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Jew, Gentile and Overman in Èrenburg's
Khulio Khurenito and Other Works:

The Role of Jewry in Èrenburg's Internationalist World
View

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1998

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ABSTRACT

Il'ia Èrenburg (1891-1967) was a controversial literary figure whose life and works spanned a tumultuous and dramatically changing epoch in Russian history. Many found him suspect because of his apparent political reversals and his survival in the face of Stalin's purges and anti-Semitic policies. The purpose of this work is to identify a unifying theme that winds throughout his writing, ideological stances, and activities in the widest sense. This theme is found in the aspect of Èrenburg's life that elevates him above the level of mere survivor—his loyalty to his Jewish ethnicity. The basic tenets of Èrenburg's philosophy and his attitudes toward Jewry are established by looking primarily at his first and finest novel, Khulio Khurenito (1921) and secondarily at some of his other works that appeared at significant times in his life: The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwanetz (1929), The Second Day (1934), The Thaw (1954), as well as his memoirs, Men, Years—Life (1961).

In investigating Èrenburg's presentation of the role of the Jew as set forth in Khulio Khurenito and the other works mentioned above, his ideas are placed against the background of some of the literary and philosophical views concerning the Jews that were debated in nineteenth and twentieth century Russia. First, since traces of

Nietzsche's philosophy abound in the novel Khulio Khurenito, Èrenburg's discussion of the Jewish role among other nations is approached through the lens Nietzsche's views, particularly as expressed in Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Beyond Good and Evil.

Secondly, his views of the Jews are compared to those of two prominent Russian-Jewish thinkers, Simon Dubnov and Mikhail Gershenzon. Thirdly, Èrenburg's views of Jewry are looked at in relation to Dostoevsi's "Underground Man," who bears some traits of Èrenburg's Jewish archetype.

By investigating the philosophical base for understanding Èrenburg and his attitudes toward the Jews this dissertation attempts to show that Èrenburg's stance toward the Jews was not pro-Semitic, but rather anti-anti-Semitic and that his interest in the Jews and his own heritage was not entirely motivated by a feeling of kinship with, or bias against the Jews, but by a vision that the nation had an important historical role to perform. It was this vision that provided the unifying theme for his life and works.

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INTRODUCTION

Ilya Èrenburg (1891-1967) has been given a great variety of labels, many of them casting aspersions on his moral integrity.¹ He has been called a survivor,² who had a gift for knowing when to defy and when to acquiesce; a traitor, whose ideology and actions constantly changed and often seemed at odds with each other; a compromiser, who lived a double life to maintain some level of personal integrity;³ and both an enemy and defender of the Jews.⁴ Regardless of the characterizations given to him, it is undeniable that Èrenburg was a controversial literary figure, whose life and works spanned a tumultuous and dramatically changing epoch in Russian history. Born in 1891, Èrenburg witnessed the pre-revolutionary days of Tsarist Russia, the Revolution, the rise of communism and its proponent, Vladimir Lenin, the disillusionment of NEP, two world wars, Iosif Stalin's relentless cult of personality, the softening of the Thaw and, eventually, Leonid Brezhnev's return to stricter controls—even if not quite of Stalinist caliber.

¹ Although Ilya Èrenburg's name is commonly spelled "Ilya Ehrenburg" in English translations, I am following the Library of Congress transliteration standard.

² Борис Параманов, Портрет Еврея (Петербург: Издательство Гржебина, 1993), 10.

³ Joshua Rubenstein, Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 1.

These were times of alternately soaring hopes and plummeting disillusionment as attempts to conform lofty ideals to pragmatic action led to less than ideal results. Many artistic, political and intellectual figures fell victim to these times when repression became the strategy to cover up for failure. Listed among the casualties are such writers as Isaak Babel', Osip Mandel'shtam, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Boris Piln'ak, and other notables. Many of these were victimized because they were unwilling to submit to the artistic restrictions placed upon them or because they preferred to voice their criticisms rather than remain silent. The price of integrity was usually a silenced pen, exile and, eventually, death.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that Èrenburg, by the mere fact that he survived and was handsomely paid as well, comes out looking a little suspect. Though Èrenburg did suffer censoring and was blacklisted on occasion, his works continued to pour forth and be published and he escaped a tragic and early death. In fact he was one of the most prolific and enduring Russian and Soviet novelists and journalists of the first half of the twentieth century. How could one retain one's artistic integrity and continue to be openly published despite heavy censorship and an atmosphere of strict intolerance—during the time of the Union of Soviet Writers, Socialist Realism and Stalin's paranoia that included anti-Semitism?

From the outset Èrenburg's biography appears fraught with contradictions and reversals. As a youth he joined the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party in 1907 and was arrested for distributing leaflets. This led to his expulsion from Russia,

⁴ Efraim Sicher, Jews in Russian Literature after the October Revolution: Writers and Artists between Hope and Apostasy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166-168.

whereupon he took up residence in Paris. Among the largely leftist *émigré* community in Paris, Èrenburg soon became disillusioned with the revolutionaries and their ineffectual rhetoric. As a result he broke with the party and lived the life of a Bohemian frequenting Parisian cafés and associating with the international artistic community. This was a time of questioning the passionate ideals of his youth and searching for new ones in poetry, history, culture and religion.

Upon the news of the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, Èrenburg returned to Russia in 1917. He never rejoined the party however and in 1921, with the publication of his first novel, Khulio Khurenito, expressed his cynical attitudes towards Lenin's revolution and his anarchistic views—even daring to offer a caricature of Lenin in this work. As the twenties progressed Èrenburg attempted to remain relatively independent of the political scene, but his work became increasingly pro-Soviet in nature as Stalin gained power and less literary freedom was tolerated. Finally in 1931 Èrenburg found himself forced to make a choice as he saw the rise of National Socialism in Germany and Fascism in Italy and Spain. Given the choice between Stalin and Hitler he felt “he could no longer remain an uncommitted, ironic skeptic”⁵ and placed his sympathies with Stalin.

This alliance was to be tested dearly on several occasions. Èrenburg was to become indispensable to Stalin as a propagandist during World War II, spurring the Russian army on, while vehemently denouncing their fascist enemies. His writings as a correspondent were to gain him great popularity among the soldiers, which may have

⁵ Rubenstein, 114.

been one of the factors contributing to his survival in the face of Stalin's purges, as he was later to become an annoyance to Stalin.

Unbeknownst to Èrenburg, Stalin was secretly forming an alliance with the political leader the writer detested most of all, Hitler. When this news became known, Èrenburg was once again placed in a compromising situation, but he decided to continue to endorse Stalin. He submitted to pressure from Stalin, even as it became increasingly apparent that Stalin was perpetuating many of the same crimes that Hitler had committed, for example, totalitarian rule, purges and the persecution of the Jews.

Upon the death of Stalin, Èrenburg was engaged in the effort to minimize the damage done during Stalin's era and, in fact, the term used to characterize the post-Stalin reconstruction period was borrowed from his novel Оттепель (The Thaw, 1954).

Given Èrenburg's colorful biography it may appear that the pejorative designations mentioned above are fitting. Nevertheless, the purpose of this work is to identify a unifying theme that winds throughout his writing, ideological stances, and activities in the widest sense and that may justify, to some extent at least, his apparent lack of principle. In other words, the purpose is to show that Èrenburg's reversals and compromises were, in fact, carried out to accomplish some greater goal than merely surviving the shifting political winds of his time.

The aspect of Èrenburg's life and works that, in this scholar's view, does elevate the writer above the level of mere survivor is his loyalty to his ethnicity. Èrenburg was of Jewish origin. Just as the political atmosphere tried the integrity of the author as an artist,

so too did it place him in a position of further jeopardy as a Jew. Here too, Èrenburg's actions and attitudes often came under question.

Considering himself one of the last remnants of the nineteenth-century “*intelligentsia*,” Èrenburg adhered to a “cosmopolitan” worldview. According to this view, the divisions existing between nations were unnecessary and undesirable. The future ideal was to achieve a “world culture” which, in spite of many variations, would essentially be one, forming a culturally united nation or family of mankind. In harmony with this belief, Èrenburg often quoted the German poet Ernst Toller: “To say that I am proud of being a Jew is like saying I am proud of having brown eyes.”⁶ In other words, to Toller and Èrenburg, ethnicity was largely irrelevant.

Yet, at other times, Èrenburg made statements apparently contradictory to this claim. In one of his essays entitled «Ложка дегтя» (“A Spoonful of Tar,” 1925) the author insisted that a spoonful of tar, rather than spoiling a barrel of honey, as a Russian proverb states, would in fact improve it.⁷ Èrenburg used the proverb to indicate that the Jews, acting as a fomenting agent (or as the tar) would be a positive force among their hosting nations (the honey) and that they held a unique destiny.⁸

In practice Èrenburg was accused of both deserting and defending his fellow Jews and received simultaneously both ample criticism and praise. At times he remained silent when fellow Jews suffered persecution and yet, at other times, he was their outspoken

⁶ Anatol Goldberg, *Ilya Ehrenburg: Revolutionary Novelist, Poet, War Correspondent, Propagandist: The Extraordinary Epic of a Russian Survivor* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1984), 122.

⁷ Илья Эренбург, «Ложка дегтя», *Белый уголь* (Ленинград: Прибой, 1928), 86-91.

⁸ Goldberg, 122.

proponent. As he witnessed the growth of anti-Semitism in Europe he was accused of becoming so obsessed with the matter that he became an annoyance to his listeners.⁹ Yet on other occasions he was accused of “savagely criticizing the Jews” and placing Soviet nationalism before Jewish concerns.¹⁰

The purpose of this dissertation is to resolve these apparent contradictions basing its findings upon the philosophical tenets of Èrenburg’s first and arguably, finest, novel, Khulio Khurenito.¹¹ In this novel, the main character, Khulio Khurenito selects representatives from several nations to aid him in his plan to destroy the existing world culture. Each of these characters is a caricature of the dominant qualities of the country that they represent. The most valuable disciple and the narrator of the work is a Jew and, in fact, the author’s namesake. Less of a stereotype than the others, he appears to have a unique role among the Master’s followers. As the “tar” among the European nations it is his duty to perform the role of the “nay-sayer” and reject their decaying values. Although the Jew does not escape criticism in the novel, he plays a necessary part in the movement toward the projected ideal of a universal mankind.

Further information about Èrenburg’s stance in regard to the Jews will also be sought in other of his works that appeared at significant times in his life. These include

⁹ Rubenstein, 215.

¹⁰ Harrison Salisbury, To Moscow and Beyond (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 74. As quoted in: Rubenstein, 258.

¹¹ The full title of this work is: Илья Эренбург, Необычайные похождения Хулио Хуренито и его учеников: мосье Дэле, Карла Шмидта, мистера Куля, Алексея Тишина, Эрколе Бамбучи, Ильи Эренбурга, и негра Айши, в дни мира, войны и революции, в Париже, в мексике, в Риме, в Сенегале, в Кинешме, в Москве, и в других местах, а также различные суждения учителя о трубках, о смерти, о любви, о свободе, об игре шахматы, о еврейском племени, о конструкции и о многом ином В кн.: Собрание Сочинений в девяти томах (Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1962).

his only novel on a Jewish theme, Бурная жизнь Лазика Ройтшванецца, (The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwanetz, 1929),¹² his first socialist realist novel, День Второй, (The Second Day, 1934),¹³ his novel written in the relatively liberal post-Stalinist period, Оттепель, (The Thaw, 1954),¹⁴ and his memoirs, which were written in the twilight of his life, Люди, годы, жизнь, (Men, Life, Years, 1961).¹⁵

By looking at Èrenburg's attitudes toward Jewry in these works and then scrutinizing them within the larger scope of his life's activities, this dissertation offers a philosophical explanation and unifying principle for the author's life and work, thus resolving the apparent contradictions, at least in some measure.

Certainly Èrenburg's life, works and inconsistencies have been explored by previous scholars who have approached these from several different perspectives with varying degrees of sympathy. Unfortunately, and yet understandably, very little has been written about Èrenburg by his Soviet peers. An exception however, is one of the earliest biographies of the writer entitled Илья Эренбург and written by T. Trifonova; it appeared in the Soviet Union in 1952.¹⁶ The work, in typical Soviet style, praises Èrenburg as an artist, in so much as he conformed to Socialist Realism thereby enriching

¹² Илья Эренбург, Бурная жизнь Лазика Ройтшванецца, (Germany: Petropolis, 1928).

¹³ Илья Эренбург, День Второй, Собрание сочинений в девяти томах, (Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1962).

¹⁴ Илья Эренбург, Оттепель, Собрание сочинений в девяти томах, (Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1965).

¹⁵ Илья Эренбург, Люди годы жизнь, Собрание сочинений в девяти томах, (Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1965).

¹⁶ Т. Трифонова, Илья Эренбург (Москва: Издательство Художественной Литературы, 1952).

Soviet literature. Naturally restricted as to what she could express about the author and his Jewish background, as well as other topics taboo during that era, the author is unable to shed much light on anything beyond the scope of the “acceptable” Soviet line.

It is the Western biographers who deal with Èrenburg, the man and writer, in any meaningful way. However, it took Western critics some time to tackle the subject. In 1984 the English critic Anatol Goldberg published a biography of Èrenburg in which he attempted to give a “balanced assessment”¹⁷ of the man and his life. In his work, Ilya Ehrenburg: Revolutionary Novelist, Poet, War Correspondent, Propagandist: The Extraordinary Epic of a Russian Survivor, Goldberg offers a literary and historical look at the life of Èrenburg. In his analysis, Goldberg is sympathetic toward Èrenburg whom he views as a prisoner to his times, yet at the same time he cannot fully excuse, nor explain, the inconsistencies in the author’s political loyalties that he has chronicled. Nor does he offer any explanation for the seemingly paradoxical views that Èrenburg expresses toward the Jews—merely shrugging them off as the author’s inability to put his ideal into practice.¹⁸

As the centennial of Èrenburg’s birth grew closer, interest in the man and his works became more marked. Michael Klimenko’s Ehrenburg: An Attempt at a Literary Portrait was published in 1990.¹⁹ Like Goldberg, Klimenko avoids passing any moral

¹⁷ Erik De Mauny, introduction, Ilya Ehrenburg: Revolutionary Novelist, Poet, War Correspondent, Propagandist: The Extraordinary Epic of a Russian Survivor, by Anatol Goldberg (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1984), 1-9.

¹⁸ Goldberg, 121.

¹⁹ Michael Klimenko, Ehrenburg: An Attempt at a Literary Portrait (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990).

judgment of the author. His only goal is to relate objectively Èrenburg's literary career while offering a general analysis that traces the path of the author's development. By Klimenko's own admission, his work really only has a basic biographical function and he leaves the discussion of the complexities of Èrenburg's life, such as the Jewish issue, to future research.²⁰

Another monograph with similar goals appeared the following year; it was by Julian Laychuk and was entitled: Ilya Erenburg: An Idealist in an Age of Reason.²¹ This book attempts again to chronicle Èrenburg's life as objectively as possible without offering any explanation for his activities. Here, once more very little light is shed on the subject of Èrenburg's Jewish ethnicity and the work is not so much an intellectual biography as an outline of events in the author's life.

As these two biographies by a Canadian and an American were being published two others by French authors appeared in France: Ewa Berard's La Vie tumultueuse d'Ilya Ehrenbourg: Juif, Russe et Soviétique (1991) and Lilly Marcou's Ilya Ehrenbourg: un homme dans son siècle (1992). Both of these works deal sympathetically with Èrenburg, but once again do not fully elucidate the Jewish issues.

At the same time a Russian critic, Aleksandr Rubashkin approached the subject in his work Илья Эренбург: Путь писателя (1990). The opening of new archival material made it possible for him to expand on his earlier work of 1965.²² *Glasnost'*

²⁰ Klimenko, 9.

²¹ Julian Laychuk, Ilya Erenburg: An Idealist in an Age of Reason (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991).

²² Александр Рубашкин, Илья Эренбург: Путь писателя (Ленинград: Советский писатель, 1990).

could still not bear complete openness, however, and a full treatment of Jewish issues in Rubashkin's work is not given.²³ Nevertheless, this work marks the reentry of valid Russian criticism on Èrenburg.

The most recent major publication about Èrenburg, Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg, appeared in 1996 and was written by Joshua Rubenstein. Unlike many of the earlier biographies of Èrenburg, Tangled Loyalties explores the Jewish element of Èrenburg's life story extensively and explains, in a thorough manner many of the contradictory elements of the writer's life within the context of his ethnicity. Rubenstein's work is largely sympathetic towards Èrenburg and portrays him as being able to "successfully maintain a measure of personal and artistic integrity."²⁴ In part Rubenstein credits Èrenburg's Jewish ethnicity and his resultant outsider status, as having been decisive elements of his capacity to survive and to overcome the contradictions that he faced. Rubenstein argues that the steps that Èrenburg took, although they may have seemed detrimental, or hypocritical, to some factions of the Jewish community, in the long run were planned to produce the least damage and the greatest good for the Jews, given the situation in which the author found himself. In essence, Rubenstein presents Èrenburg as being pro-Jewish in his approach to the Jews.

Another author worth mentioning in this list of biographers is the Israeli Mordekhai Alt'shuler. Although he did not write a complete monograph about Èrenburg's life, he offers a rather extensive introduction to the work Советские евреи

²³ Sicher, 263.

²⁴ Rubenstein, 1.

пишут Илье Эренбург 1943-1966 (1993). In his lengthy introduction he gives an extensive biographical sketch of the author and discusses his activities and ideas within the context of his Jewishness.²⁵ Like Rubenstein, Alt'shuler considers Èrenburg to be a defender of the Jews and pro-Semitic. In so doing, Alt'shuler goes a little further than Rubenstein in developing this view; he takes into account Èrenburg's literary works, discussing the fact that Èrenburg believed that the Jews, as a cultural group, held a unique and important role among other nationalities.

Another contribution that should not be overlooked in a discussion of Èrenburg and his Jewishness is Efraim Sicher's study of Jewish writers in the early Soviet period in Russia—Jews in Russian Literature after the October Revolution (1995). In the chapter entitled "Il'ia Ehrenburg, the eternal chameleon", Sicher approaches Èrenburg from a less positive stance than Rubenstein and Alt'shuler.²⁶ According to Sicher, Èrenburg was not pro-Jewish, but rather anti-anti-Semitic. When he did aid his fellow Jews, it was not out of sympathy for their cause, whether it was Zionism or recognition of the state of Israel, but in defiance of the prevailing anti-Semitic attitudes and aggressions in Western Europe and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, in Sicher's opinion, Èrenburg's sometimes contradictory behavior was motivated, above all, by the instinct for self preservation in the face of possible imprisonment, exile or death. Èrenburg's priorities, according to

²⁵ Мордехай Алтшулер, Советские евреи пишут Илье Эренбург 1943-1946 (Иерусалим: Центр по Исследованию и Документации Восточно-европейского Еврейства Еврейского университета в Иерусалиме, 1993).

²⁶ Sicher, 165-204.

Sicher, were first preservation of self, second allegiance to Russia and third his Jewish ethnicity, in so far as it was defined by his opposition to anti-Semitism.

Having mentioned the major biographical works that have been written about Il'ia Èrenburg, I would also like to point to a couple of critical studies that should also be discussed. The two major works, Rahel-Roni Hammerman's monograph, Die satirischen Werke von Il'ja Èrenburg, published in 1968,²⁷ and Erika Ujvary-Maier's critical work, entitled Studien zum Frühwerk Ilja Erenburgs: Der Roman "Chulio Churenito,,, which appeared in 1970,²⁸ both deal rather extensively with Èrenburg's novel Khulio Khurenito. Hammerman and Ujvary-Maier both discuss the stereotypes of the various European nations set forth in the novel—showing how they typify the author's views of national cultures. In addition, Hammerman discusses the Nietzschean elements in the novel, thus raising a contentious issue, since Nietzsche's name eventually became associated with the Nationalist Socialists who wrested his ideas from their context and used them to support their anti-Semitic activities. Ujvary-Maier discusses traces of Fedor Dostoevskii's ideas in Èrenburg's works. In particular the chapter that is a parody of Dostoevskii's famous "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in (The Brothers Karamazov) is treated at some length. Both these German contributions to Èrenburg scholarship are, undoubtedly, illuminating and enriching.

²⁷ Rahel-Roni Hammermann, Die satirischen Werke von Il'ja Erenburg (Wien: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1968).

²⁸ Erika Ujvary-Maier, Studien zum Frühwerk Ilja Erenburgs: Der Roman "Chulio Churenito,, (Zürich: Juris Druch, 1970).

The purpose of this dissertation is to add to the debate surrounding Èrenburg's stance in relation to the status of the Jews in diaspora, to Zionism, to Jewish nationalism, Judaism and other facets of "Jewishness" in Èrenburg's life and ideology. As mentioned before, the primary text that will be used for the exploration of this topic is Èrenburg's novel, Khulio Khurenito. Although it may seem inappropriate to rely on an author's fictional work as a reliable source of his own philosophical stance, this approach is being taken for a couple of reasons. First, in his memoirs Èrenburg says of the character of the novel that bears his name: "герой, именуемый Ильей Эренбургом, подчас высказывал мои подлинные мысли."²⁹ (the character called Ilya Ehrenburg sometimes voiced my real thoughts.)³⁰ In reference to this statement he singles out a particular scene in the novel in which the Jewish nation is discussed and the character, Èrenburg, asserts that he, being a Jew, prefers to deny rather than affirm. On this pivotal point then, which serves as the impetus for a discussion of the Jews, the author is in agreement with the philosophical stance of his namesake in the novel. Secondly, this image of the "nay-sayer" appears as an important motif in several of his works, written at different points in his life, which adds support to the claim, made in his memoirs at a late stage of his life:

Хуренито...мне дорог. В нем я высказал много того, что определило не только мой литературный путь, но и мою жизнь. Разумеется, в этой книге немало вздорных суждений и наивных парадоксов; я все время пытался разглядеть будущее; одно увидел, в другом ошибся.

²⁹ Илья Эренбург, Собрание Сочинений в девяти томах, т. 8 (Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1962), 28-29.

³⁰ Ilya Ehrenburg, Men, Years-Life (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1962), v.1, 32.

Но в целом это книга, от которой я не отказываюсь. ...Я подписываюсь и теперь под этими мыслями;...³¹

(Jurenito... is dear to me: in it I expressed many things that determined not only my literary development but my whole life. Naturally I contains many false judgments and crude paradoxes; I was trying all the time to look into the future; some things I succeeded in seeing, others I missed entirely. But by and large it is not a book that I would disown. ...I still subscribe to those ideas;...)³²

If Èrenburg's life was a web of contradictions, on this point of singling out Khulio Khurenito as his most confessional work, he remained constant at least.

In investigating Èrenburg's presentation of the role of the Jew as set forth in Khulio Khurenito, his ideas will be placed against the background of some of the literary and philosophical views concerning the Jews that were debated in nineteenth and twentieth century Russia. First, since traces of Nietzsche's philosophy abound in the novel, the Jewish Question will be approached through the lens of his philosophy, particularly as expressed through his works Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Beyond Good and Evil. Second, they will be compared to the views about the unique role of the Jews among other nations, as suggested by two prominent Russian-Jewish philosophers, Simon Mikhailovich Dubnov and Mikhail Osipovich Gershenzon. Thirdly, they will be looked at in relation to Dostoevskii's ideas, since his works left a deep impression on Èrenburg. In particular, the role of the Jew will be viewed in the context of Dostoevskii's "Underground Man," who bears some of the traits of Èrenburg's Jewish archetype.

This dissertation contributes to the debate about Èrenburg and his attitude toward the Jews by broadening the philosophical base for understanding Èrenburg's views.

³¹ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 394.

³² Ehrenburg, Men, v. 2, 193.

Whereas, Dostoevskii and Nietzsche have already been brought into this debate to some extent, I will expand on what has been previously done in this area and include the ideas of Russian-Jewish philosophers who are likely to have influenced Èrenburg, a subject that has, so far, been neglected. By so doing this dissertation will show that Èrenburg's stance was not pro-Semitic, in the traditional sense that Rubenstein and Alt'schuler propose, but anti-anti-Semitic—although not with the same prioritization that Sicher suggests. Èrenburg's apparent interest in the Jews, as well as his own Jewish heritage, was not entirely motivated by a feeling of kinship with, or bias against them but rather by a vision that the nation had an important historical role to perform. Despite this unique role, the Jews were not above criticism, however, nor were they valued above other nations—for ultimately all nations would take their place side by side in a united mankind.

CHAPTER 1: ÈRENBURG'S BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

The Russian Jews

As already stated, Il'ia Èrenburg, in reference to his Jewish background, liked to quote Ernst Toller's statement: "To say I am proud of being a Jew is like saying I am proud of having brown eyes." Ironically, although he seemed reticent to express any special loyalty to Jewry, his Jewish background most certainly played not only a very significant, but even decisive, role in shaping his philosophical and ideological stances and commitments. In fact, his commitment to the cause of Jewish ethnicity was the ideological glue that held his divided loyalties together. Èrenburg was not a "Zionist", even less a Stalinist; nor was he a "Soviet" citizen except in the most superficial sense; but he was an anti-anti-Semite. This qualification does not imply lack of fervor. Èrenburg was a passionate anti-anti-Semite. Ultimately, his deep commitment to Jewish culture as the culture of the "no" is the cinch that holds his biography and *oeuvre* together.

Born in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Èrenburg often remarked that he considered himself part of the intellectual climate of that century.³³ It may be true that the philosophical mood of that time strongly influenced him. However, it would be

negligent to ignore some of the important transitions that Jewry was undergoing during the second half of the nineteenth century, as well, and the impact that these transitions had on the European intellectual climate, Jewish national perception, and Erenburg himself.

Paul Johnson, in his monograph The History of the Jews, marks the beginning of the nineteenth century as a time of tremendous change for Russian Jewry.³⁴ Up until the last quarter of the eighteenth century Jews had been practically non-existent in Russia. The few that had ventured into its territories before that time were either forced to be baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church, or sentenced to death in Ivan the Terrible's time; his successors forbade Jews entrance into the country following an isolationist policy. Not until Russia absorbed a large portion of Poland, along with the millions of Jews that inhabited it, were the czars forced to confront the Jews on any significant scale, and made aware of the "Jewish question". Suddenly saddled with such a large population of a non-Russian ethnic group that it had more or less ignored earlier, the Russian government proved inept in its dealings with the Jews. Facing what became known as the "Jewish question", the tsars set up policies that vacillated widely. They sometimes restricted the Jews and sometimes allowed them more freedoms, but they never accepted them as an integral part of the multi-national empire.

³³ Goldberg, 130.

³⁴ Paul Johnson, A History of the Jews (New York: HarperPerennial, 1988), 341-342.

Eventually the Jews were permanently restricted to one particular region of the Empire that became known as the Pale of Settlement.³⁵ They could leave the Pale to travel, or to live elsewhere, only if they were employed in certain privileged professions such as “discharged soldiers, graduates, ‘useful merchants’ and ‘mechanics, distillers, brewers and artisans’.”³⁶ Heavy taxes was a continuous burden placed upon all the Jews of the Pale and they often found it difficult to earn a living. During the reign of Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) the condition in the Pale was particularly oppressive, as he introduced conscription for Jewish males. Not only conscription per se added to the burdens of the Jewish population, but attempts at Russifying the Jewish conscripts were also undertaken and Jewish boys as young as 12 who were called up to service would be urged to convert to Russian Orthodoxy.

Unfairly taxed, unable to leave crowded conditions and stripped of the most active segment of their male breadwinners, the Jews of the Pale lived in conditions of poverty and squalor, harboring a bitter resentment against the Russian government. Forced to live in an oppressive atmosphere, the Jews turned to spiritual scholasticism, albeit in a sterile form, as an escape from the harsh and stifling reality of their conditions. Outdated as scholasticism of any shape was by this time, this one turned out sterile and irrelevant to real-life conditions. Casuistics, poring over the minutia of the Talmud, and mystical, ritualistic religious practices became the dominant features of Jewish

³⁵ The Settlement was made up of 25 provinces that extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea. (Johnson, 358).

³⁶ Johnson, 360.

spirituality.³⁷ Learning and, in particular, learning the Torah and Talmud for the men, was held in high respect and often all resources in the Jewish home were consecrated to a lifelong study of the Talmud.

In this stifling, medieval atmosphere, news from the West in the form of the Haskalah, or European Jewish Enlightenment trickled in, albeit slowly. In the West many young Jews had sought a secular education and opted to forsake their religious and ethnic traditions in an attempt to assimilate with the culture surrounding them. The result was a great Jewish exodus from the ghetto, which was destined to cause significant reverberations both outside and inside the Jewish community.

Naturally, news about the emancipation and assimilation of the Jews in Germany and other European countries appealed to the Russian Jews who remained oppressed by the anti-Semitic Russian tsars. As had happened in Europe, the Russian Jews eventually turned to secular scholastics to find an escape from their stifling situation and the texts of assimilated western Jews were often pored over with the same fervent zeal that previously had been relegated to the Talmud and Torah. As is often the case, with greater enlightenment came greater dissatisfaction and the younger generations of Jews, in particular, became increasingly unsettled.

During the reign of Alexander II, who is well known for his emancipation of the serfs, many of the restrictions placed on the Jews were relaxed as well. Those who performed certain trades or services useful to the Empire were allowed to leave the Pale and live in St. Petersburg, or Moscow, and some of the Jewish youth were allowed to

³⁷ Joshua Kunitz, Russian Literature and the Jew: A Sociological Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Literary Patterns (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 11.

study in Russian schools. Many Jews at this time attempted to assimilate among the Russian population, as the western Jews had done in Europe. Some were even able to do quite well in the cities, though their successes were often short-lived because the gradually emerging Russian middle class felt threatened by them.

The liberal policies of Alexander II came to an abrupt halt when he was assassinated in 1881. Among the revolutionaries involved in the assassination was a young Jewess, Gesia Gelfman who had performed a minor role by providing a place for the revolutionaries to take up secret residence.³⁸ The anti-Semitic press took advantage of this fact to spread their already strong anti-Jewish sentiments. There had arisen a great deal of animosity toward the Jews because of their successes in the cities during the liberal reign of Alexander II. Their urban prosperity had become a threat to the Russian petty bourgeoisie, who had first used Jewish successes to establish themselves, but later, having achieved independence, sought to eliminate the Jewish element that they viewed as a disgrace to the Russian soil.

Alexander III ascended the throne after the assassination of his father and in the atmosphere of extreme anti-Semitism that gripped the country set into place the most damaging anti-Jewish policies to date in order to appease the Russian populace. Within a month and a half of the Alexander III's ascension to the throne the first Jewish pogrom was executed and, within a year, 150 more followed, most with some degree of government participation or, at least, tacit agreement.

³⁸ Simon Mikhailovich Dubnov, History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: From the Earliest Times until the Present Day (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1975)

During this bleak period of Alexander III's reign all hopes of assimilation and normal relations between Jews and Russians crumbled and the Jews were plunged into an even more desperate situation than before *Haskalah*. In the face of such bleak circumstances the Jews turned to several avenues. Many abandoned the Pale and immigrated to Europe or the U.S., while others clung to the hopes that the Zionist movement offered. Still others chose a route similar to that of many of their western counterparts—revolution. The impetus for their revolt was to escape the fetters of both the stifling atmosphere of the small Jewish towns, or *shtetls*, and the threatening policies of the Russian government. The Social Democratic Party, founded in 1898, attracted quite a few Jews who saw its program as working for opportunities to escape from the oppression of the tsars.

Much like his European counterpart from the ghetto, the Russian Jewish revolutionary from the *shtetl* was a hybrid created by the suffocating social traditions of life in the Pale and the inflexible animosity of his host country. He was often highly educated, being a product of a *shtetl* tradition that doted on its intellectuals. Yet his brand of secular intelligence was unfit for the very society that produced him. These Jewish rebels were faced with a dilemma; were Judaism and Jewish ethnicity merely part of life, or did they envelop all of life? It was an all or nothing decision involving repudiation of religion versus adherence to Judaism, assimilation with Russians versus “being Jewish”. To leave the Pale was to forsake all, while to stay required acceptance of all.

For those that opted to leave the Pale and their cultural traditions this severance resulted in a spirit of negation and self-criticism.

Their break with the past, with family and community, often combined with self-hatred, promoted among them a spirit of negation and destruction, of iconoclasm, almost at times of nihilism—an urge to overthrow institutions and values of all kinds—which gentile conservatives were beginning to identify, by the end of the nineteenth century, as a peculiarly Jewish social and cultural disease.³⁹

The historian of Jewry, Paul Johnson, offers some reasons for the Jewish intellectuals' often radical rebellion against authority. Chief among them is the "Biblical tradition of social criticism," or the readiness of Jews throughout the centuries to expose societal injustices and point out the needs of the poor. Always being within an alien nation and, in most cases, not being a participant in its culture lent the Jews some degree of objectivity and they were quick to point out these injustices to the authorities since their status was usually non-acceptance by their host nations. They had nothing to lose.

Another reason for the rebellion was, ironically, because of their respect for authority. This authority however, did not lie in respect for individual rulers. Rather, because of the societal tradition of producing biblical scholars, the Jews had a highly tuned respect for the Law, or the Torah. When the rebelling Jews rejected Jewish Law, they sought efficacy in a new law based on an ethical system. For many this was found in the constitutionally based systems of the United States and Great Britain. For those who stayed in Russia however, the gross moral deficiencies of the tsarist law deserved little respect.

³⁹ Johnson, 354.

Èrenburg's Family

Èrenburg's father was among those of the first generation of Russian Jews to leave the Pale and to get an education in a Russian school.⁴⁰ This was significant not only because it symbolized his secularization and break with the Jewish religion, but also because it was difficult for Jews in nineteenth century Russia to be allowed into a Russian school. Tsarist Russia was notorious for its poor treatment of the Jews. Whereas other European governments had "preserved an ambivalent attitude, protecting, using, exploiting and milking the Jews, as well as persecuting them from time to time, the Russians always treated the Jews as unacceptable aliens."⁴¹ As already mentioned above, part of this treatment was the exclusion of Jews from top educational institutions and the implementation of a *numerous clausus*, or quota system, for those wishing to enter Russian secondary schools. Èrenburg's father had apparently worked hard to get his education and he would always stress the importance of good marks to his son.⁴²

Another restriction placed on the Jews limited their movement almost exclusively to the Pale of Settlement. Visiting, living, working, or traveling outside the Pale were prohibited to all Jews except those who were granted privileged status. The occupation of Èrenburg's father was that of a brewer and it earned him the right to acquire a residence permit for Moscow and to relocate from Kiev to the capital. This move occurred when Èrenburg was still quite young.

⁴⁰ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 19.

⁴¹ Johnson, 358.

⁴² Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 19.

Although Èrenburg's father had rejected the religious customs of his past, his mother continued to cling to hers. Èrenburg describes his mother as being a superstitious woman who feared:

...и бога, которого нельзя было называть по имени, и тех «богов», которым следовало приносить обильные жертвоприношения, чтобы они не потребовали кровавых жертв. Она никогда не забывала ни о Судном дне на небе, ни о погромах на земле.⁴³

(...both the God whose name could not be uttered and those 'gods' which had to be offered plentiful sacrifices in order that they should not demand blood. She never forgot either the Day of Judgment in heaven or the pogroms on earth.)⁴⁴

From his mother's fearful prayers and rituals he probably sensed some of the anxiety associated with the Jewish situation. At his maternal grandfather's house all religious customs were strictly observed, which must have seemed odd to a child and youth growing up outside of the tradition.

Given the oppressive attitude of the Russian government towards the Jews it is surprising that the young Èrenburg felt no anti-Semitic sentiment aimed at him while growing up in Moscow. In his autobiography, Люди, годы, жизнь (Men, Years, Life, 1961), he claims that, while it very likely was present among some of his schoolmates and teachers, it was never openly expressed.⁴⁵ This reticence to express anti-Semitic

⁴³ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 15.

⁴⁴ Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 16-17.

⁴⁵ He does however, mention one incident when he went to school for the first time. A little boy began singing the following version of "Humpty Dumpty": 'Jew boy, Jew boy sat on a wall, Jew boy, Jew boy had a great fall.' Èrenburg claims that he then hit the boy in the face, but they soon became friends and he was not taunted by anyone else. Anatol Goldberg in his work, Ива Èренбург, gives this incident a little more weight than Èrenburg did in his autobiography, Люди, годы, жизнь (Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 15). He claims that this episode apparently was more serious to the young Èrenburg than he lets on later because in an earlier autobiographical sketch, which he wrote in 1926, the author fails to mention that he and the boy became friends. This smaller autobiography was also only supposed to only contain the

feelings openly, he attributed to the fact that: «АНТИСЕМИТИЗМА В ТЕ ВРЕМЕНА ИНТЕЛЛИГЕНТЫ СТЫДИЛИСЬ, КАК ДУРНОЙ БОЛЕЗНИ.»⁴⁶ If the young Èrenburg was spared external persecution, he nonetheless instinctively understood that he was different from his Russian peers. Part of this sense may have stemmed from the Jewish traditions that his mother cherished and the residual memories of life in the Pale that his parents had retained, as well as occasional visits to his grandparents in Kiev.

As mentioned above, his father tried to instill in his son the importance of working hard to achieve high marks in school in order to be one of those chosen to fill the quotas. Èrenburg sensed that he must perform better than his peers in order to be acceptable. Success in school and one's profession earned a Jew freedom in Russia. Naturally, Èrenburg's father was anxious to see his son succeed and assimilate with the Russians. Nevertheless, he was not prepared for him to forsake his ethnic roots completely. He expressed his dislike for those Jews who sought to better their position by converting to Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, though Èrenburg grew up with no religious ties to Judaism; [«Никакому богу— ни еврейскому, ни русскому—я не МОЛИЛСЯ,»⁴⁷ (“I never prayed to any God, either Jewish or Russian,”)⁴⁸ he states in his memoirs that he, at the same time, derived a sense of loyalty to it from his father from whom he

things that had really mattered the most to him as opposed to the all-encompassing Люди, годы, жизнь. (Goldberg, 123).

⁴⁶ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 18.

⁴⁷ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 18.

⁴⁸ Ehrenburg, Men, v. 1, 20.

learned that «нельзя стыдиться своего происхождения.»⁴⁹ (“one must not be ashamed of one’s origins.”)⁵⁰ From his father’s counsel to do well in school, his mother’s fearful prayers and their combined discussions of Jewish topics, Èrenburg came to sense his situation as a member of the Jewish race in these terms:

Слово «еврей» я воспринимал по-особому: я принадлежу к тем, кого положено обижать; это казалось мне несправедливым и в то же время естественным.⁵¹

(My reaction to the word ‘Jew’ was a peculiar one: I belong to those whom it is proper to persecute. This seemed to me unjust and at the same time natural.)⁵²

He indicates that at an early age he was well aware that there were such things as the Jewish Pale, residence permits, place quotas and pogroms.⁵³ Such ideas however, must have remained vague and distant for Èrenburg since he was in Moscow and experienced no anti-Semitic persecution himself. When he was twelve he heard news of the Kishinev pogrom in 1904, but understood that those responsible for the persecution were, «царь, губернатор, городовые,» (“the Tsar, the Governor, the police...”) he also knew «что все порядочные люди против самодержавия, что Толстой, Чехов,

⁴⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 18.

⁵⁰ Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 20.

⁵¹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 18.

⁵² Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 20.

⁵³ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 18.

Короленко возмущены погромом.»⁵⁴ (“that all decent people were against the autocracy; I knew that Tolstoy, Chekhov, Korolenko were outraged by the pogrom.”)⁵⁵

To him the articles about the pogroms conveyed merely «последние отголоски средневекового изуверства»⁵⁶ (“the last echoes of a medieval fanaticism”)⁵⁷ that should have died with the nineteenth century. Thus when his father remonstrated with him for poor grades and warned him that he would lose the privilege of living in Moscow, Èrenburg merely grinned, reasoning that when he completed the gymnasium, «все на свете переменится.»⁵⁸ (“the whole world would have changed.”)⁵⁹ The world did not change with the turn of the century, but Èrenburg, as a young adolescent, became more acutely aware of its contradictions. Although he had not been raised in the Pale, and his father had been the one to rebel against *shtetl* life, Èrenburg nevertheless inherited from his father some of the traits characteristic of Jews who chose to leave the *shtetl* and the Pale. He had not suffered personal persecution, but he knew that he was numbered among those to whom it could be meted out for no meaningful reason. The stories of the pogroms, the Pale and the “yiddish” conversations of his parents all contributed to this heightened awareness of injustice and increased his sympathy for the

⁵⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 19.

⁵⁵ Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 20.

⁵⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 19.

⁵⁷ Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 20.

⁵⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 19.

⁵⁹ Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 20.

oppressed.⁶⁰ Since Èrenburg was not in a situation of oppression himself, his energies and sympathies extended outward to those whom he saw suffering around him, regardless of whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

One such example of his heightened sensitivity injustice was his reaction to the situation at his father's brewery. There he saw a life far different from that of the bourgeois atmosphere of his parents' drawing room:

Рабочие спали в душных полутемных каннармах на нарах, покрытые тулупами; они пили кислое, испорченное пиво, иногда играли в карты, пели, сквернословили. ...Помню еще забаву: рабочие облили керосином крысу, и огненная крыса металась в кругу. Я видел жизнь нищую, темную, страшную, и меня потрясала несовместимость двух миров: вонючих казарм и гостиной, где умные люди говорили о колоратуре.⁶¹

(The workmen slept in stuffy, dark barracks on boards covered with sheepskin coats; they drank bad sour beer, sometimes played cards and sang and swore. I remember an entertainment: the workmen poured some paraffin over a rat and the fiery rat darted to and fro inside a circle. I saw a poverty-stricken, dark, terrifying life and I was deeply shaken by the incompatibility of two worlds: the stinking barracks and the drawing-room where intelligent people talked about coloratura.)⁶²

Èrenburg found the conversations about music, literature, the theater, the latest court cases, and Jewish pogroms that filled his parents' drawing room to be dull, and in fact, hypocritical. How could such ideals as beauty and justice be discussed in a comfortable room, while the workmen lived and worked nearby in morally and physically deprived conditions?

⁶⁰ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 21.

⁶¹ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 21-22.

⁶² Ehrenburg, Men, v.1, 23.

One particular incident at the brewery led Èrenburg to the conclusion that «взрослые тоже ничего не понимают в жизни.»⁶³ (“the grown-ups didn’t know anything about life either.”)⁶⁴ Among the workmen there was a group of Czechs, that were especially oppressed because of their outsider status as foreigners and they also suffered the derision of the other workers. One Czech youth was found guilty of murdering his mother and two sisters, because his parents would not give him money to buy some expensive jewelry for a “Moscow beauty.” As the rumors of the murder and murderer circulated, Èrenburg remembered the sickly workman’s son and realized that he had been a “Jew” within Russian society and that the same society that had demeaned him and driven him to the act, now criticized him and held him entirely accountable for it.

Another memory of the brewery was that of a visit from Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi who lived next door. Èrenburg had voraciously read his novel, Воскресение (Resurrection, 1899), in one sitting and had come to the conclusion that Tolstoi «знает всю правду.»⁶⁵ (“knew the whole truth.”)⁶⁶ Eager to see what this sage would say, Èrenburg tagged along as Tolstoi was given a tour, arranged by his father, to see how beer was made. Tolstoi was given a mug of warm beer to drink and, after praising its taste, he suggested that beer could be used in the war against vodka. For the idealistic

⁶³ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 22.

⁶⁴ Ehrenburg, Мец, v. 1, 24.

⁶⁵ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 22.

⁶⁶ Ehrenburg, Мец, v. 1, 24.

young Èrenburg, replacing beer for vodka was a far less noble concern than replacing falsehood with truth.⁶⁷

Èrenburg's Political Activity

As social inequity brought disillusionment to young Èrenburg, he sought answers to life in books. The more he read, the more he began to distrust society, increasingly becoming aware of its injustices. One book that he mentions as leaving a particularly strong impression on him is Dostoevskii's Преступление и Наказание (Crime and Punishment, 1865). The pathos of Sonya's fate perceived as an image of the downtrodden elements of Russian society-caused the young idealist a great deal of pain; he felt similarly sympathetic toward the men who lived in the depraved conditions at his father's brewery. In view of such injustices he came to the conclusion that: «нужно все перевернуть, решительно все!»⁶⁸ (“positively everything must be turned upside down.”)⁶⁹

Èrenburg was eager to take an active part in dismantling the society that he considered so corrupt. The times offered ample opportunity for a youth looking for involvement. In 1905, at the young age of fourteen, Èrenburg records often attending revolutionary meetings at Moscow University that were filled with students and workmen. With the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, Èrenburg, as many other boys, jumped in to help erect barricades in the streets of Moscow. In 1906 when things were

⁶⁷ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 22-23.

⁶⁸ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 28.

⁶⁹ Ehrenburg, Мен, v.1, 32.

settling down after the revolution, he made the decision to join the Bolsheviks. He preferred the Bolsheviks over the more moderate Mensheviks and Kadets (the party his father favored) because he was drawn to the “romance of the unromantic” or, in other words, the to steely, intolerant enforcement of justice they advocated.⁷⁰ Remembering the men in the brewery, who apparently had become a symbol of society’s iniquity for him, Èrenburg favored a swift and radical overturn of things as they were; he believed the militant Bolsheviks were the ones who would usher in total justice:

Я часто повторял про себя одно слово: «справедливость». Это очень жестокое слово, порой холодное, как металл на морозе, но тогда оно мне казалось горячим, милым, своим.⁷¹

(Often I repeated the word ‘justice’. It is a very hard word, sometimes cold like metal in the frost, but to me then it seemed warm, friendly, a word I could love.)⁷²

Motivated by his longing for justice Èrenburg plunged into underground activities. He wrote articles for underground newspapers, attended workers’ meetings and copied and distributed leaflets to workers and soldiers. These activities eventually led to his expulsion from school and, finally, to imprisonment.

Èrenburg remained in prison for four months before he was set free, but only under surveillance. Given his youthful ardor, Èrenburg continued his association with the Bolsheviks and his underground activities and, as a result, had a difficult time getting lodging, as he was not allowed to stay in Moscow and few were willing to risk their

⁷⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 35.

⁷¹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 35.

⁷² Ehrenburg, Men, v. 1, 39.

security for his sake by allowing him to stay with them. He shuffled from place to place, constantly harassed by police until he could no longer stand the situation and in desperation he turned himself in, begging to be put back into prison. Much to his surprise the police informed him that his father had paid 500 rubles for his bail and had applied for permission to send him abroad for medical purposes, which had been granted. In a short time Èrenburg, still a youth of seventeen, took up residence in Paris.

Far from the intense political activities at home Èrenburg was to have a very different experience in Paris than he had in Moscow; it would be one that would change his direction politically—for some time at least. When he arrived in Paris, Èrenburg immediately sought out the Russian political *émigré* community and, in particular, those affiliated with the Bolsheviks. Initially he joined in the political meetings and debates and he met all of the prominent Russian political exiles. As time passed, his attendance waned and he grew disillusioned with their debates. For a young man who had been taking great risks in the Russian underground, the fruitless and impotent arguments of the *émigrés* apparently appeared lackluster. The Bolshevik- *émigrés*' efforts at ideological involvement seemed ineffectual.

One experience was to take the final toll on his affiliation with the Bolsheviks. On the advice of a friend, Èrenburg traveled to Vienna to meet and work for a prominent Social Democrat whom Èrenburg refers to as X in his memoirs. Apparently this X was Leon Trotsky.⁷³ While staying with X, Èrenburg was to prepare newspapers to be mailed to Russia. Èrenburg apparently showed X some of the poetry that he had been writing, to

⁷³ Goldberg, 24.

which Trotsky, or X, responded negatively. He chastised Èrenburg for wasting time on poetry, arguing that art and poetry were of secondary worth to the political agenda and spoke poorly of those poets that Èrenburg held in high regard. Èrenburg was upset by X's comments and, feeling it was useless to argue with him, simply left his home without any parting words in order to return to Paris. Completely disillusioned by X's outright denial of the value of art in the revolutionary movement, Èrenburg almost completely ended all of his associations with the political left-wing *émigré* community in Paris.

The Bohemian Period

The idea of art being superfluous to social reform and secondary to politics had actually already, prior to his Vienna stay, been a subject of much consternation and inner struggle for Èrenburg. He had always been drawn to literature—and this fact had caused him considerable embarrassment when he was actively involved in underground activities for the Bolsheviks in Moscow. Justice and revolution were clear cut and rational issues that had to be accepted as beyond doubt in the mind of the young revolutionary who had little tolerance for moderation. Initially he took the typical socialist stance towards art: it was superfluous, since it hindered the progress of the revolutionary struggle. And yet Èrenburg was never able to subdue his desire to indulge in this “weakness”, even in his most revolutionary phase:

Казалось, я был забронирован своей непримиримостью; но нет, искусство забиралось и в мое подполье. Ночами я читал Гамсуна — «Пана», «Викторию», «Мистерии», ругал себя за слабость, но восхищался.... Я говорил себе по-прежнему, что все это чупуха, но порой не мог от «чепухи» заслониться.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 45-46.

(One might have thought that my intransigence would have acted as an armour; but no, art penetrated even into my underground world. At night I read Hamsun—Pan, Victoria, The Mysteries; I cursed myself for my weakness, but was enthralled nevertheless:.... I said to myself as before that all this was nonsense, but sometimes I could not take refuge from the ‘nonsense’.)⁷⁵

Earlier in Moscow he had chided his girlfriend for her “passion for poetry,” at the same time feeling his own inability to subdue his affinity for it: «я боялся всего, что может раздвоить человека: меня тянуло к искусству, и я его ненавидел.»⁷⁶ (“I was afraid to do anything that might divide me. I was drawn towards art, yet hated it.”)⁷⁷ It was poetry that would ultimately “divide” him for good—it was poetry that he began to write «неожиданно для самого себя»⁷⁸ (“to [his] own surprise.”)⁷⁹ This final capitulation to art must have come about for several reasons. One was his growing isolation from revolutionary action at home. As time passed Èrenburg’s letters to his activist friends in Russia began to receive shorter and shorter replies. As already mentioned above, he found no meaningful compensatory activities among the *émigrés*.

The strongest allure that drew him to poetry and the arts came from his new surroundings in Paris. Life among the Russian political *émigrés* was much like living in a ghetto. The Russians, as a general rule, remained isolated in their own communities speaking only Russian among themselves, eating *shchi* and bickering over ineffectual and

⁷⁵ Ehrenburg, *Мен*, v. 1, 49.

⁷⁶ Эренбург, *Собрание* т. 8 (1962), 38.

⁷⁷ Ehrenburg, *Мен*, v. 1, 42.

⁷⁸ Эренбург, *Собрание* т. 8 (1962), 72.

⁷⁹ Ehrenburg, *Мен*, v. 1, 80.

petty issues of Russian politics. This gray existence could hardly have been expected to command the attention of the young Èrenburg when the bright cafes, museums and artistic activity on the streets of Paris beckoned. The hopes that he had placed in Bolshevism began to be replaced by a commitment to art. Bohemian and cosmopolitan cafés replaced political meetings and political tracts were replaced by poetry.

This period of transition from stoic revolutionary to bohemian artist was a time of confusion and difficulty for Èrenburg, and the fact that he so whole-heartedly had taken up poetry did not signal that he had resolved all of his ideological issues:

Я не хотел жить искусством, я не мог от него уйти. Когда знакомые меня спрашивали «Пишете стихи?» — я обижался. Я хотел что — то делать, жить всерьез.⁸⁰

(I didn't want to live by art, but I couldn't walk away from it. When acquaintances asked me, "Do you write poetry?," I was offended. I wanted to do something—to live seriously. [My translation])

Although Èrenburg had allowed himself to follow his aesthetic instincts and to indulge in this innate need to write poetry, he was not comfortable with the situation. There still remained an ideological void that art could not completely fill at this point. In his early autobiographical work, Книга для взрослых (A Book for Grown-Ups, 1936) Èrenburg describes his struggle to come to terms with his predicament:

Я сидел на скамье парижского бульвара с Лизой. Мне было восемнадцать лет. Я говорил, что у меня нет больше цели. Париж мне казался легкомысленным до отвращения. Лиза подарила мне книгу; на первой странице она написала, что сердце надо опоясать железными обручами, как бочку. Я подумал: где же я возьму обручи?⁸¹

⁸⁰ Èренбург, Стихотворения, 318-319.

⁸¹ Илья Григорьевич Èренбург, Книга для взрослых (Москва: Книга и Бизнес, 1992), 318.

(I sat on a bench with Liza along a Parisian street. I was eighteen years old. I said that I didn't have a purpose. Paris seemed superficial to point of repugnance. Liza gave me a book: on the first page she wrote that the heart must be bound by iron hoops like a barrel. I wondered where I would find these hoops. [My translation]).

For a short time Èrenburg found the cohesive, “binding” force that he felt to be lacking in his life through religion and, in particular, Catholicism—not Judaism. This was a rather unusual turn, considering that Èrenburg was a young Jew and had never prayed to “any God, either Jewish or Russian.”⁸² As a child growing up he had only associated religion with his mother’s “superstitions”, but now he felt there was a deeper meaning in it and sought to understand the concept of God:

Понятие Бога пришло ко мне в те годы растерянности; «Бог» был псевдонимом: за ним скрывалась справедливость. Прежде я думал, что идея Бога связана с постным маслом, с храктением бабок, с невежеством. Вокруг меня были философы и поэты, они говорили на моем языке, но слово «Бог» казалось им естественным, как «жизнь» или как «смерть».⁸³

(The idea of God came to me in those years of confusion. God was a pseudonym behind which justice hid. Earlier, I had connected the idea of God with lent, the shrieking of old women and ignorance. Around me were philosophers and poets who spoke in my language, but the word “God” seemed real to them, like “life” or “death.” [My translation]).

Perhaps, the ideas of God and faith appealed to Èrenburg at this time because they had legitimacy in the artistic milieu with which he now associated, whereas they were dismissed by his father and the revolutionaries with whom he was involved earlier. In any case, the main concept that drew Èrenburg to his new faith was that of justice—a

⁸² Èренбург, Собрание, т. 8, 20.

⁸³ Èренбург, Книга, 319.

motif which runs throughout Èrenburg's autobiographical works. Justice, as a cold and inexorable notion, was the very thing that had lured the young man to the revolutionary Bolsheviki—he had found the very lack of romanticism in Bolshevism romantic. However it was this very brand of inflexible and intolerant justice that later disillusioned and repulsed him during his talks with “X” in Vienna. In religion and the concept of “God,” Èrenburg was able to find a very different conceptualization of justice. Although it still remained a central value, it allowed room for artistic creativity and did not exclude the veneration of beauty. Indeed, the beauty of the Catholic cathedrals, the sacred music and the murals all combined to make this religion appealing to Èrenburg:

Я зашел в католическую церковь. Меня изумило все: витражи, шепот исповедален, орган. Мне показалось, что для чувств найден некий строй. Я хотел во что-нибудь верить: я не знал утром, как прожить день.⁸⁴

(I went to a Catholic church. Everything amazed me: the stained glass windows, the whispers of the confessional, and the organ. It seemed to me that there was a certain order for feelings. I wanted to believe in something: I didn't know in the morning how I would survive the day. [My translation])

During this time he was also reading the works of the Catholic poet, Francis Jammes, which he liked for their simplicity. Jammes' poetry contained a pastoral mixture of pagan pantheism and simple Christianity; it described such pastoral scenes as meadows with frolicking animals and beautiful trees. Èrenburg embraced Jammes' “God of donkeys and grass.”⁸⁵ Wishing to gain some insight from Jammes and expecting some advice and instruction from the “poet of simplicity”, Èrenburg went to visit him, but

⁸⁴ Èренбург, Книга, 319.

⁸⁵ Èренбург, Книга, 320.

came away disappointed as so often seemed to be the case (as with Tolstoi and Trotsky) when he visited those that he admired. The poet had only spoken of mundane matters concerning his farm and had proven to be no St. Francis of Assisi, or Father Zosima (of Dostoevskii's Brothers Karamazov), as Èrenburg had hoped.

Despite his disappointment with Jammes, Èrenburg still felt a strong attraction to the church and his “flirtation” with Catholicism even led him so far as to consider joining a Benedictine Order and entering a Benedictine monastery. Èrenburg does not offer much information about why he considered this step, nor whether he struggled with the idea of betraying his Jewish ethnicity and inherited religion (however superficially embraced) by aligning himself with the Catholic Church. In any case, he did not take this step and apparently it was not because of any disagreement with church doctrine or practice, but rather because he became distracted and fell in love.

World War I

Soon another distraction was to command his attention—the outbreak of World War I. Èrenburg was both repulsed and fascinated by the war. As he saw the organized columns of German troops moving along the streets he was sickened by the mechanized and carefully organized war effort devised for the destruction of other peoples. Yet, he also desired to become involved and to oppose the frightening German war machine. As a result he tried to join the French Army, but due to poor health he was denied acceptance. Not willing to be left out of the action Èrenburg found another way of getting to the front—that of becoming a Russian news correspondent. From this experience at

the front, Èrenburg was to come away with two lasting legacies: an abiding hatred for the German penchant for organization and an established career as a journalist.

In 1917 news of the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II reached Èrenburg and he, like many other Russian political exiles, rushed to return to the Motherland. This news had initially pleased Èrenburg, but soon the reality of the situation brought him consternation and disappointment. Even before he was able to get transportation back to Russia he witnessed the animosity between the different factions of political exiles and the situation only grew worse when he arrived in Russia. Soon the civil war broke out in Russia and Èrenburg watched with horror as each side acted equally violently, perpetuating terrible atrocities.

Èrenburg did not support the Bolshevik Revolution, and had initially even been hopeful that the Whites would gain the upper hand. His loyalty to the Whites dispersed however, when he saw that they were proliferating anti-Semitic propaganda and he realized that they represented a return to life as he had known it, as a schoolboy. In the post-revolutionary struggle for power Èrenburg recognized that a “stick remains a stick” and that the same policies of oppression and cruelty would be meted out regardless of which faction wielded control.

The Post War Years

After spending three years in Russia, Èrenburg was ready to return to Paris. He had formulated an idea for a book that he would base on the events of the prewar years and the revolution. In order to do this he felt he needed to leave the chaos in Russia and

return to the atmosphere of a Parisian café to write it. Although Èrenburg was unable to stay in Paris long enough to write this book, he did manage to achieve his goal in Belgium where he produced his first and finest novel, Khulio Khurenito, which is discussed at some length below. In Khulio Khurenito, Èrenburg expresses his disillusionment with the state of things both in Russia and Europe, where despite the upheaval of both war and revolution, society has returned to its same decadent and corrupt values. In the novel he particularly decries the extreme German nationalism which he witnessed during the war before leaving for Russia, but he also warns of an equally threatening phenomenon—that of socialism in his own homeland. In this he proved to be prophetic as he was to witness, a decade later, the rise of the Writer's Union and the ensuing restrictions of Socialist Realism, as well as Stalin's relentless policies and purges.

In the decade following the completion of his novel Khulio Khurenito, Èrenburg continued to write in a tone of cynicism and skepticism abroad. He wrote prolifically and brought under scrutiny such themes as European corruption, the return of Europe to its prewar state and the threat of capitalism. The Soviet Union too, came under attack as Èrenburg was quick to point out the deficiencies of the new bureaucracy and the dangers of the NEP. These works, which were written abroad and published in the Soviet Union, did not fare well with the Soviet critics, who accused Èrenburg of being a nihilist and petty bourgeois incapable of understanding the Revolution.⁸⁶ They did not notice that Èrenburg criticized the West as much as Soviet Russia. No one perhaps saw that

⁸⁶ Goldberg, 100.

Èrenburg acted out his “Jewish role” of saying “no” to all decaying values and to display disrespect for all “sacred cows” and “taboos” alike.

In 1929 Èrenburg published his only novel dedicated to a Jewish theme, The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwanetz (Бурная жизнь Лазика Ройтшванецца)⁸⁷. In the novel Lazik, a poor Jewish tailor, suffers at the hands of the communists in the Soviet Union and then moves on to various European countries, where is treated just as poorly, as he tries to earn money and survive on a subsistence level. None are exempt from Èrenburg’s criticism in this tale of the archetypal wandering Jew—not even the Jews themselves. At the end of the novel, Lazik travels to Jerusalem, the land of his forefathers, hoping to find refuge from persecution and hunger, but even there he finds no welcome and dies in poverty. Although some Zionists criticized Èrenburg for his critique of Israel in this work, overall it brought broad acceptance and praise from the Jews who now felt that they could consider Èrenburg a Jewish writer. Despite his success among the Jewish population with the publication of the novel, Èrenburg found it to be a cause for concern as well, since he as an idealistic (non-Bolshevik) socialist still believed in, and planned to return to, the Soviet Union. Lazik Roitschwanetz was the only novel of Èrenburg’s that was never allowed to be published in the Soviet Union.

In 1932 Èrenburg took a step that indicated another significant ideological transition by signing on as a correspondent for Izvestiia (Известия). In making this move Èrenburg sacrificed the artistic freedom that he had been able to enjoy as a freelance correspondent and he identified himself with Stalin’s increasingly despotic

⁸⁷ Илья Эренбург, Бурная жизнь Лазика Ройтшванецца, (Germany: Petropolis, 1928).

regime. Èrenburg does not offer much insight in his memoirs, Life, Men, Years, as to how he reached this decision since the times still required considerable self-censoring. The biographer, Goldberg, however offers a plausible explanation for Èrenburg's choice. By 1932, with mounting criticism from Soviet critics, Èrenburg could no longer remain aloof from the Soviet regime without putting himself in a position of jeopardy—he had to make a decision to either align himself with the regime or to oppose it and suffer either exile, a silenced pen, or death. Goldberg suggests that Èrenburg's choice was well thought out and involved much more than mere self-preservation, but was an ideological choice as well:⁸⁸

Now Èrenburg brought himself to say 'yes'. It was the era of the first Five Year Plan, which in theory was certainly more acceptable than the NEP. Moreover, having been away from Russia for a long time, he could not know exactly what the new era was like in practice. But the great ideals still existed, whereas the West had no ideals at all, not even hanging on the rack. Whatever the Soviet regime might be in real life, its ideology was unassailable.⁸⁹

Èrenburg's first socialist realist novel, The Second Day sheds some additional light on the issue. Volodia Safonov, arguably the main character in the novel, is an intellectual who suffers from an acute conscience and is unable to assimilate into socialist society. In Soviet life, which he equates to an anthill, he sees no room for the genius or individual and, eventually, he commits suicide because he is unable to reconcile himself to the new collective way of life. Èrenburg most certainly identified with Safonov and his

⁸⁸ Goldberg, 135-136.

⁸⁹ Goldberg, 137.

predicament and by having him commit suicide indicated the death of that part of himself which he had to compromise by conforming to the regime.

In 1936, Èrenburg went to Spain in order to cover the Spanish Civil War for two and a half years for Izvestiia. By this time, Stalin's purges of the political and artistic circles had begun so Èrenburg's relocation to Spain turned out to be a fortuitous move for him, since he was at least somewhat removed from the terrifying atmosphere back home. In Spain he kept company, primarily with the anti-fascist and the communist militias, and took it upon himself to wage a personal war against Fascism. Already before signing on with Izvestiia, Èrenburg had recognized the evils of German Fascism and, in fact, this was probably an additional motivation for his choice to side with the Soviet regime—he felt that Stalinism would be an obstacle to the spread of fascism. Soon after his arrival in Spain, however, Èrenburg sensed that he must exercise caution and distance himself from overtly political topics.

At the beginning of the war, the Soviet Union had been financing the Spanish Republic, but when the tide seemed to be turning in the favor of the Fascists and Hitler appeared to be gaining increasing popularity in Germany, Stalin's generosity waned. Èrenburg was warned that he should refrain from expressing his anti-fascist criticism too overtly in the articles he was writing for Izvestiia. In the spring of 1939 Stalin began to hint that his position toward Germany was changing and a short time later Èrenburg noticed that his reports were no longer being printed in Izvestiia. Upon inquiry he was

told not to send any more articles and in the summer the news of Stalin's pact with Hitler was announced.⁹⁰

To Èrenburg, the avid anti-Fascist, the news was stunning :

...to Èrenburg [the pact] meant that the authority of the Soviet Union had been shattered. The Soviet Union had been anti-Fascist by definition and to Èrenburg and those like him, this had been its most valuable asset.⁹¹

Èrenburg remained a paid correspondent with Izvestiia, but did not write for a year, until it began to become obvious to Stalin that Hitler posed a threat to his own power. When the German armies invaded Russia in 1941 Èrenburg and his anti-Fascist reputation became useful to Stalin. During the Second World War, Èrenburg reached the height of his popularity among Jews and Russians alike because of his anti-German and anti-Fascist propaganda.

The war brought Èrenburg great success, but, not long after the war, he was once again placed in a position of jeopardy by Stalin's policies. In 1948 the Soviet Union had given its endorsement for the establishment of a Jewish State in Israel. Many Soviet Jews naively believed that they could now openly express their sympathy for Israel and even speak of emigration. Stalin however, could not tolerate this talk which to him smacked of divided loyalty. The situation was further exacerbated when the new Israeli Minister, Golda Meir, came to the Soviet Union in order to encourage Stalin to allow Soviet-Jewish emigration. The Soviet Jews had given her an especially warm welcome upon her arrival in Moscow and this was perceived as a threat by Stalin. Èrenburg was

⁹⁰ Goldberg, 176.

⁹¹ Goldberg, 177.

commissioned to write an article for Pravda that was to oppose this “heretical” talk and the great showing of support for Meir.. He carried out his commission, filling an entire page of the newspaper and stressing that the Soviet Jews had nothing to gain from emigrating to Israel. Their work, he wrote, could be better carried out in the Soviet Union. Although Èrenburg took a staunch anti-Zionist stance, the overall sentiments conveyed by the letter were a critique of anti-Semitism. Nothing that Èrenburg wrote in his article was actually at odds with the anti-Zionist, cosmopolitan sentiments that he had expressed many times before, but it was also fairly obvious that the piece had been written at Stalin’s behest. For this reason, as well as because of Èrenburg’s previous anti-Zionist remarks, many Soviet and Israeli Jews were shocked and upset by the article.

Later that winter, there was a wave of arrests targeting “cosmopolitans” and Jews who were prominent in cultural circles. A few years later, in 1953, Stalin’s anti-Semitic campaign was unleashed at full force and the Jews began to suffer various forms of persecution. Jewish students were barred from universities and Jewish professionals lost their jobs. Jewish doctors were targeted in the so called “Doctors’ Plot”, which first emerged when some lead articles in Pravda reported that nine doctors had been arrested for attempting to sabotage the medical treatment of important Soviet leaders. These accusations led to widespread paranoia and suspicion of Jewish doctors. Several times Èrenburg was approached and asked to sign affidavits condemning the arrested doctors and accusing them of treason, but he refused. Also during this period of confusion and paranoia Èrenburg was offered the Stalin Peace Prize and it was requested that he make

reference to the “criminal” activities of the doctors at the award ceremony. Èrenburg refused to make the denouncements, but did attend the ceremony and accept the prize.⁹²

For many Jews, the very fact that Èrenburg had survived the “cosmopolitan” purges made him suspect, since all major Jewish cultural figures had been targeted, but now his public acceptance of the Peace Prize in the midst of Stalin’s campaign was considered an additional affront. Èrenburg however, took a risk and made use of the ceremony to “pay tribute to those fighters for peace who are being defamed, persecuted, tortured, hounded, and killed.”⁹³

Fortunately, the Doctors’ Plot was never brought to its completion because of Stalin’s death in March of 1953. With his death came a more liberal atmosphere and Èrenburg took advantage of the situation to write his novel The Thaw, whose title was to become the term assigned to the post-Stalin era. In the novel, Èrenburg criticized Stalin in his portrayal of a paranoid bureaucrat; he also mentioned such taboo topics as the Doctors’ Plot, and the intrusion of government into private and family life. By criticizing Stalin’s crimes, Èrenburg was in essence implicating himself as well as all those in government and cultural circles that had remained silent during Stalin’s reign. This was taking on more responsibility than Khrushchev was ready to accept at the time, since Stalin had not yet been officially renounced, and Èrenburg was reprimanded for his candor.

⁹² Rubenstein, 268-276.

⁹³ Rubenstein, 272.

In 1958 Èrenburg began his final major work, Люди, годы--жизнь (Men, Years—Life). He had long considered writing his memoirs, but his friendship with Lisolette Mehr was the final motivation he needed to record his life's activities.⁹⁴ Much of Èrenburg's memoirs were formulated around the many famous personalities that he had associated with during his life and, as he recounted his experiences with these people to Lisolette, he solidified his ideas for his work.

In 1960 Èrenburg submitted the manuscript for Book One of his memoirs to Новый Мир (Novy Mir) and immediately confronted difficulties. The two main subjects of contention in the manuscript were his mention of Nikolai Bukharin and his references to the existence of anti-Semitism in Russia. With some persuasion, Èrenburg was able to retain many of his comments about anti-Semitism, but he was not successful in getting the editors to accept anything about Bukharin. In the next five years as Èrenburg sent in the rest of his work, he continued to meet with opposition in the form of censorship and his attempts to counter the opposition achieved varying results—sometimes he was successful, as was the case with his chapter about Pasternak, but at other times, as mentioned above concerning Bukharin, he was unable to publish all that he desired. In any case, Èrenburg's memoirs must be viewed with the knowledge in mind that they are limited by both the author's self-censorship, as well as, the external censorship imposed upon him by the editors.

Despite the difficulties that Èrenburg had in getting some material past the censors, he managed in his memoirs to make some significant contributions in several

⁹⁴ Lisolette Mehr was the wife of Hjalmar Mehr, the city commissioner of Stockholm from 1948-1971). Rubenstein, 334.

different ways. First, he was actually successful in bringing up and discussing some taboo issues, such as anti-Semitism and the negative reactions of some to the Revolution. Secondly, he wrote warmly about many of the cultural figures that he had known and that had become victims to Stalin's purges. By honoring such personalities as Tsvetaeva, Mandel'shtam and Mikhoels, Èrenburg was lending validity to their work and condemning the actions of Stalin. Thirdly, in his memoirs Èrenburg acquainted many Soviets with the prominent cultural figures from the west. The average Soviet citizen had been cut off from west, but Èrenburg's descriptions of the friends that he had met abroad, such as Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera, and Max Jacob, showed the connection between western and Russian culture.⁹⁵

In his final years, until his death in 1967, Èrenburg became increasingly outspoken in defense of his friends, literary friends and his cosmopolitan views. He also stood firm against additional attempts by the Soviet authorities to use his influence in their anti-Semitic measures.

If in his career, Èrenburg tried to maintain a semblance of integrity by remaining true to his cosmopolitan ideals in his writings, his personal life was also an expression of his commitment to these ideals. Most of his time from the age of seventeen to forty nine (1908-1940) was spent abroad in Western Europe, where he established close friendships with political exiles from Russia and the Soviet Union, as well as many prominent members of the western cultural scene (such as Picasso, Max Jacobs, Ernest Hemingway, Diego Rivera, etc.) and he sought to keep some connections open between the European

⁹⁵ Rubenstein, 344-351.

cultural community and the Soviet Union. Despite the extreme isolationist policies of the Soviet authorities, Ėrenburg, much to the envy of others was allowed an unusual amount of freedom to travel between the Soviet Union and Europe and he took advantage of that privilege to maintain a cosmopolitan way of life, perhaps it was the best possible substitute at the time for his intangible ideal of a universal humanity.

CHAPTER 2:

SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL KHULIO KHURENITO

As mentioned earlier, Èrenburg escaped the turmoil of civil-wartorn Russia in 1921 with the express purpose of returning to the Rotonde Café in Paris to write a novel based upon prewar Europe as well as Russia during the Revolution. He had been formulating the idea in his mind for some time, but felt he needed to return to the atmosphere of the Rotonde in order to create the work. Unfortunately, he was unable to carry out his intentions there in Paris among the eclectic group of eccentric artist friends with whom he had associated before leaving for Russia. Wartime suspicions still reigned in Europe and the French authorities forced him to leave because they feared he was a Russian agent. As a result Èrenburg retired to a seaside resort in Belgium where he produced his first and finest novel, Khulio Khurenito, in the short space of a month.

Although Èrenburg was denied the opportunity to write his novel at the Rotonde, the earlier impressions that he had gathered, as well as the friendships he had made there, served as inspiration for this satirical work.⁹⁶ In fact, the Rotonde serves as the setting for the opening of the novel. Il'ia Èrenburg, the narrator of the novel, as well as the

⁹⁶ Khulio Khurenito was not written in the traditional style of the Russian novel, but rather in the tradition of the Western, picaresque novel. In fact, many critics believed that Èrenburg had used Votaire's Candide as a model for his work. Èrenburg states however, that he did not read Candide until well after Khulio Khurenito's completion. See: Goldberg, 54. and Эрэнбург, Собрание, т.8, 193.

author's namesake, begins his narrative with the entrance of the main character, Khulio Khurenito, into the bohemian atmosphere of the café which was frequented by foreigners, artists and tramps. Dressed in a mackintosh and a bowler hat, Khulio Khurenito, causes quite a stir among the eccentric group there, simply because his appearance is so unremarkable. In this ordinary looking gentleman, Èrenburg however, immediately recognizes something unusual. From what appear to be two horns rising from his temples and a tail emerging from the back of his mackintosh, Èrenburg surmises that Khurenito must be the devil himself.⁹⁷ Fully expecting to be destroyed by him, Èrenburg approaches Khurenito and surrenders himself to his service. Khurenito is non-plussed by Èrenburg's reaction and, recognizing that Èrenburg has mistaken his identity, reassures him that the devil does not exist. Upon closer inspection Èrenburg sees that indeed the horns are merely locks of hair and the tail a long Dutch pipe in Khurenito's side pocket. This discovery however, far from comforting Èrenburg, causes him further consternation. If the devil does not exist, he reasons, than the opposite cannot exist either; there can not then be a God. This realization destroys his understanding of the purpose of existence:

Я отнюдь не радовался тому, что врага нет, что он лишь моя нелепая выдумка. Наоборот, вместе с чертом исчезал весь уют, пусть ада, но все же жилого, понятного, осязаемого.⁹⁸

(I was by no means pleased that my enemy did not exist, that he was only my nonsensical invention. On the contrary, together with him vanished all hope of comfort, the comfort of hell perhaps, but still the comfort of something homely, tangible, open to comprehension.)⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Khulio Khurenito's unexceptional appearance recalls the ordinary-looking devil who converses with Ivan in Dostoevskii's The Brothers Karamazov.

⁹⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. I (1962), 14.

⁹⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio. 18.

In a desperate bid to make some sense of the surrounding world, Èrenburg begs of Khurenito: «Но хоть что—нибудь существует?»¹⁰⁰ (But something exists, doesn't it?)¹⁰¹ To this Khurenito replies that nothing exists beyond perceivable reality. Such notions as “good,” “evil,” “justice” and “redemption” are merely abstractions formulated by culture and they obscure the truth—that there is only existence and nothing beyond it. Still disquieted by being torn away from all habitual concepts, Èrenburg begins to consider Khulio Khurenito's words. He reasons that, if one is dissatisfied with the cultural mores that have been established and there is really neither “good” nor “evil,” then the only feasible way to alter the situation would be to destroy culture itself. Excited by this insight, Èrenburg suggests it to Khurenito, only to discover that the destruction of culture has been the newcomer's intent all along.

Having described his initial meeting with Khurenito, Èrenburg then steps back in time and gives a chronicle of the events in Khurenito's life that led to his current phase. Certain facts that he mentions in Khurenito's life history are borrowed from the biography of the Mexican painter, Diego Rivera, one of Èrenburg, the author's (not narrator's), old friends from the Rotonde. Although the author denied that his hero was based on the painter, Diego, it would seem safe to say that he did select certain events from Rivera's past for his Khulio Khurenito, but certainly not in order to write Rivera's life story, but merely in order to highlight the inquisitive nature of the hero of the novel. Èrenburg's choice of Rivera's native city of Guanajuata, Mexico, as Khurenito's

¹⁰⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 14.

¹⁰¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 18.

birthplace was significant, for example, in that, at the turn of the century, it was in the throes of revolution. As a not yet “civilized” nation engaged in constant revolution it provided fertile soil for the birth of Khurenito, an *agent provocateur* who doubted all existing cultural values.

As Ehrenburg, the narrator, continues to relate in the novel, Khurenito quickly became dissatisfied with all of the false values of culture already as a youth, after testing each of them. He first experimented with religion but doubts about the divinity of the Virgin Mary arose in his mind. He crept into his hometown church and disemboweled a statue of the Madonna, only to discover that it was nothing more than brocade draped over a dummy.

Disillusioned with religion, he tested love, the subject of much poetry and art :

... он влюбился стал глядеть на звезды и думать о вечности. Но испытав кой – какие временные улады, о звездах и вечности забыл, от девицы спешно удалился и раз навсегда потерял вкус к тому, что люди зовут «любовью».¹⁰²

(...he fell in love and started looking at the stars and thinking about eternity. But, having enjoyed some temporal pleasures, he forgot about stars and eternity, hastily forsook the girl and, one and for all, lost any taste for what people call ‘love.’)¹⁰³

Khurenito next sought wealth in the mines of El Oro, where, relying on the fierce reputation of his birthplace, he frightened the greedy, but cowardly gold miners out of thousands of dollars. This money, so easily obtained, turned out to be more difficult to spend than it was to get. In a final, desperate attempt to use his money meaningfully,

¹⁰² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 17.

¹⁰³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 23.

Khurenito invited the local businessmen to a gala dinner. After handing out Corona cigars, he twisted his remaining hundred dollar bills into tapers to light them. This sent the wealthy, but avaricious businessmen scrambling about on their knees for the ashes.¹⁰⁴

Disappointed by Religion, Love and Wealth, Khurenito decided to occupy himself with the revolution in Mexico. In choosing sides:

...Хурениито предпочел Сапату и его простодушных мятежников, ненавидевших городскую культуру, машины сахарных заводов, паровозы, людей, несущих смерть, деньги и сифилис.¹⁰⁵

(...Jurenito preferred Zapata and his naïve rebels, who hated urban culture, sugar-manufacturing machines, railway engines, and the men who carried death, money and syphilis.)¹⁰⁶

Eventually captured and sentenced to death, Khurenito was disappointed to discover that even anticipation of death provided no more solemn feelings than boredom and sleepiness. Discouraged by his own blasé brush with death, he turned to killing others, but soon found this monotonous as well. Finding himself dissatisfied with the revolution he sought to interest himself in science, languages, and art, mastering each in turn, but becoming, just as quickly bored with each. Having experienced Religion, Wealth, Love, Revolution, Power, Death, Art and Science and finding each of them to be empty “values”, Khurenito comes to the conclusion that they must all be destroyed:

Он решил, что культура – зло, и с ней надлежит всячески бороться, но не жалкими ножами пастухов Сапаты, а ею же вырабатываемым

¹⁰⁴ This scene is reminiscent of the scene of Nastas'ia Filipovna's birthday party in Dostoevskii's novel The Idiot where she throws the money brought by her suitor into the fire. She too demonstrates her total contempt for “capitalism” as a mentality that believes everything is purchasable.

¹⁰⁵ Эренбург, Собрание т. I (1962), 18.

¹⁰⁶ Ehrenburg, Julio, 24.

оружием. Надо не нападать на нее, но всячески холить язвы, расплзающиеся и готовые пожрать ее полусгнившее тело.¹⁰⁷

(...he decided...that culture was an evil and should be fought in every way, though not with the pathetic knives of Zapata's shepherds but with the weapons developed by culture itself. The thing to do was not to attack culture but to nurse its spreading ulcers, which would gradually consume its rotting body.)¹⁰⁸

Khurenito chooses Europe as the setting for his work of destroying civilization because its sores had been festering longer than those of the relatively new and insufficiently civilized part of the world from which he came. In order to carry out his plan he first travels about Europe collecting an entourage of disciples. Each of these disciples is a caricature of those traits that are traditionally identified with his native country and Khurenito intends for them to aid him by increasing the decline of the already corrupt European nations.

Seven Disciples

The narrator of the novel, Il'ia Èrenburg, is the first to become a disciple of Khurenito in his project to destroy corrupt European civilization. He stands as a representative of the Jews, and as such, is the disciple that is the most valuable to Khurenito. He is the only disciple, among those who join him later, who is fully conscious that he is taking part in Khurenito's design to destroy world culture by fueling the vices characteristic of each so-called "civilized" western nation. He is also the only one who regards his relationship to Khurenito as that of a disciple and he refers to

¹⁰⁷ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 19.

¹⁰⁸ Ehrenburg, Julio, 25.

Khurenito as Teacher. Because of his Jewish ethnicity, as the member of a people lacking their own autonomous nation, Ehrenburg was the one who could be depended upon for collaboration by Khurenito, since his judgment would not be clouded by nationalistic biases. Partially for this reason, Ehrenburg is entrusted with the assignment of chronicling the Teacher's activities.

The second disciple to join Khurenito's entourage is, Mr. Cool, the opportunistic capitalist who represents America and has come to Europe to both "save her" (by the new American creed of progressive Christianity) and to obtain financial gain:

Мистер Куль понял, что Америка должна отплатить благодарностью за тот великий момент, когда матрос Хуан Луис, известный в двух Кастилиях разбойник, прежде нежели зарезать первого индейца, пробормотал молитву, побрызгал его морской водицей и, таким образом, положил начало торжеству креста. Ныне пришла очередь Америке спасти обезумевшую Европу.¹⁰⁹

(It occurred to Mr. Cool that America must show her gratitude for that great moment when the sailor Juan Luis, a bandit known in the two Castiles, mumbled a prayer before cutting an Indian's throat, sprinkled him with sea water and thus laid the foundations for the triumph of the Cross. Now it was America's turn to save demented Europe.)¹¹⁰

So it was that Mr. Cool came to Europe with the intent of reforming her by use of the «два могучих рычага цивилизации—библия и доллар.»¹¹¹ (two mighty levers of civilization—the Bible and the dollar.)¹¹² By wresting scriptures from their context Mr. Cool supports his false and egotistical moral stance, while he uses his money either to

¹⁰⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 22.

¹¹⁰ Ehrenburg, Julio, 28.

¹¹¹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 22.

¹¹² Ehrenburg, Julio, 28.

enforce his values or to profit from others' vices. One example of his methods is his suggestion for how to furnish brothels:

Обязать всех содержательниц публичных домов поставить в заведениях автоматы с необходимыми для гигиены принадлежностями. На пакетах должно быть напечатано: «Милый друг, не забывай о своей чистой и невинной невесте».¹¹³

(All brothel keepers should be obliged to install automatic machines supplying the appropriate hygienic requisites. The packages should bear the words 'Friend, Remember your Pure and Innocent Bride at Home'.)¹¹⁴

These automatic machines prove to be very profitable for Mr. Cool, who receives 1000 francs a month from their operation.

Mr. Cool is unaware of Khurenito's plan to destroy Europe, but when the Mexican expresses admiration and surprise at Mr. Cool's money making ventures, the businessman, seeing that Khurenito could be useful to him, hires him as his guide. In so doing, Mr. Cool unwittingly becomes Khurenito's second disciple. When Ehrenburg, in disgust, asks the Teacher why he has enlisted the repugnant American, Khurenito replies:

Друг мой, кто же, идя на войну, взрывает пушку? «Вспомните, мы хотим все разрушить. А Куль—это великолепное тяжелое оружие».¹¹⁵

(My dear friend, who'd smash his gun when he's just off to fight? Remember, we want to destroy everything. Cool is first-class heavy artillery.)¹¹⁶

Khurenito's third disciple is a Senegalese pageboy, named Aisha, whom he finds in a Parisian hotel. Aisha, who carves idols from coconut shells and presents them to the

¹¹³ Эренбург, Собрание, т. 1 (1962), 22.

¹¹⁴ Ehrenburg, Julio, 29.

¹¹⁵ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 26.

¹¹⁶ Ehrenburg, Julio, 24.

Teacher, is the image of innocence and youth. He is unassuming and with full trust throws himself at Khurenito's feet, kissing his shoe in admiration. Khurenito explains to Èrenburg that he chose Aisha as a disciple because:

Я беру Айшу, ибо в нем жива голая, бесстыдная, всеободряющая вера, и это будет крепким оружием в моих руках. Другие увидят во мне учителя или авантюриста, мудреца или прощельгу, а для него я буду богом, который умеет клеить марки и говорить необычайные слова, которого он будет рисовать, лепить, вырезать из дерева и которому останется верен до последнего издыхания.¹¹⁷

(I am taking Aysha because in him lives faith, naked, unshamed, all-gladdening, and it will be a strong weapon in my hands. Others will see in me a teacher or an adventurer, a sage or a charlatan, but for him I will be a god, who knows how to stick on stamps and speak extraordinary words, whom he will carve, draw and model, and to whom he will remain faithful until his last breath.)¹¹⁸

After meeting Aisha, Khurenito and his followers travel to the Netherlands where they happen upon a Russian, Aleksei Spiridonovich Tishin. Seated in the dark corner of a tavern which the group has entered, Tishin, is moaning and groaning while calling out: "Friend, brother, tell me am I a human being or not?" The narrator looks over in Tishin's direction and catches sight of a rather besotted, and also otherwise typical looking Russian intellectual. They all make Tishin's acquaintance, whereupon the Russian insists that they must hear his life story and sets about on a narrative of parental abuse and neglect as well as mental and spiritual searching accompanied by constant disappointments. Speaking with intense emotion he recounts his associations with various causes (and women) with fervent enthusiasm. As he speaks it becomes obvious

¹¹⁷ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 29. Aisha seems to represent the Feuerbachian notion that it was not God who created man, but man who creates god(s).

¹¹⁸ Ehrenburg, Julio, 37.

that his zeal is often indiscriminate and just as quick to be dampened as it is to be kindled. Upon ending his personal history, the philosophical Tishin cries out: 'all is fiction, but Man exists! 'What is the world? Nothing, but Man is spirit.'¹¹⁹ Khurenito refutes Tishin's claim, but offers to provide him with the means to set up a Society for the Search for Man, so that Tishin may have an opportunity to measure his theories against Khurenito's notion of recognizing nothing but matter. In return, he promises to join Khurenito if he fails in his search. Of his newest disciple Khurenito says:

Я буду очень рад, если возле меня окажется коренной русский. Каждый раз, когда я говорю со славянином, я испытываю великолепное ощущение расступающегося болота. ...Я не наивен, я знаю, что вы...слабы, нерешительны и склонны ко всему, кроме дела, знаю что не вам сокрушить эти спаянные кровью многих сотен поколений, насиженные города. Но вы велики, и такой пустыни не выдержит дряхлый мир – голова закружится. Вы никого не свергнете, но падая, многих потащите за собой.¹²⁰

(I shall be very glad to have a native Russian with me. Whenever I speak to a Slav I enjoy the splendid sensation not of firm land, but of a bog which gives way under your feet....I'm not naïve,...I know you're weak, indecisive and inclined towards everything except action, I know that it's not for you to destroy these snug cities held together by the blood of many hundreds of generations. But you are vast, and the aged world will not be able to bear so huge a desert. It will turn dizzy and swoon. You will overthrow no one, but you will drag many after you in your fall.)¹²¹

From Holland, Khurenito and his entourage move on to Italy where they visit many of its monasteries and cathedrals. One morning, while in Rome, they happen upon a man lying in the road blocking their progress. The group tries with various bribes and threats to induce the man to get up, but all is in vain, as the man's only response to their

¹¹⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 58.

¹²⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 45.

¹²¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 59.

prodding is to yawn, scratch himself indolently and spit into the air. Not until Khurenito approaches him and gives him a good natured poke in the stomach with his foot along with an invitation to join them, does the man rise from the street in order to board their car. At this point, the Italian, Ercole Bambucci, becomes Khurenito's fifth disciple.

After some questioning of Ercole, Khurenito's followers are surprised at his complete indifference to everything. Mr. Cool is shocked to find out that Ercole is impressed by neither the Bible, nor the dollar (unless the money were to come to him by some luck, without effort). Tishin is surprised by the fact that suffering, for Ercole, is limited to experiencing colic from overeating and that Providence, in his view, is merely the "banco-lotto." As for Aisha, he is surprised by Ercole's opinion that there are already too many gods in existence and that making new ones is pointless and boring. For Ercole, who is proud of his lack of education and occupation, there is no motivation to seek a more meaningful existence than lying in the street and spitting—he is satisfied with life as it is.

In an aside to Erenburg, Khurenito explains his reasoning for taking Ercole on as a disciple:

Они удивляются, ...почему я вожу с собой этого босяка. Но что мне любить, если не динамит? Эрколе не Айша, он все видел и все сделал. В его руках перебивали все аксессуары мира: скипетр и крест, лира и резец, свод законов и палитра. Он строил дворцы и арки, храмы с полногрудыми богинями Эллады, с тощими Христами готики, с порхающими святыми барокко. ...Он с детства все знает и все может, но между прочим предпочитает плевать, потому что ненавидит крепко и страстно всякую должность и всякую организацию.¹²²

¹²² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 63-64.

(They can't understand, ... why I take this tramp about with me. But what should I love if not dynamite? Ercole isn't Aysha, he has seen everything and has done everything that could conceivably be done. These hands have held all the world's accessories: the sceptre and the cross, the lyre and the chisel, the code of laws and the palette. He has built palaces and arches, temples with the full-bosomed goddesses of Hellas, the emaciated Gothic Christs, the fluttering Baroque saints. ... He knows everything and can do everything from childhood, but it so happens that he prefers to spit because he has a strong and passionate loathing of all sense and all organisation.)¹²³

Khurenito's sixth disciple is acquired when the group returns to Paris. Here the Teacher enlists the help of a Frenchman, Monsieur Gaston Delet, for some financial help. Monsieur Delet who owns a funeral home that provides 16 classes of burial, offers Khurenito the assistance he needs. His available burial categories preserve the social class system beyond the grave beginning with a "luxury class," a "glorious class for those idiots who throw their money out the window," and extending to a sixteenth class for the poor:

Надо, чтобы все имели право быть похороненными. Зачем озлоблять бедных? ... Конечно нужно, чтобы бедные знали свое место — просто, честно — на три года. Полежал, и хватит, пусти другого.¹²⁴

(Everyone should have a right to be buried. Why arouse the anger of the poor? ... But, of course, they've got to know their place—all very fair and simple. For three years. You keep your place for three years, and then time's up.—give someone else a chance.)¹²⁵

Monsieur Delet's motto is ironically—in view of his profession—*élan*, which he believes is achieved through a careful system of moderation. Life is to be enjoyed

¹²³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 84.

¹²⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 74.

¹²⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 97.

without excess and nothing disturbing should be allowed to interfere with achieving a state of comfortable satisfaction:

Когда мне исполнилось шестнадцать лет, отец дал мне луи и сказал: «Гастон, будь во всем умерен». Великие слова! ...О вы не знаете, что такое чувство меры! Это разумная политика, это красота, это полный кошелек, необремененный желудок, приятная дрожь при виде хорошенькой женщины. Это все!¹²⁶

(When I reached the age of sixteen, my father gave me a *louis* and said “Gaston, be moderate in all things.” My poor father!” ..Oh, you cannot know what it is, a sense of moderation! It’s stomach, a pleasant tremor at the sight of a pretty woman! It’s everything!)¹²⁷

As Monsieur Delet finishes relating his life—a tale which is punctuated by comments about the perfection of the meal they are enjoying—he leans back and slips into a contented and vacuous sleep.

In explanation of his latest choice for a disciple Khurenito points to the following:

Гляди, это уже не мосье Дэле, это Будда, последний покой! К нирване есть два пути—через полный отказ, предельное отрицание, путь аскета или мятежника, и через эту сладость бытия, через наслаждение. Гляди, мосье Дэле уже не на пути к концу. Он сам—конец, предел, ничто!¹²⁸

(Look, this isn’t just Monsieur Delet, it is Buddha, the bringer of final peace. There are two ways to Nirvana: through complete refusal, final negation, the way of the ascetic and the rebel; and through the sweetness of being, through ultimate pleasure. Look, Monsieur Delet is no longer on the road to the end: he *is* the end—the ultimate—nothingness!)¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 73.

¹²⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 96.

¹²⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 76.

¹²⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 99.

The seventh and final disciple is found when Khurenito's entourage travels to Germany. All of the disciples (except Mr. Cool) find themselves disheartened by the rigid, organized atmosphere of the country and Ercole and Aisha find themselves particularly at odds there as they, inadvertently but inevitably, find themselves in violation of some petty rule. On one occasion, Ercole is delighted by what seems a blatant act of anarchy and, indeed, the unusual scene draws the attention of the entire group.

While walking through a public garden they see a young student walking along a path, accompanying a young woman who carries a baby in her arms. Calmly, and for no apparent reason, the young man steps to the side of the path and begins stomping on the carefully cultivated flowerbeds. Ercole, ecstatic, waits expectantly for a policeman to rush forward and discipline the student, but his anticipation turns to dismay when the student, who had acted unobserved by such an official, walks over to the *Schutzmann* and reports his own crime. As it turns out, the student is protesting against the state's poor organization; for while large sums of money are spent by the government to maintain flower beds, the woman and child, a future member of society, are suffering malnutrition because of lack of means. Schmidt is clearly a proponent of justice (merciless justice it proves), but lacks appreciation of beauty.

Khurenito's last disciple is duly fined and Khurenito offers to pay his bill, since Schmidt is a poor student and cannot pay himself. Schmidt then invites Khurenito and his followers to his tiny, but meticulous apartment. On the walls they find a large timetable on which Schmidt has mapped out a schedule of daily routines from morning to

night; he shows them other charts budgeting out his expenses down to the smallest detail. In short, everything in his apartment testifies to his passion for order and method. Schmidt expresses his desire to Khurenito's disciples to organize the entire world in the same way that he has organized his own life. Regarding the selection of his final disciple, Khurenito exclaims:

Я сразу оценил вас. ...Вашим надеждам суждено сбыться скорее, нежели вы думаете, и верьте, я помогу вам в этом. А вы, господа, смотрите – вот один из тех, которым суждено надолго стать у руля человечества!¹³⁰

(I knew you at once for what you are. ... Your hopes are destined to come true sooner than you think; believe me, I shall assist you in this. You others, look: here is one of those destined, now and for a long time to come, to stand at the helm of humanity.)¹³¹

The Teacher's Musings on Religion, Love and the Jews

While gathering his disciples, Khurenito uses events that they witness during their travels to illustrate his disillusioned views on various subjects. When Aisha presents him with his handmade idols, Khurenito takes the opportunity to talk about religion. Khurenito is pleased by Aisha's gods because they are new and as yet unencumbered by the dogma that has been built up over the millennia in such established world religions as Judaism and Christianity. While Aisha's personal religion is still in the creative state, established religion remains static and immovable. As a result of this situation true faith is non-existent in Europe:

¹³⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 83.

¹³¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 109.

Ваша вера труслива, от нее ложится тень сомнения, иронии, мальчишеского любопытства и расчетливости торговца, боящегося прогадать на товаре.¹³²

(Your faith is cowardly for it casts a shadow of doubt and irony, schoolboy curiosity and the calculation of a shopkeeper afraid of making a loss on his wares).¹³³

European atheism, meanwhile fares no better in his estimation:

Ваше безверие не храбрее вашей веры, за ним плетется суеверие, обращения за полчаса до смерти, книжки Штейнера, вечное клянчание у дверей страхового общества.¹³⁴

(Your atheism is no braver than your faith, for in its wake creep superstition, conversions half an hour before death, the works of Steiner, all the eternal begging at the doors of the insurance company.)¹³⁵

On the subject of love, the Teacher expresses his loathing for marriage, placing even prostitution above it. When considering marriage, a couple prepares and investigates everything from the size of the bride's dowry, and the bridegroom's salary, to each other's health and education, but, in so doing, they fail to consider the very reason for which they are getting married:

Узнав, ведут не в контору, не в благотворительное учреждение, не на экзамен филологии, а к широкому уютному ложу, стыдливо потупив глаза, и потом очень удивляются статистике «несчастливых браков».¹³⁶

(Having ascertained all these things they lead the newly-married couple – not into an office, a philanthropic institution or a school of philology, but

¹³² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 28.

¹³³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 37.

¹³⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 28.

¹³⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 37.

¹³⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 53.

towards a broad and comfortable bed, eyes chastely cast down, and then everybody's very much surprised at the statistics of unhappy marriages.)¹³⁷

Future mankind, Khurenito asserts, would be free of the cultural fetters of matrimony and he describes the following vision of a mankind that has succeeded in throwing off its cultural baggage in the realm of sexual morality:

...мы, изумленные, трепетали перед неопиcуемым величием человеческих тел, радостно сопряженных, не тех тел, дряблых и бесформенных, что мы привыкли наблюдать в общих банях, но новых, суровых, как сталь, и все вольных.¹³⁸

(...we, astounded, trembled before the indescribable grandeur of thousands upon thousands of human couples joyfully united in their nakedness: not those flabby, shapeless bodies which we are accustomed to see at the public baths but new, rigorous as steel, yet free.)¹³⁹

On one occasion, after he had gathered all of his disciples together, Khurenito presents them with an invitation for a spectacle arranged by him. It is called "Solemn Performances of the Destruction of the Tribe of Judah." The invitation, which also promises pogroms, features various methods of tormenting and killing Jews and it is extended free of charge to cardinals, bishops, British lords, Russian liberals and all others who would like to attend.

Shocked by such an unthinkable act, Tishin cries out in horror and wonders how the Teacher could even conceive of such an outrageous idea. But Khurenito assures him that the old diseases of mankind (including anti-Semitism) are already well established

¹³⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 69.

¹³⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 58.

¹³⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 75-6.

and fated to reappear. Besides, he explains, there is a natural gulf between the Jews and other nations. To illustrate this point, Khurenito asks each of his disciples in turn which word they would choose from their language if they were allowed just one—either “yes” or “no”. Each of the disciples then chooses the word “yes” in affirmation of his nation’s predominant trait. Èrenburg, the narrator of the novel, who represents the Jewish nation chooses “no” however, because he sees the falsity of the “yes” of the others. The others are surprised by Èrenburg’s negative response and inch away from him on the sofa.

Èrenburg admits to Khurenito:

Учитель, я не солгу вам—я оставил бы «нет». Видите ли, откровенно говоря, мне очень нравится, когда что—нибудь не удастся. Я люблю мистера Куля, но мне было бы приятно, если бы он вдруг потерял свои доллары...¹⁴⁰

(Teacher, I cannot deceive you. I would keep “no”. Candidly speaking, I’m very fond of Mr. Cool, but it would give me pleasure if he were suddenly to lose all his dollars....)¹⁴¹

Khurenito proceeds to explain to all his disciples that this division between Jews and Gentiles natural one that is destined to continue. Whereas gentiles will set up house and make themselves comfortable in their surroundings, the Jews will inevitably be dissatisfied and try to improve, or at least change, their conditions. Throughout time, he continues, the Jews have been in search of an elusive justice:

Оборванцы, ночующие на ступеньках храма, —есей трудятся: как в котлах взрывчатое вещество, замешивают новую религию справедливости и нищеты. Теперь—то полетит несокрушимый Рим. Еврей Павел победил Марка Аврелия! Но люди обыкновенные, которые предпочитают динамиту уютный домик,

¹⁴⁰ Èrenburg, Собрание т. I (1962), 87.

¹⁴¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 114.

начинают обживать новую веру, устраиваться в этом голем шалаше по – хорошему, по – домашнему. Христианство уже не стенобитная машина, а новая крепость; страшная, голая, разрушающая справедливость подменена человеческим, удобным, гуттаперчевым милосердием.¹⁴²

(The ragged beggars who spend their nights on the steps of the temple work away, concocting a new religion of justice and poverty, as though mixing an explosive in a cauldron. Now just watch unconquerable Rome go flying head over heels! Yet, ordinary people, who prefer a cosy little house to dynamite, begin to settle down in the new faith, making the bare hut homely and pleasant. Christianity is no longer a wall-beating machine, it has become a new fortress. Terrible, naked, destructive justice has been replaced by human, comfortable, india-rubber mercy.)¹⁴³

This constant search for justice and the propensity of the Jews to negate what has been achieved will continue, Khurenito avers, until no more nations exist in the distant future when mankind will return to its infancy,—stripped of the confines of atrophied cultural dogma. Until that day however, the Jews will continue to be “nay-sayers” and other nations will continue to shed Jewish blood. This blood, Khurenito tells his disciples, will make the earth more poisonous, but he also terms this poisoning blood the «великое лекарство мира»¹⁴⁴ (“world’s greatest medicine”).¹⁴⁵

War in Europe

Soon after Khurenito has collected his entourage of disciples, news of the assassination of the Austrian Archduke reaches them. Khurenito immediately divines the significance of this event and warns his followers that Europe stands on the brink of war.

¹⁴² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 88.

¹⁴³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 115-116.

¹⁴⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 88.

Khurenito, who feels there is, at present, nothing for him to do, since his plan of destruction is moving along quite well on its own with the outbreak of the war, disappears to Mallorca to vacation. Meanwhile, his disciples separate and follow their own personal pursuits in the war. Left by himself, the narrator Ehrenburg, goes into hiding to escape the harsh reality of the war; he laments the suspicious atmosphere, the ever-present sense of killing and the meager rations.

Eventually, Khurenito returns and as, one by one, each of the disciples is reunited with the group it is revealed how each has fared in the war. Aisha, who represents an underdog nation, was sent to the front where, while involved in combat, he lost his arm. Mr. Cool meanwhile has found the war to be very profitable and he has built up quite an economic empire. Among his enterprises are networks of brothels, which he set up at the rear, factories for making wreaths and tombstone decorations and moveable church structures to service the soldiers (these structures could easily be converted into movie halls, or tea dispensaries). Tishin, like Aisha, has not fared so well and is found in Senegal where he has been serving in the Foreign Legion. Stricken by fever, Tishin also suffers emotional torment at the revelation that he was responsible for the death of Aisha's brother. Khurenito and his followers are surprised to find Ercole in the Vatican dressed in the attire of a monk and selling religious trinkets in a kiosk there. Apparently he had deserted from the army when he realized the risks involved in fighting and had traded his uniform and identity with a monk who had fallen in love and wished to elope with his beloved. Monsieur Delet, still pursuing *élan* and living comfortably in his

¹⁴⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 116.

French cottage, has also been busy ferreting out imaginary German spies and hunting down deserters, as well as writing an endless stream of propaganda for the local newspaper.

After the reunion with Khurenito and his other disciples, the Frenchman persuades the group to aid him in his journalistic efforts—a proposal that is accepted by all and they set off for the front in search of material. Soon they find themselves stranded among exploding shells and the sound of German artillery and are forced to seek shelter in a dugout. Here Khurenito takes the opportunity to express his views on war and to sing its praises. First of all, he says, war is a wake-up call for those who have become too comfortable and self-satisfied. Secondly, it causes a breach with the cultural past that can not be spanned—it pushes man forward into the future:

Вы клянете войну, а она даже не шаг, она прыжок в грядущее. Она убила все, во имя чего началась, и родила все, что должна была убить. «Война во имя свободы», и оказывается что народы созрели для великого, откровенного ярма, она больше не могла выносить фикции свободы, ее призрачных благ.¹⁴⁶

(You curse the war, yet it's not merely a step, it's a leap into the future. It killed all the things in whose name it was begun and has given birth to all it should have killed. A war of liberation, was it? Yet we see now that the peoples are ripe for the great, the undisguised enslavement, for they could no longer bear the fiction of freedom or its spectral boon.)¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, he asserts, war, which comes about as a result of the hate of nation for nation, does more than any other single thing to actually bring them closer together. After spending enough time sitting side by side in the trenches men begin to realize that

¹⁴⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. I (1962), 146-147.

¹⁴⁷ Ehenburg, Julio, 193.

their enemies hate, love, fear and fight in the same manner and that they are essentially identical to one another. Not only does war prove equality on a national level, but also among individuals. Generals with epaulettes and Rothschilds with all their riches are equally reduced to the same thing in war—to corpses sticking out of the ground. In war Khurenito sees, and hopes for, a cleansing effect:

Все это я вижу, и когда вы клянете войну, я ее благословляю, как первый день тифозной горячки, от которой человек либо переродится, либо умрет, очистив землю для нового собачества или для победных легионов крыс, муравьев инфузорий!¹⁴⁸

(All this I see, and when you curse war I bless it as the first day of typhoid fever after which man will either be reborn or die, leaving the earth free for new swinishness or for triumphant legions of rats, ants and infusoria.)¹⁴⁹

Barely has Khurenito's "sermon" on war ended when the gunfire lessens. The Master's words seem to have worked magic. In the lull, the group attempts to return to safety. Their safe retreat, however, is thwarted when they are captured by a German general. Later, what appears to be misfortune, turns into a pleasant surprise when Khurenito and his disciples, who are fully expecting to face a firing squad, end up experiencing a small reunion in Schmidt's office instead. Schmidt has fared quite well in the war and barely resembles the student who had originally joined Khurenito's entourage. During the war he quickly rose in the ranks of the military until he held a position of great importance, both in the German hinterland and at the foreign fronts. When Khurenito asks him about his current occupation, Schmidt explains to the group

¹⁴⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 148.

¹⁴⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 194.

that he is involved in a plan to colonize Russia and to completely destroy France and Britain. This he is doing in order to more easily organize Europe after the war and make the transition to German rule as painless as possible. At Schmidt's announcement Tishin is aghast—that a man should plan to kill thousands is unimaginable to one who suffered such emotional anguish over his part in the death of a single individual. Schmidt counters that he does not necessarily enjoy his duty but, it is a needed step toward the future good of humanity:

Убивать—это неприятная необходимость. ...Но выбора нет. Я, моя семья, мой город, родина, человечество—это ступеньки. Убить для блага человечества одного умалишенного или десять миллионов—различие лишь арифметическое. ...Именно по—этому, если сейчас потребуются для выигрыша войны, то есть для блага Германии, следовательно, всего человечества, не стану ни одной минуты колебаться.¹⁵⁰

(...killing is an unpleasant necessity. But there's no choice, I, my family, my town, my country, humanity itself are only steps. Between killing one weak-minded old man and ten million people for the good of mankind there's only an arithmetical difference. That's precisely why, if it should be necessary for the success of a campaign today—which means for the good of Germany tomorrow and of humanity the day after... I would not hesitate for a minute.)¹⁵¹

Revolution in Russia

After a brief stay in Germany, Khurenito and his disciples once again continue their travels. This time they set off for Russia since they have received news of the abdication of the Tsar and Khurenito is excited by the prospect of revolution. Upon arrival in Russia however, the group is surprised by the chaotic conditions. Freedom,

¹⁵⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 150-151.

¹⁵¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 199.

Khurenito concludes, is obviously too heavy a burden for the Russians to bear; he predicts that they will soon cry out for an end to it and eventually be oppressed by a heavier yoke than previously.

Каждый камешек, каждый сопляк вопиет: «Уберите свободу, она тяжелее всякого ярма!» Разве мыслима свобода вне полной гармонии? Она быстро превращается в скрытое рабство. Я становлюсь свободным, угнетая другого. Теперь человечество идет однудь не к раю, а к самому суровому, черному, потогонному чистилищу. Наступают как будто полные сумерки свободы.¹⁵²

(Every stone, every snotty-nosed phiz cries to high heaven: “Away with freedom, it is heavier than the yoke, it is too much for us.” Is freedom conceivable without perfect harmony? It quickly transforms itself into disguised enslavement. I become free by oppressing another. What humanity is heading for today is by no means paradise but the harshest, blackest, sweatiest purgatory of all. The final twilight of freedom is at hand.)¹⁵³

¹⁵² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 164. This is a quote from Mandel'shtam's famous poem written in 1918:

Прославим братья, сумерки свободы, —
Великий сумеречный год.
В кипящие ночные воды
Опущен грузный лес тенет.
Восходишь ты в глухие годы,
О солнце, судия, народ.

Прославим роковое бремя,
Которое в слезах народный вождь берет...

(Brothers, let us glorify the twilight of freedom—the great crepuscular year. A heavy forest of nets has been lowered into the seething waters of the night. You are rising during sombre years, O sun—judge and people.

Let us glorify the fateful burden which the people's leader tearfully assumes...)

Dimitri Obolensky, ed., The Heritage of Russian Verse (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) 355.

The phrase “twilight of freedom” was very likely taken directly from Mandel'shtam's poem since he and Ehrenburg were friends and spent several months together in the Crimea during the civil war. Rubenstein asserts that Ehrenburg must have been influenced by Mandel'shtam's thinking. See: Rubenstein, 63.

¹⁵³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 217-218.

In the meantime however, things are turned upside down by the revolution. This is illustrated by the situation of Khurenito's disciples in Russia during the civil war. Monsieur Delet who had enjoyed his little cottage, promoted élan and carefully established a system of 16 classes for the dead in Europe before moving to an equally comfortable apartment in Moscow, is evicted from his Moscow apartment by the District Soviet and goes temporarily mad. Mr. Cool, stripped of his Bible and bank account, is labeled an "incorrigible exploiter" and is sent away to a concentration camp. Meanwhile, Ercole, in order to avoid physical labor, passes himself off as an artist and receives protection from the "Department for the Preservation of Art and Ancient Monuments of the R.S.F.S.R." so he can earn a living posing as a statue. Aisha has fared extremely well and become the Director of Propaganda for the Negro Peoples. Those of the disciples who had suffered the most during World War I in Europe enjoy a new privileged status in revolutionary Russia and vice versa.

As time progresses and things settle down in Russia, Khurenito's words about the end of freedom in the revolution prove true. The revolution has brought about change, but rather than establishing freedom, it has merely reversed fortunes and redistributed privilege and wealth among a different group of people. At the end of the revolution, Khurenito, disappointed that men have only "patched up" what existed before, rather than completely destroying the old order and building a new one, takes his disciple Èrenburg with him to visit the "captain" in the Kremlin. This chapter of the novel is entitled "The Great Inquisitor Outside of the Legend," and as the title implies, alludes to Dostoevskii's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in his novel The Brothers Karamazov. The "captain,"

whose appearance fits that of Lenin (a high vaulted forehead and piercing intelligent eyes) is forced to defend his views and actions before Khurenito.¹⁵⁴ In part Khurenito expresses his respect for Lenin who is able to act, even though it is at the cost of embracing a limiting fanaticism:

Я вас понимаю, – сказал Хуренито, – вы высокий образец здорового однодумья. Со многими мыслями жизнь кончают на корточках, за тумбой..., а начинают ее, напротив, с неумолимыми шорами, концентрирующими всю энергию на едином помысле. Однодумье – дело, движение, жизнь. Раздумье – прекрасное и блистательное увеселение, десерт предсмертного ужина.¹⁵⁵

(I understand you, said Jurenito. You are an outstanding example of healthy single-mindedness. Those who have many thoughts end their lives crouching behind pillars. Those who start life wear merciless blinkers which focus all their energies on a single idea. Single-mindedness is action, movement, life. Reflection is a splendid and brilliant entertainment, the dessert served at the last dinner before death.)¹⁵⁶

In order to act, Khurenito continues, one must consider everyone else to be wrong, otherwise there will be hesitation, discussion and consultation, all of which leads to the inability to act, to make decisions, in short, to inertia. Such single-minded vision and action lacks wisdom and compassion however, he points out.

When Khurenito mentions a list, published in *Izvestiia*, of people who are to be shot, Lenin becomes visibly upset. Èrenburg, the disciple, who has been hiding behind a

¹⁵⁴ The image of the captain is also taken from Mandel'shtam's poem which was mentioned above, as well as, the idea that he tearfully assumes the peoples' burden. Obolensky, 355.

¹⁵⁵ Илья Эренбург, *Собрание сочинений в восьми томах*, т. I (Москва: Художественная литература, 1990) 403-4. The chapter "The Great Inquisitor outside of the Legend" was removed from all publications of the novel following its initial appearance in 1922. It has recently reappeared in this 1990 publication of Èrenburg's works.

¹⁵⁶ Ehrenburg, *Julio*, 250-251.

pillar during the entire meeting notes that Lenin's voice expresses genuine unhappiness at this point. The executions are part of a duty that he does not enjoy, but regardless of that fact, feels are necessary.

– Мы ведем человечество к лучшему будущему. Одни, которым это не выгодно, всячески мешают нам. Прячась за кусты, они стреляют в нас, взрывают дорогу, отодвигают желанный привал. Мы должны их устранять, убивая одного для спасения тысячи. Другие упираются, не понимая, что их же счастье впереди, боятся тяжкого перехода, цепляются за жалкую тень вчерашнего шалаша. Мы гоним их вперед, гоним в рай железными бичами. Дезертира – красноармейца надо расстрелять для того, чтобы дети его, расстрелянного, познали всю сладость грядущей коммуны!¹⁵⁷

(We're leading humanity towards a better future. Some people, who find this not to their advantage, are hindering us in every way, shooting at us from an ambush, dynamiting our road, lengthening the distance to the longed-for bivouac. We must eliminate them, killing one man to save a thousand. Others resist us because they cannot understand that their own happiness lies ahead, because they're afraid of the heavy march, because they cling to the pitiful shadow of last night's shelter. We are driving them forward, driving them to paradise with iron whips. The Red Army deserter must be shot in order that his children should know the full sweetness of the future Commune.)¹⁵⁸

Lenin becomes more and more excited as he continues, defending himself ever more vehemently, in the tradition of Dostoevskii's Grand Inquisitor who had shouldered the burden of man's freedom in order to make him more secure and comfortable and who was willing to burn many "infidels" at the stake for the sake of future comfort. His task—a task that involved severe punishment for those who did not appreciate his efforts—Lenin insists, is not easy, but someone had to take on the burden of bringing order to the chaos of the revolution:

¹⁵⁷ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1990), 405.

¹⁵⁸ Ehrenburg, Julio, 252.

Два года тому назад ходили с кольями, ревя ревели, рвали на клочки генералов, у племенных коров вырезывали вымя. Море мутилось, буйствовало. Надо было взять и всю силу гнева, всю жажду новой жизни направить на одно – четкое, ясное: стой, трус, с винтовкой защитой Советы! ...Кто? Я, десятки, тысячи, организация, партия, власть. Сняли ответственность.¹⁵⁹

(Two years ago they were going about with sharpened poles, roaring and ranting, tearing generals to pieces, cutting out the udders of landowners' cows. A seething, raging sea. Someone had to seize hold of them and direct the full force of their anger, their thirst for a new life towards one clear, definite objective. Here's a rifle for you, coward, stand up and defend the Soviets! ...Who are we? I, tens of us, thousands, the organisation, the Party, the power. We took responsibility off their shoulders.)¹⁶⁰

At the end of Lenin's monologue Khurenito runs up to the communist leader and kisses him on the forehead. When Ehrenburg asks him later why he kissed Lenin, Khurenito replies that he was only acting in accordance with Russian etiquette as put forth in Dostoevskii's The Brothers Karamazov. Be that as it may, Lenin imitates the Grand Inquisitor in all respects, embracing doubtful means for a doubtful goal.

Shortly after the meeting with Lenin, Khurenito and his disciples happen upon Schmidt who had remained separate from the group for the duration of their stay in Russia. They discover that Schmidt had originally entered the country with the intent of assisting Germany in its victory, but then had found that the October revolution opened up more exciting prospects for his plans to reorganize the world than the declining German Empire could offer. The organizational vacuum in Russia provided a tantalizing opportunity for him to put his skills to use and he had become devoted to the Communist

¹⁵⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1990), 405.

¹⁶⁰ Ehrenburg, Julio, 252-253.

International. As Schmidt gives Khurenito and his disciples a tour of his office, it becomes obvious that Schmidt is one of the “thousands” that Lenin had spoken of who were enforcing the organization of the new order and lifting the burden of freedom from the millions. The walls of Schmidt’s office are covered with charts and his desk is piled with blueprints and drawings planning out every aspect of Moscow’s administration and the life of its inhabitants. Finally the group is led to the most frightening chart of all, which maps out every phase of man’s life in faceless geometric shapes—man in Schmidt’s planning has been reduced to a mere cog.

Èrenburg, the narrator, is disturbed by this mechanization of humanity and asks Khurenito how this new type of human being could possibly exist, for it allows for no chance factors, no contradiction and not even the smallest rebellion among them—in short it would be a boring existence. In response Khurenito tells him that he must bear the boredom. This new species of human being is destined to remain dominant for a long time, but is also a necessary step in the journey towards the vision of the future humanity who will live harmoniously and freely, unfettered by culture and the atrophied values of civilization. When Èrenburg asks him why they don’t just destroy this new order and get to the uncivilized state straight away, Khurenito replies:

Если на заре ты начнешь стрелять из тысячи батарей в солнце, оно все равно взойдет. Я, может быть, не меньше тебя ненавижу этот встающий день, но для того, чтобы пришло завтра, нужно стойко встречать жестокое светило, нужно помогать людям пройти через его лучи, а не цепляться за купол церквушки, на котором вчера теплился, угасая, закат.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 198.

(If, at dawn, you start firing at the sun from a thousand batteries, it'll rise nonetheless. It may be that I hate this dawning day as much as you do. But, in order that tomorrow may come, you must steadfastly meet the cruel sun, you must steadfastly meet the cruel sun, you must help mankind to walk in its rays, instead of clinging to the cupola of some little church which yesterday—yesterday or some other time in the past—gleamed warmly in the dying sunset.)¹⁶²

As time passes and Russia settles into its everyday existence, it proves to be as dull as Èrenburg predicted. Everything is planned and written out in reports, but all motivation is absent and the Russians shuffle about, downcast and merely marking time while giving the impression of producing feverish work. Meanwhile, the tables, which had been reversed during the revolution, are once again reversed and Mr. Cool and Monsieur Delet, who had suffered with the downfall of the Tsar are reinstated to their privileged positions and becoming “guests of the Soviet Republic.”¹⁶³

The Airplane that Cannot Fly

Khurenito, disillusioned by the reversal of all that the revolution had changed announces that Russia has become “an airplane that can't fly,” stuck in the mire of cultural traditions that may have changed their color, but yet remained essentially the same under the surface. He can bear the boredom and the return to atrophied cultural “values” no longer and announces to Èrenburg that his work is done. The phase of the mechanical, logical, and thoroughly organized man, which Schmidt typifies, is destined to last for a long time and there is nothing for Khurenito to do while it lasts. Therefore, he tells Èrenburg, he has no other choice but to die. However, Khurenito explains, he

¹⁶² Ehrenburg, *Julio*, 270.

¹⁶³Эренбург, *Собрание* т. 1 (1962), 292.

cannot simply commit suicide; this would be too banal an ending—it would appear that he still held some convictions. Rather he must die for no reason at all. This he decides to do by dying for a “pair of boots.” Leaving Moscow and taking Èrenburg with him, Khurenito travels to Konotop, a small provincial Russian town, where he places his boots in front of him and waits until a bandit kills him for his goods (this wouldn’t have happened in Moscow because it was now so boringly civilized).

With the Teacher dead, Èrenburg retreats to an unremarkably smooth and quiet existence in which he writes the biography that Khurenito had requested of him:

Теперь я кончил эту книгу. В душе моей пустота и покой. Я вновь пережил прошедшее год за годом и восстановил побледневший было образ Учителя. Я больше не боюсь предать незабвенного Предателя. Я не убегаю трусливо от неодолимых противоречий, ими жил и дышал Хуренито. Предо мной проходят Россия, Франция, война, революция, сытость, бунт, голод, покой. Я не спорю и не преклоняюсь. Я знаю, что много цепей, разного металла и формы, но все они—цепи, и не к одной из них не протянется моя слабая рука.¹⁶⁴

(Now the book is finished. My heart is empty and at rest. I have lived again through the past, year by year, and have restored the Teacher’s image, which had already begun to pale. I am no longer afraid that I might betray the unforgettable Traitor. No longer do I run like a coward from insurmountable contradictions, for they were of the essence of the Teacher’s life. Russia, France, war, revolution, satiety, rebellion, famine and repose pass in review before my eyes. I do not argue; neither do I worship. I know that there are many chains, of different metals and of various shapes, but all are chains, and to none of them will I extend my feeble hand.)¹⁶⁵

Despite Khurenito’s death and his failure to bring about the destruction of world culture, Èrenburg does not end his account of the Teacher and his activities in complete

¹⁶⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 231.

¹⁶⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 315-316.

despondency. Ehrenburg admits that his life is not particularly good, but he does not apologize for it, nor has he given up hope. He recognizes that he will not live to see the day that the Teacher had spoken of, the day when men would be set free and dance with childlike laughter in pastoral fields. Nevertheless he is still engaged in the effort to bring forth that future day:

Но ныне я бросаю семена далекой полыни, мяты и зверобоя.
Неминуемое придет, я верю в это, и всем, кто ждет его, всем
братьям без бога, без программы, без идей, голым и презираемым,
любящим только ветер и скандал, я шлю мой последний поцелуй.
Ура просто! гип—гип ура! вив! живо! гох! эвивва! банзай!¹⁶⁶

(And yet, today, I am casting forth the seed of the fleabane, the wild mint, the ragwort of that far distant future. The inevitable will come, I believe it, and to all those who await it, to all my brothers without a god, without a programme, without an idea, naked and despised, loving only the wind and outage, I send my last kiss. Hurrah! Hip-hip-hip hooray! Vive! Zivio! Hoch! Evviva! Banzai!)¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Ehrenburg, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 232.

¹⁶⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 316-317.

CHAPTER 3: FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND ÈRENBURG

Nietzsche in Russia

Khurenito's image of pastoral fields full of childlike laughter evokes the vision of another teacher, that of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. In fact there is much in the novel Khulio Khurenito that is reminiscent of Nietzsche's ideas; furthermore, as unlikely as it may seem at first glance, Nietzsche who has often been understood as anti-Semitic, was a clear ideological source for Èrenburg's "philosophy of Jewry." However, Nietzsche's view of the Jews was far from unambiguous and they were recipients of his praise as well as his criticism. The writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) first entered Russia in 1890, one year prior to Èrenburg's birth. As time progressed, his reception went through various transformations from intense curiosity, widespread discussion, and rapid assimilation to official disdain and (Soviet) censorship.

Russian intellectuals first became acquainted with Nietzsche by way of Russian writers and artists who were traveling in Europe where Nietzsche's ideas were creating a stir. Among this group of cultural travelers were the symbolists D. S. Merezhkovskii, V. Ia. Briusov, and V. I. Ivanov who learned of Nietzsche in Paris, read him avidly and transferred many of his ideas to their works. Nietzsche's early work The Birth of

Tragedy, (Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Wesen der Musik, 1871), was the primary text to appeal to them because of its “anti-rationalist, vitalist, and esthetic aspects.”¹⁶⁸ They were especially drawn to Nietzsche’s suggestion that a culture’s health is dependent upon its myths, i.e. his idea that “life can be justified only in esthetic terms and ...[that] art is the metaphysical activity of humankind.”¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche’s ideas validated their opposition to positivism and utilitarianism, as well as their belief that esthetic values were more important than material ones.

Another of Nietzsche’s works that especially attracted the interest of the Russian symbolists, as well as many Russian *intelligenty* in general, was Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Also Sprach Zarathustra, 1888). This work they enjoyed for its poetic and aphoristic style, as well as its philosophical content. In Nietzsche’s “Overman” they saw the image of the future artist and they embraced his ideas of individualism, disdain for the masses and isolation from a society ruled by popular values. As a result they adopted a form of “esthetic individualism” that contrasted with the “economic individualism” of the West, and emphasized the artist’s duty to express his own feelings and ideas, regardless of whether they conformed to accepted beliefs or not.¹⁷⁰

Discussions of Nietzsche’s ideas arose in Russian journals around 1889, specifically, in Вопросы философии и психологии (Problems of Philosophy and

¹⁶⁸ Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15.

¹⁶⁹ Rosenthal, Nietzsche and Soviet Culture, 15.

¹⁷⁰ Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 10.

Psychology) and Русское богатство. (Russian Wealth).¹⁷¹ Nietzsche's ideas met with much opposition, however, and editors, probably feeling pressure from censors, often printed disclaimers to articles dealing with his ideas; they were quick to point to Nietzsche's godlessness and the insanity that afflicted him in the last years of his life.

By the mid-1890s Russian novels and short stories began to appear which emphasized this negative image of Nietzsche. The philosopher was portrayed as encouraging egotism, ruthlessness, exploitation, and licentiousness. The stance of censors, who tended to pass only those works which criticized Nietzsche, reinforced this popular view of him.¹⁷²

In 1898 the first Russian translation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra became available, but this work was not spared by the censors either—passages that spoke critically of priests, the Church and “slave morality” were excised. Other Nietzsche's texts soon followed Thus Spoke Zarathustra, until, by 1911, almost all of his works were available in Russian, although the quality of the translations varied widely.

By 1898, the same year that Thus Spoke Zarathustra appeared in Russian translation, Nietzsche was being widely discussed in many intellectual circles, where rough translations of his works were made and circulated by those members who knew German. The intelligentsia, especially the creative intelligentsia, identified with the “Overman” and felt duty-bound to be involved in the creation of new values and a new culture. By 1900 educated Russians in both urban and rural areas were quite familiar

¹⁷¹ Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia, 10.

¹⁷² Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia, 11.

with the basic tenets of Nietzsche's philosophy: the "death" of God, the need for the appearance of the "Overman" and the doctrine that values that had outlived themselves must be destroyed.¹⁷³

After the failed Revolution of 1905, Nietzscheanism began to lose favor and, in fact, several of his original advocates rejected him. The poet Viacheslav Ivanov, in 1908, announced that, "Dionysus in Russia is dangerous," while Dmitri Merezhkovskii called Nietzscheanism a "childhood sickness" and the philosopher-writer Vassilii Rozanov concurred.¹⁷⁴ According to Bernice Glatzer-Rosenthal, this retreat from Nietzschean ideas came about for a couple of reasons. One was the pessimism that followed the failure of the Revolution of 1905 to bring about complete change and that replaced the active optimism that many had found in Nietzsche's Overman Zarathustra. Another was the process of vulgarization of Nietzscheanism that had taken place. After the Revolution of 1905, Nietzscheanism became the excuse for the torrent of pornography that appeared as a result of a lessening of censorship restrictions. Nietzsche's philosophy was also blamed for the wave of hedonism and promiscuity that was rising among Russia's youth. As a result of these two factors, although Nietzsche's ideas still circulated and his philosophy still had an influence in artistic, political and intellectual circles, he was rarely acknowledged as their source.

In the early 1920's Nietzsche's works became a target of tightening party control in the sphere of ideas. Although Nietzsche's philosophy was apolitical in nature, cultural

¹⁷³ Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia, 16.

¹⁷⁴ Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia, 27.

issues had become political issues in the newly formed Soviet Union. For the most part occupied with Russia's dire economic straits, as well as the Civil War, the Bolsheviks had initially allowed relative freedom in the cultural sphere. However, with Lenin's failing health and the competition among differing intellectual and artistic groups for cultural hegemony and for the right to be the sole representatives for the revolution, the Bolsheviks found it necessary to take control of the cultural scene. Nietzsche was declared undemocratic. In accordance with the demands of Lenin's widow, Nadezhda Krupskaja, Nietzsche's books were banned from factory and trade union libraries, as well as many universities. Mention of Nietzsche's name was suppressed. Also by this time many of the intellectuals, such as Merezhkovskii who had been "carriers" of Nietzsche's ideas had already emigrated, or been forced out of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's ideas were so widely spread and had been so integrated into philosophical, artistic and political thought that, though Nietzsche was rarely cited as their source, they continued to circulate and be reinterpreted.

During World War II Nietzsche's name fell into complete disfavor as it became connected with the ideology of the National Socialists, who used his works to rationalize their anti-Semitic activities and aggressions as well as their claim to be "overmen." Thus Nietzsche's ideas had an enormous impact on Russian culture and its writers, philosophers and artists, while open acknowledgment of his influence existed for a relatively short period of time.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia, 3-4.

The Overman

When Èrenburg began writing his first novel, Khulio Khurenito, which appeared in 1921, Nietzsche's name was already somewhat taboo and, of course, by the time he published his memoirs in 1963 it was unmentionable. Most likely this accounts for the fact that Èrenburg never mentions Nietzsche and his philosophical contributions to the novel, Khulio Khurenito, in his memoirs or elsewhere, or any influence by the German philosopher on his own philosophical stance. Yet he most certainly was very familiar with his ideas as is evident from allusions to Nietzsche in his novels, above all in Khulio Khurenito.

In order to speak of Nietzsche's impact on Èrenburg's novel, Khulio Khurenito, it is first necessary to establish some of those of the philosopher's basic ideas that were current in Russia. The two main sources for these ideas come from what were probably the most popular works of Nietzsche in Russia, namely, Thus Spoke Zarathustra and The Birth of a Tragedy. These works were Èrenburg's main sources also. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, as Mikhail Augursky states, is such a powerful pretext for Èrenburg's novel, in fact, that "Julio Jurenito is a variation of Zarathustra"; whereas The Birth of Tragedy is useful for understanding Èrenburg's vision of utopia.¹⁷⁶

In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche declares that "God has died" and asserts that there is no supernatural meaning, or purpose, to life. Man alone bears the responsibility of lifting himself above human nature and cultural conditioning to a level where he overcomes and transforms himself, surpassing the mediocre masses of

¹⁷⁶ Mikhail Agursky, "Nietzschean Roots of Stalinist Culture," Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67.

humanity (the so-called “herd”). Nietzsche faults the masses for their blind observance of traditional virtues. When virtues no longer serve to raise man up, but rather enslave him, they become “false” virtues and lose their “sacredness” and edifying capabilities. Adherence to these corrupted virtues leads to complacent mediocrity, the feature that characterizes the “herd.” When complacent mediocrity envelops a cultural tradition the notions of “good” and “evil” become distorted. “Good” becomes associated with anything that supports the traditional “pseudo” virtue, while “evil” is assigned to anything that opposes it. Nietzsche suggests that the real distinction between “good” and “evil” lies beyond the distorted meanings encountered in traditional cultures. The task of the Overman is to discover this distinction and to create new and truly “sacred” virtues. When doing this the Overman will often be characterized as “evil,” because he challenges traditional virtues and, as a result, the static comfort of the masses.

Before actually creating new values, the Overman must pass through three necessary stages. First he must subject himself to the old cultural traditions, become familiar with them and, master them. Next he must defy and reject them. Finally, he is prepared to construct new virtues that will raise him up individually. Only when he reaches this point of creation will he become an Overman.

If in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche criticizes traditional and atrophied culture, in the preceding The Birth of Tragedy, he offered a vision of what a valid culture should be. In this first of his works, Nietzsche points to the Greek tragedy as the pinnacle of human culture because it blends the Apollonian and Dionysian elements of creation. The image of Apollonian reality provides form for the chaotic and elemental Dionysus.

Apollo is characterized by light, structure, harmony, clarity and reason—he is cosmos. Dionysus, on the other hand symbolizes darkness, limitless energy, intoxication—chaos. From the union of these two impulses, Nietzsche felt, a higher form of art once was and could again be created. In The Birth of Tragedy, as mentioned earlier, his validation of the non-rational, Dionysian, element was what attracted much interest from the Russian writers and artists who discovered Nietzsche's works. It was this notion that appealed to Èrenburg also.

The Jewish Question

In a discussion of Nietzsche's ideas and their influence on Èrenburg's novel Khulio Khurenito, it is also appropriate to investigate Nietzsche's views concerning the Jews, as Èrenburg's attitude to the "Jewish question" is the main focus of the dissertation. Not surprisingly, considering Nietzsche's inconsistencies throughout much of his philosophical system, Nietzsche's stance on Jewish issues is full of contradictions also. Sander Gilman in his essay, "Nietzsche, Heine, and the Otherness of the Jew" categorizes Nietzsche's perception of the Jews into three types:

... the Jew as the prophet of the Old Testament, serving the angry and holy Jehovah; the Jew as the archetypal wandering Christian (Saul), weak and destructive; and the Jew as contemporary, the antithesis of all decadence, self-sufficient and incorruptible.¹⁷⁷

In reference to the first perception of the Jew, Nietzsche found much to admire in the people of the Old Testament which he greatly respected:

¹⁷⁷ Sander L. Gilman, "Nietzsche, Heine, and the Otherness of the Jew," Studies in Nietzsche and the Judeo-Christian Tradition, ed. James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner and Robert M. Helm (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 206.

All honor to the Old Testament! I find in it great human beings, a heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable naivete of the strong heart; what is more, I find a people.¹⁷⁸

What Nietzsche especially liked in the Old Testament were the books that dealt with the era of the kings in Israel. At this point in the history of Israel, he felt, the Jewish people stood in the right and natural relationship to all elements of reality. The Israelites were as yet a tribal community and, according to Nietzsche, had created their own god for their own needs:

“Its Yahweh” was the expression of consciousness of power, of joy in oneself, of hope for oneself: through him victory and welfare was expected; through him nature was trusted to give what the people needed—above all, rain.¹⁷⁹

Essentially, Nietzsche respected the Old Testament (particularly the first part up to the books of the prophets) because it was life affirming. The God of the Jews and their religion were generally subordinated to the needs of the people and, in this way, Jews were participants in the “yes-saying” part of life.¹⁸⁰

The second type of Jew mentioned by Gilman is the Christian Jew. This type was deemed to be entirely negative by Nietzsche. The evolution toward the Christian Jew began, according to Nietzsche, when the Jews began to suffer military defeat and eventually lost their land and were forced into exile. At this point the Jews lost faith in their “tribal god” because he had failed them. With the appearance of prophets and their

¹⁷⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1966), 580.

¹⁷⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), 594.

¹⁸⁰ Israel Eldad, “Nietzsche and the Old Testament,” Studies in Nietzsche and the Judeo-Christian Tradition, ed. James C. O’Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner and Robert M. Helm (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 206.

warnings of sin and calls to repentance came a theology that he thought was no longer life affirming since it did not cater to the physical, and immediate needs of the tribe, but rather encouraged the Jews to seek a purpose beyond life and to submit to metaphysical speculation. This transformation of Jewish theology, he asserted, signaled the decline of Jewish culture. The ultimate consequence of this was the Jewish Christ. This new deity was no longer a tribal god, but a cosmopolitan one that had universal power reaching out to all peoples. Christ preached a message of mercy and subjection, rather than the old message of justice and military prowess. This new religion suggested postponing rewards till the afterlife and offered no guarantees for success in this life. In Nietzsche's radical philosophy, Christianity is the ultimate negation of life.

The contemporary Jew, or the type of Jew who is the "antithesis of all decadence, self-sufficient and incorruptible," is the most important one for the discussion of Èrenburg's attitudes to Jewry. It is established in two main passages taken from Nietzsche's works that have been used by many Jewish writers at the end of the nineteenth century to prove that Nietzsche was a philo-Semite.¹⁸¹ The first of these, which condemns the Germans for their anti-Semitism and defends the Jews as the purest race in Europe, is taken from Nietzsche's chapter on "Nations and Fatherlands" in his work Beyond Good and Evil:

I have not met a German yet who was well disposed toward the Jews; ...thus commands the instinct of a people whose type is still weak and indefinite, so it could easily be blurred or extinguished by a stronger race. The Jews, however, are beyond any doubt the strongest, toughest, and purest race now living in Europe: they know how to prevail even under the worst conditions (even better than under favorable conditions), by means

¹⁸¹ Gilman, 207 (footnote #3).

of virtues that today one would like to mark as vices—thanks above all to a resolute faith that need not be ashamed before “modern ideas”; they change, *when* they change, always only as the Russian Empire makes its conquests—being an empire that has time and is not of yesterday—namely, according to the principle, “as slowly as possible.”¹⁸²

The second passage, which is taken from The Antichrist states that the Jews are the antithesis of all decadence:

Psychologically considered, the Jewish people are a people endowed with the toughest vital energy, who, placed in impossible circumstances, voluntarily and out of the most profound prudence of self-preservation, take sides with all the instincts of decadence—*not* as mastered by them, but because they divined a power in these instincts with which one could prevail against “the world.” The Jews are the antithesis of all decadents: they have had to *represent* decadents to the point of illusion; with a *non plus ultra* of histrionic genius they have known how to place themselves at the head of all movements of decadence, (as the Christianity of *Paul*), in order to create something out of them which is stronger than any *Yes-saying* party of life.¹⁸³

This is the image of the Jew as the survivor. In the modern Jew, Nietzsche admired what he called the Jewish “instinct” to persist despite diaspora and exile, and although he did not discourage either Jewish Zionism or assimilation, he nevertheless saw in these a weakening of this instinct.¹⁸⁴ Gilman points out that to understand both of the above mentioned passages they should be viewed within the context of the historical circumstances effecting the Jews at the time that they were written. Beyond Good and Evil, published in 1886 and The Antichrist, published in 1888, were composed in the years shortly following Alexander II’s assassination in 1881. With Alexander III’s

¹⁸² Gilman, 207- 208.

¹⁸³ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 593.

¹⁸⁴ Harry Neumann, “The Case against Apolitical Morality: Nietzsche’s Interpretation of the Jewish Instinct,” Studies in Nietzsche and the Judeo-Christian Tradition, ed. James C. O’Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner and Robert M. Helm (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 29-30.

ascension to the Russian throne came increasingly anti-Semitic laws (tougher restrictions within the Pale, smaller quotas in Russian schools for Jewish students, etc) and widespread Jewish pogroms. As millions of Eastern European Jews fled to Central Europe they posed a threat to the false sense of cultural homogeneity held by both European nationalists and the Westernized Jews who had managed to assimilate within European culture. To the Western Europeans these Jews from the Eastern ghettos seemed dirty, ragged and alien, speaking a marred form of German (Yiddish) in a boisterous manner. These stragglers from Eastern Europe began to be regarded by the Western mind as the degenerate Other.¹⁸⁵ The Western Jews also feared these newcomers because they saw in them the “embodiment of the image of the Jew fossilized in the bedrock of Western myth.”¹⁸⁶ This being the prevailing feeling in Western Europe concerning the Eastern European Jews, Gilman avers that Nietzsche, in his usual manner, inverts the conventional view:

For the very condemnation of the Jew as degenerate by the accepted authorities of Western society gave Nietzsche the fulcrum he needed to move the world: he simply turned it on its head. If the anti-Semites need to see the Jew as the essence of decay, Nietzsche, placing himself in the role of the opposition per se, must see in the imposed isolation of the Jew a source of strength. Nietzsche is thus not a philo-Semite but rather an anti-anti-Semite.¹⁸⁷

In essence then, according to Gilman, it is more out of dislike for the Germans (i.e., the accepted authorities on values in his cultural context) than real admiration for

¹⁸⁵ Gilman, 208-209.

¹⁸⁶ Gilman, 209.

¹⁸⁷ Gilman, 210.

the Jews that Nietzsche praises them. This same sentiment is echoed by Israel Eldad in his article, "Nietzsche and the Old Testament":

...it cannot be denied that most of Nietzsche's appreciative remarks for the Old Testament, despite his critique of its idealistic-moral-religious content, flowed from the ever-growing outpouring of opposition, revealed and concealed, to Christianity in theory and in practice, except for the character of Jesus himself. *It is to ridicule Christianity, in a certain sense, that he repeatedly raises the positive elements in the Old Testament.*¹⁸⁸ (Italics added.)

Here Nietzsche attacks the predominant religion of his native culture in both its branches—Catholicism and Lutheranism. It is primarily because of his anti-establishment views that Nietzsche, considering himself an outcast of society, to some extent identifies with the outsider, that is, the Jew.¹⁸⁹

Khurenito and Zarathustra

Hammermann, in her critical work, Die satirischen Werke von Il'ja Erenburg, takes note of Nietzschean influences in the novel Khulio Khurenito: "Für Erenburg war Nietzsche zweifelsohne ein entscheidendes geistiges Erlebnis, das im Churenito seine Spuren hinterlassen hat."¹⁹⁰ ("Without a doubt Nietzsche was a decisive spiritual experience for Erenburg, that left its traces in Khurenito." [my translation]). Indeed, in the opening chapter of the novel the reader is introduced to Nietzsche's views of the concepts of "good" and "evil." In this scene, Erenburg, the narrator of the novel, meets and converses with Khulio Khurenito, whom he mistakes for the devil. Khurenito, who

¹⁸⁸ Eldad, 60.

¹⁸⁹ Gilman, 210.

¹⁹⁰ Hammermann, 84.

quickly divines Èrenburg's mistake, assures him that no such being exists—a discovery which greatly disappoints Èrenburg:

Я отнюдь не радовался тому, что врага нет, что он лишь моя нелепая выдумка. Наоборот, вместе с чертом исчезал весь уют, пусть ада, но все же жилого понятного, осязаемого.¹⁹¹

(I was by no means pleased that my enemy did not exist, that he was only my nonsensical invention. On the contrary, together with him vanished all hope of comfort, the comfort of hell perhaps, but still the comfort of something homely, tangible, open to comprehension.)¹⁹²

In an attempt to retain some semblance of his former conceptualization of the world, Èrenburg questions Khurenito, “Very well, let us assume he does not exist. But something exists, doesn't it?” Khurenito once again challenges the narrator's perceptions and denies that good exists. When Èrenburg, still puzzled, questions how everything is held together and how there could be no meaning in his surroundings, Khurenito offers some examples to show that the lives and actions of the people surrounding them in the Rotonde café are merely motivated by such basic and base drives, as hunger, passion and greed:

А вот от такой ерунды все ваши святые и мистики летят вверх тормашками. Все, конечно, по графам распределено: сие добро, сие зло. А только крохотная ошибка вышла, недоразумение. Справедливость? Что же вы хозяина не выдумали получше, чтобы у него на ферме таких безобразий не было? Или, может, верите, зло— «испытание», «искупление»? Так это же младенческое оправдание совсем не младенческих дел.¹⁹³

(But it's the kind of silly stuff to send all your saints and mystics flying head over heels. Of course everything's classified under headings: this is

¹⁹¹ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 14.

¹⁹² Ehrenburg, Julio, 18.

¹⁹³ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 15.

good, that's evil. The trouble is that somebody let a tiny error creep in, a misunderstanding if you like. Justice? In that case why didn't you invent a better landlord? One who'll see to it that this sort of thing doesn't happen on his farm? Or perhaps you believe that evil's a "trial", a "Redemption", you say? But that's a childish justification of far from childish things.)¹⁹⁴

In this monologue, Khurenito's words echo the teachings of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who asserts that: "faith in God is dead as a matter of cultural fact, and any "meaning" of life in the sense of a supernatural purpose is gone."¹⁹⁵ Naturally, as a result, the concepts of "good" and "evil" are not dictated by a higher source, but simply created by man himself:

Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning.¹⁹⁶

Khurenito, echoing Zarathustra, assures Ehrenburg that nothing more than tangible reality exists and that the world is nothing more than a furnished house, where the decorations—"pictures"—represent nothing more than the idols of the day:

... Одним очень нравится—уютно, другие возмущаются и пока что мирно перевешивают картинки с одной стенки на другую...¹⁹⁷

(... Some like it very much and say it's comfortable, others hate it; but meanwhile all they do is peacefully take the pictures off one wall and re-hang them on another.)¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Ehrenburg, Julio, 20.

¹⁹⁵ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 114.

¹⁹⁶ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 171.

¹⁹⁷ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 15.

¹⁹⁸ Ehrenburg, Julio, 20.

Èrenburg considers Khurenito's words with frustration for a few moments before he is struck by a revelation. If there really is no good or evil and one is dissatisfied with one's "house," or cultural mores that have established themselves, then why not completely destroy them? Khurenito agrees and informs Èrenburg that he is in Europe for that very purpose.

With his goal of destroying existing culture, Khurenito acts out the role of Zarathustra within the novel. As pointed out by Hammermann, Khurenito, like Zarathustra is an inverted Christ figure—an Antichrist. He also, like Zarathustra, descends upon civilization (Europe) from the wilderness, in this case Mexico, a distant and new civilization that is relatively untamed—a cultural wilderness by European standards. Also like Zarathustra, Khurenito is far above the contemptible masses. In the short biographical sketch that Èrenburg, the narrator, gives us of his mentor in the novel he demonstrates that Khurenito possesses almost superhuman intellect and ability. With minimal effort he experiences and exhausts each of the values that are esteemed by culture. In turn he tests religion, wealth, power, the sciences, the arts, philosophy and even challenges life itself by facing death, but each of these pursuits he finds to be equally dull and unsatisfactory. By having mastered each of the "virtues" valued by existing culture, Khurenito is following the prescribed order which Zarathustra laid out for the would-be Overman. He cannot skirt existing cultural values, for in order to recognize their falsity he must be familiar with them and he must have the moral fortitude to perfect them in himself. Only then is he prepared to challenge them, which Khurenito does. Having performed his cultural experiments, Khurenito comes to the conclusion

«что культура—зло, и с ней надлежит всячески болроться.»¹⁹⁹ (“that culture [is] an evil and should be fought in every way.”)²⁰⁰ In order to accomplish his aim of destroying world culture, Khurenito decides upon a plan.

Khurenito reasons that rather than attacking culture, he should destroy it “with the weapons developed by culture itself.” And so he sets out on a Zarathustrian plan to «холить язвы, расползающиеся и готовые пожрать ее полусгнившее тело.»²⁰¹ (“nurse [culture’s] spreading ulcers, which would gradually consume its rotting body.”)²⁰² This he does by gathering an entourage of seven disciples, each of which represents the nation from which he originated. These disciples are all caricatures of the traits that are especially characteristic of his country. In the scene where Khurenito questions each of his disciples about which word they would prefer—“yes” or “no”, each of the disciples chooses “yes” because it protects their own interests or the perpetuation of what they consider to be “good” or, in other words, their particular national values. Khurenito recognizes in this blind dedication to national virtue a useful weapon for his plan, just as Zarathustra saw the destructive nature of virtue: “I love him who makes his virtue his addiction and his catastrophe: for his virtue’s sake he wants to live on and to live forever.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 19.

²⁰⁰ Ehrenburg, Julio, 25..

²⁰¹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 19.

²⁰² Ehrenburg, Julio, 25.

²⁰³ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 127.

Each of the disciples demonstrates the falsity of their nations' "pseudo-values." Mr. Cool, as the American, relies upon both his checkbook and the Bible as his moral standard. With his checkbook he enforces the teachings of the Bible, while, by wresting verses out of their context, he uses the Bible to justify his money making ventures. His "values" are conveniently self-serving.

Monsieur Delet, the Frenchman, lives for the pleasures of the flesh alone and moderation is his watchword, since he desires that nothing disturb his comfort. As Monsieur Delet falls asleep after telling Khurenito his life history he is reminiscent of the sage in Thus Spoke Zarathustra who preaches that virtue is that which allows one to sleep:

"Few know it, but one must have all the virtues to sleep well. Shall I bear false witness? Shall I commit adultery? Shall I covet my neighbor's maid? All that would go ill with good sleep."²⁰⁴

This sage's wisdom is the same as that of Monsieur Delet's, namely "to wake in order to sleep well."²⁰⁵ By the same token, when Khurenito says of Monsieur Delet that he «уже не на пути к концу. Он сам—конец, предел, ничто!»²⁰⁶ ("is no longer on the road to the end: he is the end—the ultimate—nothingness,")²⁰⁷ he is echoing Zarathustra's remarks about the sage: "Blessed are the sleepy ones: for they shall soon drop off."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 142.

²⁰⁵ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 142.

²⁰⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 75-76.

²⁰⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 99.

²⁰⁸ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 142.

The parodistic allusion to Christ's Sermon on the Mount reinforces both Erenburg's Nietzschean contempt for Christianity and his abhorrence of inactivity and mediocrity.

The most negative and frightening disciple within Nietzsche's paradigm of negative virtues is Schmidt, the German representative. He is an inexorable organizer whose perception of good—the perfectly organized society—is so selfishly blind that it is incapable of tolerating anything that does not conform. The end result of his "virtue" is to create a state in which men are reduced to mere cogs. It is significant that Khurenito selects him as his last disciple, since he fits the description of Nietzsche's "last man".

Hammerman recognizes this in her Die satirischen Werke von Il'ia Erenburg:

In diesem Zusammenhang sei darauf hingewiesen, daß Karl Schmidt als "letzter Mensch,, im Nietzscheanischen Sinne gedacht ist. Schmidts "Machtwille,, verwandelt ihn in einen Barbaren, der kein Mitleid und keine Liebe kennt und der nur von seiner Manie, die Menschheit zu organisieren, beherrscht wird.²⁰⁹

(This context points to the fact that Karl Schmidt is the "last man" in the Nietzschean sense. Schmidt's "will to power" turns him into a barbarian who has no compassion or love and who is only controlled by his mania to organize mankind. [My translation])

Nietzsche described the "last man" as the one who no longer despises himself and the one in whom chaos no longer exists. He no longer knows the meaning of love, creation and longing for something beyond himself:

"We have invented happiness," say the last men and they blink....
Becoming sick and harboring suspicion are sinful to them: one proceeds carefully. A fool, however still stumbles over stones or human beings!
... One no longer becomes rich or poor: both require too much exertion....
Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Hammerman, 86-87.

²¹⁰ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 129-130.

The race of the “last men” according to Nietzsche is “as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.”²¹¹ Ehrenburg recognized the danger in the Bolshevik and the Marxist concepts of the “new man,” who, in fact, was the “last man.” In them he saw the death of creativity and he feared that this “last man” was truly ineradicable and would never be “overcome.” Khurenito recognizes that Schmidt is one of the “last men” and as such must be incorporated into his plan:

...Учитель Хуренито, протиснувшись к Шмидту, сказал: «Я сразу оценил вас. Вы будете моим седьмым, и последним, учеником. Вашим надеждам суждено сбыться скорее, нежели вы думаете, и верьте, я помогу вам в этом. А вы, господа, смотрите – вот один из тех, которым суждено надолго стать у руля человечества!»²¹²

(...the Teacher pushed his way through to Schmidt and said: ‘I knew you at once for what you are. You shall be my seventh and last disciple. Your hopes are destined to come true sooner than you think; believe me, I shall assist you in this. You others, look: here is one of those destined, now and for a long time to come, to stand at the helm of humanity.’)²¹³

Alexei Spiridonovich Tishin, the man whom Khurenito selects to serve as the representative of the Russian nation, is not as threatening as the three disciples already mentioned, simply because he is unable to take a stand on any issue. The Russian is outside any Nietzschean paradigms. He comes straight out of Dostoevskii’s “underground.”

²¹¹ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 129.

²¹² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 83.

²¹³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 109.

The two remaining disciples of Khurenito are Ercole Bambucci, the Italian, and Aisha, the Senagalese. Both of these characters are more positive than the others in a Nietzschean sense:

Beide verkörpern sie den unintellektuellen, in der Unmittelbarkeit lebenden, erdhaften Menschen, dessen Verstandeserkenntnis von einem machtvollen Triebleben paralyisiert wird and dessen vitale Kräfte durch keinen zivilisatorischen und kulturellen Zwang gebändigt werden können.²¹⁴

(Both embody the non-intellectual, earthly man of immediate reactions, whose comprehension is paralyzed by a powerful instinct and whose vital strength can not be bound by any civilizing or cultural force. [My translation])

As representatives of the instinctual and intuitive element, Aisha and Ercole stand as a positive contrast to Mr. Cool, Herr Schmidt, Monsieur Delet, and the Russian Tishin, who represent cultures in which the development of the intellect have obscured their natural, instinctive needs and, in fact come in direct conflict with them. Although both Aisha and Ercole represent the “primal” man in conflict with civilization this position of theirs is brought about by different conditions.

Ercole is so depraved that he is indifferent to conventions. He represents Italy, the cradle of European culture, a country that has been overgrown by cultural traditions and institutions. It has experienced all and, as a result, all has become meaningless for it. Ercole, as a representative of this morally jaded nation, comfortably ignores its laws and traditions, “spitting” upon them just to amuse himself. Like Zarathustra, Ercole rejects the “pseudo” virtues of civilization, but unlike him (and Khurenito, as well) he has not

²¹⁴ Hammerman, 85.

really earned his right to do so, since he has rejected them without first mastering and testing them. His is an idle path.

Aisha, meanwhile, lies on the other end of the spectrum. He is the noble savage, a native of Senegal, i.e. a country that is, as yet, relatively uncivilized. Out of a childlike ignorance he breaks with convention and his disregard for cultural mores results from innocence, rather than indifference. It is this childlike innocence that makes Aisha the most positive character of Khurenito's group and, in fact, the only one that Khurenito loves. In the scene in which Khurenito selects Aisha as a member of his entourage, the narrator describes how Aisha, with a great deal of pride, shows Khurenito three idols, Gmekho, Shirik and Gikhre that he, himself has created. Khurenito is delighted by his creation and remarks:

Вы видите, ... здесь, в отеле «Мажестик», творится великолепная мифология. Через сотни лет Ширик будет отряхивать земной прах с блуждающих душ, Гmekho впускать их в святые врата, а милый Гехрэ с почтовой маркой в два су служить вечным вестником, соединяющим наш мир с трансцендентальным. Или вы позабыли послеобеденные анекдоты мудрых эллинов и бесплатных гурий бедного погонщика верблюдов? Ты, еврей, – сказал он мне, – помнишь, как Иегова обиделся на твоих девушек, как он боролся с Иаковом, ревновал Израиль ко всякому вавилонскому идолищу и торговался насчет захудалого Содома? ... Вы, дети мои, пережевываете жвачку, прошедшую через все четыре задонных желудка, а Айша готовит новую для Клоделей или Булгаковых тридцатого века.²¹⁵

You see, ... here at the Hotel Majestic, a splendid mythology is being created. In hundreds of years' time Shirik will be shaking the earthly dust off the souls of the dead, Gmekho will be letting them pass through the holy gates, and dear old Gikhray with his five-*su* postage stamp will be the eternal messenger linking our world with the transcendental. Have you forgotten the after-dinner stories of the wise Hellenes, and the *houris*

²¹⁵ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 27-28.

delivered without charge to the poor camelherd? You, a Hebrew, he said to me, do you not remember how Jehovah was insulted by your maiden, how he fought with Jacob, was jealous of Israel so much as cast an eye at a Babylonian idol, and bargained over wretched Sodom? ... You, my children, are chewing the cud which has passed through all the four lawful stomachs, and Aysha is preparing a new one for the Claudels and the Bulgakovs of the thirtieth century.²¹⁶

Rather than conforming to the religious dogmas that have built up over millennia, Aisha creates his own gods that serve his individual needs. This power to create is what makes the image of the child within the Nietzschean paradigm a positive one: “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement.”²¹⁷

In this sense it would seem that Aisha’s “yes”, in contrast to the “yes” of the others is positive in the Nietzschean sense. Interestingly he is in the position of the Jew of the Old Testament, which Nietzsche so admired. His gods are life affirming because they cater to his immediate needs and he continues to place his full trust in them. Nevertheless, his “yes” is not the final yes because he has not followed the cycle of mastery, rejection and creation of new values. He stands at the beginning of the cycle and is an innocent creator, while Khurenito creates (and destroys) with full knowledge and experience.

Although Aisha is the disciple that Khurenito loves, it is ironic that the one he hates—Erenburg—is the one most important to him. This however, is appropriate in view

²¹⁶ Erenburg, Julio, 35-36.

²¹⁷ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 139.

of the Nietzschean paradigm of friendship. When Zarathustra delivers his speech “On the Friend” he castigates those who seek to cultivate a friend for the purpose of self-flattery:

Our faith in others betrays in what respect we would like to have faith in ourselves. Our longing for a friend is our betrayer. ...In a friend one should have one’s best enemy. You should be closest to him with your heart when you resist him.²¹⁸

In Aisha, Khurenito has a loyal and adoring friend, but in Èrenburg he recognizes that the important “nay-saying” element is invaluable to him. Èrenburg, the critic, will spur him on to the future, ever dissatisfied with the present as he is.

As has been mentioned earlier, the chapter entitled: “The Teacher’s Prophecy Concerning the Destinies of the Tribe of Judah” is the pivotal point in the novel for the discussion of the Jewish disciple and the Jewish question in general. When Khurenito shows his disciples invitations for the “Solemn Performances of the Destruction of the Tribe of Judah”, he is met with disbelief from Tishin, who finds it difficult to believe that such a thing as a genocide could exist in the modern age. Khurenito assures him that anti-Semitism is not a thing of the past, but that it will continue to thrive:

Видишь ли, болезни человечества не детская корь, а старые закоренелые приступы подагры, и у него имеются некоторые привычки по части лечения... Где уж на старости лет отвыкать!

Когда в Египте Нил бастовал и начиналась засуха, мудрецы вспоминали о существовании евреев, приглашали их, резали и кропили землю свеженькой еврейской кровью. В Испании, когда начались болезни – чума или насморк, – святые отцы вспоминали о «врагах Христа и человечества» и, обливаясь слезами, впрочем не столь обильными, чтобы погасить костры, сжигали несколько тысяч евреев. Вот друзья мои, краткий экскурс в историю. А так как человечеству предстоит и глад, и мор, и вполне приличное

²¹⁸ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 168

землетрясение, я только проявляю понятную
предусмотрительность, печатая эти приглашения.²¹⁹

(The diseases of mankind, don't you see, are not the measles of infancy: they are old, deep-seated attacks of the gout, and certain habits have been formed in the course of time concerning their cure. You don't break a habit in your later years.

When in Egypt the Nile went on strike and drought set in, the wise men would remember the existence of the Jews, who would be summoned and slaughtered to the accompaniment of prayer; and the earth would be sprinkled with fresh Jewish blood:... In Spain, whenever there was an epidemic—of the plague or the common cold—the Holy Fathers would solemnly proclaim forgiveness for the “enemies of Christ and mankind” and, shedding profuse tears (not, however, profuse enough to put out the pyres) would burn a couple of thousand Jews. ... There, my friends, is a short excursion into history. And since humanity is to experience both famine and pestilence, as well as a goodly amount of earth-shaking, I am merely looking ahead in a commonsense way by having these invitations printed in advance.)²²⁰

Tishin, still shocked, asks Khurenito, «разве евреи не такие же люди, как и мы?»²²¹

(“aren't the Jews men like ourselves?”)²²² To which Khurenito replies:

Конечно, нет! Разве мяч футбола и бомба одно и то же? Или, по—твоему, могут быть братьями дерево и топор? Евреев можно любить или ненавидеть, взирать на них с ужасом, как на поджигателей, или с надеждой, как на спасителей, но их кровь не твоя и дело их не твое.²²³

Of course not! Are a football and a bomb one and the same thing? Do you think the tree and the axe can be brothers? You can love the Jews or

²¹⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 85.

²²⁰ Ehrenburg, Julio, 111-112.

²²¹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 85.

²²² Ehrenburg, Julio, 113.

²²³ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 86.

hate them, you can regard them with dread as fire-raisers or with hope as saviors, but their blood is not yours, nor is their cause your cause.²²⁴

In order to demonstrate the fact that there remains an unbridgeable gulf between the Jews and other nations, Khurenito invites his followers to play the game in which they are asked to choose either the word “yes” or “no”. As has already been mentioned, Èrenburg selects “no”:

А пока что я, отнюдь не из оригинальничанья, а по чистой совести, должен сказать: «Уничтожь «да», уничтожь на свете все, и тогда само собой останется одно «нет»!»²²⁵

(As for me, believe me I’m not trying to be original if I say in all conscience: destroy “yes”, destroy everything in the world, and then “no” will remain of its own accord.)²²⁶

Èrenburg’s “no” is, in fact, a negation of the “yes” of his fellow disciples. In other words he says “no” in order to negate the perpetuation of the “pseudo-values” of the others. Ujvary-Maier discusses the paradox of Èrenburg’s choice:

... das “ja,, der übrigen ist freilich moralisch nicht stichhaltig und deshalb gleichfalls ein faktisches “nein,,... Dieses Paradox läßt sich so lösen: wir haben es in den übrigen Schülern Churenitos mit Menschen zu tun, die lediglich nach den in ihrer jeweiligen Gesellschaft gültigen Regeln als gut bezeichnet werden können: ihre Moral ist rein äußerlich so gut der bestehenden Ordnung angepaßt, daß sie ihnen praktisch innerhalb gewisser Grenzen jede Schlechtigkeit erlaubt. Gegen diese Heuchelei glaubt Èrenburg sich nicht anders wehren zu können, als indem er das Unmoralische für gut hält. Das Gute im Bösen, die positive Wirkung der Zerstörung—es ist nichts anderes als die Philosophie Churenitos, die uns in diesem Bekenntnis Ehrenburgs unerwartet vehement entgegentritt.²²⁷

²²⁴ Ehrenburg, Julio, 113.

²²⁵ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 87.

²²⁶ Ehrenburg, Julio, 114-115.

²²⁷ Ujvary-Maier, 48-49.

(...the “yes” of the others is, of course, not morally sound and therefore, is actually a “no.” This paradox is solved in the following way: in the other disciples of Khurenito we are dealing with men, who can be perceived as “good” only according to the rules of their own societies. Their morality is superficial. “Good” is that which suits the existing order, while within certain limits, almost any evil is permitted. The only way Èrenburg believes he can resist this hypocrisy is by calling the immoral “good.” This idea of “good” in “evil” and the positive effect destruction –is nothing other than the philosophy of Khurenito that we unexpectedly find in Èrenburg’s confession [My translation])

Here we confront, once again, the Nietzschean concept of the displacement of the assignment of good and evil and the positive role of destruction in deposing atrophied cultural values. Èrenburg’s “no” is “good,” or positive, in the Nietzschean sense and the “yes” of his peers is negative or even “evil.”

The “Camel,” the “Lion” and the “Child”

As Èrenburg states his preference for “no” and its destructive power, the others move away from him and the natural division that Èrenburg spoke of is manifest. Within the inverted paradigm of “good” and “evil” that Nietzsche suggests, this dislike for the Jewish nay-sayer is natural: “Behold the good and the just! Whom do they hate most? The man who breaks their tables of values, the breaker, the lawbreaker; yet he is the creator.”²²⁸ In this paradox, in which the destroyer is, in fact, the creator, it would seem that the Jew, as the nay-sayer, should fit positively into Nietzsche’s ideology.

Within the frame of Zarathustra’s teachings, the Jew as the nay-sayer, which is an image of the Jew that Nietzsche accepted, is not a completely positive character. He is not the ultimate end, as his “no” must eventually be replaced by “yes”—not the false

²²⁸ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 135.

“yes” defending displaced virtues, but a “sacred yes” affirming genuine new values. This Zarathustra explains in the chapter entitled “On the Three Metamorphoses”, in which he describes the three stages that the spirit must undergo. First the spirit becomes a camel that “bear[s] much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded.”²²⁹ It conforms to the demands of its society and obeys the command “thou shalt.” Eventually however, the spirit begins to resent its heavy burden and, seeking respite, runs to the desert to find relief from its load. In the desert a transformation takes place and the camel becomes a lion. The lion utters a sacred “No” to the suffocating burden of the old values and replaces the “thou shalt” of the camel with a new creed of “I will.” The lion, however, has his own limitations: “To create new values—that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation—that is within the power of the lion.”²³⁰

It would seem that all of Khurenito’s disciples, except Èrenburg are “camels” in the Nietzschean sense, that is, they are beasts of burden for their national values. Èrenburg, is the only one that is a “lion” and as such he repudiates the others’ values with the “sacred No.” But as, mentioned earlier, the lion is incapable of doing more than saying “no”—he is caught in an endless cycle of destruction. Zarathustra’s solution to this dilemma is the third metamorphosis into a child:

Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred “Yes.” For the game of creation, my brothers, a

²²⁹ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 140.

²³⁰ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 139.

sacred “Yes” is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.²³¹

In a passage that demonstrates the Jewish role of negation and its limitations,

Khurenito tells his disciples:

Мы все Робинзоны, или, если хотите, каторжники, дальше дело характера. Один приручает паука, занимается санскритским языком и любовно подметает пол камеры. Другой бьет головой стенку—шишка, снова бух, — снова шишка, и так далее; что крепче—голова или стена? Пришли греки, осмотрелись—может, квартиры бывают и лучше, без болезней, без смерти, без муки, например Олимп. Но ничего не поделаешь—надо устраиваться в этой. А чтобы быть в хорошем настроении, лучше всего объявить различные неудобства—включая смерть (которых все равно не изменишь)—величайшими благами. Евреи пришли—и сразу в стенку бух! «Почему так устроено?»

Евреи выносили нового младенца. Вы увидите его дикие глаза, рыжие волосики и крепкие, как сталь, ручки. Родив, евреи готовы умереть. Героический жест—«нет больше народов, нет больше нас, но все мы!» О, наивные, неисправимые сектанты! Вашего ребенка возьмут, вымоют, приденут—и будет он совсем как Шмидт. Снова скажут—«справедливость», но подменят ее целесообразностью. И снова уйдете вы, чтобы ненавидеть и ждать, ломать стенку и стонать «доколе»?

Отвечу, —до дней безумия вашего и нашего, *до дней младенчества, до далеких дней.*²³² (Italics added.)

(All of us are Robinson Crusoes, or convicts if you prefer; the rest is a matter of personality. One man will tame a spider, study Sanskrit and lovingly seep the floor of his cell. Another will bang his head against the wall: crack! A bump—another crack! And another bump, and so on: what’ll prove stronger, the wall or his head? The Greeks came along and looked round—the place could have been more comfortable to live in, it’s true; without disease, or death, or suffering, something like Olympus. But it couldn’t be helped, this was where they had to live. And so, to keep their spirits up, they decided to proclaim every discomfort, including death (you couldn’t abolish the discomforts anyway), as the greatest boon. The

²³¹ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 139.

²³² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 87-88.

Jews came along and crack! It's the head against the wall at once. "Why is this place as it is?)

Israel has borne a new child. You will behold its wild eyes, red hair and little hands that are as strong as steel. Having given birth, Israel is ready to die. A heroic gesture: "there are no more nations, I am no more, but we are." Oh, naïve, incorrigible sectarians! They'll take your child, wash it, dress it, and it'll become exactly like Schmidt. Once more thy will say "justice", but they'll replace it by expediency. Once more you'll go away to hate and wait, beat your head against the wall and moan "how long?" I will tell you: until the day of your madness and theirs, *until the day of infancy, a distant day*. [Italics added.]²³³

The distant day of the child that Khurenito refers to is the anarchistic society that he hopes to usher in by destroying culture. This society, reminiscent of Nietzsche's ideal future world is one which is free of virtues as well as vices; it is one where human will has full expression:

Видишь, там, на солнце, откидывая иоги, прыгает по степи маленький жеребенок. Разве не передает он беспредельного восторга бытия? А здесь, у лачуги, задрал морду к небу и опустив хвост, воеет собака – не вся ли скорбь земли в ней? Им будут подобны грядущие люди, и не станут они замыкать свои чувства в тысячепудовые облачения.²³⁴

(Look over there. Do you see a little foal jumping high in the air and kicking out its legs, on the plain? Doesn't he convey to you the whole boundless joy of being? And over there by the that hut, there's a dog howling, its muzzle pointing to the sky, its tail dragging on the ground. Isn't all the sorrow of the earth in that howling? The men of the future will be like these. They will not lock up their feelings in vestments weighing thousands of pounds.)²³⁵

Both Ehrenburg and Khurenito share this ideal and both aim to reach it through negation and yet, there is an essential difference between Ehrenburg and Khurenito.

²³³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 115-116.

²³⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 37.

²³⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 48.

Ujvary-Maier suggest that Èrenburg’s “no” is not a rationally formulated response, but rather, an emotional one. He instinctively feels the need to be able to butt his head against the wall, therefore he must continuously have a wall before him—the wall is his end goal. Khurenito’s “no” however, is rational and strong. In his role of Zarathustra, he says “no”, not because he enjoys it, but because he believes it may lead to an eventual and sacred “yes.” This being the case, Khurenito is a more powerful and positive figure in the novel than Èrenburg, the narrator and chronicler of his life. He fulfills the role of Zarathustra—Èrenburg is cast in the role of his servant and biographer.

Despite the fact that Khurenito, unlike Èrenburg, has the capacity to create, he is unable to use his capabilities because the time is not appropriate for creation. He recognizes that the era of the “last man” must first be endured before it can be destroyed and his vision of the future can be fulfilled:

Если на заре ты начнешь стрелять из тысячи батарей в солнце, оно все равно взойдет. Я, может быть, не меньше тебя ненавижу этот встающий день, но для того, чтобы пришло завтра, нужно стойко встречать жестокое светило....²³⁶

(If, at dawn, you start firing at the sun from a thousand batteries, it’ll rise nonetheless. It may be that I hate this dawning day as much as you do. But, in order that tomorrow may come, you must steadfastly meet the cruel sun,....)²³⁷

Before man will be prepared to throw off the shackles of civilization, he must first feel the full measure of their weight by experiencing the inexorable era of logic, reason, plans and machines. During this period men would be reduced to unthinking cogs in an

²³⁶ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 198.

²³⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 270.

efficient machine. The time for ushering in the new world would come when men rebelled against this heavy yoke, finally preferring freedom to the Grand Inquisitor's "benevolent dictatorship." Khurenito realizes that until that time arrives, he has no purpose and so he decides to arrange his death. Khurenito's decision to end his life is in accordance with Zarathustra's admonition to "die at the right time!".²³⁸

My death I praise to you, the free death which comes to me because I want it. And when shall I want it? He who has a goal and an heir will want death at the right time for his goal and his heir.²³⁹

Khurenito, alone is capable of uttering the sacred "yes" of the child but he cannot fulfill his function because the old false "values" have not been pulled down, preparing the way for new ones. Thus he leaves his Jewish disciple, the bearer of the sacred "no", or the "lion" in the Nietzschean sense, with a dual task. One responsibility is to continue to voice his "no", in the face of false "values" and Schmidt's era of the "last men" with their aims of organizing the world. Another is to preserve Khurenito's message of a harmonious and universal mankind for the time when humanity is ready to overthrow the "last men." It is the Jewish task to prepare the way for the new child and the sacred "yes".

²³⁸ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 183.

²³⁹ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 184.

CHAPTER 4:

SIMON MIKHAILOVICH DUBNOV AND THE JEWISH MISSION

When Khurenito left his Jewish disciple, Èrenburg, with a mission and a message for humanity, he was assigning him a role that Jews throughout history were familiar with, according to Simon Dubnov's (1860-1941) anthropological approach to the history of the Jews. Although Simon Dubnov is never mentioned in Èrenburg's memoirs or other autobiographical material written by him, his discussion of Jewish historical destiny is worthy of mention in the context of Èrenburg's views on the Jews. The Jewish historian expresses ideas they both hold in common in regard to the mission of the Jews amidst other nations and the ultimate role of the Jews in a future ideal universal mankind. These shared views are very likely not coincidental. It is inconceivable that Èrenburg was unaware of his illustrious Jewish contemporary's works and that he did not consult these in areas of such concern to him.

Dubnov's Jewish History

Simon Dubnov is regarded as "the greatest of Russian-Jewish historians".²⁴⁰ By using an anthropological, rather than the prevalent theological approach to Jewish

²⁴⁰ Ruth Rischin, "The Most Historical of Peoples: Yushkevich, Kuprin and the Dubnovian Idea," The Short Story in Russia 1900-1917, ed. Nicolas Luker (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1991), 23.

history, Dubnov investigated the external, sociopolitical forces that, in his view, worked to refine and mold the Jewish national character.²⁴¹ From this secular study of the history of the Jews he concluded that the Jews had developed in a manner that was unique in world history; with this uniqueness came a particular responsibility to universal mankind.

In one of his major works, namely Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History (1893), Dubnov offers his anthropological-philosophical interpretation of the historical facts of Jewish history. He refers to the Jewish nation as the most “historical of all nations” and the Jews as “the most historical of all people.”²⁴² They merit this designation, according to Dubnov, because, unlike all other nations which either had ceased to exist at some point in history, or had only relatively recently come into existence, the Jews had managed to survive throughout the ages as a cohesive unit. Thus, he postulated, the Jews were a unique people among nations. Not only did he regard them as distinctive because they had been able to survive for thirty-five hundred years without interruption, but also because during that time they had always been “alive, full of sterling content... distinguished by exceptional qualities.”²⁴³

In reviewing Jewish history, Dubnov divides it into two parts. The first part is the period of the Jewish state. During this period the Jewish nation was very much like other nations in that it had its own territory, autonomous government and established laws.

²⁴¹ Jonathan Frankel, “S. M. Dubnov: Historian and Ideologist,” The Life and Work of S. M. Dubnov: Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish History, by Sophie Dubnov-Ehrlich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 27.

²⁴² Simon Dubnov, Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1903), 10.

²⁴³ Dubnov, 11.

The second period began with the fall of the Jewish state to the Roman Empire in 70 BC and the scattering of the Jews among other nations. Stripped of its land and autonomous government, the Jewish people were nevertheless able to preserve their national specifics and originality and maintain a cohesive bond on a spiritual, rather than political, level.²⁴⁴

The Jewish State

Although during the first part of its history, the Jewish nation was, to outward appearances, very much like that of the other nations which surrounded it, it differed in one significant way. While still forming, and while still in the primitive tribal stages of its development, the Semitic nomads led by Abraham, unlike the neighboring nomadic tribes, sought out a single, universal, and invisible deity rather than multiple, visible, and material gods.²⁴⁵ While much of this Semitic tribe was to succumb later to pressures from other nomads and began to worship the others' tribal gods and idols, one branch held firm in its belief in a universal god—that of the Patriarch Jacob and his descendants—the Israelites. To this group alone, fell the destiny of performing a special mission, the mission of the Jewish people.

The first seeds of Israel's national consciousness sprouted during Israel's captivity in Egypt, where the Israelites' simple patriarchal customs came face to face with corrupt Egyptian civilization and its decadent forms of worship.²⁴⁶ It was this sprouting national consciousness that inspired Moses to implant a strong spiritual and national feeling

²⁴⁴ Dubnov, 12-13.

²⁴⁵ Dubnov, 46-47.

²⁴⁶ Dubnov, 50.

among his people. At this time Moses emphasized the national, rather than universal, aspects of the “Israelite God” in order to build a strong sense of nationality.²⁴⁷ Part of this process of developing the national consciousness, according to Dubnov, was the introduction of the Mosaic law, which laid out a uniform code of moral and social conduct for the Jews. The Jewish religion, then was brought from the realm of the theoretical to the practical by interweaving the ethical and religious with the political and social.²⁴⁸ Thus the Jewish nation became the first to create legislation that was not solely based on abstract reasoning, but also human feeling, on such principles as justice and humaneness.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish nation, was the democratic nature of its religion. Although the descendants of Aaron, Moses’ brother, formed a type of priestly class, which alone bore the religious authority, there were prophets that acted outside of this class as “popular teachers” and “popular educators” of the masses, thus instilling the moral ideals of their faith in a more democratic manner.²⁴⁹ Other nations, all of which ultimately disintegrated, upheld an inflexible caste of priests, who were the only ones in the society privileged to learn and to dispense spiritual duties while the lower classes were kept in ignorance. The Jews, on the other hand, were all taught; regardless of social standing, they were all told about the spiritual ideals and ceremonies of the “chosen” people. Their religion also extended beyond mere doctrine, since it was

²⁴⁷ Dubnov, 52.

²⁴⁸ Dubnov, 54.

²⁴⁹ Dubnov, 14-16.

woven into the fabric of daily life. The spiritual idealism taught to the people by the prophets became integral to the national consciousness of the Jews.

Throughout the remainder of the first period of Jewish history the Jews repeatedly strayed from, and then returned to their God after periods of either ease, or scourging by other nations. When the Jewish people strayed from their God, their prophets warned them of His wrath and urged them to return to Him and they would always, eventually, come back to their national religion. With every cycle of this process, their spiritual resolution and national consciousness was slowly being strengthened, Dubnov maintained.

When the state of Israel fell, Dubnov asserts, there came a subtle transformation in the message which the prophets of Judah delivered. They reverted back to an emphasis on the universal nature of God, rather than the national one. The universal message was too grand for the Jews, newly freed from captivity in Babylon, to grasp however, and it became an ideal that was propelled into the future—a goal to be striven for, but not likely to be attained in the near future. This universal message—that God was the deity of all mankind and that he would rule the entire world—also strengthened the Jewish awareness that the Jews had a special mission to bring the knowledge of its God to other nations so that they could enjoy the same salvation and blessings as the Jews did:

... Israel's sole task is to embody in himself the highest ideals, to be an "ensign to the nations," to bear before them the banner of God's law, destined in time to effect the transformation of the whole mankind. Israel is a missionary to the nations. As such he must stand before them as a model of holiness and purity. Here is the origin of the great idea of the spiritual "Messianism" of the Jewish people, or, better, its "missionism,"

an eternal idea, far more comprehensive than the old idea of national election, which it supplanted.²⁵⁰

Thus the Jews, as the elect people, were to be a “holy nation” among other nations, or in other words, to become the priests among the gentile laity. With the movement to a more universal message, the Jews also began to be aware of their part in this mission on an individual rather than national level, therefore becoming more reliant on their own personal spiritual resources. During this era of the prophets of Judah, national and spiritual consciousness reached a culminating point; this point coincided with the fall of the Jewish state to the Roman Empire in 70 BC. At this time, according to Dubnov:

It seemed as though, before scattering the Jewish people to all ends of the earth, the providence of history desired to teach it a final lesson, to take with it on its way. It seemed to say: “Now you may go forth. Your character has been sufficiently tempered; you can bear the bitterest of hardships. You are equipped with an inexhaustible store of energy, and you can live for centuries, yea, for thousands of years, under conditions that would prove the bane of other nations in less than a single century.”²⁵¹

Diaspora

While the first half of Jewish history was distinguished by the solidifying of spiritual and moral ideals in the national consciousness of the individuals within the Jewish state, the second period was characterized by homelessness, suffering and privation. Since they could not protect themselves militarily, the Jews turned to their already highly attuned reservoirs of spiritual and mental energy for protection. The

²⁵⁰ Dubnov, 66-67.

²⁵¹ Dubnov, 17-18.

notion of nationality and its preservation shifted from the political realm (since there was no land) to the spiritual and the intellectual.

At the time that the Jewish state was destroyed, the Jewish concept of a single God was spreading throughout the classical world in the form of Christianity. In response to this movement, the Jews sought seclusion and isolation in order to retain their cohesion as a group. This Dubnov attributes to the fact that the Jews, having lost their political state, desired to preserve their nation in the only way they could—by clinging to every one of the customs, traditions and laws of the past and forming a religious state. They refused to make any of the compromises that Christianity would have required in their dogma, such as the abolition of the practice of circumcision and the relaxing of the laws pertaining to observance of the Sabbath; they “considered themselves then, as before, the sole guardians of the law of God.”²⁵² This was now their duty in view of the promise of the prophets that they would take part in ushering in a new world order of a mankind united in a common belief in the one and only God.

Thus Jewry wrapped itself tightly in the cocoon of the Law as interpreted in the Talmud, refusing to be tainted by outside forces and becoming increasingly distinct from them. Because of their physical vulnerability and their refusal to adopt the religious or cultural customs of their host nations, the Jews became the great martyrs of history—suffering constantly for their spiritual and intellectual ideals. So it is, Dubnov asserts, that Jewish history is a chronicle of constant physical suffering and mental exercise. This

²⁵² Dubnov, 90.

history of a people constantly cast into the role of martyrs for an ideal, Dubnov refers to as “history sublimated.”²⁵³

The isolationist policies of the Jews throughout the second period of their history went through a cyclical process. When persecution and intolerance reigned about them, as they did, for example, during the Spanish inquisition and the Russian pogroms, the Jews retreated to their cocoon of isolationism and pored pedantically over their books of law, or turned to mysticism. In times of relative tolerance and liberalism they ventured out and contributed to the creative and intellectual accomplishments of the world.

When the Enlightenment dawned on Europe its effects eventually reached the sphere of the European Jews. In France, the Revolution and the extension of civil equality to the Jews allowed them to emerge from their isolation and join in the movement. In Germany the process was slower, and was not complete until a generation later, but eventually the German Jews too were granted the same equality as the French Jews. In response to the ideas of equality, human liberty and justice that the Enlightenment brought, many enlightened Jews fell into step with their Christian counterparts and dealt with the universal issues of mankind. In so doing, some of the Jews renounced their national and religious customs, but this was not so much because they had adapted to their surroundings, as the fact that they were swept away by the same universal principles that were luring non-Jews as well to forsake the old traditions that were at odds with reason and conscience. Many were swept away by the spirit of emancipation:

²⁵³ Dubnov, 21.

...[they] intoxicated themselves with deep draughts of the marvelous poetry created by the magic of Goethe and Schiller. They permitted themselves to be rushed along by the liberty doctrines of 1789, they plunged head over heels into the vortex of romanticism, and took an active part in the conspicuous movements of Europe, political, social, and literary, as witness Börne, Heine, and their fellow combatants.²⁵⁴

However, the excitement that accompanied this spirit of enlightenment soon dissolved in Europe, and after 1814, there were fierce counter-reactions to it. At this point many of the Jews that had been involved in the movement realized that they had left their own people behind. So, during this period of repression they returned to their own Jewish sphere and transformed it by simplifying some of the rituals, changing their teaching methods and extending the scope of historical and literary work in Jewish sciences.²⁵⁵

At the peak of this Jewish reformation in 1848, the Jews were granted civil emancipation within the German Empire. Their reaction to their new freedoms was now to assimilate in the outside culture by becoming involved in a variety of careers, but still remaining loyal to their traditional spiritual ideals:

The Jewish genius is versatile. Without hurt to itself it can be active in all sorts of careers: in politics and in civil life, in parliament and on the lecture platform, in all branches of science and departments of literature, in every one of the chambers of mankind's intellectual laboratory. At the same time it has its domestic hearth, its national sanctuary; it has its sphere of original work and its self-consciousness, its national interests and spiritual ideals rooted in the past of the Jew.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Dubnov, 161.

²⁵⁵ Dubnov, 163.

²⁵⁶ Dubnov, 164-165.

After a discussion of the status of the Jews in Europe, Dubnov turns to the situation of the Jews in Russia where, he postulates, the Jews may have more potential for affecting a change toward the ideal universal mankind than elsewhere. This potential, he claims, lies in the fact that the sheer number of Jews in Russia outweighs that of Jews in other countries. They also lived in a compact group and they had succeeded in retaining more of the physical and cultural characteristics of Jewry than had the Jews in other regions.²⁵⁷ Whereas the Jews in Europe had enjoyed the fruits of civil emancipation, the Russian Jews with the aid of the more enlightened Russians had only managed to take some steps toward it, but had not achieved success by the time Dubnov was writing his essay in 1893. Elements of the spiritual emancipation that had transformed Jewish culture in Europe had only seeped into the upper strata of Jewish society, but still had not made it down to the lower levels of Russian-Jewish culture. These steps toward Jewish liberation in Russia were halted however, by the appearance of anti-Semitism in Europe and the anti-Semitic Tsar Alexander III's ascendance to the throne in 1881 in Russia. The return to increasingly oppressive measures by the Russian government dispirited Dubnov, but he nevertheless asserts his faith in the Jewish people to once again withstand persecution:

The recent severe trials are having the same result as the persecutions of former days: they do not weaken, on the contrary, they invigorate the Jewish spirit, they spur on to thought, they stimulate the pulse of the people. ...But now, too, in this blasting time of confusion and dispersion, of daily torture and the horrors of international conflict, "the keeper of Israel slumbereth not and sleepeth not." The Jewish spirit is on the alert. It is ever purging and tempering itself in the furnace of suffering.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Dubnov, 167.

²⁵⁸ Dubnov, 175-176.

Even though Dubnov portrays Jewish history as being unique and distinct from the history of other nations, he claims that it is nevertheless an important part of the history of the whole of mankind. Jewish history is an important thread that has been woven throughout the entirety of the historical process and, as such has been an active force in the fortunes of other existing nations.²⁵⁹ In times of fanaticism and intolerance the Jews became the scapegoats of other nations and absorbed their persecutions and aggressions. In more humane times when the other nations were open to new ideas and intellectual pursuits, the Jews stepped in and took part in the common cause, participating in the intellectual activity, promoting notions of equality and justice, contributing to the literature, and the cultural development.

After providing this outline of Jewish history, Dubnov points out the main lessons to be learned from it. First, he reiterates the importance of the fact that Jewry is a spiritual entity and, as such, cannot be destroyed. It has existed and will continue to exist because it is based on indestructible moral, religious and philosophical ideals. This, in combination with the sum of its historical experiences, has formed an impenetrable fortress for the Jewish nation and endowed the people with an instinctual desire to preserve it. Jewry also refuses to perish because it is aware that it still has a mission to fulfill.

Secondly, Dubnov asserts, Jewish history “arouses in the Jew the desire to work unceasingly at the task of perfecting himself.”²⁶⁰ Centuries of suffering and martyrdom,

²⁵⁹ Dubnov, 22.

²⁶⁰ Dubnov, 179.

rather than eroding the Jewish spirit have elevated it. As the Jew looks back on the past of his people and their intellectual and spiritual feats in the face of adversity he feels, not a sense of self-satisfaction, but rather an obligation to continue in the tradition of his people and show that he is worthy of his past:

If, in the course of time, elements out of harmony with your essential being have fastened upon your mind, cast them out, purify yourselves. In all places and at all times, in joy and in sorrow, you must aim to live for the higher, the spiritual interests. But never may you deem yourselves perfect. If you become faithless to these sacred principles, you sever the bonds that unite you with the most vital element of your past, with the first cause of your national existence.²⁶¹

Finally, Dubnov states that the last lesson that Jewish history will teach is the ushering in of a universal mankind. He reminds us that during the periods in mankind's history when "reason, justice and philanthropic instinct had the upper hand," the Jews were able to cooperate and participate with other nations. These were but faint glimpses of the ultimate goal of the Jewish nation. It is to usher in an elevated society of mankind which will be united on a spiritual and intellectual basis, as prophesied by the ancient Jewish prophets (Isaiah and Micah).²⁶² Dubnov argues, that whereas the first part of Jewish history, as recorded in the Bible, has already become accepted by mankind in general and admired for its instructional purposes with its heroes, moral lessons and ethical messages, the second half has yet to be afforded the respect that is its due. There will be a time however, he predicts, when the "heart and conscience" of men will be touched by the millenia of Jewish suffering, martyrdom and ill treatment. Men will then

²⁶¹ Dubnov, 180-181.

²⁶² Dubnov, 181-182.

perceive the edifying philosophical message of this nation of “thinkers and sufferers” and turn to the lessons of the second half of Jewish history.²⁶³ In conclusion he states:

It is our firm conviction that the time is approaching in which the second half of Jewish history will be to the noblest part of thinking humanity what its first half has long been to believing humanity, a source of sublime truths. In this sense, Jewish history in its entirety is the pledge of the spiritual union between the Jews and the rest of the nations.²⁶⁴

Khulio Khurenito and the Dubnovian Idea of the Jewish Nation

In the novel Khulio Khurenito, as mentioned earlier, the narrator and author’s namesake, Il’ia Èrenburg, is the representative for the Jewish nation. He is also the disciple most important to the *agent provocateur*, Khurenito. His importance to Khurenito can be explained by looking at his role, as the Jewish disciple in Khurenito’s entourage, within Dubnov’s paradigm of Jewish history.

It is significant that Èrenburg is the first disciple that Khurenito enlists for his plan of destruction, since he represents the nation that was the first to be formed among all other existing nations. Similarly, as was discussed in chapter three, it is significant that Schmidt is the last selected since he represents the “last man” in the Nietzschean sense. Not only is Èrenburg the first disciple to join Khurenito, but he is also the only one, with the exception of Aisha, who is present at the time of Khurenito’s death. Since the Jewish people had survived from the world’s early beginnings to the present, Dubnov characterized Jewish history as the axis that cuts through the history of the entire world.

²⁶³ Dubnov, 183.

²⁶⁴ Dubnov, 184.

Part of the reason for the longevity of the people was their mission, and the awareness that it was their responsibility to bring their message to the world and facilitate its ultimate transformation. As a Jew, Èrenburg represents those responsible for this mission and Èrenburg, himself, performs the role of messenger and connector. He cannot, for example, follow his teacher into death, since his task is to survive.

In Khulio Khurenito, Èrenburg, acting as members of the Jewish race have done before him, follows the admonitions of a “ prophet”—in this case Khurenito. But unlike the prophets that Dubnov mentions who taught the Jews of their mission to guide the rest of mankind, Khurenito is a prophet without ideals or values:

Я называю Хулио Хуренито просто, почти фамильярно «Учителем», хотя он никогда никого ничему не учил; у него не было ни религиозных канонов, ни эстетических заповедей, у него не было даже простенькой, захудалой философской системы. Скажу больше: нищий и великий, он не обладал жалкой рентой обыкновенного обывателя—он был человек без убеждений.²⁶⁵

(I call Julio Jurenito by the simple, almost familiar name of ‘Teacher’, although he never taught anybody anything; he had no religious canons, no ethical code, not so much as a simple, tuppenny-ha’penny little philosophical system. I will say more: he, the great pauper, did not even have that pathetic private income of the ordinary man-in-the-street: he was a man without convictions.)²⁶⁶

Rahel-Roni Hammermann in her work, Die satirischen Werke von Il’ia Èrenburg, points out that Khulio Khurenito is in many ways a Christ figure. Like Christ he gathers a group of disciples about him and dispenses his teachings in parables and aphorisms. Like Christ he bids that his disciples give special notice to little children who are

²⁶⁵ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 9.

²⁶⁶ Ehrenburg, Julio, 9-10.

innocent and pure and he, like Christ, travels about and exposes the hypocrisy of the self-righteous. Furthermore, Khurenito assumes the role of Christ in the chapter entitled, "The Grand Inquisitor outside of the Legend" and ultimately finishes his life, like Christ did, with a martyr's death.²⁶⁷ However, as Hammermann also points out, he is actually a reverse Christ figure, or Antichrist.²⁶⁸ Unlike Christ's, Khurenito's message is completely lacking in ideals—he preaches a sermon of criticism and cynicism and, in fact, as seen in the opening scene of the novel, has many devilish, mephistophelean traits. He plans his death so that he will not be killed for any noble ideal, and indeed he succeeds when he is martyred for nothing more than an old pair of boots. He selects most of his disciples more for their moral depravity than for their moral fiber, and when he plays out the scene of Christ and the Grand Inquisitor by kissing the Captain's (Lenin's) high vaulted forehead, he does so merely out of deference to Russian literary tradition rather than out of any respect for Lenin's sacrifice. Here Hammermann suggests that Khurenito is an Antichrist in the sense of Nietzsche's Prophet Zarathustra.²⁶⁹

Khulio Khurenito then, is the "spiritual" leader or prophet from whom Èrenburg receives his instructions and the one he significantly refers to as Teacher and "rabbi." This relationship of Èrenburg to Khurenito is different than that of all of the other disciples. In Khurenito's plan he sees the possibility to escape from the corrupt situation in Europe and the hope for a new world. All of the other disciples join Khurenito

²⁶⁷ Hammermann, 83.

²⁶⁸ Hammermann, 83.

²⁶⁹ Hammermann, 83.

because they find him useful to themselves in the pursuit of their own national interests. Èrenburg is attracted by Khurenito's plan to destroy all that exists in order to reestablish a new ideal because he is already familiar with this idea as a result of his Jewish background and is aware of the Jewish mission (here we may surmise a Dubnovian influence on Èrenburg). Khurenito must have recognized this and counted on it when enlisting Èrenburg, since later, when he speaks to his disciples about the Jewish question he refers to the concept of the Jewish hope for a unified mankind:

Евреи выносили нового младенца. Вы увидите его дикие глаза, рыжие волосики и крепкие, как сталь, ручки. Родив, евреи готовы умереть. Героический жест – «нет больше народов, нет больше нас, но все мы!» (Italics added.)²⁷⁰

(Israel has borne a new child. You will behold its wild eyes, red hair and little hands that are as strong as steel. Having given birth, Israel is ready to die. A heroic gesture: "*there are no more nations, I am no more, but we are.*" [Italics added.])²⁷¹

As a "prophet" Khurenito is unlike the ancient prophets of Judah in that he does not ostensibly preach any moral and spiritual code, but on the contrary teaches a lack of ideas, refusing to stand for any ideal. He does however, provide a vision of a future utopia as did the prophets of old. The future utopia that Khurenito envisions is one in which men will return to a state of infancy. In the child he sees "a prototype of the future world" because it is "still wild, empty and beautiful". A child acts on his own impulses and needs and has not yet learned to suppress his instincts to conform to the unnatural cultural and moral traditions of his corrupt society. This childlike man of the future

²⁷⁰ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 88.

²⁷¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 116.

would differ from an infant however, in that he would not be ignorant and innocent as a child is. This Khurenito clarifies when he delivers his final sermon to his disciples Èrenburg and Aisha before his death. He provides them some details of the future society he envisions and points out that Aisha, the childlike member of his entourage, does not possess all of the attributes needed to save the world:

Дорогой Айша, верь мне, ты самый прекрасный из всех людей, встреченных мною в жизни. Но не твоим детством спасется мир. Ты уже десять раз «защищал культуру», ты сидишь в подотделе, любишь самопишущие ручки и патефоны. Словом – порядок времен года и прочее. Чтобы спираль мира ринулась к новому счастью, должен быть описан круг столетий, круг крови, пота, железный круг.²⁷²

(Dear Aysha, believe me, you are the finest of all the men I have ever met in my life. But it will not be your childlike person that will save the world. Ten times already you have gone out to “save culture”; you have your job in the sub-department; you have a liking for fountain pens and gramophones. In short—the sequence of the seasons, and so forth. In order that the world’s spiral should soar to new happiness it is necessary to describe the circle the ages, the circle of blood, sweat, coal, the iron circle.)²⁷³

The man of the future will be like a child in that he will be unfettered by the corrupt and atrophied values of civilization, but unlike an infant, will have the knowledge and experience of the centuries of men that lived before him. He will not act out of ignorance of cultural mores and traditions, as a child does, but in defiance of them because he possesses the knowledge that they are invalid and destructive to himself. Therefore, man must achieve a new level of “experienced infancy.”

²⁷² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 219.

²⁷³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 299-300.

Khurenito further teaches that the reigning principle in this new world would be harmony since, according to Khurenito «вне гармонии нет свободы, нет преодоления смерти.»²⁷⁴ (“outside of harmony there is no freedom, no love, no defeat of death.”)²⁷⁵ He points out that lack of harmony and the attempt to force harmony both characterize the situation of the present world:

Либо мистер Куль научными средствами выводит со света, как тараканов, Айшу, либо Айша запросто, в семейном кругу, завтракает бедрышком мистера Куля. Или обоих их запрягут в одно ярмо, и они будут, ненавидя друг друга, всех и все, тащить праздничную колесницу «освобожденного человечества».²⁷⁶

(Either it's Mr. Cool exterminating Aysha by scientific means, like a cockroach, or it's Aysha, in the intimate circle of his family, lunching off Mr. Cool's thigh. Or else both of them will be harnessed under one yoke and, hating each other, everybody and everything, they will pull the festive chariot of “liberated mankind.”)²⁷⁷

Khurenito suggests that outside of harmony great races may exist and so may great men, but they enjoy nothing more than mere existence. Until man reaches a sense of concord within the entire universe he will never experience the “beautiful life”, which Khurenito characterizes as «час свободы, восторга, бездумья.»²⁷⁸ (“the hour of liberty, joy and thoughtfulness.”)²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 220.

²⁷⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 301.

²⁷⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 220.

²⁷⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 301.

²⁷⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 220.

²⁷⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 301.

Although, as mentioned earlier, the narrator claims that Khurenito has no ideals (and Khurenito, himself, makes the same claim), it actually appears from Khurenito's vision of the future of mankind that he does hold some ideal, namely that of harmony and its accompanying elements—liberty, joy and thoughtfulness. It may be more appropriate to say that Khurenito holds, and teaches none of the ideals and values in the form in which they already existed and that formed the basis for modern civilization. He furthermore suggests nothing more than a faint glimpse of this ideal in the future, for by offering anything more he would risk the corruption of his concept. Mankind would only be able to understand and grasp the ideal after it had undergone the experiences needed to prepare it for the future universal world. Until that time it would remain unattainable and incomprehensible.

Neither of the visions of the future that Dubnov and Khurenito look forward to are described in any greater detail, but the one principle that both Dubnov and Khurenito specify for this future world is a unified and harmonious mankind which is no longer divided by the boundaries of nationalism. Both are also dispirited by the gulf that separates the present state of the world from the realization of that vision of the future and neither of them expects the fulfillment of the universal mankind until some distant day. However, their hope for the preservation of the idea and its fruition lies in both cases with the Jews. For this reason Khurenito entrusts Èrenburg, the Jewish disciple, with the task of recording his life and preserving his idea:

...ты, Эренбург, отправляйся после моей смерти в какое—нибудь тихое место и, времени своего, никому не нужного, не жалея, но и строк (sic) бессмысленно не нагоняя..., опиши все, что знаешь о моей жизни, беседы, труды и анекдоты предпочтительно. ...В самом начале угрюмого величественного дня я говорил уже, забегаю

вперед, как пес, принюхиваясь, прислушиваясь, о дне завтрашнем.²⁸⁰

(...you, Ehrenburg, betake yourself after my death to some quiet place and year after year, neither sparing your time... describe all you know of my life: conversations, work and anecdotes, particularly the last. ...At the very dawn of this dark, majestic day I was already speaking of the morrow—running ahead like a dog, sniffing, cocking an ear.)²⁸¹

And Ehrenburg is the perfect choice because he will not subvert Khurenito's message to conform to his own personal or national agenda. He knows that much of what his Teacher did and said will repel many, but he being from a race that is conditioned to resist opposition (at least intellectually) and withstand persecution, is able to perform his duty:

Мой долг выполнен: книга написана. Я знаю, что она оттолкнет от меня всех, кто из чрезмерной любви к литературе или по чувству сострадания еще тщился понять и оправдать меня. ...Одиночество, отверженность ждут меня. В рассказе об истинных событиях, в передаче искренних чувств безжалостные Фомы увидят гнусный пасквиль и даже имя мое станет презренным. Да будет так!²⁸²

(My duty is done: the book is written. I know that it will repel all those who hitherto, out of excessive love of literature or a sense of commiseration, still tried in vain to understand or justify me. ...Loneliness and rejection await me. In this tale of true events, this confession of sincere emotions, the doubting Thomases who know no mercy will see a vile lampoon, and my very name will come under contempt. Let it be so!)²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 219.

²⁸¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 299.

²⁸² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 232.

²⁸³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 319.

As for the Jewish nation as a whole, Khurenito is depending upon them to act as catalysts in bringing about the overthrow of the period of the mechanical, logical, man of reason, which Schmidt typifies and which must precede the future harmonious mankind. As Khurenito points out in his discussion of the Jewry, the Jews have been at the head of every spiritual and philosophical revolution throughout history. The attributes of isolation, perseverance in the face of suffering, and intellectual and spiritual cohesion with their own, which Dubnov speaks of, all combine to manifest the Jew as the naysayer among other nations. He will refuse to say “yes” until the universal ideal is achieved and his mission is complete. This refusal of the Jews to bend to the values of others is lauded by Khurenito in the passage mentioned above when he speaks of the ascendance of the communists and Marxist doctrine and predicts that the Jews will eventually reject it:

...снова уйдете вы, чтобы ненавидеть и ждать, ломать стенку и стонать «доколе»? Отвечу, — до дней безумия вашего и нашего, но дней младенчества, до далеких дней. А пока будет это племя обливаться кровью роженицы на площадях Европы, рожая еще ондо дитя, которое его предаст.

Но как не любить мне этого заступа в тысячелетней руке? Им роют могилы, но не им ли перекапывают поле? Прольется еврейская кровь, будут аплодировать приглашенные гости, но по древним нашептываниям она горше отравит землю. Великое лекарство мира!²⁸⁴

(Once more you'll go away to hate and wait, beat your head against the wall and moan “how long?” I will tell you: until the day of your madness and theirs, until the day of infancy, a distant day. Meanwhile the tribe will be drenched once more in the blood of parturition in the squares of Europe, giving birth to another child which will betray it.

²⁸⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 88.

But how should I not love that spade in the thousand-year-old hand? It digs the graves, but does it not turn up the soil of the fields too? It will be shed, the blood of Judah, the invited guests will applaud, but (remember the whispers of long ago?) the blood will only make the earth still more poisonous. The world's only medicine!)²⁸⁵

The Jews, according to Khulio Khurenito, are the “great medicine of the world” and their curative powers rest in the expression of their rejection. Dubnov believes the Jews would perform their ultimate healing of humanity when the consciences of Gentiles finally would be touched by the history of Jewish perseverance in the face of persecution and suffering. When humanity had finally reached that level of spiritual nobility it would be prepared to become united with Jewry in a universal society where equality and justice would abound. For Ehrenburg the ultimate healing would occur when other nations recognized the validity of the Jewish “no”—when they awoke to the fact that their own national interests were false and the message of a universal future held more promise for true harmony and equality.

²⁸⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 116.

CHAPTER 5:

MIKHAIL OSIPOVICH GERSHENZON

Gershenzon's Background

The idea of a Jewish mission that involved negation of and distinction from other nations is also put forth by Mikail Osipovich Gershenzon (1869-1925). He, like Dubnov, was another Russian-Jewish intellectual who is highly likely to have impacted Erenburg's views on the Jewish nation and its mission.

Gershenzon was born in Kishinev, a city within the Jewish Pale of Settlement. His early life in the Pale was one of misery and oppression, which he sought to escape by acquiring a Russian education at Moscow University's Philological-Historical Faculty. Gershenzon ultimately achieved academic success and became a noted member of the Russian intelligentsia through his writing, in particular through his works on Russian intellectual and literary history. He is a Pushkin scholar of note and is also known for the collection of essays he edited and to which he contributed entitled Вехи (Landmarks, 1909) and his epistolary exchanges with Viacheslav Ivanov in Переписка из двух углов (Correspondence across a Room, 1922).

Gershenzon's attitude toward his Jewish background was initially very negative; he regarded the Jews as being crippled in their creativity because of a "painful fragmentation of consciousness," which was inherent in every Jew and came from years

of persecution and alienation.²⁸⁶ He found the ideal of “holistic” individuals or creative geniuses in such Russian poets and thinkers as Aleksandr Pushkin, Peter Chaadaev and his contemporary Viacheslav Ivanov. Gershenzon’s writings were almost exclusively on Russian themes—he rarely touched on the topics of Judaism or Jews. On the occasions that he did turn to it, he did so voicing his critical evaluations of Jewish culture clearly.²⁸⁷ One example of such a critique is a review of the poetry of Chaim Bialik, which he wrote in 1916. In this review, Gershenzon claimed that the Hebrew poet was incapable of being a true genius because of his Jewish roots. These stunted him by imposing overly heavy “worldly burdens” on him and inspiring him with “eternal sadness,” both of which all Jews must endure²⁸⁸. According to Gershenzon, the Jewish intellectual was fragmented at birth and would be constantly plagued by cares throughout his life:

The worst consequence of the two thousand year old persecution is our painful genetic disease, the plague poisoning the souls of our children still in the wombs of their mothers. This is the woeful agitation of the Jew, his organic incapacity to be without worries. Darkness rules in families. Even where there is already no place for fear and prosaic worries, souls, poisoned by the past, are incapable of flowering. Unmotivated agitation, unidentified melancholy, at times morose, at times sweetly sad, squeezes the heart and does not allow it to open freely.²⁸⁹

In 1921, however, a subtle transformation began to take place in Gershenzon’s attitudes. In Correspondence across a Room Gershenzon admits his inability to fully

²⁸⁶ Brian Horowitz, “Unrequited Love for Russia: M. O. Gershenzon and the Story of Jewish Return,” Midstream: A Monthly Jewish Review 42.7: (1996), 37–48.

²⁸⁷ Horowitz, 39.

²⁸⁸ Horowitz, 42.

²⁸⁹ As quoted in Horowitz, 43.

assimilate among the Russian people and he acknowledges his longing for his Jewish past in the Pale.

I am loved by those who live here and I myself love them..., but I know myself as a foreigner, secretly mourning over the field of my homeland, over its different spring, the smell of its flowers and the talk of its women. Where is my homeland? I will not see it, (I) will die in a foreign land.²⁹⁰

As Gershenzon came to the realization that he would never completely fit in among the Russians, he also became aware of the fact that Judaism and Jewish history had actually been the sources of his own creative powers. In essence, the burden of sorrow and darkness that accompanied each Jew was the very factor that could lead him “toward beauty, creativity and spiritual revelation.”²⁹¹ To deny that the burden of Judaism and Jewry could produce creativity and genius would be to deny his own success.

Born in 1869, Gershenzon was older than Èrenburg and, in fact, a member of his father’s generation rather than his own. Like Èrenburg’s father, Gershenzon had been among the first generation of those to escape the stultifying traditions of the Pale. Èrenburg mentions Gershenzon only once in his memoirs, Men, Years—Life:

Как—то я возвращался после литературного вечера с М.О. Гершензоном, который жил в одном из переулков Арбата. Я знал его книги о декабристах, о Чаадаеве и думал, что для Михаила Осиповича самое важное—сохранить те духовные ценности, о которых говорил Вячеслав Иванов. Но Гершензон неожиданно рассмеялся и, остановившись возле сугроба, который был выше его, стал меня наставлять: важнее всего внутренняя свобода, нечего плакать об истлевших ризах. Он смеялся, а глаза у него были ласковые и печальные: «Почему вы огорчаетесь? Вы ведь молоды...

²⁹⁰ Ivanov, Vyacheslav Ivanovich, and Mikhail Osipovich Gershenzon. Correspondence Across a Room. Trans. Lisa Sergio. Marlboro, Vermont: The Marlboro Press, 1984.

²⁹¹ Horowitz, 42.

Разве не счастье почувствовать себя свободным от всего, что представлялось нам вечным, неизблемым? Я вот радуюсь...» Михаилу Осиповичу не было и пятидесяти, но мне он, конечно, казался стариком. Я тогда не понял, чему он радуется, а теперь с восхищением думаю о его словах если он страдал дефектом зрения, то в отличие от многих писателей, в том числе молодых, был не близоруким, а дальновзорким.²⁹²

(Once I was walking back from a literary gathering with Mikhail Osipovich Gershenzon, who lived in one of the Arbat Lanes. I knew his books on Chaadayev and the Decembrists and thought that what he cared about most was saving those spiritual values of which Vyacheslav Ivanov talked. But Gershenzon, to my surprise, burst out laughing and, stopping by a snowdrift taller than himself, started counselling me: inner freedom was the most important thing; it was a waste of time crying over decayed vestments. He laughed, but his eyes were kind and sad. 'Why do you upset yourself? You're still a young man. Doesn't it make you happy to feel free of everything that once seemed eternal and unshakable? Look at me—I'm happy.' Gershenzon was not yet fifty at the time, but to me, of course, he seemed an old man. I could not understand then what he was happy about, but today, as I remember his words, I am full of admiration; he may have suffered from defective sight, but unlike many writers, including young ones, he was not myopic, but longsighted.)²⁹³

The year of Èrenburg's conversation, although it is not recorded, must have been either 1918, or 1919, sometime before signs of Gershenzon's transformation appeared in his writings. Although Èrenburg mentions him only once in his memoirs, he was apparently part of a literary circle in which Gershenzon too was involved at the time. There is no solid proof of any exchange of ideas between the two on the subjects of Judaism and Jewry, nor is there any evidence that Gershenzon's ideas influenced Èrenburg. This could well be due to the fact that Èrenburg could not freely discuss a thinker such as Gershenzon, who was not popular with the Soviets. Certainly there is a

²⁹² Эренбург, Собрание, т. 8, 273-274.

²⁹³ Ehrenburg, Men, v. 2, 64.

strong similarity between Gershenzon's later writings, such as Correspondence, and Èrenburg's novel, Khulio Khurenito. Both works appeared in print at about the same time (1921-1922). It is very likely that the two Jewish intellectuals who frequented the same circle, and brooded on Jewish themes did exchange their views on the subject. They could hardly have avoided it, especially since they also were linked by a common interest in Nietzsche's "philosophy of values."

"Fetish" and "Vampire" Values

In Correspondence across a Room Gershenzon accused European civilization of stifling the human spirit and restricting man from achieving his highest potential. In his view, modern culture, which had been built from the remains of ancient cultures, had become a corrupt source for modern development.

Our faith, love and inspiration, all the things in us that can liberate the spirit...are infected and sick. How can you conceive of giant oaks or tender violets sprouting from a soil littered with the remains of ancient systems and concepts, with the wreckage of ancient structures, with, scattered amidst the rest, mausoleums containing undying and undisputed spiritual values, those of art, faith or thought? Nothing could grow upon such soil except miserable scrub or the ivy that thrives on ruins.²⁹⁴

According to Gershenzon, the decay of culture was a process that had occurred repeatedly before. In the search for freedom and absolute truth throughout history pure values had invariably been reduced to mere "mummies or fetishes."²⁹⁵ In fact, the philosopher emphasized that absolute truth neither should, nor could, be reached because

²⁹⁴ Ivanov, Correspondence, 22.

²⁹⁵ Ivanov, Correspondence, 31.

objective truth, in his opinion, “was and was not.”²⁹⁶ Truth could only exist in its pure form as a direction to move toward, but once considered an objective fact or realized goal, it lost its purity. In its genesis each expression of truth is merely symbolic, like a sound that causes one to turn and see from whence it is coming. It is first apprehended at the individual level where its intrinsic worth is recognized. The individual uses it to fulfill a personal need and it becomes a personal value. At this stage the value is living and dynamic. Later however, as it spreads beyond the private sphere, it no longer serves the individual’s needs, but is rather used to browbeat other individuals into submission and to shroud, in a spiritual fog, the spirit that was once perceptive enough to recognize truth. According to Gershenzon, every objective value goes through three phases: in the beginning it is not important to the world, but just to the individual, then it becomes a warrior and confronts the indifferent world in order to conquer it, and finally it ends up a despotic ruler and no longer exists as a free and true value.²⁹⁷

Every abstract value, in his view:

...however gluttonous, contains a lingering spark of divinity. By it, every individual can be affected; in it, perhaps unconsciously, every individual pays his respects to some ineradicable aspiration which he shares with all men. And the value’s strength comes from this feeling alone.²⁹⁸

The world recognizes this special force of value, but uses it for exploitation and greed. Once the value has come into general use, it is broken down into constituent parts, since man finds only components of these values serving his degenerate aims. These

²⁹⁶ Ivanov, Correspondence, 31.

²⁹⁷ Ivanov, Correspondence, 33.

²⁹⁸ Ivanov, Correspondence, 35.

fragments replace the whole and distort the original. Gershenzon labeled these values concrete values, or fetish values.

Along with the fetish values, Gershenzon identified another type of values, which he called “vampire values.” These are abstract values as opposed to the concrete fetish values. They have been abstracted from concrete values and include Art, Property, Morality, Church, Religion, Nation, State and Culture. These are distilled from the purest of values, but develop their own cults which call for the sacrifice of the individual, depersonalizing him and making him part of the faceless masses. This sacrifice of the individual is made in the interests of the imposed value which is being worshipped. Thus, for the Nation, the overruling value is unity; for the State, it is power, and for Industry, it is technological might, for which cultural sacrifices are made.

In the novel, Khulio Khurenito, Erenburg identifies this same distortion of values and the imposition of these values on others in order to further national goals. As mentioned above, Khurenito, the main character, personally tests the cultural values of Love, Religion, Wealth, Power, Art, Knowledge, Science, etc., and finds each of them to be dissatisfying, or “empty” values. He recognizes that they are meaningless to him as an individual and that they only serve to preserve a false culture, not the individual. So it is that Khurenito sets out to destroy culture in Europe where these “values” have had thousands of years to become atrophied, parasitic, “vampire values”, losing much of their meaning in the process.

Part of Khurenito’s plan, as demonstrated above, is to gather representatives of several nations. As each of his seven disciples joins his entourage, it becomes evident

that each one represents the main traits of his nation, i.e. his national values. So it is that Mr. Cool stands for the American values of wealth and religion, Monsieur Delet represents the French affinity for moderation and pleasure, Herr Schmidt personifies the German propensity for organization and power, and so on. Khurenito's intent is to use these disciples in his war against culture—to use their corrupt national traits to speed up the already declining state of European culture. Also, in the course of the novel, we see how they interact with each other—how the national values operate in relation to each other. Erenburg, the author, demonstrates this in several different ways.

Each of the disciples is merely a caricature of his national characteristics, or in other words, he is one-dimensional. Each one joins Khurenito because he feels that the Teacher can be useful for his particular national purpose, not because he is aware of, or in agreement with, Khurenito's plan. Like the “values” that he represents each disciple is limited and cannot operate or comprehend any larger truth beyond those values. Thus when the disciples hear the news of war in Europe, although they have been peacefully traveling together for some time, they suddenly turn upon each other:

...[Мосье Дэле] был совершенно невменяем, кричал, что убьет Шмидта, если тот посмеет показаться, пел «Марсельезу» и требовал, чтобы Хуренито немедленно отправился сражаться за цивилизацию. ...Эрколе вопил, что война прекрасна и что он будет стрелять из самой большой пушки. В кого? Это он посмотрит, но стрелять будет обязательно,... Под влиянием криков Айша обезумел, схватил нож для разрезывания книг и потребовал, чтобы ему тотчас сказали, кого именно он должен резать – мистера Куля или меня. Охватив голову руками, Алексей Спиридонович голосил: «Ныне пришло светлое искупление! Русь! Мессия! Он кинулся к Шмидту и, хныча, обнял немца, «Враг мой! Брат! Я люблю тебя, и оттого что так люблю – должен убить тебя!» Мистер Куль, ...дружески сказал: «Я нейтрален! Но я тоже начинаю понимать, что война не так безнравственна, да и не так невыгодна, как мы думали раньше.» Шмидт заговорил: «Дорогие друзья, ни к кому из

вас я не чувствую ни какой ненависти, хотя вы—мои враги. Но дело обстоит весьма просто. Нам необходимо вас организовать.»²⁹⁹

([Monsieur Delet] appeared completely unhinged, shouted that he would kill Schmidt if he dared to show himself, sang the Marseillaise and insisted that Jurenito should immediately go off to fight for civilisation. ...Ercole yelled that war was glorious and that he would fire the biggest gun of all. At whom? We'll see, but fire he would! ...Under the influence of the shouting, Aysha lost his head, snatched up a paper-knife and demanded to be told there and then whose throat he should cut, Mr. Cool's or mine. ...Clutching his head in his hands: 'This is the day of redemption, bright and pure! Russia! Messiah!' ...He rushed towards Schmidt and, whimpering, embraced the German: 'My foe! My brother! I love you, and just because I love I must kill you!' ...Mr. Cool,...said in a friendly way: 'I'm neutral. But I, too, am beginning to understand that war is neither as immoral nor as unprofitable as we used to think.' ...Schmidt said: 'Dear friends, I feel no hatred towards any of you, although you are my enemies. The thing's very simple. We must organise you.')³⁰⁰

When the disciples feel that their culture or national “values” are in danger, they react in immediate defense of them, even though they are in no danger from each other personally. The disciples’ “values” are useless for them on the individual level and particularly among their group of fellow travelers in this scene, but they act instinctively to protect their national interest.

The only disciple who remains truly aloof and neutral in this scene, and throughout the novel, is Èrenburg, the narrator. As noted earlier, he is also the disciple who is less of a caricature than the others. Èrenburg recognizes what is happening—that the others are acting blindly upon empty and meaningless values—a phenomenon that he already exposed during Khurenito’s discussion of the Jewish question when he asked

²⁹⁹ Эренбург, Собрание, 1962, т. 1, ст. 96-97.

³⁰⁰ Ehrenburg, Julio, 126-127.

each disciple to tell which word they would keep—“yes” or “no”. Whereas each of the other disciples said “yes” for the sake of their national “virtues”, Èrenburg chose “no” in opposition to those false virtues. In Èrenburg’s negative reaction to the “yes” of the other nations, he was quite possibly echoing Gershenzon’s views on nationality as a concept, and the Jewish specifics within this concept.

Gershenzon versus Zionism

In his historiosophic and historic work, Судьбы еврейского народа (1922), Gershenzon assigns the Jews the role of the nay-sayer among the other nations.³⁰¹ The main purpose of this tract by Gershenzon was to expose what he considered to be the misconceptions of the Zionists. In his view, they attached too much importance to the acquisition of land and the establishment of an autonomous state for the Jews, or, in other words, the establishment of a Jewish nation in the sense of other nations. As mentioned above, he considered the concept of “nation,” as it was understood in the modern world, to be an objectivized value, or an abstract, vampire value which required the sacrifice of the depersonalization of the individual, in the name of unity and homogeneity.

The concept of nationality, in and of itself, Gershenzon felt, was not necessarily a negative thing—it was a given, an inherent and organic component of humanity. It did not differentiate the basic forms of existence, since all human existence is the same everywhere, but only distinguished the outward physical appearance of the forms of life.

³⁰¹ Михаил Осипович Гершензон, Судьбы еврейского народа (Петербург: Эпоха, 1922)

For example, all men have noses, but the Romans had a special structure of nose. Such differences are subtle and cannot be consciously created or constructed—they simply are.

Therefore, in Gershenzon's view, since nationality and national characteristics are organic and cannot be consciously created, creativity can only exist on the individual level. It is at this level, as mentioned above, that truth and absolute ideals are apprehended and serve a useful purpose. Thus the Spaniard should not try to live in a Spanish manner, since he is Spanish, whether he likes it, or not, and his lot lies in serving the mission of his nation. He would do more to strengthen the position of his nation (as well as his own position) if he served his country without thinking of it. National creativity then is not a special higher form of creativity, but the combined individual creativity of its people which will inevitably be nationally colored:

Национальное творчество не есть какой-либо особенный высший вид коллективного творчества, но всякое творчество национально.... И когда вы утверждаете одновременно, что еврейство есть нация, что, распяленное по земле, оно вследствие своей распяленности неспособно к национальному творчеству, —я отвечаю: если оно, действительно, нация,... —то его раздробленное коллективное творчество непременно в какой-то сфере, недоступной нашему зрению, образует национальное целое.³⁰²

(National creativity is not a special, higher type of collective creativity, but every creation is national.... And when you stress that Jewry is a nation that is scattered about the earth and, as a result of this scattering, is incapable of national creativity, ...—then I answer, that if it is really a nation, its fragmented, collective creativity must absolutely, in some sphere, invisible to our eye, express a national purpose. [My translation])

Given his definition of nationality as something organic and inherent, one can see why Gershenzon believed it was impossible for men to attempt to master the fate of their

³⁰² Гершензон, Судьбы, 22.

nations. The attempts of Zionists to preserve the Jewish nationality by taking such measures as erecting Jewish schools and attempting to preserve the language were useless in his opinion since they were non-organic.

Since valid nationalism, in his view, existed only on the individual level, Gershenzon averred that territory was not a necessity for a unified nationality and he believed that people of different national extractions should be able to coexist within the same territory. Diversity should be considered a positive thing, but because similarity is easier to understand, mankind tends to seek to preserve it. When the rational mind attempts to tamper with nationality for the purpose of national preservation, it destroys an organically beneficial concept and distorts it, associating it with evil, mistrust and mercenary aims. Thus nationalism in Europe had become a very destructive power at the beginning of the century and was, in fact, the most evil enemy of the Jews. Zionists, he feared, would simply add one more nation, jealous of its own national purity, to the list of already existing nations, worried about the same futile course:

Я обвиняю в том, что своим призрением он усиливает в мире злое, проклятое начало национализма, стойвшее стольких слез человечеству и прежде всего евреям. В идеале сионизм стремится прибавить к существующим уже безжалостным национализмам еще один—еврейский.³⁰³

(I blame [the Zionist], because with his vision he is strengthening the evil, accursed beginning of nationalism, which has caused so many tears for humanity and, above all, for the Jews. In its ideal, Zionism is striving to add yet another ruthless nationalism to those already existing—Jewish nationalism. [My translation]).

³⁰³ Гершензон, Судьбы, 29

In their attempt to find freedom and happiness for the Jews, Zionists were following the path of other nations and completely disregarding the unique qualities that their own nation possessed. Gershenzon believed that the Jews were the aristocrats among other nations and therefore should not to follow them and reduce themselves to a common lot; this would do the world a disfavor:

По необычности своего лица и своей судьбы, еврейство
дольше — аристократ между народами; сионизм хочет сделать его
мещанином, живущим как все.³⁰⁴

(By the uniqueness of its face and its fate, Jewry, until the present has been the aristocrat among nations. Zionism wants to make it philistine, living like all the others. [My translation])

Gershenzon likened the role of the Jews to that of the misunderstood genius whose creation was destined to be misinterpreted and rejected by the surrounding world and to only enjoy a belated acceptance. The Jews should therefore listen to their own souls and not the voices of alien nations and peoples:

Так отец увещевает сына: «Остепенись! Твои сверстники давно устроены. Мы нашли тебе хорошую девушку: женись и войди в отцовское дело». Но сын не должен послушаться родительского совета. Он живет бурно и бедно, терпит лишения и насмешки, — но он гений.³⁰⁵

(A father admonishes his son: “Settle down! We found you a nice girl: marry and join your father’s business.” But the son should not obey his parents’ advice. He lives stormily and in poverty, suffering deprivation and mockery, —but he is a genius. [My translation])

The historical process, Gershenzon points out, consists of a process in which all nations rise, reach a peak, remain on a plateau for some time, and then plummet. The

³⁰⁴ Гершензон, Судьбы, 32.

³⁰⁵ Гершензон, Судьбы, 32.

outline of Jewish history however, presents a different shape—one that rises and reaches a peak, but rather than remaining on a plateau, immediately is scattered and decentralized, lying dormant for long periods of time, before once again following the same pattern. Throughout their history the Jews have been a wandering people and this was perhaps their most inherent, most defining and most genuine culture creating trait.

Despite the constant scattering among the nations of the world, the Jews neither dissolved into alien cultures, nor were drawn back to their own homeland. This constant scattering coupled with the refusal to assimilate developed in the Jew the passion for the negation of all that was unchanging and rooted:

Я вижу еврейство в его долгом скитании одержимым одной страстью: отрешаться от всего неизменного. Мне кажется: все другие народы накапливают сокровища для того, чтобы потом творческим использованием этих сокровищ осуществлять свое призвание; еврейский народ не менее жадно добивался национального единения, государственного могущества и духовной полноты, но лишь затем, чтобы во вторую половину своей жизни срывать с себя эти мирские оковы, — лишь затем, чтобы было что бросать.³⁰⁶

(I see Jewry holding to a single passion in its long wandering: the renunciation of all that is immutable. It seems to me that all other nations accumulate treasures in order to use them to realize their calling. The Jewish people no less greedily attained national unity, political might and spiritual wholeness, but only in order that in the second half of its life it could tear those worldly fetters from itself—just so there would be something to discard. [My translation])

All other nations, like the Jews, had begun without a home, but established roots and stability, or in other words, developed features of culture. In this sense, Jewry is anti-cultural and plays the role of the prophet among the nations that build cultures. This

³⁰⁶ Гершензон, Судьбы, 42-43.

Jewish will of rejection and inconstancy was what the world began to despise, in its desire to remain comfortable and static: «Он [еврей]—исчадие прошлого, он пугает наших детей, —бей его, гони, пусть исчезнет!..»³⁰⁷ (He, [the Jew] is a child of the past. He frightens our children—beat him, drive him away, let him disappear! [My translation])

Èrenburg and Lazik Roitschwanetz

Like Gershenzon, Èrenburg was a cosmopolitan and opposed the Zionist movement, a fact which many, Jews in particular, interpreted to mean that he was anti-Semitic.³⁰⁸ This anti-Zionist sentiment is expressed most explicitly in the one novel that he dedicated entirely to a Jewish theme, namely The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwanetz (1927). The work chronicles the adventures of a poor Jewish tailor as he leaves his hometown in Gomel, a traditional Jewish town in Byelorussia, and tries to make a living for himself outside of the *shtetl*. This quest leads him to many different cities in both the Soviet Union and in a variety of western countries, but the result is always the same. In each location he is beaten, thrown into prison and forced to leave. Lazik however, is by no means a saint. He tries by way of chicanery to find a means of support in each city and he succeeds for a while in each venture by exploiting others' weaknesses and vices.

³⁰⁷ Гершензон, Судьбы, 47.

³⁰⁸ There is some disagreement among the critics as to the degree to which Èrenburg opposed Zionism. According to most accounts, he looked on the establishment of an Israeli state positively, but personally did not believe Zionism held the answers to the Jewish Question. See: Rubenstein, 253-227; Alfred D. Low, Soviet Jewry and Soviet Policy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 95-97; Mikhail Agursky, The Third Rome: National Bolshevism in the USSR (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 289-91; and Efraim Sicher Jews in Russian Literature after the October Revolution: Writers and Artists between Hope and Apostasy 168.

In one instance, he masters Marxist jargon and provides an orthodox, communist preface to a trashy novel; in another, he poses as a rabbi and reassures the Jews in the city that they don't need to follow some of the more inconvenient laws of the Jewish religion; yet another time, he poses at Èrenburg's beloved Rotonde as an artist who will not show his pictures because he fears imitation. Nevertheless, despite his pranks, he is harmless and the punishment meted out to him always far exceeds his crime.

Lazik's peregrinations eventually lead him to Palestine where he hopes to find a refuge from the abuse he has suffered, but he is surprised to find that things are no different there:

Земля, как земля. Я, например, не чувствую, что она моя, потому что она наверное не моя, а или Ротшильда или сразу Чемберлена, и я даже не чувствую что она святая. Она царапается, как повсюду.³⁰⁹

(The land looks like any other land. I, for example, do not feel that it is mine, for it certainly does not belong to me, but probably to Rothschild or maybe even to Chamberlain, and I do not even have the feeling that it is Holy. It scratches the same like any other place.)³¹⁰

As in every other country where he has sought to set himself up, Lazik has difficulty finding food and money on which to subsist. In a desperate bid for food Lazik resorts to visiting an old acquaintance that he had known in Gomel, hoping that he can rely on neighborly goodwill. When he confronts the man however, he is rebuffed and informed that he will have to join all of the other unemployed workers and queue up for work:

³⁰⁹Èренбург, Лазик, 248.

³¹⁰ Ilya Ehrenburg, The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwantz (New York: The Polyglot Library, 1960), 286.

У нас есть настоящее государство, а разве есть государство, чтобы не было безработных? Вы будете тихо сидеть и ждать, пока кончится этот кризис.³¹¹

(We have here a regular state, but is there a state where there are no unemployed workers? You will sit still and wait until this crisis is over.)³¹²

A state organization, in other words, always exists at the expense of the individual.

Lazik eventually gets a menial job, but just as before he soon loses it, is beaten by the police, and thrown into prison. Such treatment in Palestine is more than he can bear and he leaves prison completely despondent and longs for his homeland of Gomel:

Я предлагаю вам вернуться на родину. Здесь, конечно, певучая речь, и святая земля, и еврейская полиция, и даже мандат в британском мундире, слов нет, здесь апельсиновый рай, но я хочу вернуться на родину. Что касается меня, мне уже пора домой. Я поездил по свету, поглядел как живут люди и какой у них в каждой стране свой особы бокс. Теперь я только и мечтаю, то о моем незабвенном Гомеле.³¹³

(I am proposing that we return to our country. Of course, here we have the singing language, and the Holy Earth, and a Jewish police force, and even a mandate in British uniform. And naturally, there is no doubt, this is the paradise of the oranges, but I want to return to my home town. As far as I am concerned, I was born, by the way, in Homel, and it is time that I returned home. I have traveled around the world, have seen how people live, have experienced the various types of boxing in different countries. Now all I yearn for is the unforgettable home town, Homel.)³¹⁴

Lazik soon realizes that it is impossible for him to return to his homeland since he is penniless and persecuted even in Palestine. Death, he realizes will be his only escape

³¹¹ Эренбург, Лазик, 250.

³¹² Ehrenburg, Lazik, 290.

³¹³ Эренбург, Лазик, 258.

³¹⁴ Ehrenburg, Lazik, 296-297.

from earthly misery. But even as he tries to find a place to die he finds no peace and Lazik, in the final scenes of the novel demonstrates how the emerging Israeli state is succumbing to a particularly pernicious false “value”—that of capitalism. When he finally finds a place to lie down, he watches the following interaction between an obese American woman and the guard at Rachel’s tomb:

– Вы прочтете самые шикарные молитвы, потому что у меня, слава богу, есть еще чем заплатить. Я приехала сюда из Нью–Йорка, и у моего мужа там самый шикарный ресторан. Я приехала поглядеть на землю предков, пустьэти патриархи видят, что вовсе не все евреи стали несчастными попрошайками,...

Бородатый сторож лебезил:

– Я прочту десять таких молитв, что все патриархи в раю ахнут.³¹⁵

(You shall read the finest prayers, for, thank God, I have enough to pay for them. I came here all the way from New York and my husband has the finest restaurant there. I have come here to see the land of the forefathers. These patriarchs should know that not all Jews have become miserable beggars.

The bearded watchman outdid himself in amiability:

I am going to read ten such prayers, so that all the patriarchs in paradise will simply keep their mouths open with amazement.)³¹⁶

When the wealthy woman abruptly cuts short the prayers to run off to dinner, the watchman catches sight of Lazik and looks at his rags in disgust while demanding to know what a beggar is doing desecrating Rachel’s grave. Lazik replies that he has come to die, but the watchman informs him that, if Lazik does not pay him, he cannot allow it. So it is that Lazik dies in the “promised land,” and there is nothing elevating about his return to the land of his ancestors. The Jewish state that is just forming is taking on the

³¹⁵ Эренбург, Лазик 264.

³¹⁶ Erenburg, Lazik, 303.

same characteristics as all other political nations, just as Gershenzon warned it would. Lazik's longing to return home to Belorussia voices Èrenburg's opinion that the Jews would do better to remain in Russia.

In their opposition to the Zionist movement Gershenzon, Dubnov and Èrenburg were all apparently in the same pro-Jewish, anti-Zionist ideological camp. They each believed the Jews were a unique nation among other nations and should remain so. Part of the Jewish mission was to remain distinct from other nations in order to expose the faults of other nations. In order to remain unique the Jews had to continue to negate the false values of other nations. This they could not do if they too became encumbered with the concerns of preservation of land, power and wealth as other landed and autonomous nations were. On this point both Dubnov and Gershenzon may have been inspired by Nietzsche's notion of the "nay-sayer" and his views of the Jewish nation as the nay-saying nation par excellence. They believed that in Diaspora nationalism, in which the Jewish nation existed on a merely intellectual or spiritual plane, the Jews could best perform their mission.

CHAPTER 6:

FEDOR MIKHAILOVICH DOSTOEVSKII

Previous chapters have dealt with acknowledged and likely philosophical-intellectual sources for the ideological plane of Èrenburg's Khulio Khurenito. In addition to these there is a very important literary one—Dostoevskii's oeuvre. As in the case of Nietzsche, Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii (1821-1881) was perceived as an anti-Semite, yet had a powerful attraction to Èrenburg. Several times in his memoirs, Èrenburg mentions reading Dostoevskii's novels among a mix of other works that he was devouring with keen interest as a teenager. Dostoevskii was one of the writers that Èrenburg read for an understanding of the surrounding world and whom he also attributed with making him become skeptical of that same world:

....чем больше я читал, тем сильнее во всем сомневался. Ложь меня обступала со всех сторон, мне хотелось то удрать в джунгли Индии, то бросить бомбу в дом генерал-губернатора на Тверской, то повеситься.³¹⁷

(...the more I read, the more I doubted everything. Lies surrounded me on all sides; one moment I wanted to run off to the Indian jungle, the next to throw a bomb at the Governor-General's house on Tverskaya, the next to hang myself.)³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 27.

³¹⁸ Ehrenburg, Мен, v. 1, 30.

Èrenburg links his reading of Crime and Punishment (1866) and his feelings of sympathy for Sonya's fate of forced prostitution in the novel with the deep impressions left by the inhumane conditions of the workers at the brewery that abutted his home. Both served as examples of society's injustices and hypocrisy and apparently provided impetus for his early involvement in revolutionary activities. Clearly in Crime and Punishment he read the "social message" without registering Dostoevskii's Christian "solutions".

Later, after he ended his political involvement with the Russian *émigrés* in Paris and took up a Bohemian lifestyle among other artists and writers there, Èrenburg once again mentions reading Dostoevskii. This was during a period of intense physical and spiritual suffering for Èrenburg. He was extremely poor, subsisting on meager rations and using newspapers for blankets; his transition from political activist to poet also had posed some serious ideological questions which he struggled to answer. Perhaps it was because he felt he could identify with Raskol'nikov during this period of dire poverty and mental searching that Èrenburg again turned to Dostoevskii's novels. Èrenburg says of this period:

Я БЫЛ В ПЛОХОМ ВИДЕ: НОЧНАЯ РАБОТА, «РОТОНДА», ЧТЕНИЕ ГАЗЕТ, РОМАНЫ ДОСТОЕВСКОГО И БЛУА, СТИХИ ПРЕВРАТИЛИ МЕНЯ В НЕВРАСТЕНИКА.³¹⁹

(I was worn out by night work; I read Dostoevsky and the Apocrypha and wrote poems which became more and more maniacal.)³²⁰

Dostoevskii's impact is clearly traceable in Èrenburg's works both by way of direct reference to him and his *oeuvre*, as is the case in the chapter of Khulio Khurenito

³¹⁹ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 171.

³²⁰ Ehrenburg, Мен, v.1, 169.

entitled “The Grand Inquisitor outside of the Legend,” or by discussion of his ideas and philosophy. Robert Jackson in his work, Dostoevsky’s Underground Man in Russian Literature, notes the “affinity that exists between the early Èrenburg and Dostoevskii, particularly taking into account Dostoevskii’s novella, Записки из подполья, (Notes from the Underground, 1863):”³²¹

The opposition between the living, feeling man, the irrational dreamer and rebel and the rational man of action, is an important theme in a number of Èrenburg’s early works. ...Èrenburg sees the spectre of mechanization in both the old bourgeois society and the new socialist society. He approaches the promised land of socialism with a scepticism and pessimism that closely resemble Dostoevsky’s. The irrationalism of Notes from the Underground and the pessimism of “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” made a deep impression on the early Èrenburg.³²²

The Underground Man

Dostoevskii’s Underground Man, the narrator of Notes from the Underground, is a representative of the generation of the 1840’s and a victim of the utopianist, rationalist and determinist ideas which composed one of the predominant intellectual movements of the following decades. Notes from the Underground is essentially a polemic with the utopian socialists, and in particular, Chernyshevskii. These utopian thinkers believed that, by purely rational and scientific means and through a natural progression of the historical process, man would achieve an earthly utopia. They suggested that when man became enlightened, he would choose to always act in his own best interest and this would ultimately mean acting in the interest of his fellow beings. Thus men and nations

³²¹ Robert Jackson, Dostoevsky’s Underground Man in Russian Literature (New York: Mouton & Co., 1989), 188-189.

³²² Jackson, 189.

would become more “civilized”; eventually and inevitably they would establish an ideal society.

The Underground Man challenges this rational utopia because he seeks to escape the predetermined fate of man in a world ruled by the inescapable laws of nature that the utopianists put forward. In their postulation of a utilitarian social order he recognized that man would be reduced to a mere, unthinking cog, robbed of personal self-expression. His spiteful ruminations in his isolated quarters are attempts to express his self-will against these immutable forces—to show that irrationality and caprice can prevail over rational self-interest—to prove that 2x2 does not have to equal 4. He is however, at the same time, a victim of his own “rationalistic intellect” and is caught in the logical tangle of his own thinking.³²³

In this tangle he feels trapped by fate and the laws of nature because they don't allow for the exercise of free will. These present themselves to him as an insuperable wall, yet one that he refuses to give in to. Unlike the men of action who “stop at the wall” and actually find in it «что—то успокоительное, нравственно разрешающее и окончательное.»³²⁴ (some kind of soothing, morally decisive and definitive meaning,)³²⁵ the Underground Man continues to butt his head against the wall, for even if he is unable to break through the wall for lack of strength, neither will he reconcile

³²³ Jackson, 180.

³²⁴ Федор Михайлович Достоевский, «Записки из подполья,» Повести и рассказы, т. II (Москва: Художественная литература, 1979).

³²⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 8.

himself to it. This spiteful tenacity, in a perverse way, is actually an indication of the Underground Man's spiritual health.

For it indicates that despite the convictions of his reason, he refuses to surrender his right to possess a conscience or the ability to feel outraged and insulted.³²⁶

The Underground Man tries to retain some semblance of personal integrity and freedom by refusing to give in to the wall; this negative protest, however, results in inertia and impotence. Men of action, on the other hand, stop at the wall and forget about it—they are characterized by limited views on life and even stupidity. It is their “blinkers” that allow them to act without a twinge of conscience, since by accepting the wall they no longer need self-consciousness or spiritual energy to exert personal will. Their actions are determined by natural law alone and they comfortably and purposefully fulfill their predetermined duties as cogs in the social machinery.

The Underground Man refuses the offered “Crystal Palace” of rational utopianists because it does not allow for him to stick his tongue out at it.³²⁷ This Crystal Palace is the pure expression of rationalism and materialism, and it makes no allowances for man's free will. The Underground Man muses that perhaps man would, in reality, prefer to perpetually “build the road” and never actually complete it because by reaching the ideal, he may ultimately be depriving himself of his own free will, and discover that he has become no more than an “organ stop”:

³²⁶ Joseph Frank, “Notes from Underground,” in *Notes from Underground*, ed. M. Katz (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1989), 212.

³²⁷ The Crystal Palace was a pavilion at the Great Exhibition of London in 1851. Dostoevskii, *Notes*, 18.

For the empirical manifestation of personality is the right to choose a course of action...and no choice is involved when one is good, reasonable, satisfied, and happy by conformity with laws of nature that exclude their very negation.³²⁸

The Crystal Palace would become a static, dull structure, which, the Underground Man contends, men would abandon of their own accord out of sheer boredom. His ultimate rejection, however, is based on the fact that in the Crystal Palace boredom would not even be relieved by suffering (that is, doubt and negation), for “what sort of a palace would it be if any doubt were allowed?”³²⁹

For the present, the Underground Man prefers to remain in his underground—until some better ideal is offered—one that he may enter out of desire rather than rational necessity. The Underground Man resorts to negation, wall bashing, alienation, spite, destructive desires, outraged impotence, and inertia as he attempts to preserve his free will against the suffocating “natural laws” and necessity.

Èrenburg and “The Wall”

As mentioned above, the narrator of Khulio Khurenito, Èrenburg, receives the ideological heritage of Dostoevskii’s Underground Man. As Khulio Khurenito travels about collecting his entourage of disciples, it is Èrenburg who becomes most valuable for him as the one who refuses to accept the “crystal palace” of European civilization. He is the only disciple that is fully conscious of his part in Khurenito’s design to destroy culture by fueling the vices characteristic of each so-called “civilized” western nation.

³²⁸ Frank, 217.

³²⁹ Достоевский, «Записки», 312.

Already in the very beginning of the novel Èrenburg demonstrates similarities to the Underground Man and other Dostoevskian intellectual characters, such as Ivan Karamazov.³³⁰ As mentioned above, Èrenburg is sitting in a Parisian café when Khurenito, a Mephistophelean figure, enters. Only after much persuasion does Khurenito convince Èrenburg that he is not the devil, and that in fact neither good nor evil exist, but only reality. Faced with a reality that he is dissatisfied with and given that neither “good” nor “evil” exist, Èrenburg reasons, why not destroy the reality (i.e. in this case European, so-called culture)?

Èrenburg affirms his existence by negating that which does exist—by sticking his tongue out at it, so to speak. In fact, it is this negation that is especially characteristic of Èrenburg. Just as the Underground Man preserves his right to say “no” and to continue beating his head against the wall, as an expression of his consciousness and even his conscience, so too is Èrenburg’s negation an expression of his non-acceptance and therefore, in a sense, his conscience, although at first it may appear to be just blind obstinacy. Later, when Khurenito presents all of his disciples with invitations to the “Solemn Performances of the Destruction of the Tribe of Judah”, they are all aghast at such an unthinkable breach of ethics. However, Khurenito quickly demonstrates that Jews are incompatible with any other nation: he asks each disciple which word they would choose from their language if they were allowed just one—“yes” or “no”. Each disciple chooses the word “yes” in turn, essentially in affirmation of that particular trait that he characterizes in his nation. For Monsieur Delet it is “yes” to *elan* and to

³³⁰ The conversation between Khulio and Èrenburg parodies that of Ivan Karamazov and the Devil.

moderation in all things, for Mr. Cool, it is “yes” to his dollars and “yes” because “no” is immoral and criminal. Schmidt says “yes” because it is more expedient for organizing, and the others too in turn answer “yes”. Finally Khurenito turns to Èrenburg who replies:

Учитель, я не солгу вам—я оставил бы «нет». Видите ли, откровенно говоря, мне очень нравится, когда что—нибудь не удается. Я люблю мистера Куля, но мне было бы приятно, если бы он вдруг потерял свои доллары....³³¹

(Teacher, I cannot deceive you. I would keep “no”. Candidly speaking, I’m always rather pleased when something goes wrong or breaks down. I’m very fond of Mr. Cool, but it would give me pleasure if he were suddenly to lose all his dollars...)³³²

As Èrenburg speaks the other disciple edge away from him and Khurenito points out:

Теперь ты видишь, что я был прав. Произошло естественное разделение. Наш еврей остался в одиночестве. Можно уничтожить все гетто, стереть все «черты оседлости», срыть все границы, но ничем не заполнить этих пяти аршин, отделяющих вас от него. Мы все Робинзоны, или, если хотите, каторжники, дальше дело характера. Один приручает паука, занимается санскритским языком и любовно подметает пол камеры. Другой бьет головой стенку—шишка, снова шишка, а так далее; что крепче—голова или стена? ...Евреи пришли—и сразу в стенку бух!³³³

(Now you see that I was right. A natural division has taken place. Our Jew is left alone. You can destroy all the ghettos, wipe away all the reservation boundaries, dig up all the frontiers, but there’s nothing to fill those ten feet which separate you from him. All of us are Robinson Crusoes, or convicts if you prefer; the rest is a matter of personality. One man will tame a spider, study Sanskrit and lovingly sweep the floor of his

³³¹ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 87.

³³² Ehrenburg, Julio, 114.

³³³ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 87.

cell. Another will bang his head against the wall: crack! a bump— another crack! and another bump, and so on: what'll prove stronger, the wall or his head? ... The Jews came along and crack! it's the head against the wall at once!)³³⁴

Here Èrenburg expresses his preference for the word “no” because he wishes to oppose the “yes” of the others. Much like the Underground Man who admits that he is not really so fond of sticking out his tongue, but does so only because he has not yet found a structure at which he doesn't feel forced to stick out his tongue, Èrenburg chooses “no” because he sees that the “yes” of the others is in fact negative. As mentioned earlier, each of the other disciples choose “yes” because it is positive for their purpose; “Diese Moral des ‘Gut ist, was mir nützt, setzt Èrenburg des Paradox des ‘Gut ist, was den Guten schadet,’ entgegen.”³³⁵ (“Èrenburg opposes this morality of: ‘the good is that which is advantageous for ones own desires.’” [My translation]) Each disciple sees the values of his particular culture as effective and preserving the status of his nation as a civilized entity. In reality these values are vices and the notion of what constitutes civilized nations is a farce. Virtues with blinders become vices and this is something the Underground Man recognizes and parodies in these musings:

Я знал господина, который всю жизнь гогдил тем, что знал толк в лафите. Он считал это за положительное свое достоинство и никогда не сомневался в себе. Он умер не то что с покойной, а с торжествующей совестью, и был совершенно прав. А я бы себе тогда выбрал карьеру: я был бы лентяй и обжора, но не простой, а например, сочувствующий всему прекрасному и высокому.³³⁶

³³⁴ Ehrenburg, *Julio*, 115)

³³⁵ Ujvary-Maier, 48.

³³⁶ Достоевский, «Записки», 300.

(I knew a gentleman who prided himself all his life on being a connoisseur of Lafite. He considered it his positive virtue and never doubted himself. He died not merely with a clean conscience, but with a triumphant one, and he was absolutely correct. I should have chosen a career for myself too: I would have been a sluggard and a glutton, not an ordinary one, but one who, for example, sympathized with everything beautiful and sublime.)³³⁷

Conscience and consciousness deprive both the Underground Man and Èrenburg of the comfort others find in their “civilized” existences. This leads to the “beating against the wall.” Èrenburg, like the Underground Man, chooses to confront the wall and spend his energies on knocking his forehead against it. Khurenito points out that this has been the function of Jews throughout history:

Евреи пришли—и сразу в стенку бух! «Почему так устроено?» Вот два человека, быть бы им равными. Так нет: Иаков в фаворе, а Исав на задворках. Начинаются подкопы земли и неба, Иеговы и царей, Вавилона и Рима. Оборванцы, ночующие на ступеньках храма, —есей трудятся: как в котлах взрывчатое вещество, замешивают новую религию справедливости и нищеты. Теперь—то полетит несокрушимый Рим! И против мудрости античного мира выходят нищие, невежественные, тупые сектанты. Дрожит Рим. Еврей Павел победил Марка Аврелия! Но люди обыкновенные, которые предпочитают динамиту уютный домик, начинают обживать новую веру, устраиваться в этом голом шалаше по—хорошему, по—домашнему. Христианство уже не стенобитная машина, а новая крепость....³³⁸

(The Jews came along and crack! it’s the head against the wall at once. “Why is this place as it is?” You have two men, why shouldn’t they be equal? But no, Jacob finds favour, Esau’s out in the cold. And so it begins: the undermining of heaven and earth, of Jehovah and the kings, of Babylon and Rome. The ragged beggars who spend their nights on the steps of the temple work away, concocting a new religion of justice and poverty, as though mixing an explosive in a cauldron. Now just watch unconquerable Rome go flying head over heels! The poor, ignorant, dull-witted sectarians come out against the beautiful order and wisdom of the

³³⁷ Dostoevsky, Notes, 14.

³³⁸ Èренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 87- 88.

ancient world. Rome trembles. The Jew Paul has conquered Marcus Aurelius. Yet ordinary people, who prefer a cosy little house to dynamite, begin to settle down in the new faith, making the bare hut homely and pleasant. Christianity is no longer a wall-beating machine, it has become a new fortress.)³³⁹

Although the wall may not have always been that of rationality and “natural law”, it has always existed as a barrier for expression of the free will. Throughout time the Tribe of Judah has struggled against atrophied dogma that has become hardened and impersonal. Ancient Rome was forced to bow to the restricting dogma hardened into the wall of the Inquisitions. This wall of “dogma” that the Jews have confronted throughout history differs from the wall that the Underground Man struggles against. Unlike the laws of nature and scientific knowledge, dogma is a human addendum to the wall, the conclusion and the acceptance of it.

The wall that Èrenburg and his contemporaries now face however, is essentially the same as that which the Underground Man confronts, as Khurenito points out to his Jewish disciple after visiting Schmidt’s office:

...это новые люди, они столь же отличаются от тебя, как жители Камерума. У них своя психология, свои нравы, свой религиозный пафос. Люди прежде падали ниц пред непостижимым, случайным. Каждое отступление от обычного, от постигнутого путем эмпирическим обожествлялось. Пафос новых людей в законности явлений, их трезвенный экстаз в ощущении безошибочности. ...Теперь пойми другой восторг – механика, впервые осмысленного ход сложной машины!³⁴⁰

(...it is new man, as different from you as an inhabitant of the Cameroons or some such place. You haven’t noticed that a new race of men has arisen out of the very depths of a way of life which seemed unshakeable.

³³⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 115-116.

³⁴⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 197.

They have their own psychology, their own morality, their own religious sense. The men of the past used to bow down before deviation from the usual—from that which had been empirically explained—was raised to divine status and called a miracle. The new men worship the inherent laws governing phenomena, their sober ecstasy is reserved for the infallible logic of work, ideas, events. ...Now try to understand another kind of ecstasy: that of a mechanic who has just grasped for the first time the workings of a complicated machine.)³⁴¹

Schmidt is Khurenito's German disciple with the passion for organization. After the First World War he sees an organizational vacuum in Russia that offers him an opportunity to exercise his skills. Feeling that the Communist International could subject Europe more easily to a unified plan than the German Empire could, he leaves his homeland to support the new, more promising cause.

Èrenburg enters Schmidt's office to find walls covered with charts, and desks snowed under with blueprints. Schmidt shows him plans for the distribution of the working population, with plans to train babies to love their assigned professions, plans to abolish the family and replace it with more efficient systems, and plans to administer prescribed doses of aesthetic emotions. Lastly, he leads Èrenburg to the most interesting chart—one that maps out man's life.

Вот жизнь! Она уже не тайна, не сказка, не бред, но трудовой процесс, в этой жалкой комнате разложенный на части и воссоединенный мощью разума!³⁴²

(Here's life for you! No longer a mystery, a fairy-tale, a feverish vision, but a work process, broken up into its components here, in this poor small room, and reconstructed by the power of reason.)³⁴³

³⁴¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 268-9.

³⁴² Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 196-197.

³⁴³ Ehrenburg, Julio, 268.

Èrenburg is terrified by the chart and, as he is leaving, makes the comment to Khurenito that the chart may be brilliant but has little to do with the life of man—«это просто вращение крохотного винтика!»³⁴⁴ (“it’s nothing but tiny cogs going around.”)³⁴⁵ Khurenito points out to Èrenburg that precise, economical, and closely reasoned planning are the new features of modern life, to which Èrenburg replies:

Если все это так, для чего же, собственно говоря, жить? В частности, для чего переписывать декреты Шмидта, вместо того чтобы как-нибудь уничтожить его?³⁴⁶

(If what you say is true, ... what’s the use of living? And in particular, what’s the use of copying out Schmidt’s decrees, instead of trying to destroy him in some way or other?)³⁴⁷

Èrenburg, like the Underground Man, understands the risk of succumbing to the rational planning of the materialist socialists and its dehumanizing, imprisoning effect. He senses this especially strongly when he accompanies Khurenito to visit the “captain”, the leading communist whose description fits that of Lenin. As the two approach the Kremlin, Èrenburg admits that he is afraid of men who can do things “not only to themselves, but also to others.”³⁴⁸ Upon entering the office Èrenburg darts behind a pillar where he listens to Khurenito’s discussion with Lenin.

Я вас понимаю, — сказал Хуренито, — вы высокий образец здорового одностумья. Со многими мыслямы жизнь кончают на корточках, за

³⁴⁴ Èrenburg, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 197.

³⁴⁵ Èhrenburg, Julio, 268.

³⁴⁶ Èrenburg, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 198.

³⁴⁷ Èhrenburg, Julio, 270.

³⁴⁸ Èrenburg, Собрание т. 1 (1990), 401.

тумбой..., а начинают ее, напротив, с неумолимыми шорам, концентрирующими всю энергию на едином помысле. Однодумье – дело, движение, жизнь. Раздумье – прекрасное и блистательное увеселение, десерт предсмертного ужина.³⁴⁹

(I understand you, said Jurenito. You are an outstanding example of healthy single-mindedness. Those who have many thoughts end their lives crouching behind pillars. ... Those who start life wear merciless blinkers which focus all their energies on a single idea. Single-mindedness is action, movement, life. Reflection is a splendid and brilliant entertainment, the dessert served at the last dinner before death.)³⁵⁰

As Khurenito's conversation with Lenin continues, the communist leader expresses his chilling version of the Crystal Palace:

Мы ведем челевечество к лучшему будущему. Одни, которым это не выгодно, всячески мешают нам. ... Мы должны их устранять, убивая одного для спасения тысячи. Другие упираются, не понимая, что их же счастье впереди, боятся тяжкого перехода, цепляются за жалую тень вчерашнего шалаша. Мы гоним их вперед, гоним железными бычами.³⁵¹

(We're leading humanity towards a better future. Some people, who find this not to their advantage, are hindering us in every way,.... We must eliminate them, killing one man to save a thousand. Others resist us because they're afraid of the heavy march, because they cling to the pitiful shadow of last night's shelter. We are driving them forward, driving them to paradise with iron whips.)³⁵²

These words are reminiscent of the arguments that Dostoevskii's Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov offers to Christ:

У нас же все будут счастливы и не будут более не бунтовать, ни истреблять друг друга, как в свободе твоей, повсеместно. О, мы

³⁴⁹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1990), 403-404.

³⁵⁰ Ehrenburg, Julio, 250-251.

³⁵¹ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1990), 405.

³⁵² Ehrenburg, Julio, 252.

убедим их, что они тогда только и станут свободными, когда откажутся от свободы своей для нас и нам покорятся. И что же, правы мы будем или солжем?³⁵³

(Under us they will all be happy and they will not rise in rebellion and kill one another all the world over, as they are doing now with the freedom You gave them. Oh, we will convince them that they will only be free when they have surrendered their freedom and submitted to us. And that will be the truth, will it not?)³⁵⁴

Lenin suggests that it is a lack of understanding where their true happiness lies that prevents people from joining in his crusade for the future ideal, thereby implying that, if rationally considered, his paradise would be unquestionable. Lenin feels it is expedient to use force in establishing his idea, until that inevitable day in the future when the sweetness of his paradise will be so undeniable that no one will be able to question it any longer, whereupon force will no longer be necessary.

Erenburg finds the same expedient organizing fanaticism in Lenin that he found in Schmidt. Human beings have been reduced in this plan to cogs in a wheel that can easily be substituted and replaced by others if necessary, to achieve a smoothly operating piece of machinery. His response, of course, -- the "Jewish response" -- is to cower and hide from this single-minded fanatic whom he recognizes as the greatest threat to humanity and free will. Cowering can be an Underground Man's only response to the man of action, because he is crippled by that all-comprehensive understanding that enables him to recognize the aspirations even of his opponent. Inertia is the corollary of full comprehension:

³⁵³ Достоевский, Собрание т. 6 (1994), 285.

³⁵⁴ Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 311.

О нелепость нелепостей! То ли дело все понимать, все сознать все невозможности и каменные стены; не примирятся не с одной из этих невозможностей и каменных стен, если вам мерзит примирятся...и вследствие этого, молча и бессильно скрежеца зубами, слядоострастно замереть в инерцию...³⁵⁵

(Oh, absurdity of absurdity! How much better it is to understand it all, to be aware of everything, all the impossibilities and stone walls; not to be reconciled with any of those impossibilities or stone walls if it so disgusts you;... even though it's absolutely clear once again that you're in no way to blame, and, as a result of all this, while silently and impotently gnashing your teeth, you sink voluptuously into inertia....)³⁵⁶

Like the Underground Man who can find no self-respect in his tangle of logic and extreme self-awareness, Èrenburg is painfully aware of his own inadequacy and impotence. He characterizes himself in these terms:

Это – повесть о великом Учителе, а не о слабом, ничтожном, презренном ученике. Илья Эренбург, автор посредственных стихов, исписавшийся журналист, трус, отступник, мелкий ханжа, пакостник с идейными, задумчивыми глазами, был на скамье вагона.³⁵⁷

(This is the story of the great Teacher, not of his weak, insignificant, contemptible disciple. Ilya Ehrenburg, authour of mediocre poems, journalist who had written himself out, coward and renegade, petty hypocrite, dirty bounder with the soulful eyes of an idealist, was weeping on a railway bench.)³⁵⁸

As emerges from the above quote, it is not Èrenburg, the narrator and author of the tale who is the main hero of the novel, but Khulio Khurenito. However, these two characters are closely linked. As mentioned earlier, Èrenburg is the only disciple selected

³⁵⁵ Достоевский, «Записки», 295.

³⁵⁶ Dostoevsky, Notes, 10.

³⁵⁷ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 218.

³⁵⁸ Ehrenburg, Julio, 298.

by Khurenito who is fully aware of his plan. He is the only one who acknowledges the teacher/disciple relationship that exists between them. Èrenburg is chosen by Khurenito to write an account of his actions and teachings because he recognizes in him the “artist, heretic, dissenter and dangerous rebel” he needs.³⁵⁹ Èrenburg and Khurenito both represent the same ideals of revolt and destruction of civilization and, in fact, it may be concluded that they are merely two aspects of the same person—two different expressions of the actual author. As Ujvary-Maier points out:

Ilya Ehrenburg verkörpert den niedrigen Lebenswillen; seine Person ist auf ein fast animalisches Gefühlsniveau herabgedrückt, während Churenito Willenskraft und Ratio repräsentiert....Churenito stellt einen überhöhten Ehrenburg dar, welcher mit grosser Machtfülle und reichen Kenntnissen ausgestattet ist.³⁶⁰

(Il'ia Èrenburg embodies the lesser will. His feelings are expressed on an almost animal level, while Khurenito represents willpower and intelligence. Khurenito represents an Èrenburg on a higher level, who is equipped with great power and knowledge. [My translation])

The Underground Man's intellectualization leads him into a logical morass where the only solution is to act irrationally and with spite—the only escape from his intellectual prison is a primitive, destructive emotional response. This is very much like Èrenburg who perceives the need to revolt, to reject the inhumanity of the civilized world, but lacks the will and power to do anything more than beat his head on the wall in protest.

Neither Èrenburg nor the Underground Man are necessarily positive characters in either of the novels (nor, would I say, are they entirely negative). Both are satirically

³⁵⁹ Jackson, 188.

³⁶⁰ Ujvary-Maier, 50.

portrayed individuals trapped by an acute awareness of what is happening around them and who therefore, feel powerless to break away from the approaching dominance of materialistic rationalism. Both reject the “anthill”, but seeing the risks in constructing their own edifice and the impossibility of finding the true ideal, prefer to stand apart from the anthill and stick their tongue out at it. This negative reaction is ironically the expression of what is positive in both of them. Unlike the men of action who accept the dogmas of those who love the wall and appear to be working toward the betterment of humanity, the Underground Man and Èrenburg preserve the kernel of mankind’s source of dignity—free will.

The Underground Man perceives that there might be something beyond his underground lair that offers a favorable alternative to it. There is, he believes, the possibility of an “edifice” that he might desire to enter, rather than be forced to accept by rational coercion. Before censorship of his work, Dostoevskii apparently expressed “the essential idea” of his work as being “faith in Christ.”³⁶¹ In the remaining text there are only hints that lead to the conclusion that Dostoevskii’s solution to the dilemma of the Crystal Palace is a Christian edifice.

Эх! да ведь я и тут вру! Вру, потому что сам знаю, как дважды два, что вовсе не подполье лучше, а что – то другое, совсем другое, которого я жажду, но кторого никак не найду!³⁶²

³⁶¹ Although it seems strange that an idea promoting faith in Christ would be censored at this time in Russian history, that is what happened. In explanation Frank suggests that Dostoevskii’s attempt in Notes from the Underground to compare his new “Crystal edifice” to the utopianist Crystal Palace may have confused and frightened the censors who were still reeling from the error of having recently allowed Chernyshevskii’s What is to Be Done? to be published. See, Frank, 219-221.

³⁶² Достоевский, «Записки», 314.

(Hey, but I'm lying once again! I'm lying because I know myself as surely as two times two, that it isn't really the underground that's better, but something different, altogether different, something that I long for, but I'll never be able to find!)³⁶³

However, the Underground Man is not even sure he believes anything of what he has written and sinks back into his boggy underground.

In the novel, Khulio Khurenito, there is another ideal presented, and although it is originally described by Khurenito, it may be assumed that Èrenburg shares the same vision since the two of them can be considered two aspects of the same person: the “denier” and the “would-be affirmer.”

Like the Underground Man, Èrenburg sees a better alternative than the enforced paradise which Schmidt and Lenin offer. His utopia, like that which the Underground Man briefly glimpses, is one based on the free expression of will, yet differs in that it is not a Christian utopia, but rather an anti-Christian one.

Unlike Notes from the Underground, the novel Khulio Khurenito, presents a positive and empowered character to contrast the impotence and inertia of the ineffective rebel. Khulio Khurenito, is the author's answer to the “underground syndrome.” Completely rational and willful, Khurenito disseminates his paradoxical teachings like Nietzsche's Anti-Christ, Zarathustra. Khulio is not placated by stone walls, nor does he satisfy himself by beating his head against them—he simply transcends them. Virtues and vices valued by civilization are simply overlooked by him since they are entirely hypocritical. Khurenito's ideal echoes that of Nietzsche's—an anarchistic society free of “corrupt” virtues where human will has full expression:

³⁶³ Dostoevsky, Notes, 26.

Видишь, там, на солнце, откидывая ноги, прыгает по степи маленький жеребенок. Разве не передает он беспредельного восторга бытия? А здесь, у лачуги, задрал морду к небу и опустив хвост, воеет собака – не вся ли скорбь земли в ней? Им будут подобны грядущие люди, и не станут они замыкать свои чувства в тысячепудовые облачения.³⁶⁴

(Do you see a little foal jumping high in the air and kicking out its legs, on the plain? Doesn't he convey to you the whole boundless joy of being? And over there by that hut, there's a dog howling, its muzzle pointing to the sky, its tail dragging on the ground. Isn't all the sorrow of the earth in that howling? The men of the future will be like these. They will not lock up their feelings in vestments weighing thousands of pounds.)³⁶⁵

Also, as mentioned above, he points to children as the prototype of the future world:

Чаще гляди на детей. Я люблю в них не только воспоминание о легких днях человечества, нет, в них я вижу прообраз грядущего мира. ...Пока он дик, пуст и прекрасен. ...Оскорбляй святыни, преступай заповеди, смейся, громче смейся, когда нельзя смеяться....³⁶⁶

(You must look more often at children. What I love in them is not merely the memory of the feather-light days of humanity; in them, too, I see the prototype of the future world. ...Today he is wild, empty and beautiful. ...Defile the sanctums, break the commandments, laugh, laugh loudly when laughing is forbidden....)³⁶⁷

This future society would be neither morally nor rationally restrictive.

Èrenburg shares this same vision, but can not rise above the new stone wall of communism in its Leninist version. At the end of the novel Èrenburg appears to be resigned to his position.

³⁶⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 37.

³⁶⁵ Ehrenburg, Julio, 48.

³⁶⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 37-38.

³⁶⁷ Ehrenburg, Julio, 48-9.

Мой долг выполнен: книга написана. Я знаю, что она оттолкнет от меня всех, кто тщился понять и оправдать меня. ...Конечно, я умру, никогда не увидев диких полей, с плясками, рыком и младенчески бессмысленным смехом наконец — то свободных людей.³⁶⁸

(My duty is done: the book is written. I know that it will repel all those who hitherto, out of excessive love of literature or a sense of commiseration, still tried in vain to understand or justify me. ...Of course I'll die without ever beholding those wild fields with the dancing, the raucous cries, the child-like, mindless laughter of men set free at last.)³⁶⁹

Despite Èrenburg's ineffectiveness he does appear to have a clearer and more hopeful vision of the future than does the Underground Man and he recognizes his duty in ushering it in (by writing the memoirs of the Teacher). The period of rational materialism is, in his opinion, merely another phase in an age-old struggle between free will and imprisonment and like all of the other stone walls in the past, it will eventually be overcome. His function, since he is incapable of transcending the wall, is to beat it (the Jewish function in world history) by rebelling and questioning the values in his society. His recording of the teachings and activities of his Teacher, preserves the «семена далекой полыни, мяты и зверобоя.»³⁷⁰ “seed of the fleabane, the wild mint, the ragwort of the far distant future.”³⁷¹

In conclusion, Èrenburg reserves the right to negate, not just for the purpose “of sticking out his tongue” in futile rebellion and disobedience, but rather, to preserve his sense of human dignity and conscience in the decadent world surrounding him. The

³⁶⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 231-232.

³⁶⁹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 316.

³⁷⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 232.

³⁷¹ Ehrenburg, Julio, 316.

Underground Man also defends his right to doubt and negate as his last resort to retain his sense of dignity and the dying flames of conscience that rationalism threaten to smother.

Èrenburg, like the Underground Man, is impotent and slowed by inertia and finds himself beating against “stone walls.” The wall in Khulio Khurenito signifies not only the indestructible “natural law” that the Underground Man struggles against, but also any hardened dogma that threatens human freedom of choice. Èrenburg embodies the historical function of the Jews in destroying impersonal and unjust dogma. Although the efforts appear futile, the tendency to reaffirm human will constantly reappears.

Èrenburg fears the “man of action” because of his cruelty and single-mindedness, just as the Underground Man saw in such men stupidity and an inevitable blindness. Èrenburg, like the Underground Man, fears the effects of such men of action succeeding in their rational plans and sees in such a future utopia mechanized humans and a tedious (non-) existence, something that the Underground Man also envisioned.

Finally, neither of the characters takes any definitive action against the restricting rationalism taking root around them. Both see the present as rather hopeless. The Underground Man allows for a faint possibility that there might be an escape from what seems an inevitable future doom. Èrenburg, although giving up any dreams for the present, sees the period of rationalism as just one more historical phase that will eventually be overthrown, as has happened in the past. However, his utopia of total freedom lies beyond it and will be sought, after the bondage of rationalism and communism is broken by future humanity.

Èrenburg's recognized function is to preserve this ideal by recording Khurenito's words. In this way he continues the denial of the stone wall of rationalism and other false values, be they "vampiric" or "fetishistic." Therefore he seems to hold to a more promising future than does the Underground Man who sinks back into the morass of his underground existence.

The Second Day

Whereas the character Èrenburg in the novel Khulio Khurenito recognizes and fears the dawn of an era of reason and mechanization, he still remains hopeful of a better future and writes to contribute to the eventual fulfillment of that day. In a later novel, written after Stalin's rise to power, Èrenburg once again introduces an underground character, but with no hint of optimism for the future of this type of man. Traces of Dostoevskii's Underground Man appear in the character Volodia Safonov in Èrenburg's novel, День Второй (The Second Day, 1934). In this novel, which is considered the author's first socialist-realist novel, Èrenburg contrasts two main characters—Safonov and Kolia Rzhanov – and glorifies the erection of *Kuznetskstroï* during the first Five-Year Plan.

Following the writing of Khulio Khurenito, which had been born of extreme cynicism and despair for the fate of Europe and Russia, Èrenburg had remained politically neutral. However, in the early '30s as he saw the rise of Nazism in Germany and its growing anti-Semitism and having grown tired of "living by negation alone," he saw that he must take a political stance. No longer able to remain an "ironic skeptic," he

placed his loyalties in Stalin's camp.³⁷² The novel, The Second Day, was written in an attempt to establish his new position and win acceptance with Stalin's regime.

Although the novel in many ways appears to conform to the official socialist-realist guidelines (workers of "iron will" who carry out the promethean task of constructing huge iron and steel works in Kuznetsk), Èrenburg, nonetheless, tempered it with some untraditional elements. He provides descriptions of workers who came to work on the project, not for any political or ideological reason, but rather just to get a pair of overalls; he mentions *kulaks* who were deported and forced into labor and remain resentful of their involvement; he does not shy away from discussing deplorable working conditions where even the rats couldn't bear to stay and inside rumors of sabotage. In addition to these rather daring elements, perhaps the biggest surprise in this "socialist realist" novel is the character of Volodia Safonov.

Safonov stands in stark contrast to Rzhanov, who is the typical socialist realist hero in the novel—the young enthusiastic worker drawn from the working class who possesses both native intelligence and immense ideological zeal. Safonov, whom Èrenburg later characterized as "a good honest fellow" comes to Kuznetsk from the University of Tomsk.³⁷³ He is well-read and intelligent and possesses a very sensitive conscience which he has inherited from his father. His father had been a doctor who was considered an eccentric by the people of Tomsk, yet whose only eccentricity had been that of unabashed honesty and sympathy for the unjustly oppressed. As the doctor

³⁷² Rubenstein, 114.

³⁷³ Èренбург, Собрание т. 8 (1962), 231.

himself would say, «у меня гипертрофия того предполагаемого органа, который обычно зовут совестью.»³⁷⁴ (“I suffer from hypertrophia of a putative organ which is commonly called the conscience.”)³⁷⁵ Doctor Safonov had rejoiced in the Revolution, hoping that it would bring changes, but when he later saw that the same injustices were being meted out, just by a different hand, he warned his son «Эх, Володька, тот же блин, да подмазан!»³⁷⁶ (“Eh, Volodka, it’s the same old dish served in a different way.”)³⁷⁷ This warning from his father was given just before his early death which came as a direct result of serving time in prison. The crime for which he had been punished was that of defending a former member of the Whites, who, although he long ago had conformed to the Soviets’ directives, was being persecuted for his past loyalties.

In a later scene, almost identical to his father’s defense of the former White, Volodya raises an outcry during a meeting of the Pioneers when one of the members is expelled because his father had been a tsarist procurator. From this incident Safonov learns that his father was right—despite the systems and their slogans, true virtues like justice are ignored, while other human qualities, like greed or thirst for power, take precedence. At this insight Safonov decides that the only thing he can do to survive in this society is to remain silent and apart; as a result, he slips into an underground existence.

³⁷⁴ Эренбург, Собрание т. 3 (1962), 193.

³⁷⁵ Илья Ehrenburg, The Second Day (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1984), 91.

³⁷⁶ Эренбург, Собрание т. 3 (1962), 195.

³⁷⁷ Ehrenburg, Second, 93.

Like Dostoevskii's *Underground Man*, Safonov turns to thought and introspection as an escape from the external world. He distances himself from others and reads voraciously to understand human nature and to find some sense of justice that is missing in current society. Like his father, Volodya suffers from «гипертрофия совестию» (hypertrophia of the conscience) and a strong sense of justice; both qualities, as he matures, contribute to a growing mistrust of reality and doubt. Nothing is as it seems, Safonov concludes.

He finds it impossible to adopt the enthusiastic, yet simple-minded nature of his comrades who find pleasure in the life of the collective. One of his dormitory mates expresses his satisfaction at being part of the collective:

Хорошо идти в ногу со всеми: тогда не чувствуешь усталости!
Хорошо знать, что ты не один, что у всех те же мускулы, то же
дыханье, та же воля.³⁷⁸

(It was good to march in step with everyone else; you never get tired that way. It was good to know that you're not alone, that everyone has the same muscles, the same breath, the same determination.)³⁷⁹

Safonov recognizes that he will never enjoy being a part of this type of collective. In the new Soviet society Safonov feels there is no place for the individual, the dreamer, the philosopher or the poet. He draws upon the *Underground Man*'s imagery of the anthill to express his frustration:

Муравьиная куча – образец разумности и логики; но эта куча существовала и тысячу лет назад. Существуют муравьи – рабочие, муравьи – спецы, муравьи – начальники. Но еще не было на свете муравья – гения. Шекспир писал не о муравьях. Акрополь построен

³⁷⁸ Эренбург, *Собрание* т. 3 (1962), 189.

³⁷⁹ Ehrenburg, *Second*, 83.

не муравьями. Закон тяготения нашел не муравей. У муравьев нет не Сенек, ни Рафаэлей, ни Пушкиных. У них есть куча, они работают.³⁸⁰

(An anthill is the epitome of rationality and logic. But that same hill existed a thousand years ago. Nothing in it has changed. There are worker-ants, specialist-ants and supervisor-ants. But never yet has the world seen a genius-ant. Shakespeare didn't write about ants. The Acropolis wasn't built by ants. The law of gravity wasn't discovered by ants. The ants have no Senecas, no Raphaels, no Pushkins. They have an anthill, and they work.)³⁸¹

Safonov's reliance on introspection and his doubt and skepticism nurtured in isolation lead him to an impasse. Like the Underground Man who suffers from acute consciousness and claims that «слишком сознавать – это болезнь, настоящая, полная болезнь»,³⁸² (being overly conscious is a disease),³⁸³ Safonov's "disease" is that of an acute conscience and the effect is the same—inertia. Having remained an aloof observer for so long his vision has become that of "I" versus "them." Out of pride, Safonov resists lowering himself to the level of his shallow peers. With criticism of others comes criticism of self and this is what cripples him. Safonov realizes that, if he acts, he will become further ostracized and politically misinterpreted, but to remain inactive is unbearable also, because he feels he is a coward. Thus he is caught in the Underground Man's quandary:

Ведь чтоб начать действовать, нужно быть совершенно успокоенным предварительно и чтоб сомнений уж никаких не оставалось. ...А попробуй увлекись своим чувством слепо, без

³⁸⁰ Эренбург, Собрание т. 3 (1962), 263.

³⁸¹ Ehrenburg, Second, 214.

³⁸² Федор Михайлович Достоевский, Собрание Сочинений, т.7 (Москва: Ликсика, 1994), 327.

³⁸³ Dostoevsky, Notes, 5.

рассуждений, без первоначальной причины,.... Послезавтра, это уж самый поздний срок, самого себя презирать начнешь за то, что самого себя зазнамо надул. В результате: мыльный пузырь и инерция.³⁸⁴

(For in order to begin to act, one must first be absolutely at ease, with no lingering doubts whatsoever. ...Just try to let yourself be carried away blindly by your feelings, without reflection, without primary cause,... The day after tomorrow at the very latest, you'll begin to despise yourself for having deceived yourself knowingly. The result: a soap bubble and inertia.)³⁸⁵

Trapped between a society that he rejects and a conscience that incriminates him, Safonov finds that, like the Underground Man, all he can do in his situation is bang his head on the wall. This does not foment any real change, but at least signals his rejection of the society that has no place for him:

Для меня они не люди. Все, как один. Называется «коллектив». Проще говоря—стенка. Вот я и расшиб себе голову.³⁸⁶

(They're not people to me. They're an agglomerate, called the collective—a stone wall, in simple terms. And I went and cracked my head on it.)³⁸⁷

Safonov realizes that he will never fit into Soviet society and that he never will be able to participate in it with enthusiasm—doubt and skepticism will always deny him that. When one of his professors calls him a *типичный изгой*, Safonov looks up the definition and finds this: «Изгой—исключенный из счета неграмотный попович,

³⁸⁴ Достоевский, Собрание, т. 7, 335-336.

³⁸⁵ Dostoevsky, Notes, 12-13.

³⁸⁶ Достоевский, Собрание т.7, 335-336.

³⁸⁷ Ehrenburg, Second, 331.

князь без владенья, проторговавшийся гость, банкрот.»³⁸⁸ (“Nonfeasor—a priest’s son, illiterate and excluded from the rolls; a prince without a domain; an insolvent alien trader; a bankrupt.”)³⁸⁹ As the social outsider, who stands at a distance and recognizes society’s deficiencies, and yet is never able to be assimilated into that society, Safonov is fulfilling the role of the Jew in the novel, as it is set forth in Khulio Khurenito, as well as the philosophical texts that inspired the novel.

As many critics have noted, Safonov, in many ways represents the author, Il’ia Èrenburg, himself.³⁹⁰ Èrenburg had come to a point where he could no longer exist on “negation alone.” In the West he saw the rise of Nazism and its rising anti-Semitic aggressions; at the same time he realized that to break with Stalin would mean alienation from Russia and the fate of many exiled writers whose pens lay dormant without a Russian audience. Èrenburg’s choice to seek acceptance with the Soviets was what appeared to him to be the lesser evil and perhaps the situation in which he could have the most influence against the evils of fascism. He was fully aware of the sacrifice he was making by aligning himself with Stalin and subordinating “his artistic instincts to political constraints”.³⁹¹ So it was that during this period Èrenburg took a stance similar

³⁸⁸ Эренбург, Собрание т. 1 (1962), 185.

³⁸⁹ Ehrenburg, Second, 78.

³⁹⁰ Joshua Rubenstein writes: “... Volodya Safronov (sic) in *Out of Chaos* so closely parallels Ehrenburg’s stated views of himself that it is fair to understand Voldia’s fate as emblematic of Ehrenburg’s own.” (Rubenstein, 119.) Anatol Goldberg says of Safonov: “He personifies the feelings which had haunted Ehrenburg for a long time, and from which he was now trying to free himself.” (Goldberg, 142.)

³⁹¹ Rubenstein, 120.

to that of Safonov, who remained silent and unattached to the party, while dutifully and unenthusiastically carrying out his expected tasks:

I did not renounce what I held dear, nor did I repudiate anything, but I knew I would have to live clenching my teeth and master one of the most difficult disciplines—silence.³⁹²

Nevertheless, in capitulating to Stalin, Èrenburg, in essence, killed a part of himself—he lost the ability to stand completely aloof and to independently and openly make his criticisms. Thus in many ways Safonov’s eventual suicide represents the death of a portion of Èrenburg himself, the one that had to be silenced in order to support Stalinism.

Èrenburg’s Safonov is the embodiment of the Underground Man (i.e. the individual, the nay-sayer, and, presumably, the Jew) in Soviet society of the 1930’s for whom there was no tolerance in the new collective. His position is the realization of the predictions that Èrenburg, the narrator, of Khulio Khurenito, and Dostoevskii’s Underground Man had both made.

Jackson, in his study, The Underground Man in Russian Literature, suggests that Èrenburg recognized that it was no longer possible for him to openly function as a “nay-sayer” and individual in Soviet society and that he made his compromise, because he believed that, if he could not openly oppose, he could at least make some modest contribution to society by compliance:

His acceptance of Soviet reality seems based not so much on [an] optimistic view of the immediate situation as on the belief that only through participation in Soviet reality can be baseness in life be destroyed.

³⁹² Èrenburg, Men, Years—Life, v.1 as quoted in Rubinstein 120. (Literary) Silence was also Babel’s reaction as expressed in his 1934 speech at the First Congress of Soviet Writers.

Irina, significantly, approaches her participation in Soviet reconstruction with the realization that it will not be “a heaven of rest, but a veritable hell.”³⁹³

Jackson claims that in The Second Day Èrenburg signaled his rejection of the negativism and self-destruction of the Underground Man as he attempted to subdue that element in himself.³⁹⁴ It is more likely however, that his “underground” tendencies still remained although they had to be temporarily silenced. This certainly is what Èrenburg himself seemed to indicate in a conversation with a Canadian journalist, Paul Austin, after Stalin’s death:

Èrenburg said that Safonov had to die because the 1930’s afforded little latitude for the individual. Fortunately, he added, there were now many more people like Safonov, who would eventually show the way to the future.³⁹⁵

The Thaw

Èrenburg, as the nay-sayer, reemerges in any case soon after Stalin’s death in 1953, with the publication of his novel, Оттепель (The Thaw, 1954). The novel was artistically unremarkable, but its content created quite a few ripples among the political establishment and the title eventually came to be associated with the period of openness that followed Stalin’s death. In The Thaw, Èrenburg deals with some issues that were still considered taboo in the Soviet Union since Khrushchev had not yet made his official denunciation of Stalin. One example of his daring criticism is his portrayal of the character, Zhuravlev, who is drawn in strong Stalinist overtones. Once a cheerful youth

³⁹³ Jackson. 199.

³⁹⁴ Jackson. 199.

³⁹⁵ Goldberg, 143.

who had earned his reputation as a good worker, Zhuravlev eventually achieves the status of a powerful bureaucrat. With the passage of time, however, his personality undergoes a transformation and he becomes hardened and lacking in any warmth or human emotion. As he becomes more involved with the factory, which he manages, he becomes increasingly engrossed in the enterprise and less concerned about the workers. He surrounds himself with mediocre men that flatter him in pursuit of their own interests. When his wife decides to leave him, he becomes terribly suspicious of everyone who surrounds him—a probable connection with Stalin's growing paranoia after his wife's suicide. Zhuravlev eventually loses his position and is called back to Moscow as a result of his disregard for his workers. He is held responsible when their dilapidated huts are destroyed by a storm because he had diverted monies marked for the new lodgings to improvements for factory equipment. The machine is more important than the individual in this Stalinist bureaucrat's books.

Equally daring were Èrenburg's references to the so-called Doctors' Plot. Vera Sherer is a Jewish doctor in the novel. She reacts with unusual sharpness when her friend, who is concerned about her daughter's health, asks her if she is sure there is nothing wrong with the girl, as Vera had stated. Although her friend had asked her question out of motherly concern, Vera perceives it as a sign of distrust. In this scene Èrenburg implies that the reason for Vera's strong reaction is the atmosphere of suspicion which Stalin's accusations against Jewish doctors had fostered.

Èrenburg also turns his criticism to Soviet culture and shows how the State and collectivism have crippled individual expression. In one example he compares two

artists—Pukhov, who had sacrificed his talent for success in the regime and painted dull portraits for party bureaucrats, and Saburov, who had refused to forsake his integrity and suffered by being unable to exhibit his works, living in dire poverty as a result.³⁹⁶ With the spring “thaw,” the tables are turned and Pukhov begins to regret his compromises while some of Saburov’s paintings are finally accepted for an exhibition. Other characters in the novel who were considered with suspicion by the collective finally find an outlet for personal expression at the end of the novel and the “underground element” is able to rise again.

The Russian Elect and the Jewish Chosen

It is ironic that although Dostoevskii’s works, especially Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov were instrumental in deepening Èrenburg’s sympathies for the oppressed and his dissatisfaction with societal injustices, these very works contained many anti-Semitic passages. Dostoevskii had very little patience for the very ones whom Èrenburg later struggled to protect—namely, the Jews. In the final decade of his life, Dostoevskii associated more and more closely with those who held high positions in the government and who expressed conservative views, principal among them, Prince V.P. Meshcherskii and the tsarevich’s tutor, K. P. Pobedonotsev, both well-known anti-Semites.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ In the portrayal of Saburov, Èrenburg turns to another Dostoevskian theme. Saburov is married to a crippled wife that is very unattractive yet in his portraits of her he brings out her genuine inner beauty.

³⁹⁷ David I. Goldstein, Dostoevsky and the Jews (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 89.

Dostoevskii's attraction to this aristocratic milieu was motivated both by a commonality of ideology, as well as a desire to establish his own credentials as a hereditary member of the nobility (although this connection was only on a very modest level). What Dostoevskii shared with these members of the high echelons of the government was a concern for the future of Russia and the autocracy, as the political, social, and economic situation of the country became less stable. Dostoevskii agreed with these conservatives that the resolution of the country's unrest lay in the return to traditional Russian values, i.e., in strengthening and reaffirming the autocracy, adhering to the Russian Orthodox religion and a renewal of patriotic allegiance to Russia.³⁹⁸

As early as 1856 Dostoevskii had shown signs of sympathy for these ideas in his adherence to the doctrine of *pochevnnichestvo* which viewed the progressives with their positivism and scientism as a threat to Russia's organic development.³⁹⁹ Like the slavophiles of the 1830's and 1840's, he mourned the fact that the educated Russians were out of touch with the "soil," or, in other words the common Russian people. Dostoevskii advocated a return to their roots, but did not agree with the slavophile belief that Russia should revert back to the culture that had existed before Peter the Great's day. On the contrary, he sought a synthesis of Russian-Orthodox and Western cultures, with the Russians leading the way to this union.

In his famous "Pushkin Speech", delivered in 1880, Dostoevskii outlined his vision of the special role of Russia. The speech, given on the occasion of the unveiling of

³⁹⁸ Goldstein, 90-91.

³⁹⁹ Victor Terras, A History of Russian Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 346.

the Pushkin statue in Moscow, extolled Pushkin as the only poet in the world with truly “universal sympathies.”⁴⁰⁰ According to Dostoevskii, no other writer could capture the essence of any nationality whatsoever, as Pushkin had done, preserving national specifics without adding any admixture of his own:

Самые величайшие из европейских поэтов никогда не могли воплотить в себе с такой силой гений чужого, соседнего, может быть, с ними народа, дух его, всю затаенную глубину этого духа и всю тоску его призвания, как мог это проявлять Пушкин. Напротив, обращаясь к чужим народностям, европейские поэты чаще всего перевоплощали их в свою же национальность и понимали по – своему.⁴⁰¹

(The greatest of European poets could never so powerfully embody in themselves the genius of a foreign, even a neighboring people, its spirit in all its hidden depth, and all its yearning after its appointed end, as Pushkin could. On the contrary, when they turned to foreign nations European poets most often made them one with their own people, and understood them after their own fashion.)⁴⁰²

In this ability of Pushkin to successfully express the essence of other nationalities, Dostoevskii saw a prophetic phenomenon. Pushkin, he believed, embodied Russia’s national spirit, and had anticipated its future destiny, which was to eventually usher in “omni-humanity.” Through Russia and Orthodoxy all races would be united into one universal mankind. Pushkin had unconsciously participated in and foreseen the progress of this mission in his writing.

According to Dostoevskii, movement toward this goal had been steadfast, albeit imperceptible in Russian history. As an example, he pointed to Peter the Great and his

⁴⁰⁰ Достоевский, Собрание, т. 7, 537.

⁴⁰¹ Достоевский, Собрание, т. 7, 538.

⁴⁰² Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, The Dream of a Queer Fellow and the Pushkin Speech (London: Unwin Books, 1960), 55.

reforms. Beyond the utilitarian benefits of Peter's policies, Dostoevskii argued, there was a higher goal that Peter the Great and the Russians were striving toward on an unconscious level. In order to carry out his reforms Peter the Great had collected many skilled artisans and geniuses from foreign nations to the Russian soil. More important than the contribution these geniuses made to Russia was what the Russians had to offer them.

Ведь мы разом устремились тогда к самому жизненному воссоединению, к единению всечеловеческому! Мы не враждебно..., а дружественно, с полною любовью приняли в душу нашу гении чужих наций, всех вместе, не делая преимущественных, племенных различий, умея инстинктом, почти с самого первого шагу различать, снимать противоречия, извинять и примирять различия, и тем уже высказали готовность и склонность нашу, нам самим только что объявившуюся и сказавшуюся, ко всеобщему общечеловеческому воссоединению со всеми племенами великого арийского рода. Да, назначение русского человека есть бесспорно всеевропейское и всемирное.⁴⁰³

(Surely, we then turned at once to the most vital reunion, to the unity of all mankind! Not in a spirit of enmity...but in friendliness and perfect love, we received into our soul the geniuses of foreign nations, all alike without preference of race, ...therein we already showed our readiness and inclination, which had only just become manifest to ourselves, for a common and universal union with all races of the great Aryan family. Yes, beyond all doubt, the destiny of a Russian is pan-European and universal. To become a true Russian, to become a Russian fully ...means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universal man.)⁴⁰⁴

Dostoevskii believed that this universality would be ushered in, not by the sword, but rather by a sense of brotherhood and fraternity that would be inspired by adherence to the gospel of Christ, i.e., Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, rather than turning to the West as the

⁴⁰³ Достоевский, Собрание, т. 7, 540.

⁴⁰⁴ Dostoevsky, Dream, 57.

Westernizers were doing, Dostoevskii suggested that the Russians should be looking for their answers to national problems within their own borders and their own spirituality. If they did this, instinctively, their universal mission would be brought to fruition and this effort of the Russian people would be a purely instinctive, natural one. In this vision Dostoevskii did not entirely dismiss the Westernizers, but rather sought a reconciliation with them—surely there were some things to be learned from the West— but in accepting Western values one must neither forget, nor forsake, one’s Russian roots, for in those roots lay the seeds of “omni-humanity.”

What could be the biggest threat to Dostoevskii’s vision of a universal mankind if not a group that challenged his notion of Russia’s and Orthodoxy’s chosen status, following their own nation’s historical-religious mission instead. The Jews were the threat. Dostoevskii, although he claimed in his second and third chapters of the March 1877 installment of *Дневник Писателя* (*The Diary of a Writer*) that he was not anti-Semitic, in fact did little to persuade otherwise in the ensuing argument. The first three articles, which comprise the second chapter, were written in response to letters from the Jewish journalist Arkadi Grigorievich Kovner who asked Dostoevskii for an explanation of his position:⁴⁰⁵

...но я намерен затронуть один предмет, который я решительно не могу себе объяснить. Это ваша ненависть к «жиду», которая проявляется почти в каждом выпуске вашего «Дневника».⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ In *The Diary of a Writer* Dostoevskii does not mention Kovner’s name, but refers to him anonymously. [Ф. М. Достоевский, *Дневник Писателя* (Париж: YMCA-Press, 1951), 99.] David Goldstein in his work, *Dostoevsky and the Jews*, identifies Dostoevskii’s correspondent as Kovner. Kovner was a radical journalist who had been convicted of embezzlement and was awaiting transport to Siberia at the time of the correspondence. He came from a poor Jewish family in Vilno but had rejected his religious upbringing and became a follower of Pisarev. (Goldstein, 106).

⁴⁰⁶ Достоевский, *Дневник*, 99.

(...but I intend to touch upon one subject which I truly cannot explain to myself. This is your hatred of the “Yid,” which reveals itself in virtually every issue of your Diary.)⁴⁰⁷

Dostoevskii responds that he does not hate the Jews, yet argues that they should not enjoy the same civil rights as the recently emancipated Russian serfs and other non-Russian nationalities in Russia. He defends this stance by claiming that the Jews pose more of a threat to the Russians than the Russians do to the Jews, thus inverting the “Jewish Question” into the “Russian Question.” The threat from the Jews he claims, lies in the “Jewish idea”, a phenomenon that has already taken firm hold in the world and Europe in particular. This “Jewish idea” which opposes the “Russian idea” of universality, is capitalism and the rule of “Mammon.”

Если и указывают на Европу, ...нельзя не указать и в Европе на сильное торжество еврейства, заменившего многие прежние идеи своими. О, конечно, человек всегда и во все времена боготворил материализм и склонен был видеть и понимать свободу лишь в обеспечении себя накопленными из всех сил и запасенными всеми средствами деньгами. Но иногда эти стремления не возводились так откровенно и так поучительно в высший принцип как в нашем девятнадцатом веке. «Всяк за себя и только за себя и всякое общение между людьми единственно для себя»,....⁴⁰⁸

(And if people are going to point to Europe...one cannot fail to note the effective triumph of Jewry which has replaced many of the old ideas with its own. Oh, of course human beings always and at all times idolized materialism and tended to see and understand freedom only as safeguarding one’s self with wealth accumulated with one’s every effort and hoarded by every possible means. But never before have these strivings been elevated so openly and held up as a higher principle as in our nineteenth century. Every man for himself and only for himself: all communion among people only for oneself....)⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, Diary of a Writer (...),902

⁴⁰⁸ Достоевский, Дневник, 112.

⁴⁰⁹ Dostoevsky, Diary, 914.

As examples of the Jewish involvement in the European movement toward materialism and bourgeois capitalism, Dostoevskii points to the Jewish reign over the European stock exchanges, their control of credit and even their dominance in international politics. «близится их царство, полное их царство!»⁴¹⁰ (“Their reign, their complete reign, is drawing nigh!”)⁴¹¹ he exclaims in desperation, for with the rise of merciless and selfish capitalism dominated by “Rothschilds” he saw an inevitable collapse of Christianity, brotherly unity and the search for truth.

In this perception of what he called the “Jewish idea,” Dostoevskii was not alone—many others had made the same claims, but Dostoevskii’s anti-Semitism had a special twist, as Gary Rosenshield points out in a recent article:

By the early 1860’s, Dostoevskii saw the salvation of the nation—and thus his own personal salvation—as inextricably tied to the salvation of the Russian common people. The Russian people were a God-fearing people whose Christianity, Russian Orthodoxy, would save not only the nation but also the world. In Dostoevskii’s conception there is only one New Israel; the Old Israel has been superseded by the newest of all Christian dispensations—the Russian—as Hilarion had implied in the eleventh century.⁴¹²

Rosenshield further points out that Dostoevskii knew there could only be one Israel, i.e. one chosen people. Since he considered the Russian people to be the “elect” then, it naturally follows that he would be especially upset by the reports of exploitation of the

⁴¹⁰ Достоевский, Дневник, т. 3, 112.

⁴¹¹ Dostoevsky, Diary, 914.

⁴¹² Gary Rosenshield, “Dostoevskii’s ‘The Funeral of the Universal Man’ and ‘An Isolated Case’ and Chekhov’s ‘Rothschild’s Fiddle’: The Jewish Question,” The Russian Review 56.4 (1997), 501.

“chosen” Russians by Jews in the anti-Semitic press.⁴¹³ Dostoevskii had viewed the emancipation of the serfs by Alexander II as a Christian resolution to the oppression of the Russian serfs (i.e. the Russian Question), but he greatly feared that while they were in a vulnerable state they would be especially susceptible to Jewish exploitation:

...еврейству там и хорошо, где народ еще невежествен, или несвободен, или мало развит экономически, — тут — то, стало быть, ему и лафа! И вместо того чтоб, напротив, влиянием своим поднять этот уровень образования, усилить знание, породить экономическую способность в коренном населении, вместо того еврей, где ни поселялся, там еще пуше унижал и развращал народ.⁴¹⁴

(...Jewry thrives in places where the people are still ignorant or not free or economically backward—that’s just where they’re in clover! And instead of using their influence to raise the level of development, to encourage knowledge, to give rise to economic competence among the native population—instead of this, the Jew, wherever he has settled, has humbled and corrupted the people even more;...)⁴¹⁵

Dostoevskii’s animosity toward the Jews probably had much to do with rumors of the exploitation of the Russian peasant that were being circulating by the anti-Semitic press, but beyond that it is also likely that he felt some competition with, and jealousy toward, the Jews who were the “elect” of the Old Testament and thus presented a threat to his view of the status of the Russians. Not only that, but the Jews also remained aloof from the Russians, rejecting their customs and cultures—certainly an affront to one who felt that the “elect” were being snubbed by those who “falsely” believed themselves chosen.

⁴¹³ Rosenshield, 500.

⁴¹⁴ Достоевский, Дневник, т. 3, 111.

⁴¹⁵ Dostoevsky, Diary, 913.

Dostoevskii, in Diary of a Writer, blames the concept of *status in statu* (the formation of a state within the state) for the chasm that prevents reconciliation of the Jews and the Russians.⁴¹⁶ He admits that certainly because of their adherence to this policy the Jews have been able to survive and retain their unity despite the repeated loss of territory, political autonomy, and almost their religion at times. However, he goes on to describe what he feels the real meaning of *status in statu* is:

...можно изобразить хотя некоторые признаки этого *status in statu*, по крайней мере, хоть наружно. Признаки эти: отчужденность и отчуждимость на степени религиозного догмата, неслиянность, вера в то, что существует в мире лишь народная личность – еврей, а другие хоть есть, но все равно, надо считать, что как бы их и не существовало. «Выйди из народов и составь свою особь и знай, что с сих пор ты един у Бога, остальных истреби, или в рабов обрати, или эксплуатируй.»⁴¹⁷

(...one can outline at least some of the characteristics of this *status in statu*, even if only superficially. These characteristics are: alienation and estrangement on the level of religious dogma; no intermingling; a belief that there exists but one national individuality in the world—the Jew, and though there may be some others, one still has to think of them as nonexistent, as it were. “Go forth from the other nations, form thine own entity and know that henceforth thou art *the only one before God*; destroy the others or enslave them or exploit them.”)⁴¹⁸

Erenburg’s and Dostoevskii’s visions of the future were similar in the sense that both held the hope of a universal humanity in which there would be no national divisions. Dostoevskii believed this would come about when the “elect” Russians were able to bring about an organic synthesis on the basis of Russian Orthodoxy and the principle of

⁴¹⁶ Goldstein suggests that Dostoevskii drew his inspiration for this passage about *status in statu* from Yakov Brafman’s Book of the Kahal and that Dostoevskii tried to lend the text a biblical tone in order to convey the feeling that God or one of his prophets is speaking.

⁴¹⁷ Достоевский, Дневник, 108.

⁴¹⁸ Dostoevsky, Diary, 910.

brotherhood. Èrenburg., on the other hand believed that this ideal would be achieved when man recognized the stifling nature of their atrophied values and was prepared to destroy them and construct new, valid ones. The “elect” Jews, in his view held the key to the future because they would continue to point out the deficiencies of culture and its values, performing the role of the Underground Man” and not allow mankind to become self-satisfied and remain static.

Both Dostoevskii and Èrenburg saw a particular danger in the western “value” of capitalism. Dostoevskii saw the Jews as the principle proponents of capitalism and believed that they were using their expired “chosen status” to exploit the real “elect”—the Russian common people. Èrenburg also feared capitalism and feared that it would prove to be a hindrance to the Jewish mission of negation. Like Gershenzon, he believed that if the Jews established their own state they would become complacent and would lose their uniqueness. In Lazik Roitschwanetz he expresses his fear that money or capitalism would become the dominant value in Israel and would make the Jews there vulnerable to the same self-satisfaction that Gentiles embraced in their national security.

Dostoevskii was offended by the Jewish policy of remaining distinct from the Russians or, what he termed *status in statu*, because it was a manifestation of the Jewish belief in their “electness” and posed a threat to his idea that the Russians were now the “chosen” people. The Jews who insisted on remaining distinct from the Russians would become an obstacle to the synthesis that Dostoevskii envisioned. Although Èrenburg did not advocate that the Jews remain physically separate from their hosting nations, he

believed that they would, by nature, always be “outsiders,” as Khurenito asserts in his teachings about the Jews. It is this very characteristic which is their greatest asset.

CONCLUSION

Èrenburg's vision of the role of the Jews among other nations was derived from a multiplicity of sources. Perhaps chief among these was Nietzsche for, as stated earlier, "Julio Jurenito is a variation of Zarathustra."⁴¹⁹ Khurenito, like Zarathustra, is the prophet of a future day when mankind will be unfettered by spent cultural values.⁴²⁰ He rejects all values as they exist in their present form and claims that he stands for no values or ideals, but rather their destruction. However, just as with Zarathustra this is not *really* the case; Khurenito is not amoral, but he has not yet found an existing ideal to which he can say "yes". Zarathustra taught that "false" virtues would eventually cause their own destruction, a concept that Khurenito tried to play out by gathering a group of disciples, each of which represented the prevalent "virtues" or "values" of their own nations. Among these disciples however, is one exception—the character Èrenburg who represents the Jewish nation. Unlike the other disciples, Khurenito selects him to be his servant and to accompany him in his negation and destruction of corrupt "values". As the "nay-sayer", the disciple Èrenburg, fulfills the same role that Nietzsche had ascribed to the Jews in some of his other writings as the "antithesis of all decadence, self sufficient

⁴¹⁹ Agursky, Nietzsche, 267.

⁴²⁰ These ideas were not exclusive to Èrenburg's novel. It should be noted here that there are a great deal of similarities between the Nietzschean ideas expressed in Khulio Khurenito and Zamiatin's novel of 1920, Мы (We). In We, the Zarathustrian role is filled by a woman, I-330, the "wild," animal-like men that live outside of the utopian state are idealized, and the concept of atrophied culture is a prominent theme. Zamiatin also relies upon the Dostoevskian opposition of freedom versus happiness.

and incorruptible”.⁴²¹ As such the Jews, in Èrenburg’s view, perform the mission of the “lion” which casts off the burden of old values and says “no”, as set forth in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. However, also like the “lion” that cannot say the ultimate “yes,” the Jews can only negate, and destroy, thus preparing the way for the ultimate “yes,” but not creating it. Èrenburg hoped for the future universal humanity which Khurenito envisioned and saw the Jews as the “nation” that would be instrumental in ushering in that vision. He also realized that with the achievement of that ideal there would no longer be any need for Jewish negation and therefore the ultimate “yes-saying” element would take over and Jewry would blend with the rest of humanity. Thus Jews had a special mission to perform, but ultimately they must be prepared to take their place on an equal footing with all of humanity.

This idea of a special mission for the Jewish nation is the main focus of Dubnov’s conceptualization of the place of Jews in world history. This role, according to Dubnov, had been given to the Jews by the ancient biblical prophets who told them of their mission to unite all nations under a universal God. Èrenburg similarly uses the Zarathustrian “prophet” Khulio Khurenito to impart his Jewish disciple with a special mission. He is given the responsibility of preserving the message of a future humanity that will live together freely and harmoniously without national boundaries. Not only does Khulio Khurenito see the usefulness of this individual disciple, but he also recognizes that Jewry as a whole will play a part in bringing about this future utopia, just as Dubnov did. Since the Jews hold this vision of a united humanity, they are unwilling to reconcile themselves to the customs and traditions of surrounding nations, i.e. to adopt

⁴²¹ Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, 593.

a national agenda rather than a universal one. Thus they remain separate from others, slipping into isolation in times of persecution and coming forth and joining the struggle for justice, equality and harmony when they are allowed expression.

Dubnov's and Èrenburg's ideas of how exactly the Jews would influence other nations to reach this future utopia differed however. Dubnov believed that the Jewish example of suffering under persecution for the ideals of justice, equality and united humanity would serve as the impetus for other nations to eventually accept the Jewish message. Èrenburg however believed that the universal ideal would continue to motivate the Jews to say "no" until there would finally be an era when men were prepared to live by the ideal.

If Dubnov stresses the importance of a universal humanity and the Jewish role of ushering it in, Gershenzon, like Nietzsche, expounds on the subject of the evils of individual nations and explains how important it is that Jewry remain scattered, never achieving statehood. By describing the development of values, Gershenzon demonstrates how values begin as pure concepts that are useful for an individual, and how, when they are forced upon others, they lose their validity. So called "values," at the national level have become so corrupted that they are meaningless and harmful. National "values" only serve to preserve the nation as a whole and their proponents are willing to sacrifice the individual and his rights. This is a concept that Èrenburg also expresses in the scene in which each of Khurenito's disciples says that he would prefer to chose the word "yes" over "no". Each of these national caricatures wishes to preserve their national "values" which are corrupt and have lost their efficacy. These "values" are useful to them only for selfish purposes.

Having established the atrophied nature of cultural and national values, Gershenzon then proceeds to explain why the Jews should remain scattered among other nations. Nationality, he believed was an inherent trait and not necessarily bad, but when men attempt to master the fate of their own nation this was the point where the problem of corrupt values arose. The Jews as a nation without a state or land or an autonomous government had a special status among other nations because they were not saddled with the destructive and blinding national values. Other nations which develop roots and stability and eventually fixed features of culture ultimately become too tied to those values; they become unwilling to make necessary changes. It is because the Jews are unable to establish this kind of stability that they are so valuable to the world, Gershenzon avers. As a result of their history of constant scattering the Jews refuse to blend with other nations and also continue to negate all that is unchanging.

Èrenburg perhaps partly influenced by Gershenzon, also expresses an anti-Zionist stance; although not so overtly in the novel, Khulio Khurenito, as in his later work, The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitschwanetz. Anti-Zionism remains a constant feature of Èrenburg's ideology. In the later novel in which the main character, a poor Jewish tailor wanders about trying to find a place to settle down and make a life for himself, he discovers that he is unwanted and abused in every nation. Eventually when he goes to the new state of Israel where he expects to find acceptance among his own people he finds that it has become a state like any other (in this case a capitalist state—an extension of the United States). As Gershenzon would state, in Israel the inherent national traits of the Jews have become overtaken by the needs of the new Jewish State. In this situation, the special role of the Jews as the “nay-sayer” and “genius” among other nations is lost.

The Jewish State is like any other state and lost its power and therefore no longer a catalyst for change.

If Èrenburg feared that the State of Israel would become just another state and, in particular, an extension of the United States and its capitalist economy, then his fears, strangely enough, coincided to a not inconsiderable degree with some elements of Dostoevskii's anti-Semitic sentiments. Dostoevskii feared the Jews because he saw them as a threat to the Russians and the Russian common people in particular. The Russian people, he felt, held the fate of the future of all nations. As he expressed it in his famous "Pushkin Speech," of 1880, he believed that the Russians would lead the way to a synthesis of the Western world with the Russian-Orthodox world. This synthesis would be brought about through the expression of Christian brotherhood and love extended by the Russians and would lead to an eventual "omni-humanity," i.e. universal humanity.

In this belief that the Russians would act, in a sense, as the "saviors" of humanity or the elect people, Dostoevskii was echoing the belief that had already been established in Hilarion's times that Russia was the "New Jerusalem." Thus Dostoevskii very likely felt threatened by the original, Old Jerusalem or the Jews who were the biblical "elect." He therefore believed that the Jews were responsible for the greatest evil of the Western world—that of capitalism. He feared the financial exploitation of the "chosen" Russian masses by the Jews. Èrenburg too feared the rise of capitalism among the Jews and feared that it would rob the Jews of their special, "elect" mission—that they would forsake their role as "nay-sayers" in order seek financial gain and stability in the new Israeli State.

Interestingly, Dostoevskii and Èrenburg both looked forward to a similar future ideal—one of a universal humanity. Dostoevskii envisioned one built on the basis of

Orthodox Christian principles, however, while Èrenburg's conception of the future ideal was a non-Christian one. To both Russian writers it was but one of harmony and equality nonetheless. Both also believed in the "election" of their ethnic peoples to bring about the future ideal. For Dostoevskii this was the Russians and for Èrenburg it was the Jews (and very likely he agreed with Dubnov that the Russian Jews were preserving that mission best of all Jewish groups, since they were still isolated from the West and thus less exposed to the capitalist element there).

If Dostoevskii and Èrenburg both believed that capitalism posed a threat to their respective "elect" people, they also both saw a threat in the face of the new age of rationalism, positivism and determinism. In Dostoevskii's case, it was the doctrines of utopian socialism, that posed the threat, while for Èrenburg it was the rise of Leninist communism that threatened to reduce humanity to mere unthinking automatons. Just as Dostoevskii created the Underground Man to express his rejection of the ideas of the utopian socialists, so too did Èrenburg use the image of an Underground Man—a Jewish one—to convey his rejection of communism. Also, like the Underground Man, Khurenito's Jewish disciple confronts the wall of rational materialism and bangs his head against it as a symbol of his rebellion. In so doing, he is acting out the centuries-old function of the Jews to reject atrophied and corrupt dogma, which is humanity's extension of the Underground Man's wall of natural law. Furthermore, Èrenburg's Jewish disciple is just as incapable of overcoming the wall as the Underground Man—he can only reject the wall, not provide a solution to overcome it. Like the Underground Man, Èrenburg cowers before the man of action who stops at the wall. He is limited by

his conscience and his own intangible standard of self-perfection, traits which Dubnov ascribes to the Jew.

The same “underground” image appears in Èrenburg’s The Second Day in the character Safonov. By the time he wrote this novel, Erenburg had begun to witness the rise of collectivism and Stalin’s regime. As an outsider who cannot betray his conscience by joining the masses, Safonov finds himself beating his head against the wall. He is performing the role of the Jew within the novel. Unlike the character Èrenburg, in Khulio Khurenito however, Safonov cannot see beyond the present collective. He has spent all of his energy banging his head against the wall and sees suicide as the only escape from his misery. This may have signaled the author’s own resignation before the wall and the decision that for the present, at least, compliance was the best plan of action, thereby killing a part of himself. He realized that negation (or the manifestation of his Jewish ethnicity) would lead to nothing but the same persecution from the Stalinist regime that had descended on so many of his friends. Therefore he resorted to isolation, or silence, in the face of that persecution in order to survive and preserve the message of a better day.

Evidence that the Underground Man had merely been silenced, but not eliminated in Èrenburg’s philosophical stance, reemerges soon after Stalin’s death in Èrenburg’s novel The Thaw. In this novel, Èrenburg voices his criticism of Stalin through the presentation of the paranoid bureaucrat Zhuravlev and advocates the return of individual expression, the need for personal opinion. Once again the time had come, Èrenburg indicated when the Underground Man could return to beating his head against the wall and expressing his rejection of society.

Given this explanation of Èrenburg's view of the role of the Jews in world culture one may detect a unifying thread that runs throughout his seemingly contradictory actions and verbalized ideological stances. First Èrenburg believed that the Jews had a mission to perform—that of rejecting invalid culture and banging their head against the wall of hardened dogma. This was a mission that he, personally, was prepared to perform until the time came when he recognized that this action was no longer efficacious—the period of Stalin's "Cult of Personality." If he had voiced his rejection of Stalin and the new collective society Èrenburg would have suffered either exile or death, which would have meant permanent silence for him—the voice of the Jewish people. However, by complying with Stalin to some degree, he was able to preserve his voice and his message. Just as the Jews had retreated to isolation in times of persecution and reappeared in times of greater liberalism, Erenburg forced the Jewish, or underground portion of himself, into isolation during periods of intolerance, awaiting a period of greater tolerance when he would again stretch forth his head and again bang it against the wall.

As mentioned above, some Jews in the West, the Zionists especially, accused Èrenburg of putting Russian nationalism ahead of Jewish loyalty because he did not stand behind the Zionists who supported an Israeli state and had put great hopes in the visit of Golda Meir. In reality, Erenburg was merely reiterating the cosmopolitan stance that he had always held—that the Russian Jews could do more good in Russia or any diaspora-- than they could do in the new Jewish State. In fact, as mentioned above, he was wary of the fate of Israel and feared that it would become just another nation and especially that, losing its uniqueness would fall under the influence of the capitalistic United States. If

the Jews stayed in Russia, however they could better continue to perform their mission of preparing for his vision of the world nation, or universal mankind.

Certainly one cannot excuse Èrenburg for all of his reversals and inconsistencies, but perhaps Alice Nakhimovsky sums him up best in her work Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity in which she states that although Èrenburg's life as a Russian writer and Soviet citizen was contradictory, but his path as a Jew was more consistent:

He was and remained a cosmopolitan who proclaimed his Jewishness as a reaction to Hitler and anti-Semitism in general....

Under the circumstances his behavior was no worse and often better than that of others: when he could help, he did a great deal; when he could not, he muddled through. Ehrenburg acted like a human being, but on the mythic level of martyr-writer...he falls short.⁴²²

⁴²² Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity: Jabotinsky, Babel, Grossman, Galich, Roziner, Markish (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 1992, 31-32).

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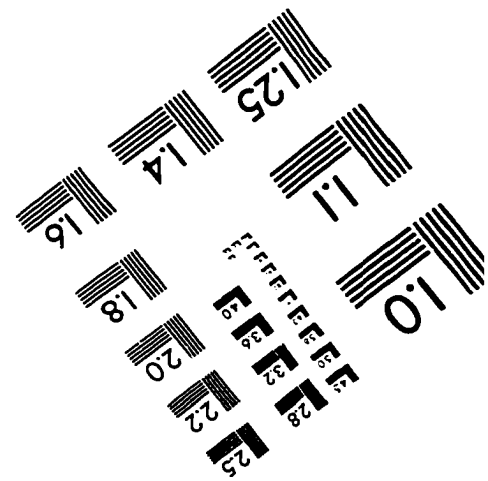
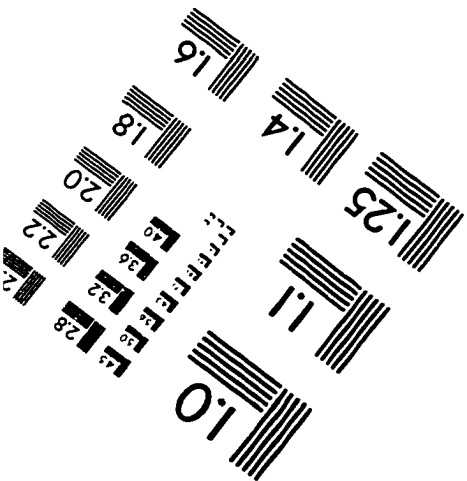
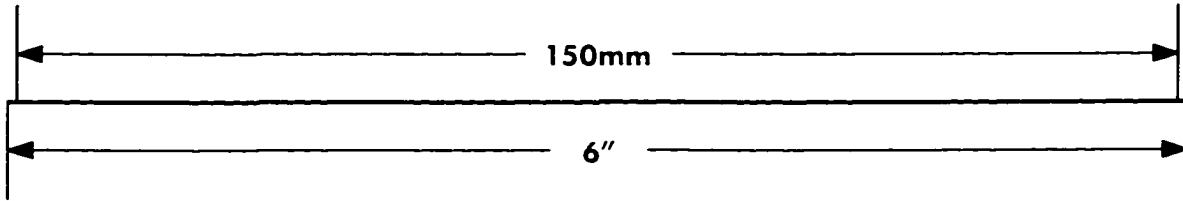
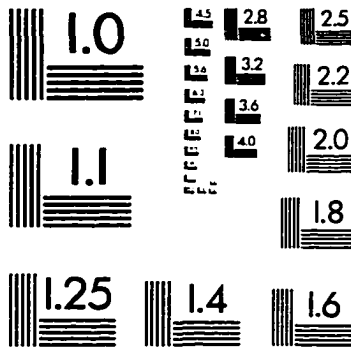
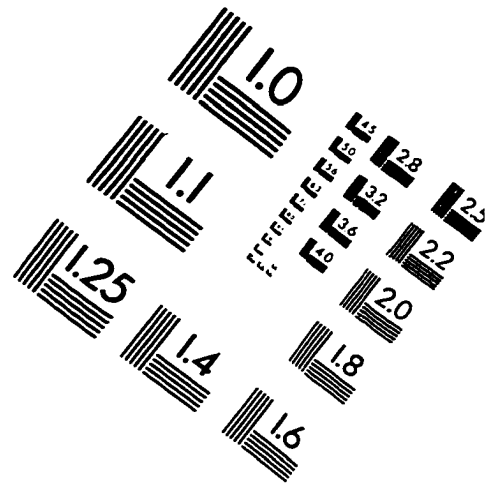
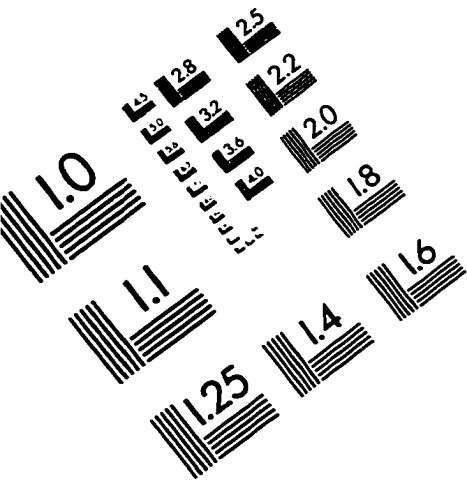
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