would have failed to bring an intuition for the incalculable: the capacity for those unexpected discoveries which shatter the barren harmony of empty foresight.

And in order to do good to others he would have needed, besides the principles which filled his mind, an unprincipled heart - the kind of heart that knows of no general cases, but only a particular ones, and has the greatness of small, but only of particular ones, and has the greatness of small actions.3

The main opposition is that between Yury himself and those who have surrendered to the ethos of the New System - Pasha Antipov, Liberius the Partisan leader, and the 're-educated' Duborov and Gordon, though later they become the disciples of Zhivago after his death. Lara, on the other hand, blames the World War for having destroyed the authority of individual conscience “It was then that falsehood came to the Russian land. The chief disaster, root of the future evil, was loss of faith in the value of one’s own opinion... There began to grow the dominion of the phrase, at first monarchial, then revolutionary.4

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3 Ibid., p.256-257.
Zhivago, in a conversation with his father-in-law Gromeko, asks him whether they would claim any part of the property from their relatives in case of a counter-revolutionary coup. Gromeko explains to Zhivago that he is not going to claim any rights in the property. “The history of private property in Russia”, says old Gromeko, “has come to an end”.

This is the style in which Pasternak speaks of political reality affecting the private lives of his heroes. What concerns Pasternak is: What should a man like his hero do when faced with such changes, in order to preserve his moral integrity and to survive without breaking up his personal identity?

“I am here so as to try to understand the terrible beauty of the World and to know the names of things, and if my forces do not suffice, to generate children who will do it in my place.” Thus thinks the young woman Lara at the beginning of the novel.

History for Zhivago bears a strict affinity to ‘the life of the vegetable kingdom’. Its answers to the profound seasonal changes, which prepare themselves invisibly, like wise “the immobility to our eyes of the eternally growing, ceaselessly changing history, the life of society moving invisibly in its incessant transformations.” And “those who make revolutions are active men, one-sided fanatics, geniuses of self-limitation.\(^5\)

\(^{5}\) Ibid., p.466.
Pasternak shows the contrast between two main characters of the novel - Pasha Antipov (Strelinikov), as the central ideological theme of the novel. The contrast between the two, is that Zhivago, who possesses the qualities of heart, bearer of that tolerant, merciful attitude towards other human beings and feels that man is capable, of living having those qualities and attitudes alone. On the other hand, Pasha Antipov, in his view, life is a huge arena in which, honestly adhering to the rules, men are competing in their progress to greater perfection, and who longs for a highest and brightest ideals. Both perish in the social turmoil ruled by laws which have nothing to do either with emotions and the common sense of Zhivago or the high ideas and theories of Pasha Antipov.

Pasternak sees 'history as another universe' through the eyes of Nikolai Nikolaievich Vedeniapin - a universe build by man with the help of time and memory in answer to the challenge of death.

“What you don’t understand is that it is possible to be an atheist, it is possible not to know if God exists or why he should, and yet to believe that man does not live in a state of nature but in history, and that history as know it now began with Christ, it was founded by Him on the Gospels. Now what is history? Its beginning is that of the centuries of systematic work devoted to the solution of the enigma of death, so that death itself may eventually be over come ... the love of one’s neighbour - the supreme form of living energy. Once it fills the heart of man it has to overflow and spend itself ... the two concepts which are the main part of the make-up of modern man - without them he is inconceivable - the ideas of free personality and of life regarded as sacrifice ... It was not until after the coming of Christ that time and man could breathe freely..."
The final point of Pasternak’s vision, is the message of Christ, and Christ means to him is absolute faith in man’s innerness and freedom.

The verse and prose are interlinked in “Dr. Zhivago”, at the most tragic and triumphant moment in the narrative Pasternak lets us see Zhivago at work on his poems, some of which are mentioned by the titles actually used. Of the twenty-five pieces at least seven, which depict episodes from life of Christ in fairly traditional terms. Some half-dozen of poems have a recognisably urban setting, but an equal number belong to the country, taking their scenes from farm, ‘dacha’ and forest. They portray the semi-rural character of the Russian cities. Moscow, St. Petersburg also find their places in the poems. We read of trees and fences of a white summer night seen from a Petersburg window, of a half-crazed woman chewing snow on the doorstep and a needle that pricks a finger.

It is not necessary to know the novel in other to get at the heart of the poems. The poems are autonomous; there is nothing else they could need. It seems that the origin of most of the poems lie not so much in particular passages of the novel, but in the length and breadth of the imaginative experience that went into its making.

Through “Dr Zhivago”, Pasternark makes the official Soviet regime responsible for destroying the position of moral superiority of the political “activists.” He emphasizes more on the individual’s freedom, his feelings,
his right to love nature and his argument is not based on any theoretical view, but on a direct poetical vision of Soviet Society.

(B) Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The most prominent writer of the Brezhnev era is Solzhenitsyn (1918-), who used his own experience of the underside of Stalinist Society, acquired from eight year’s imprisonment under Stalin. Solzhenitsyn’s literary career began in 1962 with the Khrushchev sanctioned “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich” (“Odin den Ivana Denisovicha”, 1962), which was first published in the Soviet literary journal “New World” (Novy Mir, 1962), Solzhenitsyn became an Export only author after it had proved impossible to publish certain other works, notably the long novels “Cancer Ward” (Rakovy Korpus, first published, 1968) and “The First Circle” (V Kruge Pervom, first published, 1968), in his native land. At the end of the 1973, Solzhenitsyn further released for publication in Paris the first part of “The Gulag Archipelago” (Archipelag Gulag), a vast study of the Soviet prison and penal system, written between 1958 and 1967.

“One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich” is a short novel (‘Povest’) first published in the Soviet literary Journal “Novy Mir” in 1962, and its events take place within a single day in January 1951 in a Siberian concentration camp, where the 104th squad of Zeks (prisoners) builds a
wall. The story is told through a narrator, Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, now prisoner S 854, a Russian peasant carpenter who is serving the eighth year of his sentence in this “special” penal colony, and through him we are introduced to a cross section of Soviet Society, individuals representing almost every class and profession and many of the ethnic groups in the Soviet Union: police, military, peasant, worker, intellectual, Russian, Estonian, Latvian, Ukrainian, gypsy. The microcosm of this Siberian penal colony reflects the macrocosm of that greater penal colony, Russia. Among the inmates is Tiurin, a Kulak’s (rich peasant’s) son, who has spent more than twenty years in the camps; Buinovsky a former naval captain and confirmed communist; Tsezer, an erstwhile film producer and intellectual, Alyosha, a Baptist convicted for his religious beliefs; Volkovoi, a lieutenant in the security police and Veteran Chekist; Fetiukov, a former government bureaucrat now reduced to the status of prisoner-Jackal. All of them have been stripped of liberty, dignity, and elementary human rights. The story gives a credible account of life reduced to an animal level where “It was every man for himself” and everybody has his own little racket and expects his “own little cut.” The very existence of the camp and the level of life of the inmates, is a tragic irony in a land supposedly motivated by socialist ideals.
The prisoners of the camps are forced to work in winter, for ten to eleven hours in open; in summer longer. Winds blow constantly over the naked steppe, intensifying both heat and cold beyond the limits of tolerance. The unaccustomed effort of digging and bricklaying at raw construction sites demands energy unreplenished by the rations, principally heavy bread, thin porridge, and soups of vegetables or fish. While work drain the prisoners' strength, hunger and exposure threaten their health. The inmates' thick cotton jackets provide scant protection against the fierce cold and inadequate relief from the dizzying heat. The thin-walled wooden barracks are of no use, the prisoners are almost permanently chilled in winter and sweltering in summer.

The narrator dwells on every circumstance of the day: arranging the bedding so as to sleep warmly, covering draughty window embrasures with roofing felt, laying breeze blocks on a frosty day when the mortar freezes as soon as applied.

Ivan Denisovich Sukhov’s day opens at five in the morning to the sound of the harsh blows of a hammer on a length of rail. Awakened, he feels sick, and is concerned that his squad may be sent that day to a new site to build a settlement on the bare icy steppe, where for a whole month there will be no place to get warm and where, as a consequence, many of the prisoners will die. The job of the squad leader, Tiurin is “to elbow some
other squad, some bunch of suckers, into the assignment instead of the 104th,” but for Tiurin to do that successfully, “he would have to take a pound of salt pork to the senior official there (at the assignment centre), if not a couple of pounds.”

In opening the novel that way, Solzenitsyn conveys the message that, corruption is endemic in the camps, which represents the corruption of Soviet Society at large, and, more, may be part and parcel of man’s nature and institutions. The greased palm is the order of the day, because everyone wants some advantage or special privilege; hence bribery, blackmail, and back-scratching are rife: every service has a price, and almost every individual as well. Tiurin, for instance, uses salt pork to bribe the official who assigns prisoners work and so keeps his squad from being sent to the “Socialist Way of Life” settlement at the new site; but some other “poorer and stupider” squad must go in its place, and its men will die on the unsheltered snow-covered steppe.

The fat content of the gruel, the state of the fish-bones in the watery soup are a matter of life and death. The warders are poorly paid and conduct a black market trade in grain, by stealing from the unfortunate

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prisoners' daily ration. Every squad is cheated its bread ration at the central supply depot:

Shukhov took a look at his ration, weighing it in his hand and hastily calculating whether it reached the regulation sixteen ounces... There was short weight in every ration. The only point was how short.  

Social relationship is very vital to all the prisoners. The distinctions and conflicts between the “we” and “they” are most clearly demonstrated in the relations between the prisoners on the one side and the camp authorities and guards on the other. The key to social existence is the brigade, that is the prisoners, which is both a blessing and a curse. The authorities invented the brigade for their own purpose:

In the camps they had these brigades to make the prisoners keep each other on their toes. So the fellows at the top did not have to worry. It was like this - either you all got something extra or you all starved.  

Prisoners can be sentenced to solitary confinement for not removing their hats “to a guard five paces before passing him, and replace it two paces after” The camp doctor can only exempt two prisoners a day from work because of illness, and all the rest must work, sick or not. Those, who could hardly stand on their feet are not left in peace. They are forced to work, like fencing the garden, laying paths, bringing soil to the flower

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8 Ibid., p.35.
9 Ibid., p.35.
10 Ibid., p.30.
beds etc. Hierarchy and caste also continued to play their roles. For example, Vdovushkin, who was a former university student, is exempted from the physical works prisoners usually do. He gets the permission from the doctor to be his assistant. Tsezer, because he is an "intellectual" and gets two parcels a month, can bribe his way to become an assistant to the inspector.

A separate and different kind of hierarchy is formed by the "Stukachi" (squealers), because of the information they provide for the security service, which may damage anyone, from ordinary prisoners to the camp commandant himself. So they are universally regarded with caution. The complex set of unofficial hierarchies and conventions make the life of prisoners more miserable.

If the guards are cruel to the prisoners, the prisoners are even crueler to one another. "Who is the Zek's main enemy?" Shukhov asks, then answers himself: "Another Zek. If only they were not at odds with one another - ah, what a difference that would make!" ¹¹ The prisoners fight for bread, for porridge, for soup, for warmth, for an extra piece of clothing, in a war of all against all to survive.

All this is presented as a closed system, perverted, but complete and self-sufficient. Nobody expects it to change and to fight against it

¹¹ Ibid., p.119.
would be foolishness, from the part of prisoners. The man who learns its laws and conventions must simply adapt himself to them. He must find the will to survive within the existing conditions, rather than struggling for a new and better world.

Prisoners, are permitted to receive parcels “from home”, but even those zeks who do get parcels are forced into greasing palm after palm.

"The prisoner has to share with the guard and squad leader—and how can he be help giving a little something to the trusty in the parcels office? Why, next time the fellow may mislay your parcel and a week may go by before your name appears again on the list!..."12

Early in his sentence Shukhov had also received a few parcels from his wife, but then he wrote her: “Do not send them. Do not take the food out of the kid’s mouths.”13 He knows how very difficult it is for families on the outside to send prisoners such parcels, knew that his family will not be able to afford it for the ten years of his sentence.

In the few passages that reflect life outside the camp, the work contains clear hints about what has destroyed Russia’s peasant culture. The state-sponsored break-up of farms and families has led to a steady decline in the rural economy and culture, to such an extent that Shukhov, who left it all ten years ago for war and then captivity, can no longer understand letters from home:

12 Ibid., p.143.
13 Ibid., p.125.
The things Shukhov did not get at all was what his wife wrote about how not a single new member had come to the Kolkhoz since the war. All the youngsters were getting out as best they could - to factories in the towns or to the peat fields. Half the Kolkhozniks had not come back after the war, and those who had would not have anything to do with the Kolkhoz - they lived there but earned their money some where outside... The real work in the Kolkhoz was done by the same women who had been there since the start, in 1930.14

The basic corruption of Soviet society is reflected in the injustices inflicted on the prisoners, in the reasons and the way they were sentenced, indiscriminately to ten or twenty-five years. The stories of the prisoners tell us of the thousands of returning prisoners of war who, far from being welcomed in the motherland, were rounded up and sent to labour camps. Among the prisoners, Tiurin has spent nineteen years in the camps because he concealed the fact that his father was a Kulak. The former naval commander Buinovsky has been condemned to twenty-five years for spying for Britain, because he had served as a liaison officer on a British Cruiser and as a token of gratitude the British admiral had after the war sent him a gift, a Souvenir.15 Shukhov was in jail for high treason.

He had testified to it himself. yes, he’d surrendered to the German with the intention of betraying his country and he’d returned from captivity to carry out a mission for German intelligence. What sort of mission neither Shukhov nor the interrogator could say. So it had been left at that - a mission.

Shukhov had figured it all out. If he did not sign he would be shot. If he signed he would still get a chance to live. So he signed.\textsuperscript{18}

The meek Christian Alyosha, sentenced to twenty-five years for Christ’s sake, is the only truly happy man in the camp. The Baptist’s Christian faith gives Alyosha the strength and purpose to continue. He tries to persuade Ivan Denisovich Shukhov to let his soul pray, Shukhov insists: “prayers are like those appeals of ours. Either they do not get through or they’re returned with ‘rejected’ scrawled across them.” Yet Shukhov himself believes in god and does pray, when the day is over, thankfully: “Glory be to the Thee, O Lord. Another day over. Thank you I am not spending tonight in the cells. Here it is still bearable.”\textsuperscript{17} He likes and respect Alyosha.

Buinovsky’s Communist idealism and Tsezar’s commitment to art - the art of cinema - help them to survive the rigors of camp life. Shukhov respects and admires Buinovsky for his scientific knowledge and for his communist ideals, though he himself believes in neither. His eight years of experience in the camps have taught him that it is “better to growl and submit. If you were stubborn they broke you.”\textsuperscript{18}

Work and religion give solace to Shukhov and the other prisoners, beyond the meager comforts of food and rest and warmth that the

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.71.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p.154.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.57.
authorities provide. Ivan Denisovich reflects “Real jail, was when you were kept back from work.” Once Shukhov’s instinct of workmanship takes hold, he is able to forget the discomforts of cold and damp and hunger.

In “One day of the Life of Ivan Denisovich”, the high point of Ivan’s Day; is the exquisite pleasure, he gets building a wall straight and true and not wasting any mortar. It is the triumph over political impositions with the routine exercise of his human capacities. When Shukhov goes to sleep, after the day’s work, he develops his modest definition of prison happiness:

(He) went to sleep fully content. He’d had many strokes of luck that day: they had not put him in solitary, they had not sent his squad to the settlement; he’d swiped a bowl of Kasha at dinner; he’d built a wall and been happy doing it; he’d smuggled that bit of metal through... And he had not fallen ill. He’d got over it. A day without a dark cloud. Almost a happy day.

Solzhenitsyn’s “One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich” did indeed expose the hollow pretensions of official Stalinist fiction; on the other hand, it also reaffirmed certain principles which official socialist realism had distorted; genuine “narodnost”, concerns with human values, meticulous and honest reporting of the everyday life of ordinary people. “Ivan Denisovich” was a protest against the organized barbarity of a state apparatus which could produce horror of the Soviet prison camps. In

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p.21.
rendering Ivan Denisovich’s day and the day of his fellow prisoners, Solzhenitsyn pictures the Stalinist-induced upheavals inflicted on the people: the collectivization of the countryside and the accompanying mass murder of Kulaks in the early 1930s, the great purges of the Party, the revived Stalinism at the end of the war and during the postwar period, with its imprisonment of former Russian prisoners of war and so on.

Solzhenitsyn considered it his responsibility to speak as the moral conscience of the nation, recreating the whole truth, as he understood it, regarding Soviet Society, all the while cherishing Russian’s ancient mystical and religious reality and its continuity.

(C) Vladimir Tendryakov

Vladimir Tendryakov (born 1923), whose work began appearing during the so-called thaw and attracted the attention of critics in the Soviet Union and outside. He is principally concerned with the problem of moral choices, but in some of his novels he deals also, with philosophical and religious questions. His works mostly deal with the life in the remote countryside and in the ‘Kolkhozes’ and he treats problems of personal morality, giving much attention to individual differences of character and personality. Some of his published works are ‘The Fall of Ivan Chuprov’ (Padenie Ivana Chuprova, 1953), ‘Three, Seven, Ace (Troika, Semerka, tuz, 1960), ‘The Short Circuit’ (Korotkoe Zamykanie, 1962), ‘The Death of

The theme of ‘On Apostolic Business’ is the failure of materialist philosophies to satisfy man’s inner aspirations and the need to recognise this. The central character of the novel is Yury Ryl’nikov, a scientist in his mid-thirties, successful in his career working for a popular scientific journal, living in a well-appointed Moscow flat, and happily married with a small daughter. Yet gradually Yury Ryl’nikov, seized by what he himself as narrator calls an ‘illness’, comes to find his existence meaningless and painful, and eventually leaves his family, job and flat and goes off to the countryside to seek God by joining a rural church congregation and doing manual work on a collective farm.

Yury Ryl’nikov soon after leaving his apartment discovers, that material well-being is not an end in itself or even a joy, once the immediate, novelty has worn off. “We are happier,” he confesses,

“... but we have many more worries, for now we have our own daily growing fastidiousness to service... Beware of superfluous pleasures in life, for the stronger they are, the more you are vulnerable to trivia, and little things turn into problems. Successful people are a burden above all to themselves. The ephemerality of the world is most apparent in its joys: as Ecclesiastes said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

Yury's loss of faith in the capacity of science to reveal the ultimate truth about the world is more important to his attitude to life. Preparing an article on the origins of the universe, he comes to feel that none of the various hypotheses can better claim our confidence scientifically than religions:

'... the hypothesis, according to which a mysterious god created the world out of chaos in six days. What are the merits of the hypothesis?... At least that's simple and clear, and at least one can imagine it, without any of those confusing neutrons and a anti-neutrons. Neither hypothesis is the truth, but in the last analysis they are equally valid. So in fact science has nothing over naive legend.'

He is haunted by the words of a scientist: 'Our knowledge is an island in the infinite ocean of the unknown, and the larger the island becomes, the greater grows the extent of its boundaries with the unknown.'

Tendryakov sees in Soviet Society, the building of material abundance and the pursuit of scientific knowledge, ultimately losing their ultimate justification. In a society where his hero finds his existence meaningless and painful. Yury begins to doubt whether he has a meaningful self, seeing that the only goal of his life which no one can possibly deny is death. Yury is disgusted with the generally accepted

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21 Ibid., 79.
22 Ibid., p.79.
purpose of life, like many other Soviet citizens. Yury feels: ‘My ultimate goal is the grave! In the whole boundless universe there is nothing more meaningless than me.’

Yury doubt whether any moral obligations exist, if there is no purpose outside individual physical existence:

“We are told to live for others, to sacrifice our lives for the common good. But why should I give up my one and daily life for others, unless I can be convinced that those others will live meaningfully? Why should I sacrifice myself just so that someone else can live an aimless and superfluous life? In what way is he better than me? No, if that is how things are, then let me live out my meaningless days for my own pleasure. Live in order to live! Once I accept that, then nothing will stop me acting basely, killing, stealing, anything as long as it’s for my pleasure.”

Reflecting on the emptiness of his pleasure, the limits of his reason, and the shakiness of his morality, Yury nevertheless discovers a ground for asserting man’s dignity:

“The world is infinitely large, and ‘I’ am triflingly small, lost in space beside the Earth. ‘I’ am small, yet who else gave a measure to six billion light years of unending space? It was ‘I’, thanks to the experience of counting the years and the miles on this planet. ‘I’ am the point of departure for everything. If it were not for ‘me’, with my reason, it would be impossible to say that the world exists, ‘I’ am necessary for the very concept of existence.”

A personal tragedy makes Yury to ponder over the importance of personality for human values. Rita, a hysterical woman, who lives in the...
same apartment, appeals one day for help and sympathy after the departure of her latest ‘husband’, but Yury simply does not pay any heed to it, considering her appeal to be false. The next day Rita commits suicide. Yury stricken by remorse, reflects:

‘Every flash of reason is a flash illuminating the whole of creation’. to kill a human life is to kill a whole infinite world. How simple, it would have been to save Rita.’

Yury recognizes the value of the personal, but at the same time is tormented by the inadequacy of purely human purposes and faculties. That is the experience that leads him to feel that he needs some kind of religious belief:

“If I recognize god, that he is, that he exists, that he is the creator of the world and its rational principal, then does it really matter whether I know when the world began and when it will end? It is my business to worry about such questions? It is enough for me to believe that someone knows, someone inconceivably more important than me, someone to whom I owe my existence. Then my incapacity to answer these questions is perfectly right and proper: they are not my questions, they are not for me to answer... I do not know what His meaning consists of... but it is sufficient for me that ‘that meaning exists’, that I, as I am, am needed by someone, am not useless, ‘I am not meaningless.’

Yury thus departs for the village to fill an emptiness in himself, not because he really believes in God. He goes to find release from the duplicity of his professional and personal life through simple manual labour and the support of a community of believers. His actual experience in the

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28 Ibid., p.76.
27 Ibid., p.80.
countryside is disappointing in almost every aspect. The old poor woman, with whom Yury stays, cannot read the Bible. She treats religion as a refuge from an unhappy life. Anna, the village’s most outspoken believer, already imprisoned for her evangelical activities, is forbidding and narrow-minded. The priest is a mere youth. He is newly ordained, thirsty for serious conversation with an intelligent man, but he has retained his childish faith intact, accepts every word of the Bible, and is shocked by Yury’s critical approach to the sacred texts. Yury’s workmates simply laugh at him, while the local party secretary is suspicious of him and almost has him arrested.

Of all the villagers, only the kolkhoz chairman, Gusterin, a lonely eccentric who spends his little spare time reading history books: He sees that Yury’s formulation of faith implies the subordination of man’s faculties to a God-given purpose which men do not even comprehend. That’s why an average Kolkhoznik does not take part in the running of the collective, by showing his laziness and the habit of being dominated. He simply picks up the pay and leave the worries to the bosses. That’s the reason, in his view, young people leave the villages, in search of a fuller-life in the towns, but ironically Yury’s case is just the reverse. We might say Yury’s God reflects the whole relationship between Soviet Society and the authorities, in which the entire burden of seeking meaning and purpose is
assumed by the authorities, and with it the prerogative of deciding men’s fates.

Yury is shaken by Gusterin’s criticism as well as by the unsympathetic attitudes of the other rural believers. Besides, he receives a bitter letter from his wife, Inga, reproaching him with a lack of frankness and openness. Gusterin has already told him that, he is not really acting in a humane and adult way, but more like a deprived child. In the end he decides to return and at least try to resume his conjugal and paternal responsibilities.

Yury returns home from his self-imposed exile, with a new humanist and secular understanding of the immortality of the soul. Even, when he feels, there is no need to believe in God, he still retains the sense that men would neither love nor create if they think their lives will end with the grave.

(D) Yury Trifonov

Yuri Valentinovich Trifonov (1925-81) established himself as a writer as early as 1950, earning the lucrative Stalin prize with his novel “Students”. He was one of the few Soviet writers who tried to bypass the hurdles of literary censorship and editorial control and who endeavoured to create a literature in which the ethical foundations of contemporary Soviet man are tested. His dominant concerns became moral failure and a search
for values that would guarantee a humane life. His protagonists are mostly incapable of change, either because they lack insight or because of a moral paralysis that prevents them from acting upon their perceptions.

His works "Obmen" (Exchange, 1969), "Predvaritel'nye itogi" (Preliminary stocktaking, 1970), "Dolgoe Proshchanie" (The Long Goodbye, 1971); "Drugaia Zhizn" (Another life, 1975) and "Dom na nabерзнóй, 1976) deal with family problems, infidelity, narrow-minded egotism, the sacrifice of spiritual values for material well-being etc. Trifonov abandoned practically all the precepts of Socialist realism by refusing to suggest positive solutions and by declining to make a clear choice.

Most of his plots are simple in themselves and deal with common problems and situations, but ones which are deeply rooted in Soviet reality and experience.

Trifonov’s novella "Preliminary Stocktaking" (1970) is about the protagonist, a translator, who has given up his talent for a comfortable life, also abandons his family in the moral sense. The family life of the translator Gennady Sergeevich, Rita, his wife and their son Kirill is an offense to the ideals of either a Christian or a Socialist Society. Yet the clearest condemnation of that family life comes through Gennady, who is
himself part of it. He reproaches Rita, his wife, who spends a lot of money and time buying fashionable items and rare books.

I told her I found it profoundly repulsive. That her pseudo-religiosity was sheer hypocrisy and affectation and that the first commandment of any religion - and especially of Christianity - was love for one’s fellow men. What was she doing about it? She did not give a damn, she stayed out all hours, she proudly showed off her books. Her husband was neglected, and her son was growing up like a wild thing in the forest. 28

But Rita is indifferent to him. She is only concerned with the family’s material well-being, especially her own and their son’s. Lack of love, affection, respect, and compassion within his family increases Gennadi’s sense of insignificance. At one point, he justifies his moral position:

You can be ill or do uncongenial work all your life, but you must feel yourself to be a human being. And for that one thing is essential - an atmosphere of simple humanity. No one can cultivate that atmosphere autonomously, all on his own, it arises from others, from those who are close to one... But if a man does not feel the closeness of those around him, then, no matter how intellectually elevated he may be, no matter how ideologically well equipped, he begins to squirm and suffocate spiritually. 29

Gennady provides the necessities of life for the family, but suffer from being ignored by it. The family relationship is based on calculations and compromises but, real needs of support and love should be met as well. Gennady is deprived of both - moral support and altruistic love from his family.

29 Ibid., p.105.
The nodal point of the novella concerns an old icon which Rita has asked her housemaid, Nyura, to procure for her from an old aunt back in the village. Nyura is a key figure, she is a country girl who lost her parents and suffered permanent damage to her health in the famine of the thirties. Gennady feels no particular responsibility for her, but values her because her presence enables him to get his work done. Rita, for her part, uses her to obtain the valuable old icon from her aunt. When Nyura falls ill and asks for the icon in hospital, Rita entrusts it to Kirill, who instead of taking it to Nyura sells it on the black market. Gennady feels a certain responsibility for what his son has done, but also feels helpless to do anything about it or even to confront him directly. Rita, on the other hand, refuses to get excited about the morality of the issue, and is merely worried about which strings to pull so that Kirill will not get into serious trouble.\(^{30}\)

Nyura's illness is also a test of their humanity. When she goes into hospital, the family almost falls apart.

"We all started to go our own way, each of us sought his own room, his own affairs and secrets, his own silence. She alone had been our "home", the guardian of stove and hearth!"\(^{31}\)

The illness turns out to be a chronic form of Schizophrenia, from which there is likely to be no cure. This raises the question of whether the

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p.131.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p.124.
'guardian of their stove and hearth' is a member of the family and ought to be taken back when discharged from hospital, perhaps incapable of much work and requiring nursing. Each of them, Gennady and Rita, prefers to take no responsibility, tactfully leaving the other to take the decision.

Semblance of an orderly and contented life is destroyed by unbearable situations faced by Gennady: his wife’s and his own failure to care for the ill Nyura, Kirill’s deception and thievery and the threat of his expulsion from school etc. Retrospectively analyzing these episodes, Gennady realizes that his family provides no altruistic support and loving warmth. He feels treated with disdain, hate, and contempt, or just ignored by his closest kin. Kirill calls his translation work "rubbish"; his wife makes him an object of discussion with her friend. In addition, she openly prefers tutor Gartvig’s company to Gennadi’s, and possibly has an affair with him. Rita characterizes Gartvig as a "real man", which to her, is identical with "sub-assertion and free choice as the individual, not society, needs it.\textsuperscript{32} "One has to make up one’s mind to transgress."\textsuperscript{33} She says of Gartvig’s conduct. In Gartvig’s company, Gennadi feels like an insect: Gartvig seems to scrutinize him - like everyone else - as an "Object of Study", like "some ant or frog.\textsuperscript{34} On the other hand, Gennadi is aware that Gartvig does not

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.118.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p.118.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.117.
really value anything\textsuperscript{35}, but instead, mocks everyone and everything. He is weighed down by the fact that his wife calls him a blank (Pustoe mesto, pg. 133), but this is no impulse for self-criticism and change. He is defensive, makes excuses. He knows that he spend his life not doing what he wanted to do, "but what was expected and what allowed him to get by"\textsuperscript{36} Like a fly in a spider’s net, he is entangled in a web of interrelated demands, needs, pressures, necessities, from which he thirsts to escape.

At the age of forty-eight, feeling that like is flowing away, Gennadi contemplates his own personality, and, in order to understand what he is, analyzes the action that brought him to leave home for a remote corner of Turkmenia. In Turkmenia, Gennady works in a writers’ dacha after escaping from his family. The caretaker, gardener and janitor, Atabaly, attracts Gennadi as a man who is ‘hard working and well disposed towards people;\textsuperscript{37} always ready, in spite of his eleven children and numerous duties. His children and children-in-law have the same troubles that all families have, yet he is somehow able to rise above them and offer help and support.

Egoism (Gennadi reflects) is a deficiency of love. Our woes derive from that monotonous. But can a man who has eleven children be an egoist? It’s inconceivable! However much you might want to and

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p.114.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.105.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p.104.
no matter what your inborn personality traits, you just couldn’t be one.38

“Predvaritel’nye itogi” is written in the form of notes - reminiscences of Gennady. The reminiscences are placed into the context of his experiences in Turkmenistan. The experiences in Turkmenistan, together with his recollections of the recent Moscow past bring about several fleeting moments of self-understanding and moral illumination. It is particularly the realization that Atabaly is happy and that this happiness is connected with altruism and indifference to success and recognition that prompts Gennadi’s yearning for another life. But what he reveals about himself in his reminiscences proves that he is incapable of changing his character and his life.

Trifonov has a strong sense of history, and it deeply pessimistic about the direction in which his society is moving. He is not concerned only with the depiction of everyday life. Instead, his main attention is attracted to the “emotional experiences” of man in situations of everyday life.

The evolution of Trifonov’s artistic method and his new approach to the treatment of his heroes are the result of the changes which took place in the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin period. Post-Stalin reforms changed

38 Ibid., p.135.
the Soviet system and the essence of Soviet man very little. One of the main shortcomings of Soviet Society post-Stalin period was the shallowness of the ethical values professed by most Soviet citizens.

"Preliminary Stocktaking", is one of Trifonov’s many works, which portrays the moral state of Soviet Society, demonstrating how the social and economic environment and the individual interact in shaping a person’s moral consciousness.

(E) Vladimir Voinovich

Vladimir Voinovich was born in 1932. After army service and some years working as a carpenter, Voinovich joined Moscow Radio in 1960. These experiences were a training for a literary career in the sense that they gave him understanding of a wide variety of kinds of life and work in the Soviet Union.

Voinovich was more concerned with personal integrity and how it is, not ideally but actually, built up in the individual in the exacting and often corrupting circumstances of modern industrial and agricultural work.

His main works include “I want to be Honest” (Khochubyt’ Chestnym, 1963), “We live here” (My Zdes’ Zhivem, 1961), “Half a kilometer Away” (Rasstoyanie V Polkilometra, 1963), “Two Comrades” (Dva Tovarishcha, 1967),

"The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin"\textsuperscript{39} is a comic masterpiece. Chonkin the main character is a naive hero, a village idiot, who innocently gets everyone else at cross-purposes and in the process reveals their hidden motives, making nonsense of the Soviet System. Chonkin is small, bow-legged, red-faced, and protruding red ears. Far from being alert, intelligent, determined and disciplined, he is clumsy, stupid, easy-going. He is a kind of "anti-Socialist Realist hero." A new kind of positive hero, who is more passive, tolerant and kind, more attuned to the present than the future, pragmatic rather than idealistic, and above all ordinary. He is not a victim of inauthentic existence forced on everyone in Soviet Society by an overbearing system of authority and ideology, which is not based on essentials of human existence.

Chonkin is the ideal central character for this Satire because, though he is subject to the external coercion as much as anyone else, he does not internalize it. In fact, he does not even understand it, and in that way remains spiritually free from it. But when, at a political education session,

he stands up and asks if Stalin has had two wives, his naivety puts the political commissar to helpless silence.

Voinovich has implied, right from the beginning that his story is both reality and fantasy:

It is impossible to say definitely whether it all really did happen or not, because the incident which set the whole affair in motion... happened in a village of Krasnoe so long ago that there are practically no eyewitnesses left... I have collected everything I have heard on the subject and added a little something of my own as well, in fact may be I have even added a little more than I heard.40

The story goes like this: A plane makes a forced landing on a remote collective farm somewhere in western Russia. To stand guard over it, an army unit nearby details off Ivan Chonkin, one of those hopeless soldiers to be found in every unit who is incapable of so much as standing to attention without tripping over himself. Once he has left for his unusual sentry duty his superiors forget all about him. So Chonkin gradually sloughs off his forced identity as a soldier and resumes his natural existence as a peasant, moving in with the Plump Nyura and helping her in house and garden plot. In fact Chonkin resumes his proper existence as a peasant. His life settles into a rural, domestic and natural rhythm. Until, that is, the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) receives a tip-off, shortly after the German invasion, that there is a mysterious soldier lurking in a village for behind the front line. Then, the descriptions of

40 Ibid., p.3.
attempts of NKVD troops to apprehend Chonkin, Chonkin’s ‘extraordinary adventures’, different reactions of the Party officials are satirically portrayed by the author.

There are all kinds of echoes and overtones surround Chonkin’s personality. His very origins are mysterious: rumour has it that he may be the illegitimate son of the last Prince Golitsyn. On the other hand, his father may have been a Shepherd.’

At the beginning Chonkin is under the external compulsion of the system. He leaps up and down in the hot sunshine under sergeant Peskov’s orders because he has no choice. But he is notorious for his untidiness and inability to perform the simplest parade ground manoeuvre without tripping over himself. More than a year of army training has made not the slightest impression on him, and he is doing the duty most suited to his personality - managing the stable, where he can collect firewood, cart dung, and talk to horses who, unlike human beings, do not answer back.

Chonkin is suddenly freed from all immediate surveillance and compulsion, the moment he is been detailed off by an army unit to stand guard over the plane, which made a forced landing, on a remote collective farm. Rather quickly he sloughs off his forced existence as a soldier and resumes his natural existence as a man and a peasant:

Chonkin stopped and, resting against the plane, started to think. They had left him alone for a week with no one to relieve him. So what was he to do? According to the regulations a sentry was
forbidden to eat, drink, smoke, laugh, sing, talk or relieve himself. But could he really just stand there for a week? In the course of a week, try as you might, you could not help breaking the regulations! Having come to that conclusion, Chonkin walked back to the tailpane and broke the regulations there and then. He looked around, Nothing happened.  

He begins to sing songs, and exchanges ribald remarks with some women passing in a cart:

All this had the most pleasant effect on Chonkin. he leaned on his rifle and was overcome by thoughts of the opposite sex, such as were not at all permitted by the regulations... In the vegetable garden closest to him, Chonkin caught sight of Nyura Belashova, who, after her afternoon rest, had come out again to mound her potatoes...  

Having made this transition from regulation-bound soldier to natural man, Chonkin more or less renounces his sentry duty altogether, not from carelessness, but because there does not seem any point in elaborately guarding a plane miles from anywhere. He moves in with the plump Nyura, helps her in house and garden plot, and in fact resumes his proper existence as a peasant.

In contrast to Chonkin the other characters stand out in clear relief - Golubev, for example, the collective-farm chairman. His life is a hell of personal indecision, who is softened only by the liquor he keeps in the farm strong box. For every decision - or indecision - he can be held responsible. his colleague, Kilin, the village party organizer (Partorg), is in

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41 Ibid.. p.40.
42 Ibid., p.41-42.
the same position. Their situation is summed up in the scene at the
c beginning of part two when the news of the outbreak of war reaches the
village and all the villagers rush to the farm office to find out what has
happened. Kilin, who has been told to organize a ‘spontaneous meeting’ to
explain the military-political situation, is delighted that they have gathered
so quickly. However, when he phones district party headquarters for
further instructions about how to conduct the meeting, he is severely
reprimanded for having allowed a ‘spontaneous meeting’ to assemble
spontaneously:

‘You have unleashed anarchy, that’s what you have done!’ Borisov, from
district party headquarters, let his words fall like drops of lead.
‘Who ever heard of people assembling all by themselves, without
any direction from the leadership?’

Kilin went cold inside.

‘But listen, Sergei Nikanovich, I mean, you said yourself: “A
spontaneous meeting”...

‘Spontaneity, comrade Kilin, must he directed!’ rapped out
Borisov.’43

Borisov’s last pronouncement can stand on its own as a summary of
the doublethink that dominates the lives of all the party officials. The
following activity of Golubev, chairman of the Kolkhoz, exposes the nature
of Soviet reality:

43 Ibid., p.136,138.
Ivan Timofeevich was sitting in his office, toiling over the composition of a report concerning haymaking in the last ten-day period. Needless to say, the report was a fraud, since there had been practically no haymaking at all during the last ten-day period. The men were leaving for the front, and the women were getting them ready - what kind of harvest could you expect? The District Committee, however did not consider such reasons valid. Borisov would swear at him over the phone and demand that the plan be fulfilled. Of course he knew that at a time like this he was asking the impossible, but for him the papers reporting completed work were more important than the work itself - for his superiors were swearing at him too...44

This world of authoritarian fantasy and doublethink, makes Golubev to think that Chonkin is some kind of 'inspector-general' come to unmask all his fabrications and contrivances. For some days he goes around tense, fearful and irritable, afraid to do or say anything openly. Eventually he can stand it no longer, and decides to challenge Chonkin directly. The resulting conversation is a comedy of misunderstanding, but Golubev finishes up by losing his temper and pouring out at the bewildered Chonkin years of pent-up spleen and frustration.

Golubev and Kilin are ordinary corrupt, lazy, timid, uncomplicated human beings, who find the authoritarianism and duplicity of the system difficult to adjust to, and resort to the liquor when the strain gets too immense. Not so Revkin, the first secretary of the district party committee. His personality is entirely made up of official attitudes, and for that reason, 44 Ibid., p.127-218.
when Chonkin, captures the entire local branch of the NKVD, he feels their absence as an internal malaise:

Comrade Revkin gradually began to sense that something was missing in the world around him. This odd sensation gradually grew stinger... Having failed to come to any understanding of this condition, he lost his appetite, grew distracted, and once he even went so far as to put his long johns on over his riding breeches and was about to go to work like that, but Motya, his personal chauffeur, tactfully restrained him.45

The most extended portrait of an authority figures is that of the NKVD captain Milyaga, a personality entirely formed by the inauthenticity of power. The disintegration of Milyaga starts when he goes out to the village of Krasnoe to discover what has happened to the NKVD platoon he sent to capture Chonkin. He is taken prisoner himself and, isolated from the world in Nyura’s hut which Chonkin is using as a base, he begins to feel, for the first time in his life, unneeded, not part of any smooth, well-ordered mechanism. Almost by inertia, he contrives to escape, only to find that this makes things worse. Not knowing whether the Germans have perhaps occupied the area, not knowing whether the NKVD, has ceased to exist locally, he is plunged into an external void, where he can only reflect how comfortable it was in captivity inside the hut and how the rain is trickling down his neck. The breakdown of his personality is succeeded by a grotesque revelation of its real roots. When he is captured by a patrol

from the Red Army regiment sent to liquidate "Chonkin and his band", he is mistaken for a German paratrooper, while he himself takes his captors for members of a German occupying force.

Alongside the authority figures, stands the home-grown village scientist, Gladyshev, the man who actually betrays Chonkin to the NKVD. Drawing his erudition from a prewar run of popular scientific journals, and 'inspired by the progressive teachings of Michurin and Lysenko,' he tries by selective breeding to produce a hybrid combining the fruit of the tomato with the roots of the potato, which plant he proposes to call a 'puks' - short for "Road to Socialism" in Russian.

'So far these experiments had not produced any actual results, although certain characteristics of the "puks" had already started to appear: the leaves and stems were rather like those of potatoes and the roots were absolutely tomato-like.'

He also has an elaborate and improbable project for solving the problem of Soviet agriculture. Since, as he observes, dung is the fertilizer which starts food growing, and since all food, having been digested, returns to the state of dung, one could simplify the natural cycle and do away with the need for agriculture altogether by living on dung alone. In pursuit of this project he fills his house with pots containing different varieties of excrement in order to investigate their properties.

These fantastic experiments are paralleled by his political attitudes: Gladyshev is the only person in the village who not only accepts the

46 Ibid., p.64-65.
47 Ibid., p.Part.1, Chapter 15.
existing power system, but also accords it genuine devotion, out of belief in its progressive and scientific nature.

Voinovich deliberately allows his usually realistic world to the penetrated now and then by the fantastic. "Chonkin." He shows us perverted and inhuman fantasies enslaving a whole society; but he also indicates that the kind of fantasies which are fruitful and liberating.

One of the Gladyshev’s confident ‘scientific’ assertions is that in the course of evolution the monkey became human by hard work. Chonkin is puzzled by this statement and contends that, in that case, then the horse would appear to have a better claim to human status. After this argument Gladyshev dreams, or thinks he dreams, that the Kolkhoz workhorse has turned into a man and wants to go into town, join the party and make a career for himself. As the action of the novel develops, this horse keeps cropping up in situations which suggest it ‘did’ in fact disappear and go into the town on its own; and after the battle which concludes the novel Gladyshev comes upon its corpse:

There was a scrap of paper crumpled on the ground under the horse’s hoof. Seized by a premonition of something extraordinary, Gladyshev grabbed the piece of paper, lifted it to his eyes and froze, dumbfounded. It says: ‘If I perish, I ask to be considered a communist.’

48 Ibid., p.316.
Voinovich’s novel “The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin”, does everything that a satire should do, and very powerfully, in showing up the pretences and evils of the society it depicts. But at the same time it is remarkably good-humoured and gentle. Chonkin is not merely a satirical catalyst, but also a positive hero of a kind. Chonkin awakens the reader’s humanity, and points to the essentials of human existence surrounded by the gross and inflated inessentials of the system.

II) Non-Russian Writers’ Commitment towards Ideological Issues and their attitude towards Social Problems

(A) Chinghiz Aitmatov

One of the Soviet Union’s most successful non-Russian writers is Chinghiz Aitmatov, born in Kirghizia in 1928. Aitmatov is the most prominent representative of ethnic minorities among Soviet writers in the 1970s and 1980s. Aitmatov comes from a remote and relatively unlettered national minority and was born in a small settlement in the foothills of the Tien Shan mountains, close to a vast desert-like area called the Hungry Steppe. He is bilingual in Russian and Tartar. First he wrote in his native language and then gradually switched to Russian. An old unbroken attachment to the land of his birth appears persistently in his fiction: nostalgia for old values, resistance to urbanization, and loving attention to native myths.
Aitmatov often writes of the pain of personal and social injustice and the oppression and suffering of innocents. Author’s love and respect for simple, good people and their aspirations can be seen in his works. The greatest strength of Aitmatov comes from his observant affection for the landscape of Central Asia and its folk tradition. His dynamic descriptions of the steppes and mountains of Kirghizia and Kazakhstan, the workings of the weather and seasons, the behaviour of animals and birds, are poetically powerful. The stories, novellas, and novels are often inspired by, or at least closely integrated with, folk legends of ancient vintage.


(1) Farewell, Gul’sary!

Aitmatov’s novella “Farewell, Gul’sary” (1966) is outwardly the tale of a Kirghiz peasant and his horse, contains much implied criticism of collectivization and party methods. The social and psychological analysis is deep and author’s mastery in portraying life’s complexities grows, in the novella. Serious social upheavals are deeply felt by the main character,

Tanabai Bakasov. The Horse Gulsary, who was raised and trained by Tanabai, is closely linked with Tanabai’s lyrical way of thinking as a true Kirghiz, for his native people have bred fine horses for centuries. Tanabai’s attachment to Gulsary, the fine pacer, is an integral part of his way of living. That is why the tale of the horse runs parallel to the disclosure of Tanabai’s thoughts, aspirations, and actions. ‘Farewell, Gul’sary’ is presented to us mainly in recollections of Tanabai’s past. Tanabai walks along behind the old, dying comrade of his life, and looks back on his life, examining all that was good and bad. The time frame in the narrative extends over the length of Gulsary’s life.

Tanabai Bakasov, herdsman, is just as tireless and selfless in working for the common good, and just as categorical and uncompromising in his opinions. He fights with the same enthusiasm for those things in life which he sees as right. Tanabai’s ‘commonness’ is not just a matter of his level of consciousness but of his actual place in society, that is his job on the collective farm; he is at first in charge of the farm’s herd of horses, and later he becomes a shepherd. A man of physical labour, who achieved literacy only late in life, unlike his friend Choro, another active and enthusiastic fighter for collectivisation. Tanabai feels responsible for all that goes on around him and that is the spirit and quality
of his thought. He is not one who makes wordy speeches about responsibility, but actually feels it in his blood and bones.

Tanabai fought in the Second World War:

"He had fought in the West and in the East and was demobilized after the capitulation of Japan. In all, he had seen almost six years of active duty."\textsuperscript{50}

He returns from the war to his native village with the joyous feeling that a worldwide, historically significant victory has been won. He assumes that the hardships which existed during the war are gone forever, and now a new life would begin. People who have suffered so much have the right to a better life. But as it has turned out, the future demands hard work and new sacrifice.

Tanabai is upset by all this and by the state of affairs at the collective farm he had helped to create with his own hands. He understands how much his fellow-villagers and his friend Choro, the chairman of the collective farm, now party organizer, sacrificed to help the front. After the war:

"... the collective farm was in debt up to its ears; a hold had been put on its bank account..."\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p.212.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.213.
Tanabai feels sorry about the collective farm. There is a shortage of bread and clothes; the children do not know the taste of sugar. So, he rolls up his sleeves and gets down to work. Tanabai does not feel discouraged:

"Everything will turn out all right. The main thing is that we won the war!"\textsuperscript{52}

The hardships everyone was experiencing, in those days, depended for the most part on the mistakes and mismanagement of specific people, and in part on those who were entrusted with positions of leadership.

Aitmatov emphasizes Tanabai’s enthusiasm, honesty and devotion to the cause of socialism, the moral purity of his thoughts and actions. Tanabai is shown as a man actively resisting time’s contradictions and striving to overcome them.

Tanabai and his friend Choro, who later becomes chairman of the collective farm, and party organiser work together to liquidate Kulaks. In occasions:

"He, Tanabai, had been particularly zealous, and even gave Choro dressings-down at meetings, for being inadmissibly soft with the class enemy."\textsuperscript{53}

Tanabai has another, more solidly based point of reference to support his confidence in his rightness. He recalls:

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p.214.  
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p.214. 
\end{footnotesize}
“how they first started the collective farm, way back; how they promised the people a good live; what marvellous visions they all had. And how they fought to make them came true. Turning everything upside down, getting their spades underneath all the old rubbish. Well, they had not lived too badly either, to start with. They would have lived even better if it had not been for the accursed war.”

The post-war troubles typical of agricultural life throughout the whole country could not rob him of his confidence and courage. In spite of his advancing years, civic consciousness is as strong in Tanabai now, as it was in youth. His position of an eternal rank-and-filer does not bother him in the least—he is doing something he can do better than others can, something the collective farm needs more than anything else. But he will not keep silent on what is lacking, what is wrong. And he will speak his mind straight out, face to face, at the farm board’s meeting or in the management office.” ‘How long have people to go on working for nothing? was it like this before the war?’” ‘No, it should not be life this, comrades, something is wrong, there is a spanner or something in the works,’ he says arriving at the office from the mountain pastures. ‘I cannot believe it should be like this. Either we have forgotten how to work, or you are not leading us properly.’”

“ ‘Just think,’ he says to himself, when things are really getting him down, - ‘right through from the thirties it has been the same - first

54 Ibid., p.272-273.
up, then down, a lift and then a drop... A collective farm is no simple matter, by the look of it...”\textsuperscript{55}

In the thirties Tanabai saw the Kulak as the main enemy, now he is up in arms, with the same fury and refusal to mince his words against bureaucrats, grabbers and cowards.

In “Farewell, Gul’sary” life comes to us filtered through the consciousness of a common man, a “simple collective farmer”, but he is a “simple” man for whom his own joys and misfortunes are inseparable from the needs and concerns of the collective. A man who even in the moment of his deepest despair, does not doubt his civic consciousness and does not cease to believe in the possibility of change.

Aitmatov boldly discloses people who abuse their positions, their incompetence and loss of a sense of responsibility. Here we meet Segezbayev the district procurator, a dishonest man who thinks only of how to move up the career ladder, and the lazy livestock expert Ibraim. As a result of his mismanagement, there were heavy losses of sheep in the district. Ibraim was responsible for preparing the sheds for the spring lambing, but he did nothing. So Tanabai had to correct Ibraim’s negligence. The story reaches its climax in the scene where Tanabai and two of his assistants work day and night in terrible weather to prepare sheds for the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.280
lambing. The author compares Tanabai’s labours with the heroic exploits that occurred during the war.

“... He worked all week till he was ready to drop. He could not remember working like that before, perhaps only at the front line when they had dug trenches round-the-clock. But there, it had been a regiment, a division, or a whole army setting up fortifications. Here there was only himself, his wife and one of the woman helpers.”

Yet their superhuman efforts could not save the lambs from the cold winds - they were dying like flies. Aitmatov, focuses Tanabai’s enthusiasm and his sense of responsibility for the work that he does. During the most furious moments of Tanabai’s work to save the lambing, a confrontation takes place between the hero and the callous regional leader, Segezbayev, who ignoring the truth, accuses Tanabai of all kinds of mortal sins, including negligence. Tanabai protests angrily. As the conflict reaches its climax, Tanabai’s courage, nobility, and honest are revealed on the one hand, while the nature of Segezbayev, his cowardliness, and pretentious arbitrariness are exposed on the other. Segezbayev is temporarily the winner in the conflict, as Tanabai is expelled from the Party.

The conflict gives Aitmatov the opportunity to show Tanabai’s full-blooded personality. He can not imagine life without the Party. The story of Tanabai’s youth of his participation in organizing the collective farm and the construction of the Fergana Canal, and of his joining the Party reflects

56 Ibid., p.290
a period of intensive building of socialism throughout the country. Through the recollections of Tanabai, the writer realistically shows the historical conditions which formed the pure and integral nature of his hero, Tanabai, the communist.

In showing the growth of the protagonist’s consciousness, the writer exposes the radical changes taking place in the lives of the Soviet people. Because of the enthusiasm and hard work of people like Tanabai, collective farms were strengthened, devastation wrought by the war overcome, and the economy was improved.

The beginning of such changes, which in fact can change nothing in Tanabai’s personal fate. But Tanabai takes these changes as something not totally unexpected, not as a gift from the Gods, in his already declining years. They are something he has waited for, waited a long time. When Kerimbekov comes to see him - Kerimbekov, secretary of the District Committee of the Party, and one of those who boldly stood up for Tanabai when he was wrongfully expelled from the Party, Tanabai says:

‘I can judge from our own farm here. Things seem to be going better. Cannot believe it, hardly. Not long ago I was in Five Trees Valley - where I had such a bad time that year, you know. Quite envious I felt - they have built a new fold. A house for the Shepherd. And a shed alongside, a stable... In the village folk are beginning to build for themselves, every time I go in there is a new house sprung up somewhere along the street...!’\(^{57}\)

\(^{57}\) Ibid., pp.290-291.
The Party’s treatment of the horse parallels its treatment of him. The Party took Gul’sary from him - when he had trained it and ridden it to victory, making it a champion - and castrated it, breaking its spirit. The narrative technique underlines the point - the gelding of the stallion is the emotional high point of the story and Aitmatov takes the trouble to make clear that it is an act of personal revenge and savagery by the new chairman, Aldanov, against the hated horse, the symbol of resistance to his will;

“And now his new master hopped up to the pacer who was stretched out on the ground, squatted down beside his head, bringing with him again yesterday’s smell of raw spirit, and grinned, with an open expression of hate and triumph, as if he had before him not a horse but a man who was his worst enemy.58

Tanabai suffers materially: from poverty, from the vicious, vengeful idiocy of team leader, farm chairman, district authorities. But his character is such that it never occurs to him to stand back and laugh at all that, and find his own private escape route. He is not a passive, voiceless figure waiting patiently for justice to triumph. Tanabai is a real, live man. He was shaped by his time. Tanabai, the old man, has lived his life, has lived it as best he could. Nothing can now be added, nothing taken away from his personal lot, which has had in it everything - joy, the joy of work, of

58 Ibid., pp.269-270.
fatherhood, of overcoming obstacles of all sorts, and sorrow, and troubles, and disillusion. He has lived his life.

Such is the complex spiral construction of “Farewell, Gul’sary!” The old is dying off, and the new is being born before our very eyes, absorbing the best of the past and achieving victory.

As a sensitive writer, Aitmatov understands the demands of the times and devotes much attention to moral problems and the formation of a new socialist individual. “Farewell, Gul’sary!” is profoundly humanist and democratic for the good reason that its foundation is the fate and character of a man from the very bosom of the people. The life of Tanabai is the axis around which the whole spectacle of life revolves.

(2) The white Steamship

In “The White Steamship” (Belyi Parokhod, 1970)\(^{59}\), the action takes place in a forgotten, out-of-the-way reserve. There a young boy is being raised by his grandfather, Momun. The boy’s uncle, Orozkul, the forester in charge of the reserve, is an evil man who takes advantage of his official position and is cruel and merciless to his family. Unable to stand rude, autocratic Orozkul’s tyranny, the boy commits suicide. This is the dramatic plot of the story.

The young boy, the main hero of ‘The White Steamship’, is an actual, small boy, a pupil in First Form, with all the oddities, tricks and mischief proper to that age, and he is an incarnation of childhood in general: frail, impressionable, ready to take things in - first and foremost, those things that are good.

To say that the little boy from the forest reserve, with his rocks known to him as “The Wolf”, “The Tank”, “The Saddle”, and “The Camel”, with his plants that he divides into “bold ones” and “shy ones”\(^\text{60}\), with his grandfather’s peaked cap, his binoculars and his briefcase, is no way unhappier like other young boys in the cities. But, unfortunately, what the boy lacks is something else - parental love, human sympathy.

In ‘The White Steamship, the boy is never without the binoculars his grandfather was given. When the boy looks at the world through the opposite end of the binoculars, he sees houses that run far far away and look like small boxes. While mighty boulders are like small stones. But when the boy looks through the binoculars the right way, all his surroundings are brought close and grow in size: he can examine everything in detail, down to the smallest blue vein and deep wrinkle on Grandfather Momun’s face.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p.9.
To intensify the concrete images, scenes and events the writer concentrates on peculiarities. They maintain their uniqueness in expressing the heroes’ specific national psychology.

On the other hand the boy’s Grandfather Momun, lives his life working from morning till night, always busy, but he never learns how to make people respect him. “People do not forgive anyone who fails to make them respect him,” writes Aitmatov in “The White Steamship.” Momun has not the gift of demanding respect, even though he “knows many things in life”, and practically everything which makes a man valued in rural life goes well under his hands. “He did carpenter’s work, “saddler’s work... when he was younger, he used to build such ricks for the collective farm that it was a shame to open them up, come the winter... During the war he built factory walls in Magnitogorsk and was honoured as a Stakhnovite workers. When he came back he built timber houses on the reserve; and worked as a woodman...”

It simply does not occur to Momun that a man might see “respect” as an object to aim for. He does everything that should make him respected, but nothing aimed at achieving respect.

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61 Ibid., p.15.
Both Momun and his grandson and their warm friendship embody the national ideals of goodness and justice, of harmony and beauty. The Mother Deer from the folk legend - the image that enchants the boy - is a symbol of life eternal on earth. Momun tells the tale of Horned Deer-Mother to his grandson, that long ago it saved the lives of two children. When the boy sees the Horned Deer-Mother, accompanied by other deer, he considers them not, just, to be stray animals wondering across from the neighbouring wild-life sanctuary. It is the Horned Deer-Mother herself who has returned to help him, the boy, who is one of her sons. And the hunting of the deer becomes, for him, the collapse of both worlds together.

In the overall structure of the story, the conflict between kind, gentle Momun and the cruel, greedy poacher Orozkul and the tragic fate of the boy who realizes how much evil Orozkul inflicts on others, take on a particular significance.

The culmination of the conflict “The White Steamship” is the boy’s horrifying vision. Burning with fever, the sick child sees how the beautiful Mother Deer, the symbol of nature’s immortality, is killed and then hooked to pieces. He cannot imagine how that could happen. And his grandfather, his beloved, kind Grandfather Momun was now different. He had always found time to say something nice to his grandfather, but now he would blush upon seeing him, then pale, stumble and mutter something
incomprehensible. The boy did not yet know that his grandfather had killed the Mother Deer, had killed the ancestral mother of his people.

In his dream, the boy witnessed a horrible scene: Orozkul and the collective-farm accountant, Koketai, a “huge, darkfaced” man who bared, “great yellow teeth” when he smiled, divide the meat.\(^{63}\) They are drunk and pleased at the sight of raw meat. Each detail and individual word in the scene takes on a new, broader meaning.

It is a feast of wild beasts, ready to destroy all that is living. “The boy watched that terrible scene with horror.” He could not believe that they were dividing up the meat of “that same deer who, yesterday, was still the antlered Mother Deer, who yesterday looked at him with a ‘kind, intent gaze from the opposite shore, the same with whom he had talked mentally and whom he had asked to bring the magic cradle with bells on her antlers to his childless aunt. All that had suddenly been transformed into a shapeless pile of meat, a shredded hide, severed legs and a head thrown to one side.”\(^{64}\)

Through the young boy’s eyes, the writer shows the clash of the wild and bestial with the eternally beautiful, giving the concrete situation important philosophical significance. In drunken mood, Orozkul decides to

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p.106.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., p.106-107.
cut off the Mother Deer’s antlers, cynically announcing that he will place them on Grandfather Momun’s grave. Later, Orozkul went completely mad. He split the skull and “grabbed the antlers with both hands, and, pressing the head to the ground with his foot, tugged at the antlers with brutal strength, they cracked like roots breaking...”

The legend of the female deer tells of the custom of placing antlers on the grave of the deceased.

Orozkul living in a reserve and working as a forest ranger, is no different psychologically than those rich landowners, who in the past ruled their lands with absolute authority and humiliated people, flaunting their power and wealth. With sadistic cruelty Orozkul beats his wife Bekei because she can not bear him a child. In the general structure of “The White Steamship”, Bekei’s infertility is an important metaphor. It expresses the idea that people like Orozkul are doomed: they are remnants of the past.

The concept of the beautiful in “The White Steamship” is connected with ethics and behaviour and thus acquires a social and moral aspect. It opposes the ugly.

65 Ibid., p.108.
The scene, when Orozkul and the driver who has come for timber notice the deer, we see opposite attitudes toward this marvel of nature.

The deer were coming up the precipice in single file led by a dark brown stag who carried his antlers with pride. He was followed by an antlers fawn, and bringing up the procession was the Mother Deer. The graceful deer stood out against the smooth clay surface of the fault. Their movements were clearly visible.

"'Ah, what a beautiful sight!' the driver exclaimed in admiration. He was a young, bug-eyed fellow who looked quiet and sly. 'It's a pity I have not got my camera with me, it would have made a beautiful photo.'

"Oh, come off it! Beautiful!' Orozkul interrupted with irritation. 'Don't waste your time. Beauty does not put money in the bank. Back the truck up to the shore.'"\[88\]

Orozkul's reply reflects his mercenary attitude towards the beautiful which is typical of people with low moral characters. He is a vandal destroying all living things on earth, and he is antipathetic to the beauty and kindness propagated by the author.

In the isolated world of the reserve where the action takes place, there is no one to resist Orokul. Occassionally, state farm truck drivers, coming there for hay, are forced to spend the night at the reserve because of bad weather. The boy is astonished at how friendly they are to one

\[88\] Ibid., p.99.
another and how they work together to fight the snowstorm and overcome the elements. A new and unknown world is opening to him graphically and in an appealing fashion. The boy’s acquaintance with the truck driver Kulubek, a recently demobilized soldier, is of particular significance. He treats the boy as a friend and shows concern for him. In bitter moments in his life, when the boy sees the impunity of Orozkul’s evil actions, he mentally talks to Kulubek. He knows that only Kulubek could deal with Orozkul and punish him.

The boy’s perception of the world, his ideas of human happiness, and his disgust at the crimes committed by Orozkul reflect the author’s philosophy. The boy is a child of nature, and his death symbolizes the death of everything beautiful in the world.

In the final moments of the narrative, the philosophical idea is expressed more strongly through the author’s emotions. The author expresses his feeling about the boy:

“You swam away, my boy, to your fairy tale...”
“You swam away.”
“There is nothing I can say now except that you rejected that to which your young soul could not reconcile itself. And that is my comfort. Your like was life lightning, flashing for an instant and then gone forever. But lightning is born in the sky, and the sky is eternal. And that is my comfort.”

“I also find comfort in the fact that a child’s conscience is like a wheat germ - without that germ, the grain will not sprout. And no

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67 Ibid., p.116.
matter what awaits us, the truth will remain as long as people are born and die...”

The case against Orozkul and his kind is conducted in a complex, philosophical manner, contrasting Orozkul with the living world of nature, beautiful in its unspoiled majesty, and the pure perception of that world as beheld by a child.

“The White Steamship”, the confrontation between good and evil, in the moral, ethical, social and philosophical sense, is carried through to the end. It is an uncompromising struggle. Philosophical ideas are even stronger against the backdrop of this battle of contradictions.

To strengthen the “time connections”, the writer introduces myths, folk tales, songs, and legends, attempting to give the narrative scale and relief, generating in the very development of those narrative events which are a manifestation of the past, the present and even the future. The whole narrative acquires a metaphorical character.

(3) The Cranes Fly Early

In “The Cranes Fly Early”\(^\text{69}\), the story seems ordinary at first glance. The action takes place in a Kirghiz village far from the front during the

\(^{68}\) Ibid., p.116.
Second World War. A group of teenagers have to interrupt their studies and leave for the Virgin lands to help a collective farm put new land under plough. Every day brings another "Posted Dead" notice, every day finds it colder in school and grimmer at home... Where every little thing is a reminder of the father gone to the war. Every day the grown-ups in the collective farm, are more keenly aware of the need they have of the working hands and will of the boys in the Seventh form, who then have to become men in a single day. One of the youngsters, Sultanmurat, the main hero of the novella, shows great courage as he races after the thieves, but the bandits are armed, and the children are powerless to do anything. These are the events at the foundation of this novella taken from real life. With the accuracy of a Chronicler, Aitmatov tells of the everyday cares of a distant Kirghiz village during the Second World War.

In "The Cranes Fly Early", Aitmatov chooses not to use myths and legends. The story is strictly realistic in its description of the situation, while at the same time romantic in its poetization of the moral world of teenagers.

Aitmatov's work contains many levels. The portrayal of collective farmers' lives during the war and the moral maturation of the teenagers take on an important meaning. "Eternal themes" continually run through what he writes: people have always ploughed the earth, planted wheat and
hoped for the better despite life’s cruel trials. The idea of the victory of high moral principles over the power the darkness gradually grows and reaches a dramatic culmination in the denouement. For that reason, in analysing Aitmatov, it is important to see his writing’s inner unity, the subordination of all its elements and story lines to the general idea.

Each of the teenagers’ significant actions are a reflection of the times. The author does not hide his admiration for these young people. These ordinary teenagers are on a par with real heroes; their horses are the horses of knights, and a former soldier maimed in battle, the chairman of the collective farm, is Manas, legendary hero of the famous Kirghiz folk epic, himself.

“To them he was Manas - with a shock of grey hair, mighty in his chain armour. They stood before him like devoted warriors, shields in hand, swords swinging from their belts.”\(^\text{70}\) All this strengthens the heroic themes of the story and emphasizes the uncommonness of the events taking place.

A dramatic turn of events take place in the development of the plot. The denouement is, in its own way, an explosion of all the moral power stored up by the teenagers finding themselves in a seemingly hopeless situation.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., p.374.
The final scenes are described by the author with particular artistic power; all the previous themes were mere preparation for this final chord.

The narrative’s intonation changes towards the end. “These were hungry days in the village. Supplies were running out and the new harvest was a long way off. The cattle were lean starved...”71

The strictly realistic story about the hardships of the war years changes to Sultanmurat’s lyrical thoughts of their duty to do everything for the front. The sorrowful scene in which Anatai suffers after losing his father is followed by a majestic picture of the endless expanse of the Aksai steppe at the foot of the mountains where “a primaeval quietness long unbroken reigned over this huge expanse of foothills under the Great Manas Range.”72 The unusual in daily life is emphasized: “Three ploughmen and the mighty mountains before them. Three ploughmen and the mighty steppe behind them.73 “For the third day the ploughs were working on the Aksai clearing.”74 The contrasts in the final scenes are heightened as is the dramatic tension. The weather changes abruptly and snow begins to fall, but the teenagers continue the work they had begun:

71 Ibid., p.418.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., p.419
74 Ibid., p.417
"...the ploughs went on. Black ploughs appeared for a moment on ridges as though cast upon the crest of waves, then vanished again in the hollows.\textsuperscript{75} The ploughing is compared to a great battle. "The dark ploughs floated through it like ships in a white fog."\textsuperscript{76} This is followed by a change in mood. The weather takes a turn for the better. The tense dramatic notes in the narrative change to bright tones. There is a description of a sunny spring morning and the happiness of teenagers sure of their strength and that they will carry out the work they have been given to do.

All the previous themes revealing the teenagers' developing moral world are concentrated in one picture: the early arrival of the migratory cranes. It is symbolic - and full of spring and joyousness. The boys know that the appearance of cranes in early spring promises a good harvest, and they greet the cranes with cries of joy as they run to meet them: "There’ll be a good harvest!"\textsuperscript{77} They are sure that all difficulties can be surmounted. But the joyous motif in the narrative suddenly changes to a sombre one. Horse thieves hidden behind a knoll watch the boys.

"So they ran, and a flinty unwinking eye followed them through the sight of gun, smoothly moving it from the first to the second, to the third. There was hatred in that eye following the boys through the sight as they

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p.420.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p.421.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p.427.
ran to meet the cranes. The land was so vast outside the back-sight and they so small within the notch. The sky above was so vast and they so tiny, pinned by the foresight. A twitch of the finger and they would cease to exist...78

The author tells how the two bandits come in the dark of night, tie up the boys, and steal four horses. The spirits of evil commit a crime. They represent the world in which the savage laws of profit, robbery and murder are in force. Their language is coarse, and their interests are base: to get all they can for the stolen horses and live a life of ease.

The story reaches great heights of dramatic intensity. It seems that a catastrophe on a universal scale has taken place. The teenagers’ dreams are shattered, for all their efforts have been in vain: without the horses they cannot plough the fields. The main idea of the story is expressed in concentrated form in the resolution. The author turns all his attention to Sultanmurat who acts decisively and courageously. After freeing himself and his friends from the ropes, Sultanmurat sends Anatai to the village for help and goes after the armed bandits alone on his favorite horse, Chabdar, to prevent them from driving the horses away. There follows a cruel, unequal skirmish which ends tragically for Sultanmurat.

78 Ibid., p.428.
The bandits kill the boy's horse and get away. "Screaming wildly with pain and rage, Sultanmurat rushed after the thieves, shouting, 'Stop! You'll not get away, I'll catch you! You've killed Chabdar! Father's Chabdar!'"

"He ran as if possessed, he ran in fury and indignation", (then he fell) ... "he rolled on the ground gasping, struggling with lack of breath - then he heard the hoofbeats of the driven horses fading, receding in the distance, and he got up and trailed back, sobbing loud and bitterly... Now he and Ajimurat would never gallop to the railway station on father's horse Chabdar to meet father coming home from the war. And now they would not be able to sow all the corn that was needed, on the Aksai. The day would not come, the joyous, triumphant day, when they were to return from the Aksai fields, - "she" would not come out on the street to rejoice and would not be amazed and impressed by him... His dreams were wrecked. That was why he wept."  

Aitmatov focuses on Sultanmurat at a decisive moment, showing his consciousness, bravery and courage. The logic of the plot's development is designed to show the moral power Sultanmurat revealed in his...

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79 Ibid., p.436.
80 Ibid., p.436.
confrontation with evil. The tragic situation emphasizes the young hero’s inner strength and fortitude.

Actual events in *The Cranes Fly Early* are described with historical accuracy but take on a legendary character. Sultanmurat’s courage and sense of duty symbolize the high moral qualities of the country’s wartime youth. This is particularly noticeable in the final episodes of the story. Failing to catch the horse thieves, Sultanmurat returns to his dead mount. He weeps in despair. It seems that he and his favorite horse are all that remain in the entire universe. But then, in the darkness, a wolf’s eyes shine - the hungry wolf is preparing to attack the horse’s carcass. Sultanmurat takes the bridle off Chabdar and wraps it around his hand, leaving the bit free. This is his only weapon. And he begins a fierce battle against the wolf. It reveals the story’s main idea - during the difficult war years, Sultanmurat is developing into a fighter who will never retreat. He is on the side of truth. And this factor determines the inner optimistic inspiration in Aitmatov’s *The Cranes Fly Early*.

The effect of moral shock is important in *The Cranes Fly Early*, and it is closely connected with the social conflicts of the age. The tragic consequences of war are portrayed with great depth through the eyes of children. The character of Adjimurat, Sultanmurat’s younger brother, is an example of this. He is the center of a whole range of emotions, both happy
and sad. The major feature of Adjimurat’s character is his love for his father. Even before his father was drafted, the boy had been very selfish of his father’s love. His constant need to be caressed and praised, his eagerness to please his father and his pride in him were so childish and naive that they met with surprise and smiles.

When his father leaves for the front and they haven’t heard from him for six months, Adjimurat misses him more than anyone else and does not hide his feelings. His longing for his father takes many forms: he either expresses wild joy when meeting his uncle Nurgazy - Adjimurat misses adult male company - or he is upset over little things. When he and Sultanmurat could not catch a fox, Adjimurat cries bitterly, saying: “We could have made a fox fur hat for Father like the one Uncle Nurgazy has.”81 Adjimurat thinks constantly about his father. His childish sorrow is so painful that we can feel the tragic consequences of the war and the sufferings of millions of Soviet children orphaned during that tragic time.

In *The Cranes Fly Early*, the feelings and sufferings of young people are connected with a concrete historical period. Tragic events are particularly painful when experienced by children; they have a deep effect, for they are so true to life.

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81 Ibid., p.397.
When Anatai’s family learns that their father was killed at the front. Chekish, the team-leader at the collective farm, a kind old man, gathers the boys together, and trying not to show his pain, says: “You’ve seen the bad side of life too early. And today, one more of you will grieve. Anatai’s father, Satarkul, has been killed in action. You are not little children anymore. You have to learn to help those who are in trouble.”

This terrible news came as a shock to the children. “Sultanmurat went to Anatai’s house, his heart filled with sorrow and sympathy. It was terrible to think that in a minute or two, like wildfire, the air would be pierced by lamentations for yet another. One more person born and raised in these mountains would not come back from the front, and nobody would ever see him again.”

This true-to-life story describing the tragic consequences of the war is multi-faceted and gives an artistic representation of the compassion, unity, and moral strength which the war could not destroy. The more people suffered, the stronger their spirits grew. This was their guarantee of victory. Aitmatov’s concept of humanness and the victory of high moral principles are conveyed by the story. Every aspect of the human soul concerns the writer, evoking deep feelings and anxiety for the fate of

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82 Ibid., pp.413-414.
83 Ibid., p.414.
mankind. Aitmatov attempts to penetrate the essence of tragic situations and conflicts, searching for manifestations of the greatness of the human spirit which determine the victory of good over evil. His works are filled with important ideas extolling faith in the good and the triumph of humanness.

(B) Fazil Iskander

Fazil Iskander was born on 6 March 1929 in Sukhumi, capital and major city of Abkhazia. He is of the same generation and shares the same war-time childhood as Chinghiz Aitmatov and N. Dumbadze, both born in 1928.

Fazil Iskander, an accomplished poet and narrator, has inherited the past of his motherland. He is deeply concerned about the survival of the collective memory of his long-lived Caucasian countrymen, their customs, traditions, philosophy and humour.

It is just difficult to put Iskander’s prose into a specific category. His stories seem to emerge from the depths of his consciousness and subconsciousness during the magic moments when the spirit moves him. After all, the mysteries of the creative process have yet to be unravelled. The colourful mosaic which he creates embraces not only the author’s own childhood and youth, but almost hundred years of Abkhazian life. The mountains of Abkhazia, its forests and clear streams, figure in his work as
a refreshing contrast to the urban or village settings of most Russian writings, and the characters whose adventures and misadventures he relates with such great skill and humour are native Abkazians or inhabitants of neighbouring Georgia.

Although Iskander first became known for an effective satire on bureaucratic control of agriculture, 'The Goatibex Constellation' (Sozvezdie Kozlotura, 1966), his most important work consists of two cycles of tales about Abkhazia. One deals with the experiences of a growing boy, 'Chik's Day' (Den Chika, 1971); the other centres on the person of a mountain village elder and master of ceremonies (tamada), 'Uncle Sandro of Chegem' (Sandro iz Chegema, 1973).

Iskander is a specialist in humorous, innocent-seeming satire that hits squarely upon its social target without arousing offense or anger. Each of his stories delivers a sharp point, but delivers it with a smile. He manages this by presenting situations.

Iskander's 'Sandro of Chegema' (1973-1981) is a version of the picaresque novel, ranging from pre-revolutionary times to the post-Stalin period. A series of episodes in the life of one Uncle Sandro, a humorous and absurd character expert in manipulating the life around him. The customs, traditions, and folklore of his native Caucasus region figure in Sandro, as in many of Iskander's other things. Memorable chapters recount
the struggles of Stalin's various Georgian henchmen, implying that the whole of Soviet politics, at least under Stalin, was an extension of a Caucasian tribal feud.

The stories Iskander tells extend over nearly the entire twentieth century, although they concentrate on the past fifty years. They are lively, often improbable, full of adventure, arresting characters, and local colour, and packed with robust humour.

There are twenty stories, plus many more numerous stories within the stories in the 'Chegem Cycle', which include many events and ideas, about people's past and present.

In "Abduction or the Endursky Enigma", Iskander has created a place, Enduria, and a race of people, the Endurskies, to cope with life's vexations, frustrations and contradictions. Enduria is the homeland of all evil and of all that is negative. The Endurskies possess all the possible negative human characteristics and are, by nature, the sworn enemies of the Chegemians. The Endurskies are to blame for all the misery the Abkhazians are made to endure. Among other things, Endurskies are ignorant of human psychology and do not understand the value and importance of custom and tradition in the Abkhazian way of life. The

portrait of the typical Endursky and the description of his stupid reactions and behaviour remain unfinished.

Iskander’s creation of the words and places such as Enduria, Endursky or Endurgentia based on the Russian root “dur” meaning stupid (i.e. ‘durak’, a fool) indicating an imaginary province and a non-imaginary category of people. Iskander’s use of such satirical device in the specific Abkhazian context has far-reaching repercussions and an undeniable impact because such satire attacks some of the most sensitive areas in relations between the citizens and the authorities.

Endurskies over a time become exceedingly prolific and omnipresent. They now form the ‘endurgentsia’ which comprises three categories: liberal, patriotic and governing.

The liberal ones work poorly and consider democracy to be the complete subjugation of everyone to their way of thinking. They take bribes in the form of fund-raising to support the struggle for democracy.

The second category, the patriotic ones work poorly, praise the golden thirties and silver forties, and blame all the country’s misfortunes on members of other ethnic groups. They take bribes under the pretext of a collection for the altar of the fatherland.

And the third category, the governing ones work poorly since all their strength goes into loving the government, but they sometimes
criticize it for not promoting them to positions of leadership fast enough. They hate the endurgentsia of the other two categories, never speak to foreigners and accept bribes to carry out certain precise tasks.\textsuperscript{85}

Iskander has a particular fondness of this satirical vein and uses Uncle Sandro as his main spokesman in his outbursts against the endurgentsia. Calling someone an Endursky is a mockingly serious accusation, and the accused will always try to defend himself and prove otherwise. As Sandro’s brother, kyazym, declares one night.

“My brother Sandro is the biggest Endursky in the world. No, the second biggest. The biggest one sits in Moscow.”

“From Chegem to Moscow nothing but Endurskies! I alone am not an Endursky!”\textsuperscript{86} was the answer while reacting to his friend’s comment.

All kinds of hypotheses are rampant as to their origin, although it is recognized that they found all over the world and can be Russian, Ukrainian, Estonian, Georgian etc. The following excerpt gives a sample of Iskander’s “Typical-Iskanderian-vein-of-Satire”:

‘The Abkhazians have a very complicated attitude toward the Endurskies. The main thing is that no one knows exactly how they go to Abkhazia, but everyone is sure they’re here to gradually destroy the Abkhazians. At first the hypothesis was advanced that the Turks were sending them down on the Abkhazians... Ever since, the Endurskies go on and on in Abkhazia, there’s no end to them... The Chegeman put forward a different version of the story. The Endurskies had been spontaneously generated from wood mold in the dense forest between Georgia and Abkhazia. And later they

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., pp 90-92.

grew into a whole tribe, multiplying much faster than the Abkhazians would have liked.\textsuperscript{87}

Despite its precise, detailed and authentic ethnic and geographical background, Chegem is clearly a mythical world, the product of one writer’s fertile, lively and unfettered imagination. The very whimsicality of Iskander, his wry flights of philosophizing his fondness for parodying Soviet officialese, his love for creating oddball characters, and his pervasive humanity, all are compellingly endearing.

Iskanderian interpretation of ‘Lenin’s biography’ and last will and testament, we have four uproarious pages, in “Abduction or the Endursky Enigma”\textsuperscript{88}. Another one of Iskander’s amusing satirical strategies is to transpose which have happened “in the outside world” and which Chegемians assimilate through the prism of their own culture and values.

Abkhazians sympathize with the blood feud that brought Lenin to power and understand the covert enmity that smoldered between him and Stalin, but they are deeply grieved by the fact that Lenin’s body has not yet been buried, more than 40 years after his death. This is a major transgression of ancient Abkhazian custom and Abkhazians were often


inclined to attribute the many troubles that beset the country to the great
sin of the non-committal to the earth of the dead leader’s bones.

When retelling Lenin’s testament the Chegemians invariably called
their listeners’ attention to the indisputable fact that before his
death Lenin had been preoccupied above all with the fact of the
Abkhazians. After that, how could the Chegemians not love and
revere Lenin.89

As for Lenin’s testament:

The first thing he wrote was, Drive the Big Moustache (here Stalin is
referred to Big Moustache) out of power, because he is a vampire.
The second thing he wrote was, Don’t round up the peasants into
Kolkhozes. The third thing he wrote was, if you absolutely can’t do
without Kolkhozes, don’t touch the Abkhazians, because when an
Abkhazian looks at the Kokhoz he wants to lie down and quietly
die. But the Abkhazians must be protected, since even though not
numerous they are an exceptionally valuable breed of men.90

Collectivization, one of the main themes woven into the Chegem
cycle, has been a major preoccupation in Abkhazia since it started in the
early 1930s. For centuries the Abkhazian way of the life and the
psychology rooted in it have been strongly paternalistic and family-
oriented. Collectivization in other regions also posed problems but in
Abkhazia the collision between the old and the new values has been
particularly dramatic. The following excerpt from “Belshazzar’s Feasts” of
‘Chegem Cycle’ carries the message:

The historical development of the people of Chegem had been
unnaturally accelerated. They manage this with a certain patriarchal

90 Ibid.
clumsiness. On the one hand, at home, in complete accord with the march of history and the decisions of higher organs of government, they were building socialism - that is, engaging in collective farm agriculture. On the other hand, they came to town to sell things, engaging for the first time in capitalistic trade relations.  

In this episode “Belshazzar’s Feast”, Iskander does not attempt to enter Stalin’s mind extensively, but his external portrait is vivid and sharp in its emphasis on the dictator’s sadistic treatment of his inner circle.

In another story ‘The Story of the Prayer Tree”, the main protagonist is Khabug, a wealthy peasant. The dilemma of Khabug after returning from Turkey at the end of the last century, to where he had been tricked into immigrating. He returned with no worldly possessions except a wife and a child, found a spring and a piece of land, and through unrelenting hard work and good management, was able to breed herds of goats and sheep and to obtain good yields from his corn fields. He was illiterate, but that did not prevent him from being the most skilled peasant in the village in farming and animal husbandry for he loved his work, his land and his livestock. Although he knew that Stubborn, rich peasants elsewhere had been sent to Siberia, he was not, in principle, averse to joining the Kolkhoz, but there were psychological stumbling blocks, for Khabug had built his life and that of his large family, alone with his own bare hands. An excerpts from the story:

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But the big question, which could not be expressed in words... was who would want to work, or even live on this earth, if they are going to profane the age-old Mystery of Love, peasant’s love for his own field, his own apple tree, his own cow, his beehives, his own rustling in his own cornfield, his own bunches of grapes crushed by his own feet in his own wine-press. \(^2\)

Khabug gives half of his livestock to the collective farm, but his help and advice as a successful farmer are never solicited. The, collective flock dwindles through ignorance, neglect and mismanagement as individual peasants try to keep up their own blocks. And so the Kolkhoz, as a symbol of the ideal of collectivization, loses all credibility on the part of the local farmers. Khabug is always very upset when Abkhazians are indifferent to their work; Blackamoor, Khabug’s mule witnesses the following scene:

We are passing a big cornfield, which ten Kolkhoz workers were hoeing. “Listen here”, my old man shouted, “What kind of hoeing job is that?”...

- “you’re not hoeing like decent people!” my old man shouted.
  “You’re hoeing like infidels! Where’s your conscience? Were you born in Abkhazia or not?”

- “This is a Kolkhoz field”, a peasant woman said at last in a soothing way “why take on so, old..”

- “What if it is Kumkhoz field”, he said quietly, “It’s sin to work that way, I feel bad for the corn”

Khabug curses the Kolkhoz and at the same time cannot watch sloppy work, even in a Kolkhoz field. He cannot bear all this and has nowhere else to go; that is the way it is.

His heart aches with the results of mismanagement and the lack of love for the land and pride in a job well done.\(^3\)

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Blackamoor, Khabhug’s mule, has great compassion for the master. He tells us:

Now they donot have as much stock in the whole Kolkhoz as he alone had then. Big talk, but they have thrown it all to the winds! that is what hurts my old man... The sorrow on his face means: The peasant way of life has ended.

Iskander’s one of the many literary devices, for example - Anthropomorphism: monologues and dialogues by and with dogs, donkey etc., who speak as human beings, can be referred to Blackamoor, Khabug’s mule.

In “Three Princess Carouse in a Little Green Yard”, Iskander’s variation in theme has been expressed. Once Uncle Šandro was commissioned by Lakoba to force the famous soft-drink manufacturer to reveal the secret of his “Lemon Fizz”. At pistol point Logidze, the manufacturer, confess: “No, there is not any Logidze secret; there is love for the work and knowledge of the work” And Logidze goes on to say that as long as there is love and talent in the world, there will be people able to do any task well; the respect for talent is the key to many problems which is something that certain people in high places do not seem to understand.

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94 Ibid., p.223.

To survive in the crossfire of all these contradictions, one has to adapt and in this process of adaptation, people try to preserve traditions and core values which they consider to be "inside", while politics, government and bureaucracy are considered to be "outside".96

In one instance, Fazil expresses anxiety to Sandro about having described how Lokoba once shot eggs off a cook’s head at an official banquet in the mid-1930s. To this Uncle Sandro made his comment:

Socialism takes place outside, this was inside... Socialism is when they build factories, mills and power plants. That always takes place outside, and Lakoba did his shooting inside... How does one interfere with the other.97

There is a great deal of information in the Chegem cycle about Abkhazian customs involving the abduction of future brides, marriage, blood feuds, funeral rites etc. The Chegem cycle is rich in ethnographical substance. It reveals to the reader, in a warm and personal way, a part of the Abkhazian past that is now history. Among the most touching and lyrical moments are those conveyed to us by Blackamoor, old Khubug’s mule, as he recounts his adventurous life story, his passionate and overwhelming love for colts, his wise mule philosophy, his attachment to his master, his evaluation of men, dogs and other animals.

96 Ibid., p.285.
97 Ibid., p.285.
Uncle Sandro, who, as a captivating source of free-flowing narrative, shares with us the dashing, picaresque adventures of his youth and manhood, during which his most daring and extraordinary deeds are performed. Even in old age, he is appreciated for his skill and imagination. Friends and relations still turn to him for help in resolving everyday problems for Sandro has a special gift for ruse and diplomacy.

There are stories within stories, in Chegem cycle, and each of them makes a unique contribution to this warm, colourful and engaging modern saga of Abkhazian life bathed in aura of nostalgia, and often sadness, redeemed by an unbridled sense of humour and a basic love for animals and human beings.

"Jamkhoukh", "son of a Deer", or "The Gospel According to Chegem" has appeared side by side with the stories comprising the Chegem cycle although this legend could be understood as a completely independent work.

Here is an excerpt from a delightful tale, from "The Gospel According to Chegem", in which human qualities and foibles are put to the test in search of the profound meaning of life and its real values.

"It turns out that an empty soul cannot be filled by anything. Emptiness of the spirit is a substance that is unknown to us. If the substance of emptiness fills the soul, the soul is full. And what is full can no longer be filled with anything..."88 Life is becoming duller

and more dangerous everyday. The city fathers are alarmed. Explain to us, for love of the Great Weighmaster, what's come over us all and how to help the people of our city find peace and good will once more among the tribes... “Corruption has come to you,” Jamkhough said, “but not just to you, perhaps. people have lost sight of man’s chief purpose - to be pleasing to our God, the Great Weighmaster of Our Conscience...” “Convey to the city fathers that they should draw these man close to them and appeal to the conscience of the rest.”

Although a comic, ironic tone predominates as Islander pokes fun at nearly everything involving human nature and its vivid Abkhazian manifestations, a tragic sense underlies the whole. The violence of social disorder and blood vengeance; the harmful effects of the Soviet regime, Collectivization, and the Stalinist terror on the native way of life; and the common human misfortunes of poverty, illness, and death frequently comes to the surface.

One of the Iskander's best stories, is "The Constellation of the Goat-Buffalo" It relates the misadventures of a dogmatic bureaucrat who devises a project to cross goats with buffalo in order to produce a new animal that will give more milk, be more lively, and grow a new kind of wool. With Party support this weird project is adopted, in spite of the serious doubts raised by qualified geneticists and agrobiologists.

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98 Ibid., pp.335-336.
Both satire and parody are specifically aimed at the so-called Michurinist School of Agrobiology, the group led by Trofim Lysenko, whose theories did great harm to Russian Science.

Iskander’s another most important work, which consists of cycle of tales, is entitled “Chik’s Day” (1971). It mainly deals with the experiences of a growing boy. Chik, a bright, lively, and perceptive schoolboy who grows up in the Black Sea city of Sukhumi. He has a normal capacity for mischief, saying the wrong thing, and disobedience. But he is also curious, and an independent thinker. For him the world is fundamentally a sunny and fascinating place, but its adult sector, as seen from Chik’s point of view, is puzzling and often fails to make sense. Chik wants to believe that the world of adults is rational and just; but the evidence tells him it is not.

There is an autobiographical quality to many of the stories from ‘Chik’s Day’, and what astonishes us is the extent to which Iskander has retained the inner logic of a child’s reasoning. Gifted with the ability to read minds, especially by observing the expressions in the eyes, Chik has conversations with the dog Bielka and expresses surprise at the contradictions between what adults think and say:

Chik had noticed long ago that in their conversations with children or with each other, the grown-ups in his yard very often said one thing while thinking something quite different, for some reason or
other they got angry at him for guessing what they were thinking about.\textsuperscript{100}

Iskander, looking back on his childhood experiences, stresses not so much the experiences themselves as his own adult reaction to them. Through his nostalgia as an adult, he is fully capable of appreciating the sights, sounds and smells which have given substance and dimension to his youthful summers at his grandfather's Big House.

Chik lives in an Abkhazia of the 1930s and 1940s that is in many respects warm and normal, providing the boy with delights, and inculcating in him beliefs and loyalties. He is romantically inspired by what he has been told about the revolution and its mythical heroes. At the same time, he learns gradually that the adult life about him is tainted with anxieties and sorrows, occasioned by an atmosphere of suspiciousness, mysterious disappearances, and sudden exiles. We are thus shown a world, as seen from a child's perspective, that is both benevolent and ominous.

Iskander's belief in the younger generation is rooted in his belief that childhood's unwavering faith in common sense and in the world's rationality provide man with the passion and zeal necessary in his struggle against the twin follies of cruelty and stupidity.

\textsuperscript{100} Fazil Iskander, "Chik and His Friends", trans. J.C. Butler, Raduga Publication, Moscow, 1985, p.10.
Iskander, who feels very close to his young hero, perpetuates a period of his and our own lives through the adventures of Chik. Although each person’s childhood world is different, Iskander has recreated his own, giving it a universal appeal while retaining the colour, beauty and warmth of a rural Abkhazian setting.

Iskander’s two more introspective, emotional and philosophical stories are “A Great Day at the Big House” and “Expenses.” The first one relates events which took place in 1912 in Grandfather Khabug’s Big House in the Abkhazian highlands, the events of one day in his mother’s life, one day that she loved remembering and often reminisced about. In this story, Iskander remembers his mother, how she made a constant war on the “Chaos of Selfishness, alienation and the profanation of God’s sacred gifts.” Throughout her life, she tried desperately to have all the members of the family maintain close ties, an important element of the Abkhazian value system, which was disappearing gradually, and she fought a losing battle. Through this story, he pays tribute to all she has done for the family, especially through her example of hard work, selflessness and love which finally wore her heart out.

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101 Fazil Iskander, “Zashchita Chika” (Chik’s Defence), Rasskazy i Povesti (Short Stories and Novellas), Mockow, 1983, pp.190-260.
"Expenses" is a family related story on the introspection triggered by his sister’s death and his return to Abkhazia for the 40th day ritual. In thinking about his sister who was loved by all who knew her, he ponders on life’s meaning and highest values, those of love and goodness;

How little we know about those closest to us: To live your life so that all or almost all those around you have loved you - this is the highest feat of valour!

The aim of humanity is the creation of a good person, and there is not and there cannot be any other aim.102

Here, Iskander becomes the writer, Zenon, whose life has had its ups and downs in Moscow. Members of his family, believing him to be rich and successful, expect him to give them money, which he does. Narratives of the story mainly reflect on the choices and direction of his own life. Within one year, he lost his mother, brother and sister and he is guilt-ridden for not having been closer to them during their lives.

Such moments of soul-searching interrogation are frequent in those who have left a close family to build careers in other places.

102 Ibid., p.234.