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On 19 November 1962, high-ranking party officials flocked to the Kremlin to attend a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CC CPSU) on the subject of economic development. A surprise was waiting for them in the bookstalls set up in the Kremlin for the delegates. Alongside the red book of materials for the Central Committee's discussion was the light blue cover of *Novyi mir*, the Soviet journal that most enthusiastically supported Nikita Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization expounded at the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses. Thousands of copies of the issue of *Novyi mir* that featured Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's groundbreaking novella on everyday life in the Stalinist Gulag, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, had been rushed, hot off the presses, to the Kremlin bookstalls. From the tribunal of the plenum, First Secretary Khrushchev gave the novella his full-throated endorsement.[1]

On 1 December 1963, the *Novyi mir* editor and renowned Russian poet Aleksandr Tvardovskii wrote in his diary about his new top priority: securing a Lenin Prize, the highest award in Soviet literature, for *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Tvardovskii noted that, in a sign that enthusiasm for the novella was waning in some quarters, the Moscow branch of the RSFSR Writers' Union had failed to nominate the work for the 1964 Lenin Prize.[2]

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[1] Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union*, trans. Harry Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 46.

[2] A. T. Tvardovskii, "Rabochie tetradi 60-kh godov," *Znamia*, no. 9 (2000): 162.

Nevertheless, it was ultimately included in the list for consideration by the Lenin Prize Committee after receiving two nominations from prominent cultural institutions: the Central State Archive of Literature and Art and *Novyi mir* itself.[3]

Despite Khrushchev's and Tvardovskii's support for *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Solzhenitsyn's novella failed to win the Lenin Prize in April 1964. Those scholars who have discussed Solzhenitsyn's failed bid for the prize have interpreted it (correctly) as a sign of crumbling support for Khrushchev's Thaw in general and Solzhenitsyn's work in particular on the part of the Central Committee.[4] Heretofore unexamined in the secondary literature, the transcripts of the debates over *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* that took place at the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964 reveal more than just waning support for de-Stalinization, however. They give insight into the major debates taking place in the Soviet literary world during the twilight of the Thaw. These transcripts show that in 1964, much of the discussion of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* hinged on Solzhenitsyn's depiction of the Russian peasantry and nation as embodied in the character of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. Where one expects to find lengthy discussions of the Gulag, one finds instead polemics from the country's top writers on whether or not Ivan Denisovich is a true representative of the Russian people. Perhaps even more surprisingly, the transcripts show that Solzhenitsyn's most vocal critics on the committee came from among the Russian writers, who argued that the novella's main character played into prerevolutionary stereotypes of the Russian peasantry as passive and politically disengaged. Solzhenitsyn's Russian critics argued that the Russian peasantry was in fact progressive and revolutionary in its nature. To suggest otherwise, they insisted, was an affront to the Russian nation. Today it may seem strange that Solzhenitsyn, a committed Russian nationalist, was accused of insulting the Russian nation at the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964. Yet the arguments made by Solzhenitsyn's Russian critics, though rarely analyzed, are deeply revealing.[5] They illustrate

[3] Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI) f. 2916 (Committee on Lenin and State Prizes in the Areas of Literature, Art, and Architecture under the Council of Ministers of the USSR), op. 2, d. 4, ll. 55–57 (List of nominations for the Lenin Prize, 17 February 1964).

[4] L. I. Saraskina, *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2008), 522–26; Michael Scammel, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 480–95; K. B. Sokolov, *Khudozhestvennaia kul'tura i vlast' v poststalinskoi Rossii: Soiuz i bor'ba (1953–1985 gg.)* (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2007), 232–34; M. R. Zezina, *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia i vlast' v 1950-e–60-e gody* (Moscow: Dialog MGU, 1999), 318.

[5] Here I agree with Polly Jones, who has argued that we can deepen our understanding of the Thaw by analyzing the arguments and motivations of its opponents ("The Personal and the Political: Opposition to the Thaw and the Politics of Literary Identity in the 1950s and

a clash between two conceptions of the Russian peasantry: one that was, in Stalin's famous formulation, "national in form but socialist in content" and one that bore the influence of prerevolutionary conceptions of the peasantry.

The debate over *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the most important literary work published during the Thaw, demonstrates that conversations about the peasantry and national identity were an integral part of the Thaw and de-Stalinization. Since the earliest days of the Thaw, *Novyi mir* had attempted to "de-Stalinize" Soviet discourse about the peasantry by conducting a critical reevaluation of both late Stalinist agricultural policies and late Stalinist depictions of the peasantry in literature. Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which emphasized Stalinism's corrosive effect on the "traditional" virtues of the Russian peasantry, contributed to *Novyi mir*'s ongoing critique of Stalinist policies toward the peasantry while subtly introducing pre-Soviet ideas about the peasantry into the conversation. Most recent English-language studies of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* have focused almost exclusively on its role in the exposure of Stalinist terror and the Gulag, overlooking the fact that the novella's portrayal of a Russian peasant was widely discussed in the press in 1963 and 1964, at the deliberations of the 1964 Lenin Prize Committee, and in Solzhenitsyn's own memoirs written in the late 1960s.[6] Focusing on a singular moment at the end of Khrushchev's Thaw, this article connects the scholarly literature on de-Stalinization and the Thaw to the scholarly literature on debates over the peasantry and national identity, which thus far have been discussed primarily in the scholarship on the development of Russian nationalism.[7] This article also contributes to the literature on the development of Russian nationalism in the Soviet Union by highlighting a moment when the Stalinist model of Russian national identity that dressed up Marxist ideology in Russian national clothes clashed with a

1960s," in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Denis Kozlov and Eleonory Gilburd [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013], 232).

[6] For scholarly discussions of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, see Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 215–36; Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953–70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 129–72; and Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 209–38.

[7] On the development of Russian nationalism in literature after Stalin, see Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); John B. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Rulers and Victims: The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2006); and N. A. Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia: Dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR, 1953–1985 gody* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003).

newer mode that eschewed Marxism in favor of prerevolutionary conceptions of Russian national identity.[8]

The discussions of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964 also shed light on another understudied aspect of the Thaw: the reception of Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization among non-Russian intellectual elites. In 1964, non-Russian writers constituted more than half of the members of the literature section of the Lenin Prize Committee, where the bulk of the discussion of Solzhenitsyn's novella took place. In his literary memoir *The Oak and the Calf,* Solzhenitsyn noted the sharp divide in the vote: "In the literary section [of the Lenin Prize Committee] the vote was split in a way that was not at all accidental but quite prophetic: Tvardovsky and all the non-Russians voted for Ivan Denisovich; all the Russians except Tvardovsky voted against it."[9] In a diary entry on 14 April 1964, *Novyi mir* editor Tvardovskii noted that his allies in the struggle on the Lenin Prize Committee had been "the most influential writers of national [non-Russian] literatures," while his opponents had been "those ruined by the school of the cult of personality, the bureaucrats and bigwigs of literature."[10]

As we will see, for both ideological and structural reasons, the high-ranking non-Russian writers who managed to obtain seats on the Lenin Prize Committee tended to be more supportive of Khrushchev's Thaw and de-Stalinization than their Russian counterparts. Non-Russian writers had particular reasons to welcome the Thaw. Across the Soviet Union, many nationally minded cultural elites saw de-Stalinization and the Thaw as a welcome relief from the late Stalin era, when so-called "bourgeois nationalists" were purged and persecuted in the non-Russian republics in the late 1930s and late 1940s. The relentless hunt for "nationalist" writers in those years probably convinced many non-Russian writers who lived through the period that Stalinist cultural policy was hostile to national culture. Younger non-Russian writers often viewed the Thaw as a chance for greater national expression in literature. Yet, much like in the RSFSR, in the non-Russian republics there remained contingents of neo-Stalinist writers who

[8] On Stalinist models of Russian national identity, see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[9] Solzhenitsyn, *Oak and the Calf*, 70.

[10] A. T. Tvardovskii, "Rabochie tetradi 60-kh godov," *Znamia*, no. 11 (2000): 163.

sought to block the careers of pro-Thaw writers.[11] Crucially, however—and this is demonstrated by the careers of several people on the Lenin Prize Committee—pro-Thaw writers in the non-Russian republics often managed to gain support from cultural and political elites in Moscow when they ran into trouble with neo-Stalinists in their native republics. (After all, successful non-Russian writers were useful to Moscow as examples of the successes of Soviet nationalities policy.) Meanwhile, as there was no Central Committee for the RSFSR, pro-Thaw Russian writers could appeal only to the Soviet Central Committee, which, even during Khrushchev's time in power, tended to favor anti-Thaw Russian writers.[12] The debates over *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* at the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964 thus shed light on differing levels of support for the politics of reform among Russian and non-Russian intellectual elites.

Ivan Denisovich: A Russian Peasant in the Soviet Literary World

In *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Solzhenitsyn addressed so many important issues in Soviet society that it has been easy to overlook the fact that it is, at its core, a story about a Russian peasant. The publication in November 1962 of this remarkable account of daily life in the Stalinist labor camps by a former camp inmate was the high water mark of the second phase of de-Stalinization that began with the 22nd Party Congress in 1961. In addition to vividly portraying the difficulties of life in the Gulag, the novella also challenged the widespread stigmatization of former prisoners of war, who were often viewed as traitors by the state and their fellow citizens alike. While the novella's portrayal of Stalinist repression has attracted the most attention, especially abroad, Solzhenitsyn also sought to make a statement about the fate of the Russian peasant under Stalin through the character of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. In *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,* Solzhenitsyn's simple, good-hearted peasant hero navigates another day in the dehumanizing, brutal conditions of the camp and manages to find some solace in honest hard work. Solzhenitsyn also touches on the collateral damage of agricultural

[11] See, e.g., H. V. Kas´ianov, *Nezhodni: Ukraïns´ka intelihentsiia v Rusi oporu 1960–80-kh rokiv* (Kyiv: Lybid´, 1995), 12–46; Leon Mikirtitchian, "Armenian Literature," in *Discordant Voices: The Non-Russian Soviet Literatures, 1953–1973*, ed. George Stephen Nestor Luckyj (Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press, 1975), 13–27; Petru Negură, *Ni héros, ni traîtres: Les écrivains moldaves face au pouvoir soviétique sous Staline* (Paris: Harmattan, 2009).

[12] As Maria Zezina explains, the faction that dominated the Soviet Writers' Union in the late Stalin era remained largely in control of literary institutions under Khrushchev. On this, see Jones, "Personal and the Political," 235; Zezina, "Crisis in the Union of Soviet Writers in the Early 1950s," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, 4 (1994): 649–61; and Zezina, *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia*.

collectivization: in one scene, Ivan Denisovich's capable squad leader, Tiurin, reveals that he was expelled from the army when the higher-ups discovered that his father was a kulak, a rich peasant, and thus a class enemy.[13] The fact that the Red Army expelled the upstanding character of Tiurin because he was the son of a kulak highlights the injustices suffered by the peasantry under Stalin. Ivan Denisovich and Tiurin—long-suffering, simple, and decent—bear more than a passing resemblance to the Russian peasantry as depicted by Russian intellectuals (particularly Fedor Dostoevskii) in the mid-19th century.[14] Through Ivan Denisovich, Solzhenitsyn shows how the conditions of Soviet life under Stalin, both inside and outside the camp, work to degrade a peasant's innate love of labor and other traditional virtues of the Russian peasantry.[15]

Due to the sensitive nature of the content of the novella, *Novyi mir* editor Tvardovskii worked closely with Solzhenitsyn and shepherded his manuscript through to publication, bypassing the censors by securing approval from Khrushchev himself.[16] In his 1967 account of the publication of the novella in his literary memoir *The Oak and the Calf*, Solzhenitsyn speculated that the novella might never have been published if its peasant hero had not appealed to Tvardovskii and Khrushchev, who, unlike Solzhenitsyn himself, both came from peasant origins:

> I cannot say that I had precisely planned it, but I did accurately foresee that the *muzhik* [peasant man] Ivan Denisovich was bound to arouse the sympathy of the superior *muzhik* Tvardovsky and the supreme *muzhik* Nikita Khrushchev. And that was just what happened: it was not poetry and not politics that decided the fate of my story, but that unchanging peasant nature, so much ridiculed, trampled underfoot and vilified in our country since the Great Break [i.e., collectivization], and indeed earlier.[17]

While it is impossible to know the true reasons why Tvardovskii and Khrushchev decided to throw their support behind *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Solzhenitsyn's novella certainly resonated with the critical

[13] Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, trans. Ralph Parker (New York: Signet Classic, 1993), 69–70.

[14] On mid-19th-century depictions of the Russian peasantry, see Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32–53.

[15] See the discussion in Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since Ivan Denisovich* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), 46.

[16] Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, 410–35; William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 525–28.

[17] Solzhenitsyn, *Oak and the Calf*, 21.

reevaluation of Stalinist policies in agriculture that both Khrushchev and Tvardovskii had championed since the early Thaw. After Stalin's death, Khrushchev had staked his claim to Soviet leadership in part on the bold reforms he advocated to address the abysmal standard of living on Soviet collective farms in the late Stalin era.[18] Khrushchev, in the words of Yitzhak Brudny, "opened a window" for discussion of his reforms in the press.[19] Tvardovskii, who came from a peasant family deported as kulaks during collectivization, was openly contemptuous of the work of Stalin Prize–winning poets like Nikolai Gribachev, who, in his view, presented an artificially rosy picture of a prosperous and contented Soviet peasantry in their postwar poetry.[20] The changing party position on agriculture made it possible for Tvardovskii to express these views in print. Tvardovskii seized the opportunity, publishing an explosive series of works critical of the Stalinist management of agriculture by the Russian writer Valentin Ovechkin in the pages of *Novyi mir* starting in the early 1950s.[21] In the winter of 1953–54, *Novyi mir* published essays by the Russian writers Vladimir Pomerantsev and Fedor Abramov that harshly criticized the depiction of the life of the postwar peasantry in late Stalin-era "*kolkhoz* novels."[22] Solzhenitsyn's sympathetic portrayal in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* of a hardworking Russian peasant suffering under Stalinist rule was thus an extension of both Khrushchev's and Tvardovskii's rejection of late Stalinist policies in agriculture.

The publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was initially accompanied by glowing endorsements from top party officials and leading writers. The prominent writer Konstantin Simonov called Solzhenitsyn a "true helper of the Party" in a November review in *Izvestiia*.[23] In December, *Pravda* published an article by the orthodox critic Vladimir Ermilov in which he wrote that Solzhenitsyn's novella "at times calls to mind Tolstoi's artistic

[18] Anatolii Strelianyi, "Khrushchev and the Countryside," in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason, trans. David Gehrenbeck, Eileen Kane, and Alla Bashenko (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 113.

[19] Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 32.

[20] Tvardovskii was also critical of the depiction of the postwar peasantry in works by Aleksandr Iashin. As we will see, during the Thaw, Iashin came over to Tvardovskii's position. For more, see L. I. Lazarev, "The Sixth Floor," *Russian Studies in Literature* 31, 2 (1995): 68.

[21] For the impact of his family's experience of dekulakization on Tvardovskii, see Kozlov, *Readers of Novyi Mir*, 134–70.

[22] As a result of these and other essays, Tvardovskii was fired from his position as editor of *Novyi mir* in July 1954. He returned in 1958. See Kozlov, *Readers of Novyi Mir*, 72–78; F. A. Abramov, "Liudi kolkhoznoi derevni v poslevoennoi proze (Literaturnye zametki)," *Novyi mir*, no. 4 (1954): 210–31; and V. M. Pomerantsev, "Ob iskrennosti v literature," *Novyi mir*, no. 12 (1953): 218–45.

[23] K. M. Simonov, "O proshlom vo imia budushchego," *Izvestiia*, 17 November 1962, 5.

power in its depiction of the national character [*narodnogo kharaktera*]."[24] During a meeting with the intelligentsia on 17 December 1962, Khrushchev called Solzhenitsyn "our contemporary Tolstoy" and patted himself on the back for his role in publishing *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.[25] Central Committee secretary Leonid Il´ichev stated that "works like this inspire respect for the laboring man, and the Party supports them."[26] In January 1963, however, a few voices of opposition emerged from print organs of the RSFSR Union of Writers, whose leadership was dominated by neo-Stalinist writers who opposed the Thaw.[27] Lidiia Fomenko, a critic at *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, faulted Solzhenitsyn for emphasizing only the tragic aspects of the Stalin era and not the "all-encompassing truth."[28] It was Fedor Chapchakhov, however, a critic at the regional journal *Don*, who first articulated the critique of Solzhenitsyn's hero that would dominate the discussion of the novella at the Lenin Prize Committee. Chapchakhov criticized Ivan Denisovich's "archaic" mindset, which in his view did not constitute an accurate picture of the "concrete characteristics of the Russian national character that have been born and developed in our era." The novella would have been improved if the hero had exhibited greater ideological commitment and civic-mindedness, he argued.[29] Despite party leaders' endorsements of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,* the backlash against Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of his peasant hero had already begun.

Shortly after the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *Novyi mir* continued its critical evaluation of the impact of Soviet rule on the Russian peasantry, publishing two works that emphasized low living standards in rural areas and reasserted the importance of the traditional peasantry for Russian national identity. In December 1962, *Novyi mir* published "Vologda Wedding," a sketch by the Stalin Prize–winning Russian poet Aleksandr Iashin that exposed poverty and mismanagement in the contemporary Russian village.[30] In a departure from the critical rural prose of the 1950s, Iashin included something new: a discussion of the persistence of pre-Soviet

[24] V. V. Ermilov, "Vo imia pravdy, vo imia zhizni," *Pravda*, 23 November 1962, 7.

[25] E. A. Evtushenko, "Introduction," in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (New York: Signet Classic, 1998), xvi; V. M. Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2009), 211.

[26] L. F. Il´ichev, "Sily tvorcheskoi molodezhi na sluzhbu velikim idealam," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 10 January 1963, 2.

[27] On the RSFSR union, see Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 87–88; and Vol´fram Eggeling [Wolfram Eggeling], *Politika i kul´tura pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve, 1953–1970 gg.* (Moscow: AIRO-XX, 1999), 87.

[28] L. Fomenko, "Bol´shie ozhidaniia," *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, 11 January 1963, 6–7.

[29] F. A. Chapchakhov, "Nomera i liudi," *Don*, no. 1 (1963): 158.

[30] A. I. Iashin, "Vologodskaia svad´ba," *Novyi mir*, no. 12 (1962): 3–26.

traditions in the village.[31] Starting in January 1963, a chorus of newspapers condemned Iashin's sketch for its overly negative and outdated portrayal of rural life.[32] In January, Solzhenitsyn published a story in *Novyi mir* that further demonstrated the influence of prerevolutionary ideas about the Russian peasantry on his thinking: *Matrena's House*.[33] Set in 1953, the story presented a grim picture of life in a Russian village under Stalin. The narrator comes to teach in a village school and rents a room from a poor older Russian woman, the titular Matrena. Over the course of the novella, the narrator comes to appreciate Matrena's innate kindness and goodness, qualities that go unnoticed by her callous, money-grubbing fellow villagers. In the final pages of the novella, Matrena is run over by a train. In the conclusion to the story, the narrator calls Matrena "that righteous one [*pravednik*] without whom, according to the proverb, no village can stand." He adds: "Nor any city. Nor our whole land."[34] In this key passage of *Matrena's House*, Solzhenitsyn located the moral center of the nation in the person of an elderly Russian village woman. By using the term *pravednik* to refer to Matrena, Solzhenitsyn evoked the concept of a righteous, exemplary individual that was common in both Russian Orthodox religious culture and Russian literature in the 19th century.[35] The lesson of Matrena's sad fate was that Stalinist rule destroyed the traditional moral core of the Russian peasantry. The use of the term *pravednik* further revealed Solzhenitsyn's debt to prerevolutionary Russian thought, already perceptible in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

The critics of "Vologda Wedding" and *Matrena's House* initially avoided criticizing *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. On 2 March 1963, Vadim Kozhevnikov, the editor of the journal *Znamia*, wrote a negative review of *Matrena's House* in which he expressed disappointment that the author of the "wonderful" *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* had failed to notice the positive new developments in rural life.[36] On 17 March, Khrushchev met again with the intelligentsia, and this time he launched into a tirade against young writers and liberals. Khrushchev's outburst emboldened the opponents

[31] See the discussion of the sketch in Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 52.

[32] See A. I. Iashin, "Bobrishnyi ugor: Iz dnevnikov 1958–1968 gg.," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), 3:289; A. Beresenev, "Dve repliki: Glavnomu redaktoru zhurnala 'Novyi mir' A. T. Tvardovskomu," *Izvestiia*, 30 January 1963, 4; and "Svad´ba s degtem: Otkrytoe pis´mo pisateliu A. Iashinu," *Komsomol´skaia pravda*, 31 January 1963.

[33] A. I. Solzhenitsyn, "Matrenin dvor," *Novyi mir*, no. 1 (1963): 42–63. English translation: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Matryona's House," in *"We Never Make Mistakes": Two Short Novels*, trans. Paul W. Blackstock (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1963), 89–138.

[34] Solzhenitsyn, "Matryona's House," 137–38.

[35] See A. B. Tarasov, "Pravednichestvo," *Znanie. Ponimanie. Umenie*, no. 3 (2007): 239–40.

[36] V. M. Kozhevnikov, "Tovarishchi v bor´be," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 2 March 1963, 1.

of the Thaw.[37] On 22 March, Sergei Pavlov, the head of the Komsomol, wrote an editorial condemning *Novyi mir*'s pessimistic depiction of Soviet life, mentioning both Iashin's "Vologda Wedding" and Solzhenitsyn's *Matrena's House*.[38] On 24 March, the attacks continued, this time from the magazine *Ogonek*, which was edited by the neo-Stalinist reactionary Anatolii Sofronov. The critic Aleksandr Dymshits, known for his fierce attacks on pro-Thaw writers, published an article in *Ogonek* in which he praised Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* but accused Solzhenitsyn of ignoring positive improvements in rural life in *Matrena's House*. Dymshits then went farther, arguing that the old peasant woman Matrena was not the moral foundation of the country, as Solzhenitsyn portrayed her, but an anachronism. Rather than "righteous sufferers" (*pravedniki-stradal´tsy*), Dymshits wrote, the country needed "active creators" (*aktivnye tvortsy*) who were capable of remaking the world.[39] Like Chapchakhov, Dymshits saw Solzhenitsyn's Russian peasant characters as an old-fashioned throwback to pre-Soviet times.

In April 1963, the journal *Oktiabr´*, a mouthpiece of neo-Stalinist orthodoxy under the editorial leadership of Vsevolod Kochetov, published a comprehensive article by the critic Nikolai Sergovantsev that critiqued the portrayal of the Russian peasantry in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, "Vologda Wedding," and *Matrena's House*.[40] In spite of Solzhenitsyn's efforts to portray Ivan Denisovich as a true representative of the people (*glubokii narodnyi tip*), Sergovantsev wrote, Ivan Denisovich lacked the fighting spirit necessary for a Soviet hero. "If Shukhov has the qualities of a [typical character from the people], then they are inherited not from the Soviet people of the 1930s and '40s, but rather from the patriarchal *muzhik*," he stated, suggesting that Solzhenitsyn's peasant hero had more in common with his prerevolutionary forebears than the "new Soviet person."[41] In a similar vein, Sergovantsev objected to Iashin's "elegiac sighing" over aspects of traditional village life in "Vologda Wedding."[42] In his discussion of *Matrena's House*, Sergovantsev denied that the meek, obedient, victimized character of Matrena could serve as

[37] See Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 593–96; and Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 213–19.

[38] See Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 220; and S. P. Pavlov, "Tvorchestvo molodezhi—sluzheniiu velikikh idealov," *Komsomol´skaia pravda*, 22 March 1963, 2.

[39] A. L. Dymshits, "Rasskazy o rasskazakh, zametki o povestiakh," *Ogonek*, no. 13 (24 March 1963): 30–31. On Dymshits, see V. V. Ogryzko, *Sozdateli literaturnykh reputatsii: Russkie kritiki i literaturovedy XX veka. Sud´by i knigi* (Moscow: Literaturnaia Rossiia, 2017), 288–333.

[40] On *Oktiabr´*, see E. A. Dobrenko, "The Lessons of *Oktiabr´*," *Russian Studies in Literature* 34, 3 (1998): 28–54.

[41] N. M. Sergovantsev, "Tragediia odinochestva i 'sploshnoi byt,'" *Oktiabr´*, no. 4 (1963): 199.

[42] Ibid., 203.

an example for Soviet Russian women. Throughout their history, the Russian people had embraced peasant rebels like Emel´ian Pugachev, not the *pravedniki*, he asserted.[43] Sergovantsev's argument here seemed to suggest that the Russian peasant's nature was revolutionary, and thus compatible with socialism, anticipating the criticism of Solzhenitsyn at the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964. With Sergovantsev's article, the orthodox, neo-Stalinist camp resoundingly rejected *Novyi mir*'s turn toward prerevolutionary peasant traditions and pre-Soviet conceptions of the Russian peasantry.

Solzhenitsyn's critics continued to gain confidence over the course of 1963. Finally, in January 1964, the *Novyi mir* critic and staff member Vladimir Lakshin created a major literary stir when he published a comprehensive rebuttal to the criticisms of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* titled "Ivan Denisovich: His Friends and Foes" in *Novyi mir*'s January 1964 issue.[44] Lakshin spent much of the article attacking Sergovantsev's criticism of the character of Ivan Denisovich. Lakshin praised Solzhenitsyn's choice of an ordinary peasant as his protagonist. "During the years of the cult of personality, many writers began to show more interest in what takes place in collective farm administrative offices than in what happens under all the other roofs of the village," he quipped.[45] Assuming the role of the defender of the Russian peasantry, Lakshin argued that many of "the virtues that run in the very blood of the Russian peasant" help Ivan Denisovich to survive the hardships of the camp.[46] Lakshin conceded that Ivan Denisovich could not be considered an "ideal hero," but he argued that the character's personal shortcomings should not become a distraction from the dehumanizing and lawless nature of the Stalinist camp system.

On the eve of the first round of deliberations for the Lenin Prize, the debate around *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* revolved in large part around Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of the Russian peasantry. As we have seen, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was part of *Novyi mir*'s broader program of critically reevaluating the impact of Stalinism on the Russian peasantry, an issue the journal had championed since the earliest days of the Thaw. As Solzhenitsyn and *Novyi mir* tested the limits of the Thaw by reintegrating pre-Soviet conceptions of the peasantry into Russian national identity, Solzhenitsyn's works became the target of criticism by anti-Thaw critics like

[43] Ibid., 205–6.
[44] V. Ia. Lakshin, "Ivan Denisovich, ego druz´ia i nedrugi," *Novyi mir*, no. 1 (1964): 223–45. Translated in "Ivan Denisovich's 'Friends and Foes' Continue Debate," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 16, 12 (1964): 3–9.
[45] Translation adapted from "Ivan Denisovich's 'Friends and Foes' Continue Debate," 5.
[46] Ibid., 6.

Dymshits and Sergovantsev, who rejected the return to "archaic" portrayals of the Russian peasantry. These critics' arguments would form the basis of the case against Solzhenitsyn made by Russian writers in the literature section of the Lenin Prize Committee.

Debates in the Literature Section of the Lenin Prize Committee

In 1964, the Lenin Prize was the most prestigious award that a work of literature could receive in the Soviet Union. Between 1957 and 1967, the Lenin Prize was awarded annually to works in the field of literature, art, science, and technology.[47] After receiving nominations from cultural institutions, the Presidium of the Lenin Prize Committee forwarded a preliminary list of nominated works to the sections dedicated to literature and other fields of the arts in February. The sections were composed of previous winners of the Lenin Prize, as well as representatives from the Soviet republics. In February, the sections met in Moscow to consider the preliminary list of candidates and then presented their decisions to the Plenum, which made an initial round of cuts. In April, the sections of the committee met again to winnow down the list of candidates and shortly thereafter presented their recommendations at a plenary meeting of all the members of the sections. After a discussion, the Plenum voted on a final list of candidates, which was then submitted to a secret ballot. To win the Lenin Prize, nominees had to receive more than three-fourths of the ballots cast. Winners received the endorsement of their work at the highest levels as well as a substantial monetary prize of 10,000 rubles.

The main competition for *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1964 was the Ukrainian writer Oles´ Honchar's optimistic, mildly anti-Stalinist novel *Tronka*. Honchar had enjoyed the support of Ukrainian and all-union political and literary authorities from the beginning of his career.[48] A World War II veteran, Honchar won the Stalin Prize—twice—in the late 1940s for his popular trilogy about the war, *Standard-Bearers*. As the Ukrainian literary scholar Iryna Zakharchuk has explained, Honchar's trilogy became the signature statement on the war in the Ukrainian socialist realist canon.[49] In 1959, with the support of the Ukrainian Central Committee, Honchar was

[47] After the introduction of the USSR State Prize in 1967, the Lenin Prize was awarded once every two years. On the history of Soviet literary prizes, see M. L. Butrin and V. N. Kutik, *Pisateli—laureaty premii SSSR i soiuznykh respublik* (L´vov: Vyshcha shkola, 1980).

[48] For an overview of Honchar's career, see V. I. Kuz´menko, "Oles´ Honchar (1918–1995)," in *Istoriia ukraïns´koï literatury XX–poch. XXI st.*, ed. Kuz´menko, 3 vols. (Kyiv: Akademvydav, 2014), 2:148–60.

[49] Iryna Zakharchuk, "Militarna strategiia sotsrealizmu," *Slovo i chas*, no. 10 (2006): 51–60.

elected head of the Ukrainian Writers' Union.[50] In 1962, again with the support of the republican authorities, Honchar won the Ukrainian republic's Shevchenko Prize for his novel *Man and Arms*.[51] As head of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, Honchar mediated between the ideological hardliners on the Ukrainian Central Committee and the younger generation of nationally minded writers who embraced the Thaw.[52] Honchar's 1963 novel *Tronka* embodied his centrist ideological position: it hewed to socialist realist aesthetic conventions and depicted Soviet society in a positive light but included anti-Stalinist themes.[53] The novel's main characters are the hardworking residents of a rural community on the Ukrainian steppe. Their primary antagonist is the former camp director Iatsuba, "a dinosaur of the cult period," who spends his retirement harassing local youth whom he suspects of listening to foreign radio broadcasts.[54] While Honchar's novel made a clear statement against the "cult of personality" and the Gulag, it was hardly a far-reaching condemnation of the Stalinist system in comparison with *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Appealing to both the neo-Stalinist and anti-Stalinist members of the literature section, Honchar's sunny tales from the Ukrainian steppe won their unanimous support in the first and second rounds.[55] *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* received a very different reception.

Before diving into the debates over *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* among the literature section, we must pause for a moment to understand how the writers on the committee got there. The literature section that considered

[50] According to a report submitted to the Ukrainian Central Committee, only writers whose candidacies had been discussed in advance with the Ukrainian Central Committee were elected to the governing bodies of the Ukrainian Writers' Union in 1959. See Tsentral´nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads´kikh ob´iednan´ Ukraïny (TsDAHOU) f. 1 (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine), op. 24, d. 4926, l. 54 (Information on the Fourth Congress of Writers of Ukraine, 21 March 1959).

[51] The hardline Ukrainian ideological secretary Andrii Skaba supported Honchar's candidacy at a meeting of the Shevchenko Prize Committee. See Tsentral´nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv-muzei literatury i mystetstva Ukraïny (TsDAMLM) f. 979 (Committee of the Taras Shevchenko National Prize of Ukraine), op. 1, d. 11, l. 4 (Transcript of the 22 February 1962 meeting of the Governmental Republican Committee).

[52] Serhy Yekelchyk, "The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine's Generation of Cultural Rebels," *Nationalities Papers* 43, 1 (2015): 55.

[53] For the original Ukrainian, Russian, and English versions, see, respectively, O. T. Honchar, "Tronka: Roman v novelakh," *Vitchyzna*, no. 2–3 (1963): 3–79, 7–93; A. T. Gonchar, "Tronka: Roman v novellakh," trans. I. Novosel´tseva and I. Karabutenko, *Druzhba narodov*, no. 5 (1963): 6–176; and Oles Gonchar, "Tronka: A Novel in Novellas," trans. Natalia Lukoshkova and Hilda Perham, *Soviet Literature*, no. 6–7 (1964): 22–124, 15–131.

[54] Gonchar, "Tronka: A Novel in Novellas," 87.

[55] "Transcript of the meeting of the Literature Section," 4 February 1964 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 16, l. 19); "Transcript of the meeting of the Literature Section," 6 April 1964 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, l. 15).

Solzhenitsyn's nomination was populated by prominent Soviet writers who—through political cunning, literary skill, or a combination of the two—had managed to climb to the highest echelons of the Soviet cultural elite. The Russian writers in the literature section tended to have a rather different profile from the non-Russian writers, however. With the notable exception of Aleksandr Tvardovskii, the Russian contingent in the literature section was dominated by powerful literary functionaries who had enforced the party line during the late Stalinist ideological campaigns of the period known as the *Zhdanovshchina*. Both Nikolai Gribachev and Aleksandr Prokof´ev, Solzhenitsyn's main opponents in the literature section, were notorious for having persecuted writers during the *Zhdanovshchina*.[56] Both, as we will see, were also known for writing works that glorified the Stalinist transformation of the peasantry. The presence of these Stalin-era ideological stalwarts on the committee was the direct result of Soviet Central Committee policy. Although there had been some shake-ups among the Russian literary elites during the Khrushchev era, the Central Committee had ensured that many members of the union leadership from the late Stalin era remained in power.[57] Meanwhile, when we examine the biographies of the non-Russian writers in the literature section, we see a much greater proportion of pro-Thaw writers among them. Keen to showcase the success of Soviet nationalities policy in promoting the literatures of the non-Russian peoples, the Soviet leadership in Moscow frequently allowed successful pro-Thaw writers from the non-Russian republics to rise to positions of power, even coming to their aid when they ran into trouble with neo-Stalinist elites at the republican level. As we will see, the non-Russian writers in the literature section were much more supportive of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization overall.

The debate over *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* among the Russian writers in the literature section reflected the participants' long-standing and profound disagreement over both the impact of Stalinist rule on

[56] As head of the party cell of the Soviet Union of Writers, Gribachev enthusiastically persecuted his fellow writers during the antisemitic anticosmopolitan campaign. After the 20th Party Congress, the Moscow branch party cell censured him for his behavior. See Tsentral´nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Moskvy (TsGAM) f. P-8132 (Party Organization of the Moscow branch of the Union of Writers of the RSFSR), op. 1, d. 6, l. 168 (Decision of the closed party meeting of the Party Organization of Moscow Writers, 31 March 1956). As head of the Leningrad branch of the Union of Writers in the late 1940s, Prokof´ev presided over the persecution of the prominent Soviet writers Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko (E. A. Evtushenko, "Aleksandr Prokof´ev," in *Poet v Rossii—bol´she, chem poet: Desiat´ vekov russkoi poezii. Antologiia*, ed. Vladimir Radzishevskii, 5 vols. (Moscow: Russkii mir, 2013), 5:69.

[57] Zezina, *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia*, 116–18.

the peasantry and the depiction of the Russian peasantry in literature. In a sense, both sides sought to "defend" the Russian peasantry, but in different ways. Solzhenitsyn's sole Russian advocate in the literature section was his editor Tvardovskii. As we have seen, Tvardovskii, who had achieved near-universal acclaim with his serialized wartime poem about a Russian peasant soldier named Vasilii Terkin, used his position as editor of *Novyi mir* to publish works that criticized Stalinist policies in agriculture and falsely positive depictions of the life of the peasantry under Stalin. His own Thaw-era poetry was quite critical of the impact of Stalinism on the peasantry.[58] In the literature section, Tvardovskii defended the Russian peasantry by criticizing the Stalinist policies that put the honest Russian peasant soldier Ivan Denisovich in the Gulag. Solzhenitsyn's harshest critics among the Russian writers were Nikolai Gribachev and Aleksandr Prokof´ev, two poets from peasant backgrounds. Although they shared Tvardovskii's rural origins, they espoused radically different views on the depiction of the impact of Stalinist rule on the Soviet Russian peasantry in literature. Both Gribachev and Prokof´ev had gained literary fame and official approval in the Stalin era for poetry that presented a positive view of life in the Russian countryside under Stalin.[59] (Tvardovskii reportedly loathed Gribachev's 1947 Stalin Prize–winning poem *The Kolkhoz "Bolshevik,"* considering it a false and disingenuous portrayal of the devastated postwar village.)[60] Gribachev and Prokof´ev, building on many of the arguments that anti-Thaw critics had articulated in the run-up to the committee's deliberations, rejected Ivan Denisovich on the grounds that he was not a true representative of the progressive, rebellious Russian peasantry. They defended the Russian peasantry in the debates in the literature section by asserting that their nature was fundamentally consistent with progressive Soviet values. This implied that Stalinist policies were not harmful to the peasantry because they were actually in harmony with the Russian peasantry's true revolutionary nature.

Gribachev first raised the issue of Solzhenitsyn's depiction of Russian national character at the February meeting of the literature section. Gribachev first echoed Sergovantsev's critique of the novella's main character, stating that "Ivan Denisovich's entire philosophy can be reduced to one thing—accommodation, survival." Gribachev objected to this on national grounds.

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[58] Kozlov, *Readers of Novyi Mir*, 134–70.

[59] See V. A. Prokof´ev, "Prokof´ev Aleksandr Andreevich," in *Russkaia literatura XX veka: Prozaiki, poety, dramaturgi. Biobibliograficheskii slovar´*, ed. N. N. Skatov, 3 vols. (Moscow: OLMA-Press Invest, 2005), 3:136–40; and V. A. Shoshin, "Gribachev Nikolai Matveevich," in *Russkaia literatura XX veka*, 1:564–66.

[60] Lazarev, "Sixth Floor," 68.

"Is this the true Russian character? Nothing of the sort. All of our history testifies to the rebellious spirit of the Russian people, which nothing could beat out of them."[61] In Gribachev's view, the character of the Russian people is rebellious and progressive—in short, revolutionary.[62] His conception of the Russian peasantry follows Stalin's famous formula: it is national (Russian) in form but socialist in content. Gribachev's argument appears to be a peasant variant of what David Brandenberger has termed "National Bolshevism." Brandenberger noted increasing use of "Russian national heroes, myths, and imagery to popularize the dominant Marxist-Leninist line" starting in the mid-1930s—the time when Gribachev was starting to rise in the Soviet literary world.[63] Gribachev's neo-Stalinist argument against Ivan Denisovich did not convince the majority of his fellow writers at the literature section's meeting in February, and they decided to include Solzhenitsyn's book on the list of candidates by a vote of 19 to 5.[64] While Gribachev was not successful in preventing Solzhenitsyn from moving on to the second round of deliberations, his argument that Solzhenitsyn relied on prerevolutionary stereotypes about the passivity of the Russian peasantry clearly had currency in the Soviet literary world: the writer Dmitrii Eremin echoed it a few days later at the Moscow Writers' Union's discussion of the list of Lenin Prize candidates.[65]

At the April meeting of the literature section, Gribachev intensified his criticism of Solzhenitsyn, this time evoking Cold War tensions by accusing Solzhenitsyn of playing into Western stereotypes of Russian passivity: "This is the 'mysterious Slavic soul,' as they call it abroad. 'How do the Bolsheviks manage to rule? Because the Russian people [*narod*] are obedient, patient, the mysterious Slavic soul.'"[66] When the Lithuanian writer Justinas Marcinkevičius said that he did see positive characteristics of the *narod,* such as dignity and love of hard work, in Ivan Denisovich, Aleksandr Prokof´ev, Gribachev's main ally in the literature section, interrupted Marcinkevičius: "It's not good to think that way about the Russian people."[67] Prokof´ev's

[61] "Transcript of the meeting of the Literature Section," 6 February 1964 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 120, 122).

[62] This was a significant departure from the view, dominant during collectivization, that the peasantry was backward and in need of the civilizing influence of the revolutionary urban worker. See Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 29–32.

[63] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 2.

[64] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 16, l. 142.

[65] "Vzyskatel´nost´," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 8 February 1964, 3.

[66] "Transcript of the meeting of the Literature Section," 7 April 1964 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, l. 116).

[67] Ibid., ll. 119–20.

comment turned Marcinkevičius's support for Solzhenitsyn into an insult to the Russian nation.

At the April meeting of the literature section, Tvardovskii chose not to engage Gribachev's argument that Ivan Denisovich reflected negative stereotypes about the passivity of the Russian people. Tvardovskii chose instead to move to safer ground, defending the novella on the basis that it represented Khrushchev's line at the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses. "For me … the words from the first secretary of the Central Committee of our Party that this book is written from a party position means a great deal," Tvardovskii stated. Given Khrushchev's strong support for the novella, Tvardovskii saw ulterior motives in the attacks on Ivan Denisovich. "People who have been deprived of the ability to directly speak out against the decisions of the 22nd Party Congress are attacking a work that unmasks the cult of personality," he stated.[68] For Tvardovskii, the best way to defend Ivan Denisovich and the Russian peasantry was to prevent a return of the Stalinist "cult of personality" that had caused them so much suffering.

Most of the non-Russian writers who spoke up at the meeting of the literature section shared Tvardovskii's opinion on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Several of the non-Russian writers did choose to remain silent during the debates, while a few expressed either ambivalence or outright opposition to awarding the Lenin Prize to Solzhenitsyn's novella. The Azerbaijani writer Rasul Rza (Rus.: Rzaev) echoed concerns expressed by the Russian writers that Ivan Denisovich was a poor choice for a hero because he was neither a "fighter" nor a true victim of the cult of personality.[69] Nevertheless, non-Russian writers formed Solzhenitsyn's main base of supporters in the literature section. Like Tvardovskii, those non-Russian writers who spoke in favor of Solzhenitsyn's candidacy framed their arguments in terms of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization agenda. Support for de-Stalinization and the Thaw among the non-Russian writers on the committee transcended geography and generation. Many of the older pro-Thaw non-Russian writers had been touched by the "antinationalist" purges and ideological campaigns of the Stalin era. As we will see, many non-Russian writers who supported the Thaw had still managed to rise to the highest levels of the Soviet literary world, largely using means not available to their Russian counterparts. Even the two Ukrainian writers on the committee, who had not distinguished

[68] Ibid., ll. 125–32.

[69] Ibid., d. 16, ll. 141–42. See also the speeches by the Belarusian writer Ivan Shamiakin and the Tajik writer Mirsaid Mirshakar (Rus.: Mirshakarov) in d. 16, ll. 128–30; and d. 18, ll. 109–12.

themselves with their support for the Thaw, nevertheless took more moderate stances than their Russian colleagues.

Two of the strongest advocates for Solzhenitsyn among the non-Russian writers were young writers who had entered the literary world during the Khrushchev era: the Kyrgyz prose writer Chingiz Aitmatov and the Lithuanian poet and prose writer Justinas Marcinkevičius. Both had gained reputations as leaders of a new generation of Thaw writers who imbued their works with a deep national spirit.[70] Marcinkevičius had even titled his 1956 poetry collection *The Twentieth Spring* in a reference to the 20th Party Congress.[71] In his speech to the literature section, Marcinkevičius said that *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was built "on the foundations of the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses." He was particularly impressed by the way in which Solzhenitsyn used the character of Ivan Denisovich to show the power of labor to preserve human dignity in the most difficult conditions.[72] Aitmatov had achieved wide acclaim in the Soviet Union with the publication of *Jamilia*, his lyrical novella about love on the steppe, which appeared in *Novyi mir* in 1958. Building on his association with the leading journal of the Thaw, Aitmatov presented himself at the Soviet Writers' Union's 1963 Plenum as the ideal literary foot soldier of the Khrushchev era: an anti-Stalinist yet ideologically orthodox young writer whose works demonstrated the progress made by Central Asian peoples under Soviet rule.[73] Aitmatov's reasons for supporting Khrushchev and de-Stalinization were highly personal. His father Törökul, once a rising star in the Kyrgyz Communist Party, had been arrested in 1937 and shot in 1938. At the April meeting of the literature section, Aitmatov stated that he supported Solzhenitsyn's novella because he thought it helped readers come to terms with Soviet society's participation in Stalin's actions during the time of the cult of personality.[74]

Perhaps the most striking thing about Marcinkevičius's and Aitmatov's participation in the Lenin Prize Committee was their very presence. There were no young Russian writers in the literature section. An analysis of the

[70] On Aitmatov, see Moritz Florin, "What Is Russia to Us? Making Sense of Stalinism, Colonialism, and Soviet Modernity in Kyrgyzstan, 1956–1965," *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2016): 165–89. On Marcinkevičius, see Violeta Davoliūtė, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War* (New York: Routledge, 2013); and Vilius Ivanauskas, "'Engineers of the Human Spirit' during Late Socialism: The Lithuanian Union of Writers between Soviet Duties and Local Interests," *Europe-Asia Studies* 66, 4 (2014): 653–58.

[71] Davoliūtė, *Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania*, 95.

[72] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 114–16.

[73] Eggeling, *Politika i kul´tura pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve*, 141–43; "Za vysokuiu ideinost´ i khudozhestvennoe masterstvo sovetskoi literatury! Plenum pravleniia Soiuza pisatelei SSSR," *Pravda*, 29 March 1963, 3.

[74] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, ll. 134–35.

careers of Aitmatov and Marcinkevičius demonstrates that they had gained their positions on the Lenin Prize Committee using avenues that were not open to young Russian writers. In his native Kyrgyzstan, Aitmatov led a group of young writers who advocated for new, Russian-influenced literary forms in Kyrgyz literature. He faced bitter opposition from the older generation of writers, who were supported by the Kyrgyz Central Committee.[75] Meanwhile, Aitmatov's smart political moves at the Soviet Writers' Union and his lyrical works about life on the Central Asian steppe endeared him to cultural and political elites in Moscow. He won the Lenin Prize in 1963 even though some Kyrgyz writers sought to sabotage his candidacy.[76] Aitmatov owed his position on the Lenin Prize Committee to his ability to appeal to Moscow when Kyrgyz authorities turned hostile—a strategy that was not open to his Russian peers, for whom Moscow was the sole literary and political center. Unlike Aitmatov, Marcinkevičius enjoyed the support of the relatively pro-Thaw cultural establishment in his native republic. He won the Lithuanian State Prize for literature for *The Twentieth Spring* in 1957 and by the early 1960s had entered the leadership of the Lithuanian Union of Writers.[77] Marcinkevičius's career demonstrates that republican political authorities who supported the Thaw could provide a springboard for young, pro-Thaw writers like Marcinkevičius to vault to all-union prominence. Neither Aitmatov's nor Marcinkevičius's paths to participation in the Lenin Prize Committee were open to young, pro-Thaw Russian writers.

The two oldest non-Russian writers in the literature section, the Kyrgyz writer Aaly Tokombaev and the Armenian poet Nairi Zaryan, both took a strong stance in favor of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Orphaned at a young age—Tokombaev by the tsarist suppression of the 1916 Basmachi uprising and Zaryan by the 1915 genocide of Ottoman Armenians—both had reason to be loyal to the Soviet regime, which offered them opportunities for education and career advancement. Both participated actively in the

[75] See Florin, "What Is Russia to Us?"; "Transcript of the reporting-election meeting of the Party Organization of the Union of Writers of the Kyrgyz SSR," 24 September 1964 (RGALI f. 631 [Union of Soviet Writers], op. 42, d. 307); and Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (RGANI) f. 5 (Apparat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), d. 36, op. 148, ll. 199–215 (Report from the Departments of Organizational-Party Work and Culture of the CC CPSU to the CC CPSU, 1 December 1965) in *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul´tura, 1958–1964: Dokumenty*, ed. V. Iu. Afiani, Z. K. Vodop´ianova, and T. V. Domracheva (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005), 107–23.

[76] See the discussions of his 1963 Lenin Prize candidacy in the literature section. "Transcript of the meeting of the Literature Section," 6 April 1963 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 1, d. 375, ll. 5–12).

[77] Ivanauskas, "'Engineers of the Human Spirit,'" 653–58.

literary life of their respective republics in the 1920s and 1930s.[78] Both would go on to see some of the greatest minds of their generation executed during the Stalinist purges, many for their supposed participation in nationalist plots. In 1937, during the height of the purges, Tokombaev was arrested and imprisoned. He was eventually released in 1939.[79] At the April meeting of the literary section, Tokombaev spoke openly about his captivity: "It is hard to imagine for those comrades who did not experience this. But I experienced it. It was even worse than what Solzhenitsyn describes—and I am not satisfied with everything that he wrote. Those horrific things that happened during the cult of personality are hard to describe in words."[80] Tokombaev was also implicated in the denunciations that fueled the Terror: many in the Kyrgyz literary world believed that Tokombaev had denounced Chingiz Aitmatov's father Törökul, leading to Törökul's execution in 1938.[81] Zaryan's personal role in the Terror in Armenia is unclear, but many of his literary opponents ended up dead or in the Gulag by the late 1930s.[82] Zaryan himself was expelled from the Party twice during this period.[83] Zaryan's statements to the literature section in April suggest a lingering sense of survivor's guilt: "What happened in those years is the great sorrow of our society. Until we express that sorrow, somehow we will never find absolution for ourselves [*kak-to sebia ne opravdaem*]."[84]

Having survived the devastation of the Terror, after the war both Tokombaev and Zaryan were attacked for their supposed nationalism during the antinationalist campaigns in the non-Russian republics in the late Stalin era. Tokombaev, for example, fiercely opposed Moscow's 1952 campaign against the Kyrgyz national epic *Manas*, which led to his denunciation as a "bourgeois nationalist."[85] Judging by their actions during the Thaw and their statements at the Lenin Prize Committee in 1964, Tokombaev's

[78] On Tokombaev's background, see Florin, "What Is Russia to Us?," 172–73. On Zaryan's background, see N. E. Zar´ian, "O sebe," in *Sovetskie pisateli: Avtobiografii*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966), 3:272–76.

[79] A. Bocharov, "Tokombaev Aaly," Geroi strany, n.d. (http://www.warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=20693); T. Tokombaeva, *Aaly Tokombaev: Dokumental´naia povest´* (Bishkek: ZhZLK, 2004).

[80] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, l. 98.

[81] Florin, "What Is Russia to Us?," 172.

[82] Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500–1920: With an Introductory History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 204–5, 223; Gourgen Mahari, "Autobiography," in *The Warmest Country* (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1991), 15–16.

[83] Zar´ian, "O sebe," 275.

[84] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, l. 107.

[85] On Zaryan, see "Reactions from the press on the work of the Union of Writers of Armenia," 10 February 1948 (RGALI f. 631, op. 34, d. 231, ll. 38–50); and Zar´ian, "O sebe," 277. On Tokombaev, see Alexandre A. Bennigsen, "The Crisis of the Turkic National Epics, 1951–

and Zaryan's experiences during the Stalin era galvanized their opposition to the "cult of personality." In 1956, at a stormy discussion of the results of the 20th Party Congress by the party cell of the Union of Writers of Armenia, Zaryan attacked government officials who did nothing to stop the Terror, stating bluntly that "when in times of war a rank-and-file soldier displays cowardice, he is shot."[86] Although both Tokombaev and Zaryan owed their careers to the Stalinist system, their experiences of persecution during that period led them to support the de-Stalinization agenda of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

The case of the Moldovan peasant poet Andrei Lupan illustrates that, like Tvardovskii, many non-Russian writers saw no contradiction between support for the Party and support for *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Lupan lived in Romanian-controlled Bessarabia before World War II and had joined the Romanian Communist Party when it was an illegal, underground organization. As his protégé Ion Druţă later described him, Lupan was a "Communist in the marrow of his bones, who saw the future of Moldova only through the prism of socialist revolution."[87] Like Zaryan, Lupan embraced the Thaw, even writing a poem in 1956 titled "Mea culpa" that expressed regret to his readers for having written in the Stalinist style.[88] In the literature section, Lupan praised Solzhenitsyn's novella for its "strong defense of human dignity" and argued that Solzhenitsyn was a person with "our views," Soviet views. (He was less sure about the ideological orthodoxy of *Matrena's House*, however.)[89] Lupan was a "true believer" in communism and saw Solzhenitsyn as fulfilling the highest duty of a Soviet writer—serving society and the Party.

Like Aitmatov, Lupan was another example of a relatively independent voice from the republics who managed to survive in Soviet literature by appealing to metropolitan literary elites. Despite his sterling credentials as an underground communist writer, Lupan was threatened with exile to the Gulag in 1948, when a faction of writers with close ties to the Moldovan Central Committee attacked him during the Stalinist ideological campaigns

1952: Local Nationalism or Internationalism?," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* 17, no. 2/3 (1975): 468–72; and Florin, "What Is Russia to Us?," 172–73.

[86] The Armenian Communist Party censured Zaryan for his "antiparty" statements in Hayastani azgain arkhiv (HAA) f. 17 (Party Organization of the Union of Writers of Armenia), op. 1, d. 85, ll. 4–5 (Excerpt from the minutes of the meeting of the Mikoyan raikom, 7 September 1956). See also "Report of the Department of Culture," 1 December 1956 (RGANI f. 5, op. 36, d. 14, ll. 97–109) in *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul´tura, 1953-1957: Dokumenty*, ed. Z. K. Vodop´ianova, V. Iu. Afiani, and E. S. Afanas´eva (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), 573.

[87] Ion Druţă, *Lupaniada: Înălţarea şi prăbuşirea unei epoci* (Chişinău: Editura "Cadran," 2012), 42.

[88] Negură, *Ni héros, ni traîtres*, 318–19.

[89] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, ll. 101–5.

of the *Zhdanovshchina*. Fearing the worst, Lupan promptly hopped on a train to Moscow. After the head of the Soviet Writers' Union, Aleksandr Fadeev, intervened on his behalf, Lupan returned triumphantly to Moldova, where he would remain chair of the Moldovan Writers' Union until 1962.[90] Meanwhile, Lupan's Russian counterparts often had nowhere to turn if they lost the favor of the Soviet Central Committee, which had sole authority over Russian literature.

The positions of the two Ukrainian writers in the literature section of the Committee on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* illustrate that even non-Russian writers strongly associated with the literary establishment in their native republics did not adopt the hardline positions of Gribachev and Prokof´ev. Like Gribachev and Prokof´ev, the centrist Ukrainian literary critic Leonid Novychenko (Rus.: Novichenko) had participated in both the anticosmopolitan and antinationalist campaigns of the late Stalin era in Ukraine.[91] Nevertheless, he did not agree with Gribachev's arguments against the character of Ivan Denisovich. Novychenko conceded that Ivan Denisovich was a "backward" person, but one with a fundamental spiritual decency—which he did consider a "quality of the character of the people" (*cherta narodnogo kharaktera*). Novychenko's primary objection to the novella was Solzhenitsyn's neutral portrayal of religious believers and Ukrainian nationalist partisans. In the end, although Novychenko strongly preferred Honchar's *Tronka*, he still took a moderate position on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.*[92] The Ukrainian prose writer Mikhailo Stel´makh took a stronger stance in favor of the novella. The author of Lenin Prize–winning epic novels on the transformation of the Ukrainian village during the period of Soviet rule, Stel´makh had been successful under both Stalin and Khrushchev.[93] Although he was privately sympathetic to the Ukrainian cultural revival that accompanied the Thaw in Ukraine, he rarely took a public

[90] Petru Negură underscores the importance of Moscow's intervention on behalf of Lupan in 1948 (*Ni héros, ni traîtres*, 236–43). Lupan's protégé Druţă claims that Fadeev appealed to Stalin on Lupan's behalf (*Lupaniada*, 38–41).

[91] Benjamin Pinkus, "The Campaigns against 'Jewish Nationalism' and 'Cosmopolitanism,'" in *The Soviet Government and the Jews, 1948–1967: A Documented Study*, ed. Benjamin Frankel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 187; Serhy Yekelchyk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 56.

[92] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 126–28. See also his speech on *Tronka:* "Transcript of the meeting of the Plenum of the Committee," 8 April 1964 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 5, ll. 42–45).

[93] See George Stephen Nestor Luckyj, *Ukrainian Literature in the Twentieth Century: A Reader's Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 66–68.

stand that put him in direct conflict with political authorities.[94] When it came time to give his opinion on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to the literature section, however, Stel´makh did not equivocate: "I cannot agree with Chingiz Aitmatov that Solzhenitsyn's novella rings out like a bell," he said. "For me it rings with pain and grief. The author captured this very finely. That is why I am for this novella."[95] Well ensconced in the Ukrainian literary establishment, both Novychenko and Stel´makh nevertheless shied away from the hardline anti-Thaw position espoused by their Russian counterparts.

Summing up the debate at the end of the April meeting of the literature section, Section Chair Ivan Anisimov stated that there were two major arguments against the novella on the table. The first and most important, according to Anisimov, was that the character of Ivan Denisovich cared only about his own survival and lacked ideological commitments. As we have seen, Gribachev and Prokof´ev saw Solzhenitsyn's peasant protagonist as a throwback to the passive, ideologically indifferent *muzhik* of prerevolutionary Russia. In their minds, the Russian peasantry and the Russian people as a whole should be represented by a confident, conscious hero who embraced the principles of the Bolshevik revolution. Other Russian writers on the committee, like T. N. Nikolaeva, simply attacked Ivan Denisovich as an "opportunist" (*prisposoblenets*) and left it at that.[96] Popular prejudice against former prisoners of war like Ivan Denisovich contributed to negative views of the character.[97] The second major issue, according to Anisimov, was Solzhenitsyn's unorthodox use of language, which included profanity, archaisms, and neologisms.[98] As Denis Kozlov has shown, this was a common objection to the book, especially among older readers.[99] Some writers also raised objections to the ideological content of *Matrena's House*, while others expressed concern

[94] In 1966, Stel´makh intervened on behalf of Ukrainian intellectuals who had been arrested by the KGB. See Haluzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukraïny (HDA SBU) f. 16 (Secretariat of GPU-KGB of the Ukrainian SSR) op. 1, d. 954, 1. 114 (Memorandum to the CC CPU from the chair of the KGB, 21 January 1966); "Memorandum to the CC CPU from the chair of the KGB," 19 March 1966 (HDA SBU f. 16, op. 1, d. 954, ll. 400–1); and Yekelchyk, "Early 1960s as a Cultural Space," 48, 54.

[95] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, l. 138.

[96] Ibid., l. 99.

[97] One writer, insinuating that Ivan Denisovich betrayed his country while in German captivity, stated, "we know prisoners of war of different sorts" (ibid., ll. 92–93).

[98] For example, several writers in the literature section, including Prokof´ev and the Russian writer Georgii Markov, complained that the book was inappropriate for children (ibid., d. 16, ll. 131, 136).

[99] Kozlov, *Readers of Novyi Mir*, 213.

that *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* had become a tool in the hands of the Soviet Union's enemies in the Cold War.[100]

As we have seen, many of the non-Russian writers joined Tvardovskii in rejecting these arguments and expressed support for the de-Stalinization agenda of the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses. Many older non-Russian writers supported de-Stalinization in part because it meant relief from deadly Stalinist antinationalist campaigns that had decimated the ranks of non-Russian writers across the USSR. Several of the younger non-Russian writers had staked their careers on their advocacy for the Thaw. As we have seen, non-Russian writers who supported the Thaw were able to attain positions of power that most pro-Thaw Russian writers could not hope to attain. Ultimately, however, Gribachev and Prokof′ev managed to peel off enough non-Russian writers to block the progress of Solzhenitsyn's nomination. On 7 April 1964, they voted against including Solzhenitsyn in the final list of candidates by a vote of 10 to 13. Of the ten writers who voted for Solzhenitsyn's candidacy, only one, his editor Tvardovskii, was Russian.[101]

A Russian Showdown at the Plenum

At the plenary meeting of the Lenin Prize Committee held on 8 April 1964, the members of the sections on literature, music, visual arts, and film and theater met to hear and discuss the recommendations of each section and vote on the final list of candidates. After Anisimov explained the literature section's reasons for supporting Honchar and rejecting Solzhenitsyn's candidacy, the members of the other sections weighed in. It became clear that many members of the Russian intellectual and creative elite disagreed with the neo-Stalinist conservatives of the literature section. The members of the music and visual arts sections were split on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, but the theater and film section voted unanimously in favor of Solzhenitsyn's novella.[102] In the fierce debate that followed, the Russian intellectuals who spoke sought to defend the Russian people, again in very different ways.

Several members of the film and theater section gave passionate speeches defending Solzhenitsyn's hero as a worthy representative of the Russian people. One of the most stirring speeches came from the Russian film scholar Aleksandr Karaganov. "The foundation of the character of Ivan Denisovich is not only patience, but also the resilience [*nesgibaemost'*] of the Russian laboring person," he argued. Responding to critics who asked why Ivan Denisovich

[100] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 124, 133–34; RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 18, l. 141.
[101] Ibid., d. 18, l. 143.
[102] The members of the music section voted eight to five in favor of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, while the visual arts section voted nine to five against.

does not protest or fight against injustice, Karaganov remarked that the very same question could easily be turned on the critics themselves.[103] The obvious implication was that Ivan Denisovich's critics had done nothing to fight the Stalinist cult of personality—and indeed, both Gribachev and Prokof´ev had zealously pursued ideological enemies during the late Stalin era.

Unmoved by the impassioned speeches of the members of the film and theater section, Gribachev once again rejected Solzhenitsyn's attempt "to pass off Ivan Denisovich as a Russian type [*tip*]."[104] He continued to argue that Solzhenitsyn had smuggled offensive anti-Soviet, prerevolutionary notions of the Russian peasantry into his novella:

> Solzhenitsyn described in the novella the character of an old Russian peasant. There are no Soviet qualities in this character, in essence. Dignity and an ability to work—these are qualities intrinsic to an old Russian peasant who has not been awakened by the revolution, by the battles that are taking place all over the world. Portrayed is an old Russian peasant type [*tip starogo krest´ianina*], and he should not be made into the Russian Soviet people.[105]

Here we see the clearest articulation of Gribachev's national critique of Solzhenitsyn, which reflected the neo-Stalinist criticism of Solzhenitsyn's peasant characters that critics had expounded earlier in *Oktiabr´* and *Ogonek*. According to Gribachev, Ivan Denisovich's personal qualities were consistent with prerevolutionary notions of the Russian peasantry and thus an insult to Soviet Russians who had been "awakened by the revolution." Gribachev thus defended the Russian peasantry by asserting that the Russian peasant's nature was consistent with Soviet values. Following the dictates of Stalinist policy on national culture, his image of the peasant was Russian in form but socialist in content.

In his response to Gribachev's speech, Tvardovskii countered Gribachev's argument that Ivan Denisovich was a throwback to prerevolutionary conceptions of the Russian peasantry by emphasizing the Sovietness of Ivan Denisovich. Tvardovskii seemed to sense that Gribachev's argument was a dangerous one and responded by doubling down on his defense of the ideological orthodoxy of the novel. Tvardovskii described Ivan Denisovich as a Soviet hero: "This is a warrior of labor, a person in the great army of labor who accomplished historic deeds during the five-year plans and in the postwar struggle…. To have a disdainful attitude toward a rank-and-file member

[103] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 5, ll. 39–42.
[104] Ibid., l. 77.
[105] Ibid., l. 79.

of this army, I think, is disgraceful—it should not be allowed!" Tvardovskii concluded by saying once more that he did not understand how people could go against the opinion of the Central Committee and the words of Nikita Khrushchev.[106] In spite of Gribachev's arguments that the character of Ivan Denisovich was an insult to the Russian people, Tvardovskii and his allies among the Russian and non-Russian intelligentsia seemed to have won the day. The Lenin Prize Committee Plenum voted 37 to 30 to include Solzhenitsyn on the final list for the secret ballot.[107]

The Final Vote

Although the Plenum meeting on 8 April 1964 had voted narrowly to include Solzhenitsyn's novella on the final list, intervention "from above" on the day of the final vote sealed the work's fate. On 11 April, the day the committee members were scheduled to vote, the Party's main mouthpiece, *Pravda*, published a collection of letters, supposedly from readers, on whether or not *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* should receive the Lenin Prize. The author of the unsigned article stated that most letter writers "come to the same conclusion: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novella deserves a positive evaluation, but it cannot be considered an outstanding work deserving of the Lenin Prize." Some letters from readers raised the same issues that had been previously discussed in literary criticism or at meetings of the committee: that Ivan Denisovich had an impoverished or "primitive" inner spiritual life and that he could not be considered an ideal "folk hero" (*narodnyi geroi*). Another letter writer seemed to reference the issues raised in critical evaluations of *Matrena's House*, stating that the author believed in the *pravednichestvo* (righteousness) of all who suffered.[108] The message to the committee was clear: do not pick *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* for the Lenin Prize.

At a meeting to confirm the final list of candidates, the chair of the committee, Nikolai Tikhonov, raised the issue of whether they should allow *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to stay on the list over the objections of the literature section and now *Pravda.* Prokof´ev, a steadfast opponent of the novella, stated that they should take into account the opinion of *Pravda*. The Avar poet Rasul Gamzatov, who earned a seat on the committee as a result of winning the Lenin Prize in 1963, contested Prokof´ev's position, doubting that a collection of readers' letters amounted to a direct statement from the Party. Gamzatov, a frequent contributor to *Novyi mir*, complained that *Pravda* was wavering in the struggle against the cult of personality. Despite

[106] Ibid., l. 84.
[107] Ibid., l. 99.
[108] "Vysokaia trebovatel´nost´," *Pravda*, 11 April 1964, 4.

Gamzatov's opposition, Prokof´ev's views won out. Faced with contradicting the position laid out by *Pravda*, the committee backed down and voted to remove Solzhenitsyn's novella from the list by a vote of 51 to 21.[109]

On 14 April 1964, the Plenum of the committee met to discuss the results of the voting. Solzhenitsyn's main rival Honchar had gained the most votes of all the literature nominees—but with only 63 out of 93 votes cast, he had failed to reach the required three-fourths threshold to win the Lenin Prize. The chair Tikhonov proposed a revote.[110] Tvardovskii demurred, claiming that disregarding the committee's original vote would undermine the committee's authority. Minister of Culture Ekaterina Furtseva, known as a Khrushchev ally, said that she hoped that Tvardovskii would not stand in the way of a revote as a form of protest.[111] She noted that Honchar had failed to receive the votes of many non-Russian writers but claimed that they had simply chosen to vote for candidates from their own republics that they knew better. Given the dynamics of the debate prior to the vote, one wonders whether some non-Russian writers chose to boycott Honchar in protest over Solzhenitsyn's exclusion from the list. The motion to hold a revote passed, and Honchar won enough votes the second time around to receive the 1964 Lenin Prize.[112] At a meeting of the Presidium of the committee held the next day, Furtseva chided Gamzatov and the other members of the committee, stating that they should have known "how to conduct themselves" once *Pravda* clarified the Party's line on Solzhenitsyn. Gamzatov retorted that he saw no "party spirit" in voting for Solzhenitsyn one day and then voting against him two days later.[113]

The proceedings in the final days of the Lenin Prize Committee were infuriating to Tvardovskii, who as editor of *Novyi mir* had done more than any other Soviet writer to advance the policy of de-Stalinization put forth at the 20th and 22nd Party Congress. In a journal entry on 14 April 1964, Tvardovskii fumed,

> What, then, happened and is happening? That which has been rising in the distance for a long time, at first timidly, but then more bravely—

[109] "Transcript of the meeting of the Plenum of the Committee," 11 April 1964 (RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 5, ll. 216–25).

[110] "Transcript of the concluding meeting of the Plenum of the Committee," 14 April 1964 (ibid., d. 3, l. 5).

[111] Laurence Senelick, "'A Woman's Kingdom': Minister of Culture Furtseva and Censorship in the Post-Stalinist Russian Theater," *New Theater Quarterly* 26, 1 (2010): 18; RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 3, l. 11.

[112] RGALI f. 2916, op. 2, d. 3, l. 15.

[113] "Transcript of the meeting of the Presidium of the Committee," 15 April 1964 (ibid., ll. 42–49, 90–93).

> in the form of "historic meetings," the press, false "letters from fellow countrymen"[114] and so forth—cannot be called anything else but a period of active, aggressive removal of the "spirit and significance" of the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses.[115]

Tvardovskii saw the attack on Solzhenitsyn's peasant hero at the Lenin Prize Committee as a covert assault on the very foundations of de-Stalinization. Instead of reaffirming its support for de-Stalinization, the Central Committee had pulled the rug out from under him. In the report on the proceedings of the Lenin Prize Committee by the Ideological Department of the Soviet Central Committee, Tvardovskii came in for particular criticism for portraying the novella "as the true expression of the main line of the development [of Soviet literature] in the present period."[116] The report's critical attitude toward Solzhenitsyn and his allies on the Lenin Prize Committee was yet another signal that support on the Central Committee for the policy of de-Stalinization was waning.

Who was behind the placement of the 11 April article in *Pravda*? Had Khrushchev, "the supreme *muzhik,*" turned his back on Solzhenitsyn's peasant hero? It seems that Khrushchev's will to defend *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* had faltered in the face of opposition to the novella in the upper echelons of the Party. In an entry in his diary on 15 April 1964, Tvardovskii recorded Vladimir Lebedev's account of his conversation about the *Pravda* article with Khrushchev. Lebedev, Khrushchev's aide on issues of culture, read the article to Khrushchev, a detail that suggests that if Khrushchev knew about the article in advance, he was not fully aware of its contents. Khrushchev apparently told Lebedev that he did not want Solzhenitsyn to receive the prize because many would consider it the result of "direct orders" from Khrushchev. Noting that others in Khrushchev's circles had "different attitudes" toward Solzhenitsyn's novella, Tvardovskii surmised that Khrushchev was fearful and did not want to "annoy someone."[117] As Maria Zezina notes, private conversations about the possibility of replacing Khrushchev were already taking place in the spring of 1964, and the refusal to grant Khrushchev's favorite a Lenin Prize can be considered the first sign that the first secretary's power was declining.[118]

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[114] A likely reference to the attacks on Iashin's "Vologda Wedding" from Vologda (and possibly similar attacks on Fedor Abramov after the publication of *Around and About*).

[115] Tvardovskii, "Rabochie tetradi 60-kh godov," no. 11, 163.

[116] "Report of the Ideological Department of the CC CPSU," 18 April 1964 (RGANI f. 5, op. 55, d. 99, ll. 30–32), in *Apparat TsK KPSS i kul´tura, 1958–1964*, 704–6.

[117] Tvardovskii, "Rabochie tetradi 60-kh godov," no. 11, 164.

[118] Zezina, *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia*, 318.

Who on the Central Committee opposed Solzhenitsyn's bid for the Lenin Prize? The Ideological Department, for its part, did not submit a report opposing Solzhenitsyn's candidacy until after the final vote had occurred.[119] Tvardovskii believed that Il´ichev, the head of the Ideological Commission, had ordered Tikhonov to propose a revote after Honchar failed to reach the three-fourths threshold required to receive the Lenin Prize, which suggests that the Kremlin ideologist was supporting Honchar over Solzhenitsyn.[120] As we have seen, Minister of Culture Furtseva also clearly favored Honchar. The *Novyi mir* staff member Lakshin, the author of the 1964 article "Ivan Denisovich: His Friends and Foes," saw the hand of Brezhnev in the appearance of the 11 April article.[121] The combination of Khrushchev's crumbling authority and widespread opposition to Solzhenitsyn's novella in the highest ranks of the Party seem to have doomed Solzhenitsyn's chance to win the Lenin Prize.

The Aftermath

The scuttling of Solzhenitsyn's nomination for the Lenin Prize in April 1964 revealed Khrushchev's weakening position on the Central Committee and the waning enthusiasm for de-Stalinization and the Thaw among top party officials. In October, a coalition of top party figures led by Leonid Brezhnev removed Khrushchev from power. In his memoir, Solzhenitsyn mused that the Lenin Prize proceedings had been a "rehearsal for the putsch." The political ground shifted. As part of a sweeping crackdown in September 1965, the KGB seized Solzhenitsyn's manuscripts.[122] His work would not be published again in the Soviet Union until 1989, when, with Mikhail Gorbachev's approval, *Novyi mir* published Solzhenitsyn's *magnum opus*, *The Gulag Archipelago*.[123]

The discussions of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* at the Lenin Prize Committee show that contestation over Russian national identity and

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[119] No reports commenting on Solzhenitsyn's candidacy other than the one from 18 April 1964 could be found in the two files from the records of the Ideological Department that contain documentation on the 1964 Lenin Prize (RGANI f. 5, op. 55, d. 41 and f. 5, op. 55, d. 99).

[120] Tvardovskii, "Rabochie tetradi 60-kh godov," no. 11, 165. K. B. Sokolov states that Il´ichev was behind the anti-Solzhenitsyn campaign (*Khudozhestvennaia kul´tura i vlast´*, 233).

[121] Lakshin claims that Brezhnev watched a television appearance that Lakshin made in support of Solzhenitsyn's candidacy and told Mikhail Kharlamov, the head of the Committee on Radio and Television, that he was expecting the "*right* decision" from the Lenin Prize Committee (V. Ia. Lakshin, "Dnevniki i poputnoe," in *Solzhenitsyn i koleso istorii*, by Lakshin, ed. S. N. Kaidash-Lakshina [Moscow: Veche, 2008], 270).

[122] Solzhenitsyn, *Oak and the Calf*, 72, 102.

[123] Ben A. McVicker, "The Creation and Transformation of a Cultural Icon: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in Post-Soviet Russia, 1994–2008," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes* 53, 2–4 (2001): 309.

the nature of the Russian peasantry were indeed an important aspect of the Thaw. The controversy over *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was part of a broader conflict over the Stalinist discourse about the Russian peasantry. Since the earliest days of the Thaw, Tvardovskii had used his position at *Novyi mir* to criticize the impact of Stalinist policies on the peasantry, and he defended Solzhenitsyn's peasant hero at the Lenin Prize Committee by arguing that he was a hardworking victim of the Stalinist camps. What Tvardovskii did not acknowledge was that Solzhenitsyn had also incorporated elements of prerevolutionary thought about the Russian peasant and the Russian nation into his criticism of Stalinism in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (not to mention *Matrena's House*). Gribachev and Prokof´ev, Russian writers who had built their literary careers on glorifying the life of the peasantry under Stalinist rule, could not accept *Novyi mir*'s attempt to de-Stalinize Soviet discourse about the Russian peasantry. They seized on the elements of prerevolutionary thought in Solzhenitsyn's works, claiming that Solzhenitsyn was simply repeating the old lie that the Russian peasantry was politically backward and passive. They defended the Soviet Russian peasantry from this supposed insult by claiming that it was actually fundamentally Soviet and revolutionary in its nature. Their conception of Russian peasant identity thus followed Stalin's famous formulation: it was national in form but socialist in content. Tvardovskii correctly interpreted their criticism of Solzhenitsyn as an attempt to roll back de-Stalinization. Yet, as we have seen, their attack on Solzhenitsyn's peasant hero was more than just a short-term tactical move. It reflected their profound disagreement with *Novyi mir*'s ongoing campaign to de-Stalinize Soviet discourse about the Russian peasantry during the Thaw.

Solzhenitsyn may have lost the battle in 1964, but it could be said that he won the war. After Khrushchev's ouster in October 1964, debates over Russian national identity took center stage in the Soviet literary world. Although the new Soviet leadership exiled Solzhenitsyn from the Soviet Writers' Union (and, ultimately, the Soviet Union itself), the heterodox conceptions of the Russian peasant and nation that Solzhenitsyn expressed on the pages of *Novyi mir* were steadily gaining popularity in Russian intellectual circles. Indeed, the neo-Stalinists' argument for the revolutionary nature of the Soviet Russian peasantry at the Lenin Prize Committee may be called the last gasp of a truly Stalinist conception of Russian national identity. From 1965 onward, the journal *Molodaia gvardiia*, benefiting from what Brudny calls Brezhnev's "politics of inclusion" toward Russian nationalists, represented the views of a group of Russian intellectuals who, like Solzhenitsyn, hearkened back to the cultural legacies of Russia's prerevolutionary past. Intellectuals

associated with *Molodaia gvardiia* eschewed Marxism-Leninism and advocated for a conception of Russian national identity based on prerevolutionary culture and the Russian peasantry.[124] The idea that the Stalinist transformation of the village had been welcomed by a progressive and revolutionary Russian peasantry also lost currency among the literary elite in subsequent decades. Solzhenitsyn's views on the negative impact of Soviet rule on the traditional Russian peasantry were increasingly reflected in the writings of an emerging group known as the Russian Village Prose writers. The conservative strand of Russian Village Prose found a home at the journal *Nash sovremennik* starting in the late 1960s. The peasant characters in many works of Russian Village Prose published in the 1960s and 1970s bore a far greater resemblance to Ivan Denisovich and Matrena than to Gribachev's revolutionary Russian peasant.[125] While some hardliners like Gribachev continued to espouse Stalinist conceptions of the peasantry, by the late 1960s many neo-Stalinists were cooperating with the growing Russian nationalist intellectual movement on the basis of their shared enmity for the politics of reform.[126] The spread of Solzhenitsyn's views among the Russian intelligentsia in the Brezhnev era reminds us that the Russian nationalist intellectual movement had deep roots in intellectual developments taking place on the pages of *Novyi mir* during Khrushchev's Thaw.

In addition to shedding light on discussions of the Russian peasantry and national identity at the twilight of the Thaw, the 1964 Lenin Prize debates also reveal the strong support for Khrushchev's policies of de-Stalinization among a substantial segment of the non-Russian cultural elite. As we have seen, the Soviet system for the management of culture allowed many pro-Thaw non-Russian writers to rise to positions of prominence in the Soviet literary world. After Khrushchev's ouster permanently halted de-Stalinization, many of these non-Russian writers became alienated from the Soviet state. Many of the writers who voted for Solzhenitsyn in the literature section did not live to see the late 1980s, but several of those who did became outspoken advocates for Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, including Aitmatov and Marcinkevičius. Oles´ Honchar, the moderate and politically centrist winner of the Lenin Prize in 1964, underwent a political evolution after being subject to a harsh, politically motivated campaign against his 1968 novel *Cathedral*.

[124] On *Molodaia gvardiia*, see Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 58–93; Dobrenko, "Lessons of *Oktiabr´*," 50–53; and Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia*, 338–56.

[125] See Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 76–80; and Kathleen Parthé, *Russian Village Prose: The Radiant Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 64–80.

[126] Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia*, 355–56.

In the late 1980s, he became a strong supporter of perestroika and joined the Ukrainian national movement Rukh in 1988.[127] Much like in 1964, when leading non-Russian writers on the Lenin Prize Committee had allied with Tvardovskii, the non-Russian intellectuals found themselves in an alliance with the reformist Russian intelligentsia during perestroika. As in 1964, they were on the opposite side of the ideological barricades from Russians who opposed liberalizing reforms.[128] In a major shift from the Thaw era, however, the members of the post-Stalin generation of antireform Russian intellectuals espoused views on the Russian nation that were surprisingly close to what Solzhenitsyn had advocated in *Novyi mir* in the 1960s.

Dept. of History
204 Hellems Building, Campus Box 234
University of Colorado, Boulder
Boulder, CO 80301 USA
erin.hutchinson-1@colorado.edu

[127] See Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 53–57; and Serhii Plokhy, *Chernobyl: The History of a Nuclear Catastrophe* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 290–98.

[128] On the opposition of the RSFSR Writers' Union to Gorbachev's reforms, see Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 192–258.