

stoj. Those involved included Baxrax, Šklovskij and Ėrenburg. Ėrenburg was furious over a scathing review of his works in the literary supplement to *Nakanune*. Written by Ne Bukva (pen name of Vasiljevskij) and sanctioned by the paper's literary editor, Tolstoj, the article "The Tatar from Taganrog" was particularly harsh in tone: "Before us there is either an imitator, helplessly devoid of his own style and vocabulary, a graphomanically prolific commis-voyageur, a fussy 'Tatar from Taganrog', putting on all sorts of airs, or one really ill, in need of a cure, and we pity him from the bottom of our soul and wish him a speedy and complete recovery."<sup>48</sup>

The attempt to oust the members was successfully postponed by Belyj to another meeting, and a special session was called for Tuesday, November 7. Fortunately so few persons attended that the meeting could not take place.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless the following members resigned their positions in the House of the Arts: A. Belyj, A. Remizov, V. Xodasevič, V. Šklovskij, N. Berberova, V. Lur'je, S. Postnikov, A. Baxrax and S. Kaplun-Sumskij.<sup>50</sup> Ėrenburg would also withdraw.<sup>51</sup>

A regular Friday meeting was held on November 10 at which Minskij again presided and welcomed V.G. Bogatyrev from Prague who read on "Narodnoe iskusstvo." New elections were held the following week on November 14 at which the results were: Minskij – President, V. Šklovskij – Vice-President, Vengerova – treasurer. Other members of the Board included Tolstoj, Jaščenko, Braun, Lukjanov, Gul', Bōguslavškaja and Višnjak (the latter would shortly resign because he considered the board too politically oriented with a decided slant toward the *smenovexovcy*).<sup>52</sup> The controversy surrounding Vasiljevskij and Tolstoj also served to destroy one other group

48 *Nakanune*, Literary Supplement 24 (October 29, 1922), 7. Ėrenburg recalls the meeting "A storm broke out at the lecture of the artist Puni; Arxipenko, Al'tman, Majakovskij, Šterenberga, Gabo, Lisickij and I debated furiously." (p. 410). He does not mention the move to expel Tolstoj and in a letter written shortly after the incident he denied such a role, see *Nakanune*, 179 (November 7, 1922), 5 or *Dni*, 13 (November 12, 1922), 3.

49 *Rul'*, 593 (November 9, 1922), 6.

50 *Dni*, 11 (November 10, 1922), 5.

51 *Dni*, 13 (November 12, 1922), 3.

52 See *Rul'*, 599 (November 16, 1922), 6 and *Dni*, 16 (November 16, 1922), 5.

of talented writers in Berlin. *Vereteno*, formed in May 1922 and publishers of *Vereteno* and the satirical journal *Vertenyš*, was shaken by the election of Tolstoj into the group. Several resigned, including Vl. Sirin (Nabokov), V.A. Amfiteatrov and I. Bunin.

Whether purely coincidental or in spite of the happenings (although every action began to acquire political overtones) a new group was formed. *Novaja Russkaja Kniga* announced its formation:

A new literary society has been formed in Berlin under the name of the "Writers' Club" (*Klub Pisatelej*). The initiating group consists of the following persons: B.K. Zajcev, P.P. Muratov, Yu.I. Ajxenal'd, M. Osorgin, N.A. Berdjaev, S.L. Frank, A. Belyj, A.M. Remizov, E.D. Kuskova, V.F. Xodasevič and others. The Society proposes the organization of several intimate sessions.<sup>53</sup>

The composition of the group was decidedly more conservative than that of the House of the Arts. Whereas the House of the Arts looked to Petrograd for its inspiration, the Writers' Club had its roots in a similar organization in Moscow. Many of the original members of the Moscow organization would find themselves in Berlin after having been expelled from Russia in the fall of 1922. The group prided itself on its exclusivity and catered to writer-philosophers. The Club had no constitution, no general gatherings and no voting. Only those sponsored by a member of the Club, who had to vouch for his guest's conduct, were permitted entrance to the closed sessions.<sup>54</sup> During the fall of 1922 and through 1923 the Club sponsored weekly meetings on various days, Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays at the Cafe Leon. Because of the closed nature of the organization it is somewhat more difficult to establish a complete list of the early meetings. The newspaper, *Nakanune*, either because it did not receive notification of meetings, or by political preference, was completely silent on the existence of the Club. Aleksandr Baxrax, who was secretary of the Club, and therefore responsible for sending an-

53 X (October 1922), 26. According to the notebooks of Xodasevič the first organizational meeting was held on Saturday, November 4, just one day after the scandal together with Belyj, Osorgin, Muratov, V. Lur'e and Baxrax. I am especially indebted to Nina Berberova and David Bethea for making these materials available to me.

54 *Dni*, 111 (March 11, 1923), 15.

nouncements to the papers, recalled that the records of the Club had been lost.<sup>55</sup>

By November 16<sup>56</sup> the Writers' Club was already announcing the second meeting of the group. The two organizations, the House of the Arts and the Writers' Club, continued to meet concurrently through the winter and spring of 1922-1923. Often speakers at one session would appear a day or two later at the other, and the list of participants through the summer break remained impressive. I. Ėrenburg, B. Pasternak and V. Šklovskij were among the more prominent names to appear before both groups.<sup>57</sup> This free interchange did not, however, encompass the organizers. Belyj, for example, would never again go to the House of the Arts, in whose inception he had played such a major role. A. Tolstoj was a welcome guest at the House of the Arts, but would never be invited to the Writers' Club. N. Berdjaev and F. Stepun were welcome only amongst their own at the Writers' Club.

As the summer came, the conditions which had once made Berlin so attractive to writers had all but disappeared. The economic situation, which had begun to deteriorate the previous year, was now catastrophic. Newspapers stopped announcing changes in price. The major publishers as early as January 1923 had established a multiplier or co-efficient to keep pace with the exchange rate and German inflation. Strikes and demonstrations were the order of the day. For those who had lived through the events of 1917 in Russia it must have seemed as if history were repeating itself. A quick survey of one of the leading newspapers, *Rul'*, gives an indication of how bad things were. On May 27 it devoted a large article to those returning to Russia: "Arguments about Emigration." On May 30 there was an-

55 Interview with this writer (August 9, 1984). See the statement by Jurij Ivask in his article "Blagožatel'nyj Baxrax": "In 1922 those newly arrived famous expellees from the Soviet Union - Berdjaev, Frank, Stepun, Osorgin and many others founded as if to counterbalance the already existing House of the Arts their own Writers' Club and the young Baxrax became its secretary. Many of the same individuals would be responsible for the opening in Berlin in November, 1922 of the Russian Religious Philosophical Academy." Aleksandr Baxrax, *Po pamjati, po zapisjam*, (Paris: 1980), pp. 5, 6.

56 *Dni*, 16 (November 16, 1922), 5.

57 See Appendices I and II.

other of the ever more frequent calls on the Russian emigré community to help other emigrés. On June 1, 1923 the price of the paper jumped to 400 M. By July 1 it would cost 1 000 M and the ads of Gelikon, Ėpoxa and the other large publishing houses that once graced the Sunday editions would be gone. By Sunday September 2 the price had gone to 150,000 M. On September 8 *Rul'* announced: "In recent times, in connection with the cessation in Berlin of Russian theater activity, the majority of Russian artists - set designers have relocated abroad, for the most part, in Paris; among the departed are K. Boguslavskaja, I. Puni ..."<sup>58</sup>

Even as the walls came tumbling down there were a number of efforts, in actuality the last ditch attempts, to resume the intellectual life of Berlin. The first meeting after the summer break in the Writers' Club was announced for September 15 with Andrej Belyj scheduled to read from his memoirs. On September 22 P. Muratov read some of his new "Magičeskie rasskazy." On September 29 P. Ivanov read from his novel, *Babuškin svet*, and on October 6 Xodasevič spoke on "Počemu Puškin napisal 'Rusalku'" and Nina Berberova spoke on translating the German Romantics. On October 13 V. Amfiteatrov read a paper on "Mistika Lermontova."

One clear indication that the "boom" was over was given by the publishing house of Gržebin, which between May 1922 and September 1923 had published over 270 Russian titles, and now was having a liquidation sale. On October 20 for a cost of 80 million M you could read in *Rul'*:

On Saturday, October 20, the Writers' Club is closing in view of the departure from Berlin of a considerable majority of the organization's members. It is possible, that the activity of the Club, which originated in Moscow and was later transferred to Berlin, will be revived in Paris.<sup>59</sup>

Information on the House of the Arts for the fall of 1923 is also scarce. A meeting was called for Friday evening, October 26, and all members were urged to attend an important business meeting to be followed by a reading from O. Savič. A major shift in emphasis for the House was announced the next week:

58 *Rul'*, 844 (September 8, 1923), 6.

59 880, p. 5.

With the election of a new president, A.M. Arnštam, several changes are proposed for the evening programs of the "House of the Arts." A number of debates are planned on questions of art, to which several leading German writers and performers will be invited to participate. The organization of musical evenings is also planned. The next regular session of the club will be held on November 9.<sup>60</sup>

On October 23, 1923 Belyj departed for Moscow. Remizov left for Paris in November. A few attempts to revive weekly meetings were made. The Union of Journalists and Writers held a Saturday meeting on October 27 with V. Ireckij. A second literary Saturday was scheduled for November 3, featuring Xodasevič and Berberova. Just a few days later they would depart for Prague.<sup>61</sup> All of these ventures seem to have been shortlived for another article announced a new group, *Klub Literatorov*, planning Saturday meetings in the same old Cafe Leon for November 24. At that first meeting Mjakotin read a paper entitled: "Bor'ba za Peterburg v 1919 i 1920 gg." These meetings headed by Ajxenval'd, Melgunov, Mjakotin and Ljaskovskij went on throughout December 1923. Ajxenval'd spoke on December 1 on "Mysli o smysle"; the December 8 meeting was cancelled; P. Ivanov read from his play "Smert' Rasputina" on December 15; and on December 22 Mel'gunov delivered a talk on "Nravstvennyj lik revoljucii."

Another group, the Poets', Performers' and Artists' Corner (*Ugolok poëtov, artistov i xudožnikov*), scheduled and held a number of evenings at the Bülow Restaurant, but these were more of the concert and cabaret variety. By December 8 they were advertising an evening with "gypsy choir and a balalajka orchestra."

Not much remains of those days – even the old cafes are gone, victims of Germany's economy and then of Allied bombing of Berlin. The streets remain, but a supermarket and a computer firm occupy the grounds of the old Leon and Landgraf cafes. The people scattered too – Belyj, Ėrenburg, Tolstoj, Majakovskij, Pil'njak, Pasternak, Šklovskij all returned to Russia. There they provided some of the brighter pages of Russian literature in the twentieth century. Others went to Prague, Paris, New York. Only a handful remain, Baxrax, Ber-

60 *Dni*, 307 (November 3, 1923), 5.

61 *Dni*, 315 (November 17, 1923), 10.

berova, Gul', Lur'je, all of whom have been extremely generous with their time and memories. The actual records of both the House of the Arts and Writers' Club seem to have been lost. Yet their place in the history of Russian Berlin need not be forgotten.

## Appendix I<sup>62</sup>

### House of the Arts: 1921-1923

#### 1921

- 11/21 First organizational meeting
- 11/29 Election of officers
- 12/3 A. Belyj, A. Remizov, I. Ėrenburg, N. Minskij
- 12/10 A. Tolstoj, A. Remizov, N. Minskij
- 12/14 A. Belyj, "Kul'tura v sovremennoj Rossii"
- 12/17 Section heads elected
- 12/24 A. Belyj, "Pervoe svidanie"
- 12/30 I. Ėrenburg, "Novoe iskusstvo"

#### 1922

- 1/13 Evening in honor of V. Korolenko
- 1/20 Discussion of journal received from Petrograd
- 1/27
- 2/ 3 Evening in honor of Arthur Nikisch
- 2/10
- 2/17 Pil'njak and Kusikov
- 2/24 Evening of poetry and music
- 3/19 Gala Ball to aid starving children of Russia
- 3/20 Special evening with Thomas Mann
- 3/24 A. Belyj, A. Tolstoj, A. Remizov, N. Minskij
- 3/31 Evening in honor of V. Nabokov

62 The schedule of meetings has been compiled from the leading Berlin Russian language dailies, *Rul'*, *Golos Rossii*, *Dni*, *Nakanune* and the journal, *Novaja Russkaja Kniga*. Unfortunately some of the issues of the newspapers are no longer available, which may account for omissions in the list.

4/ 7 A. Belyj, A. Tolstoj  
 4/14 Musical program  
 4/28 Discussion of journal *Vešč'*: I. Ėrenburg, Lisickij  
 5/ 5 I. Ėrenburg  
 5/12 S. Esenin  
 5/19 M. Cvetaeva

Summer intermission

9/15 V. Xodasevič, V. Šklovskij  
 9/22 A. Tolstoj, B. Pasternak  
 10/ 1 Evening in honor of Maksim Gor'kij  
 10/ 6 I. Ėrenburg, "Trubki"  
 10/13 A. Belyj, "Aforizmy"; N. Ocu  
 10/20 V. Majakovskij  
 10/27 V. Šklovskij, "Literatura i kinematograf"  
 11/ 3 I. Puni, "Sovremennaja russkaja živopis'"  
 11/10 V. Bogatyrev, "Narodnoe iskusstvo"  
 11/14 New elections  
 11/17 V. Šklovskij, "Novaja russkaja proza"  
 12/ 1 A. Tairov, "Novyj teatr"  
 12/ 8 I. Ždanevič, "Zaumnaja poezija"  
 12/15 I. Ėrenburg, "Žizn' i gibel' Nikolaja Kurbova"  
 12/22 A. Tolstoj, "Aelita"  
 12/29 S. Ćaxotin, "Zaživopogrebennyj," E. Ferrari  
 12/31 New Year's Eve Party

1923

1/ 5 Ju. Ključnikov, "Kust"  
 1/12 K. Miklaševskij, "Komediya Del' Arte v sovremennom teatre"  
 1/19 B. Pasternak  
 1/26 Young poets  
 2/ 2 M. Škapskaja and G. Alekseev  
 2/ 9 S. Rafalovič "Futurizm"  
 2/15 A. Kamenskij "Leda"  
 2/23 I. Ėrenburg, "Trest D.E.," M. Škapskaja  
 3/ 2 S. Šaršun, "Dadaizm"  
 3/ 9 V. Šklovskij, I. Ėrenburg: Benefit evening

3/16 G. Evangulov  
 3/23 A. Kamenskij, "Černaja messa"  
 3/30 A. Tolstoj, "Rukopis', najdennaja sredi musora pod krovat'ju," V. Piotrovskij  
 4/ 6 G. Venus, "Vši"  
 4/13 G. Alekseev  
 4/20 Debate: "Vnėsnost' knigi" V. Šklovskij, I. Ėrenburg, Lisickij, Sums  
 4/27 S. Rafalovič  
 5/ 4 E. Ferrari and Italian poet Ruggero Vasari  
 5/11 Debate: "Reviews" Ireckij, Ėrenburg, Šrejder, Xariton, Šklovskij  
 5/18 S. Šaršun, A. Prismanova, S. Liberman  
 5/25 K. Ejnštejn, "Kubizm"  
 Summer Intermission  
 10/26 O. Savič; New elections

Appendix II

Writers' Club: 1922-1923

1922

11/ 4 Organizational meeting  
 11/11  
 11/25  
 12/ 2  
 12/16 A. Belyj, "Prestuplenie Nikolaja Letaeva"  
 12/23 P. Muratov  
 12/30 I. Ėrenburg, "Žizn' i gibel' Nikolaja Kurbova"

1923

1/15 B. Pasternak  
 1/22 V. Šklovskij, "Djadi i plemjanniki"  
 1/29 Evening of poetry with Škapskaja, Rafalovič, Ėrenburg, Odoevceva, G. Ivanov, Ocu, and Lur'e  
 2/ 3 A. Remizov

- 2/12 S. Rafalovič, "Sovremennyj teatr"  
 2/19 V. Ireckij, "Nebožiteli"  
 2/26 A. Jaščenko, "Krizis intelligencii i novaja ideologija"  
 3/ 7 F. Stepun, "Stixija artističeskoj duši"<sup>63</sup>  
 3/14 A. Belyj, "Tragedija soznaniya"  
 3/21 N. Berdjaev, "Problema ljubvi v tvorčestve  
 Dostoevskogo"  
 3/28 N. Berdjaev  
 4/ 4 V. Xodasevič  
 4/11 A. Tairov, "Zadači Kamernogo Teatra"  
 4/14 Special meeting: V. Šklovskij, "Coo ili Pis'ma ne o  
 ljubvi"  
 4/18 V. Šklovskij, "Coo"  
 4/25 P. Muratov, "Prostranstvo v literature"  
 5/ 2 A. Remizov, "Rozanovye pis'ma" and "Cvo-fir-zon"<sup>64</sup>  
 5/ 9 P. Vyšeslavcev, "Pariž"  
 5/16 I. Ėrenburg "Trest D.E."  
 5/23 L. Galič, "Problema bessilija u Dostoevskogo"  
 5/30 Meeting previously announced is cancelled.  
 Summer intermission  
 9/15 A. Belyj  
 9/22 P. Muratov  
 9/29 P. Ivanov, "Babuškin svet"  
 10/ 6 V. Xodasevič, N. Berberova  
 10/13 V. Amfiteatrov  
 10/20 Club is officially disbanded

63 In *Novaja Russkaja Kniga*, II (February 1923), 40, this is referred to as "Stixija akterskoj duši."

64 Zvo-vier-zon, the abbreviation for a new philosophical society, an alternative to Vol'fila.

Gottfried Kratz

# RUSSISCHE VERLAGE IN BERLIN NACH DEM ERSTEN WELTKRIEG

## Genehmigung zur Veröffentlichung

Die vorliegende Arbeit wurde als Hausarbeit zur Laufbahnprüfung für den höheren Bibliotheksdienst, Frühjahr 1980, bei dem Bibliothekar-Lehrinstitut des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (jetzt: Fachhochschule für Bibliotheks- und Dokumentationswesen in Köln) angefertigt. Sie wird hier in einer gekürzten (Anhang) und überarbeiteten Fassung mit Genehmigung des Staatlichen Prüfungsausschusses veröffentlicht.