

GOVERNMENT DIRECTION OF CULTURE IN THE SOVIET UNION

The following extracts from official Soviet pronouncements are printed as illustrations of the way in which art and literature in the U.S.S.R. are required to conform to standards set by the ruling political party. In 1946 the Soviet authorities began a new campaign to compel all artistic activity to serve the needs of the state. One of the opening moves in this campaign was the announcement of the decree, reproduced in part below, on the magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. The decree was supplemented by a speech by the late Andrei Zhdanov, then a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party, who took a leading part in the assertion of party control of such matters. Although Zhdanov is now dead the campaign continues. The other extracts printed below relate to music, in 1948, and to the theatre, in 1949.

These statements deal with one or two particular writers and musicians and with two particular magazines but they are clearly meant to be taken as a general instruction to all writers, musicians and literary publications. The persons and magazines named may be regarded as examples which happened to be chosen at the time of the decrees. Many others have since been criticized on similar grounds. The excerpt printed from an article in *Pravda*, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, is illustrative of the directions issued from time to time in *Pravda* and other official journals. These criticisms are also typical of the way in which control is exercised over the entire field of culture and science.

C.S.P.U. Decree

On August 14 the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (b) (1) issued a decree "On the Magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*" the tone and content of which are sufficiently illustrated by the following quotations:

The Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(b) notes that the literature and art magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, published in Leningrad, are being conducted in a completely unsatisfactory way.

In the magazine *Zvezda*, side by side with significant and successful works by Soviet writers, there have recently appeared many works which are devoid of ideas and ideologically harmful. The grave error of *Zvezda* lies in offering a literary rostrum to the writer Zoshchenko, whose works are alien to Soviet literature. The editors of *Zvezda* were aware that Zoshchenko has long specialized in writing empty, inane and trivial things, propounding the corrupt negation of ideas, triviality, and indifference to politics, calculated to disorientate our youth and poison its consciousness. The most recent of the published stories of Zoshchenko, "The Adventures of an Ape" (*Zvezda*, No. 5-6, 1946) is a vulgar lampoon on Soviet life and Soviet people. Zoshchenko portrays Soviet customs and people in a monstrously caricatured form, slanderously depicting the people as primitive, uncultured, stupid, with Philistine tastes and customs. The maliciously hooligan description by Zoshchenko of our life is accompanied by anti-Soviet attacks . . .

The magazine *Zvezda* also broadly popularizes the works of the writer Akhmatova, whose literary and socio-political personality has long been familiar to Soviet society. Akhmatova is a typical representative of the empty poetry without ideas which is alien to our people. Her poems, which are imbued with a spirit of pessimism and decadence, expressing the tastes of old drawing-room poetry which has never progressed beyond the attitudes of bourgeois aristocratic aesthetics and decadence—"art for art's sake"—and which has not wished to keep in step its people, are harmful in the education of our youth and cannot be tolerated in Soviet literature . . .

(1) Communist Party of the Soviet Union (bolsheviks)