

THE NATURE OF THE HERO IN FEDIN'S WORKS

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BY

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: An analysis of the nature of the hero in Fedin's early stories and in his seven novels.

Contains a preface and four chapters. Chapter I sketches Fedin's life and outlines his early stories: Anna Timofevna, A Tale of One morning, The Chief Gunner, The Orchard. Chapter II deals with the novels: Cities and Years, The Brothers, The Rape of Europe, Arctur Sanatorium, and with a story Transvaal. Chapter II analyses the trilogy: The Early Joys, An Extraordinay Summer, Conflagration. Chapter IV summerizes some of the findings.

## PREFACE

Konstantin Fedin is one of the major Soviet novelists. He started a new tradition of Soviet Realism with the theme of contemporary events in his first novel "Cities and Years." Fluent in German, he is one of the few Soviet writers who kept in constant contact with Western Europe. He visited Europe many times before and after the Revolution and in all his novels, in one way or another, he dwells upon the theme of Western Europe.

In 1919 Fedin joined the Communist Party only to leave it two years later. Although he never rejoined it, not only did he manage to survive all the purges and provoke only light criticism, but he achieved considerable success. He was awarded the Order of Lenin, the Order of the Red Banner of Labour twice, and a Stalin Prize. He was elected to the post of First Secretary of the USSR Union of Writers, became a full member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and editor of the literary magazine "Novy mir".

The purpose of this thesis is to show that there is a distinct trend in the development of the nature of Fedin's hero. On the one hand the author seeks the "ideal" man as he understands it, on the other, he adjusts himself to the official policy.

The hero here should be understood from the Russian word "geroy" which implies any personage in the given work.



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## CHAPTER I

### FEDIN'S FORMATIVE PERIOD

Konstantin Alexandrovich Fedin (b. 1892) is one of the most important representatives of Soviet literature. The Board of the Union of Soviet Writers in its greeting to Fedin on his sixtieth birthday writes that his name is linked with the constant struggle for ideological depth of Soviet prose and for the perfection of literary form.

Fedin wrote his first story in the summer of 1910 in Uralsk while visiting his sister. It was an imitation of Gogol's OVERCOAT, a story which left a deep impression on Fedin's mind. He sent his work to St. Petersburg to "Novyi Zhurnal dl'ya vsekh", but it was returned to the disappointed youth with no comment. He continued to write unsuccessfully until 1913 when his "TRIVIALITIES" and some of his poems were published in the "Novyi Satiricon" of Arkadiy Averchenko.

A literary career became the choice of the young boy as a result of the influence he received at school. In grammar school one of his teachers was an uncle on his mother's side, Semen Semenovich Mashkov. Mashkov's family was on a much higher cultural level than his own. The boy visited them frequently, and was introduced there to

the intellectual discussions and to the newspapers that were not in his own home. The crucial point of his attachment to literature, however, came about when he attended the senior grades at the Commercial School in Kozlov (Michurinsk) where he was greatly influenced by some progressive teachers, especially those of Russian literature. Fedin describes this period

«Классные занятия выходили за рамки программ, -- мы читали сборники "Знания", писали сочинения о русских "модернистах", об Ибсене, и это открывало нам взгляд на литературу как на цепь меняющихся в борьбе живых явлений, а не схоластический школьный "предмет". Новыми глазами я прочитал то, что прежде меня оставляло равнодушным, и скоро нашел в книгах ни с чем не сравнимую отраду.»<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1914, Fedin went to Germany to improve his German. The next four years are, perhaps, not so significant in Fedin's literary career from the point of view of achievement as they are important for the impressions and material for future works about Western Europe, especially Germany, that he gathered while staying there. These experiences were of various kinds, for he met people of different social strata. Forced to support himself, he worked at such various jobs as playing the violin at peasant dances, giving lessons in Russian, singing in a choir, acting, and he even took up painting. He read a lot; he was fascinated by Dostoyevsky and some Scandinavian and German expressionists through their magazine "Die Aktion".

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<sup>1</sup>K. Fedin, Collected Works, The Government Publishers of Artistic Literature, Moscow. 1959. Vol. I, p. 10.

He also spent much time writing the manuscript of a novel which he later destroyed. When the tide of revolt arose in Germany Fedin sympathized with the anti-war protests of the young people of the Spartacus movement. In the majority of his novels, particularly the early ones, Fedin uses the material from this period and bases his views on his own experiences.

During the first few years after the Russian Revolution, Fedin was preoccupied with journalism. Upon his return to Moscow in the fall of 1918 he found a life he had never known, a life of new enthusiasm and changed values where the past was rapidly decaying and the future offered very little. Yet he listened eagerly to the sound of revolution and, as did many young Russian intellectuals, he had high hopes for the future. It seemed to him that the new revolution would consume the social and political refuse of the past, leaving nothing but the purity of Russian achievement, and new men would build upon these foundations a life of fresh spiritual and cultural values. Fedin joined the Communist Party in the Volga town of Syzran in 1919 and took on a heavy load of work. He edited the local newspaper, founded a literary journal, served as a lecturer, teacher, agitator, and also was secretary of the executive committee of the town soviet. Fedin tells us that during this period:

«Я...работал..., с жаром отдаваясь жизни, полной ломки, новшеств и мечтаний, которые будучи "уездными" по масштабу, внутренне были для меня огромны, как революция.»<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

At the height of the Yudenich offensive in 1919 he was conscripted into the Red Army and sent to Petrograd. Most of the time, however, until 1921, he spent in the political section as assistant to the editor of the military newspaper, "Boevaya Pravda".

Leningrad, where he spent some eighteen years, plays an exceptional role in Fedin's memoirs. The beginning of his life there was very harsh, yet the hard work, hunger and cold did not prevent him from writing. He wrote of this time in "Gorky Amongst Us" (1944):

«Я был совершенно одинок в необъятном городе, во вчерашней столице неподозревавшей, что на ее проспектах появился еще один молодой человек с мечтой о писательстве, с надеждой на какие-то завоевания и-- может быть--славу.»<sup>3</sup>

During this period he wrote "Uncle Kisel", and "The Orchard," which won the first prize in a competition given by the House of Writers. He also wrote many articles in the local newspaper, using the pseudonym Peter Shved.

In 1920 Fedin met Gorky and this acquaintance developed into a long and valuable friendship which lasted until Gorky's death. Later, in 1957, in his autobiography, Fedin stresses this relationship in the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 143.

following words:

«Нынче, я могу сказать еще  
убежденнее, чем раньше, что факт  
этого знакомства с Горьким сделался  
громким событием моей писательской  
жизни.

Живой Горький с его обаянием,  
его художественным и моральным  
авторитетом нередко бывал первым  
судьей моих рассказов и повестей.»<sup>4</sup>

Through Gorky Fedin joined the Serapion Brothers, a group which consisted of talented young Leningrad writers who wrote for the sake of writing and not for Party principles. (The name came from the Hermit Serapion in one of the Tales of Hoffman). In their published manifesto the Serapions demanded freedom from all regimentation, condemned political unanimity, and sought literary inspiration in Russian and Western classics of the past. They insisted that art is free to live its own life independently of the source of its material.

During his association with the Serapions, Fedin wrote his first volume of short stories, THE WASTELAND (1923), that drew its material entirely from the past. Contemporary events and emphasis on social significance were completely avoided. In a letter to Gorky, Fedin wrote that in these stories:

«Мое чувство тяготеет к человеку  
простому, к человеку бедной  
повседневности, незаметного труда--к  
безвинной кляче, перевозящей грубый  
воз истории от эпохи в эпоху.»<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>B. Brainina, Konstantin Fedin. The Soviet Writer, Moscow: 1951  
p. 51.

The seven stories in this collection deal with the world of simple, lonely people whose sufferings arouse the sympathy of the author. Here Fedin carries on the tradition of nineteenth century realism in his selection of motifs, in his descriptive passages, and in his psychological treatment of characters.

"Anna Timofevna" (1922) is the longest of the stories. The eponymous heroine is a sturdy old self-effacing woman whose yearning for affection is hampered by a harsh provincial environment and the misfortunes that befall her. Anna Timofevna's whole life passes in unrelieved work for those whom she loves. She has to contend with a drunken husband, an imbecile daughter and a decrepit and aging lover, whose timid response to her need for love is rewarded by Anna's efforts to support him and his wayward son by peddling in the market place. She is like the exhausted horse she once saw pulling a load down the street and which is symbolic of her and of other simple people:

«Груженные рогожными кулями,  
тянулись по взвозу телеги... И в  
каждом хомуте--покорная лошадиная  
шея в налитых растянутых жилах. И  
глаза лошадиные красивы и добры, и от  
натуги ль, от обиды ль--катятся из  
глазниц по мордам, заползают в раздутые  
ноздри круглые стеклянные капли.

Глянула Анна Тимофеевна,  
подумала: "Притча"»<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> K. Fedin, Collected Works. Moscow: 1959. Vol. I, p. 50.



Later, Anna Timofevna remembers this parable again:

«В размытой грязи ноги и колеса ползли назад--под гору, и повозка была тяжела. На руках и вытянутой шее Анны Тимофевны выступили жилы, извитые и блестящие как дождевые ручьи...И вспомнила, как пришла ей в голову притча--одна на всю жизнь,-- притча о жизни, которую надо пройти, и опять улыбнулась.»<sup>7</sup>

At this stage Fedin was still under the strong influence of Dostoyevsky-«Бога моей юности»,<sup>8</sup> as he called him. Meek and passive Anna on the one hand reflects this influence, and on the other hand there is something Chekhovian, when the dying Anna hesitatingly asks her good-for-nothing husband: «Как ты... без меня... милый...»<sup>9</sup>

"A Tale of One Morning" in the collected stories THE WASTELAND is very similar in style to "Anna Timofevna", but is somewhat different thematically. Here Fedin portrays a seemingly kind and gentle person who has a strong passion for birds:

«Он слушал, как пели птицы, и улыбался ртом и, может быть, глазами, но этого никогда... не было видно.»<sup>10</sup>

Being a religious man, Savel Savelych always thanks God in his prayers

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>8</sup>I. S. Zilberstein, The Creation of Konstantin Fedin. Nauka, Moscow: 1966. p. 42.

<sup>9</sup>K. Fedin, Collected Works. The Government Publishers of Artistic Literature. Moscow: 1959. Vol. I, p. 97.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

for bestowing him with these blessings. Suddenly we learn that this man is a hangman who, to gain his freedom, volunteers to execute a fellow prisoner. Fedin ends the story with a description of a hanging, the effect it produces on some of the officials, and with Savel's attentive listening to the song of a bird after his hangman's task is done.

Fedin introduces into this story the psychological problem of a man who, having lost all feeling for human beings, seeks compensation in a love of nature and birds and in prayer. The author accentuates this problem by contrasting the moral ugliness of the spiritually and physically deformed Savel with the beauties of nature which excite his soul. Describing Savel, he juxtaposes him with this beautiful picture of nature.

«Ах, осенью, когда клен высасывает  
из земли золото и переливает его по  
своим жилам в листья; осенью, когда  
шелк паутины щекочет печальные лучи  
солнца; осенью, когда земля благодарна  
и утомлена, как любовница, --этой  
осенью быть в лесу.»<sup>11</sup>

Another story in "THE WASTELAND", "The Chief Gunner" (1922), is a story of the peasant Potap who serves on a warship as a chief gunner. He is a rational, down-to-earth man and is against the revolution, but he joins in shooting at the loyal forces despite his feelings. He is annoyed at the poor marksmanship of one of his men, takes over his gun, and starts firing, yelling: «Корабль позорить? А-а-а!»<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

The story ends on a pessimistic note:

«Список кончался старшим  
комендором линейного корабля 'Арриан'  
Потапом., фамилия его отпечаталась  
неясно.»<sup>13</sup>

The story is an unheroic and inglorious account of a simple, unidentified man who was inadvertently involved in an historic event, and who paid for it with his life. This story was not well received by the Soviet critics and F. Brainina in her book "K. FEDIN" accuses the author of a decadent frame of mind.

"The Orchard" (1922) was written before Fedin came under the influence of the Serapion Brothers. The story begins with a description of an orchard in spring when the blossoms are in full colour and fill the air with their scent. Each year at this time the old mistress of the manor arrives from the city to sit at length on the terrace and enjoy the beauty and fragrance of the orchard in bloom. Her son walks among the trees with Silanti, the reticent gardener, and tries to elicit some information from him about his work. Silanti has grown all the trees from saplings and he loves them and tends them as children. In the year of the Revolution his masters fail to arrive and instead of the help required to work on the orchard the new regime sends a school teacher with a crowd of children who occupy the manor house. The children run through the orchard breaking the branches of an apple tree and Silanti angrily

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

chases them out, only to be stopped by the teacher. When the new occupants go to town for a day Silanti sets the house on fire and sits nearby coldly gazing into the flames.

Silanti's whole existence consisted of his orchard and the old house, and he loses the sense of meaning in life when he believes he has lost them. Like Potap he acts out of inertia rather than intent and is a casualty in the struggle between the new and the old, between socialism and the individual who is involved in active creation.

"THE WASTELAND" stories are greatly influenced by the Serapion programme, which stressed stylistic devices rather than content. The general theme of these stories is sympathy for lonely and unusual people like Anna, Savel, Potap and Silanti. All the stories, with the exception of "The Orchard", display experimentation in language, such as rhythmic sentences, inversions, extreme figures of speech, and other poetic devices. A good example may be found in "The Tale of One Morning":

«Ах, осенью, когда клен высасывает  
из земли золото и переливает его по  
своим жилам в листья; осенью, когда  
шелк паутины щекочет печальные лучи  
солнца; осенью, когда земля  
благодарна и утомлена, как любовница, --  
этой осенью быть в лесу. Лежать под  
кустом барыни-ягоды, пощипывать  
красные, мясистые бусины -- пряные,  
рассыпчатые, -- лежать так и ждать,  
когда шустрая синица иль осанистый  
снегирь, нарядные, разодетые, сядут  
на солнечную верхушку клена и потом,  
не в силах устоять перед зазыванием

приманки, с куста на куст, как по лестнице, спустятся на поляну к невидимому крылу тонкой сетки...»<sup>14</sup>

Communist Party critics did not accept "THE WASTELAND" very favourably. They wondered why a writer during a revolution could concentrate on the individual experiences of people who seemed to be outside history and who stayed away from the main stream of social activity. It is quite apparent that these oppressed people rather than the socialist heroes were Fedin's own choice. Later, when he was closer to obeying the demands of the Party, he found it necessary to explain this "deviation" and he wrote to a correspondent:

«Тематический состав "Пустыря", Вас не должен удивлять. Маленький человек -- герой "Пустыря" -- был предметом моего пристрастия на протяжении долгих лет... Это был плод моей жизни в старой литературе, моей замкнутой отшельнической школы, моей скрытой мечты. Я должен был разродиться, иначе плод умер бы во мне и отравил бы меня. "Города и годы" есть прямой ответ на Ваше недоумение... А к этому времени, с выходом на свет "Пустыря", я был свободен от прошлого.»<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, in his first major work of fiction, "CITIES AND YEARS", Fedin attempts to hew closer to the Party line.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 111, 112.

<sup>15</sup> В. Brainina, K. Fedin. The Soviet Writer, Moscow: 1951.

## CHAPTER II

### FEDIN'S LITERARY DEVELOPMENT: HIS NOVELS

With his next work, "Cities and Years", Fedin acquires a new genre, the novel, which remains the main form for his literary expression until the present time.

"Cities and Years", published in 1924, was written during a period of comparative freedom in Soviet literary production. It is in striking contrast to Fedin's earlier works. Its main theme is the tragedy of the individual during the revolutionary period. It is set against the background of 'cities and years', of time and space, of war and social revolt. It is in this context that the individual is to be seen and judged. At such a time the life of the hero is completely overshadowed by the greater events of war and revolution.

The novel is a study of an idealistic intellectual who believes in humanity rather than in a nation and who is unable to accept fully the revolution and the new regime. The novel develops through the experience of the single character, Andrey Startsov, who reflects the complex problems which faced the old intelligentsia at this time. A product of European education, Startsov is not an enemy of the new but rather is a weakling who can support neither the old nor the new.

He is an individualist who cannot find a place in the collective society, which seems to him to violate indispensable humanistic ideals.

Fedin seems to sympathize with his hero, whose doubts and misgivings may well have been shared by the author himself. He gives his hero the human qualities which are lacking in Andrey's opposite, Kurt Wahn, an active Bolshevnik whose ideas flow in simple prose and whose speech is constructed of proper phrases.

The conflict between the two concerns the importance of individual human beings and the evaluation of one's ties to them through friendship, loyalty or gratitude. Andrey, whose revolutionary enthusiasm has quickly cooled, saves the life of Schonau, a class enemy to whom he owes a private debt of gratitude. Kurt, who had been Andrey's friend, hunts the latter down and coldly kills him as a traitor to the Revolution.

Although "Cities and Years" is not a biographical novel, one can hardly fail to notice some aspects of the author's life that are reflected in Andrey. Like the former, the latter goes to Germany to study just before the First World War. Andrey is a sensitive young man, gentle, idealistic and a hater of violence and any form of chauvinism. He admires Western European art and culture, and through his interest in art he meets a young German artist, Kurt Wahn, to whom he becomes devoted. The war brings about some changes in Andrey's thinking. On the eve of hostilities Andrey observes some German patriotic demonstrations which reveal to him a chauvinism that he has

not realised before, and he begins to doubt the effectiveness of European culture. Even his friend Kurt disappoints him by avoiding him and seeing him as an enemy of his people. All this causes disillusionment with European humanitarianism in Andrey and contributes to his loneliness.

Andrey is a hero with an abstract - humanistic world-view but weak will-power. He needs someone to guide him. He finds this guidance in his first love, Marie Urbach, whom he meets on one of his restricted walks while being interned in Germany. The history of this love is not important as a contribution to the story but for its provision of a parallel between Andrey's private and social life. He deceives his love as he deceives the Revolution.

Upon Marie's insistence Andrey returns to Russia where he meets his friend Kurt Wahn. They renew their friendship but the ideological gap between them widens. Kurt has become a dedicated Communist in the course of his experiences in revolutionary Russia. During their reunion, Kurt blames himself for not having understood Andrey's universalistic views, to which Andrey replies that war is still repulsive to him. Here Kurt introduces the Communist idea that the end justifies the means by saying that, if war is necessary to end the war, then there is no other course. Later Andrey tells Kurt what has happened to him in Bischofsberg and of his love for Marie. The puzzled Kurt asks Andrey whether this was the greatest thing that ever happened to him and, when his friend replies in the affirmative, he grimly says that



the greatest thing that ever happened to him was hate. Love and moral principles, hate and ruthlessness part the two friends and also mark the division between the idealistic intellectuals of the past and the realistic revolutionaries of the present.

«Это вы... Старцовы--крутитесь  
вечно в мнимой принципиальности, все  
хотите примерить идеальное с  
действительным. Мы знаем, что  
примерить нельзя...»<sup>16</sup>

declares Golosov, the young chief of the Semidol Party Executive Committee.

Indecision and weakness of character are Andrey's main traits which draw him into conflict with the new ideology and which finally lead him to his doom. He wants to be useful, but he cannot apply himself. He is just as indefinite in his personal life. Despite his strong love for Marie, he cannot resist the provocation of a stray girl, Rita, and he accepts her love as a substitute for Marie's. Constantly in need of a strong hand to guide him through life, when he has found such a hand, it seems, he manages to stay on the right course.

With Kurt's help, Andrey starts to participate in Party activities at Semidol, and, when Von Schönau appears as a leader of an anti-Bolshevik revolt among the local Mordvinians, he participates in the punitive expedition sent out to quell them. For the first time he feels useful in taking up some responsibilities in the task of overcoming the horrors in the world.

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<sup>16</sup>К. Fedin, Collected Works. Government Publishers of Artistic Literature. Moscow: 1959. Vol. II, p. 330.

«Я понял, что нужно взять на себя всю тяжесть ужаса, а не бежать его, считая, что в нем виноват мир, но не я...»<sup>17</sup>

says Andrey in one of his discussions with Kurt. This apparent strength, however, lasts only a short while as he immediately betrays his cause by stealing papers from Kurt's desk, enabling Von Schönau to escape certain death at the hands of the Bolsheviks and to make his way to Germany.

The motives for Andrey's act are very human. He is moved by Von Schönau's plea for his life in return for the same act which he had performed for Andrey, and by his willingness to deliver a letter to Marieback in Germany. It is quite evident that Fedin did not intend Andrey to be a villain, for, ashamed of his treacherous act, Andrey requests to be sent to the front at the time of the Yudenich offensive on Petrograd. Instead, however, he is given an office job at army headquarters in the city. Here various unfortunate circumstances bring Andrey's life to a tragic end. He loses his will to live after he sees the hardship and inhumanity of life in Petrograd. The pregnant Rita seeks him out and her presence only strengthens his poignant memories of Marie. Then, one day, Marie appears at the door of his room, sees the pregnant Rita and flees down the stairs, heedless of his desperate cries. The main reason for hopelessness, however, is a feeling of futility, his inability to find a place in this new world of revolutionary

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 392.

action. In his last letter to Marie he writes:

«Мне вспомнилось, как я зимой наткнулся на собаченку, которая царапала передними ногами запертую дверь. Хозяин собаченки спал, что ли, а может не хотел отворять дверей: была вьюга. Я подошел к двери и увидел на притоптанном снегу красные следы собачьих лапок. Собаченка, царапая дверь, раскровенила себе лапы. Она не могла понять, что вовсе не нужна на этом свете. Я всю жизнь старался стать в круг. Понимаешь, чтобы все в мире происходило вокруг меня. Но меня всегда отмывало, относило в сторону... Словом, я бросил царапать.»<sup>18</sup>

Andrey's story ends with his madness and his last meeting with Kurt, who, after discovering the loss of the papers from his desk, suspects Andrey and tracks him down. He extracts a confession from his friend and then kills him.

In the ideological contest between Andrey's love and Kurt's hate the latter comes out triumphant, for in the new society there is no room for love and sentiment, they are the appurtenances of individualism and the past.

In characterizing Andrey Startsov, with his idealism and reforming instinct accompanied by an inability to act, Fedin was obviously influenced by nineteenth-century Russian fiction. Startsov might easily join the long list of "superfluous heroes" of the last century. His hatred of violence and his pacifism reflect Tolstoy's ideas, and his ambivalence

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 11, 12.

which leads him into self-condemnation are reminiscent of the behaviour of some of Dostoyevsky's heroes.

In Startsov Fedin represents those members of the Intelligentsia who had a deep sense of social responsibility which they translated into a humanitarian philosophy of love for mankind, but who kept it as a personal philosophy and took few steps to realize it. Being people who dealt with abstract ideas rather than practical action they could not cope with the harsh realities of the Revolution. Andrey, for instance, tried to adjust himself to the new world in a spirit of harmony, rather than in class conflict. He could not realize that there was no other choice for him but to join the new world or die. Because of his philosophy he could not join the new world, so he had to die.

Andrey is the most logically developed character in the novel, The other characters, although effectively presenting different points of view, can hardly serve as living human beings. Kurt Wahn is very interesting in his youth when he is pictured as an artist who loves nature and European culture; yet his transformation into a hard, hostile Bolshevik, who is ready to kill his best friend for the good of the cause, is not explained properly; hence his image at the end is unconvincing.

The image of Marie Urbach is also vivid in her childhood, but from the time she falls in love with Andrey her character becomes psychologically unmotivated and somewhat schematic. Her metamorphosis, for instance, from a spoiled upper middle-class bourgeoisie into a dedicated socialist

is rather too sudden and lacks conviction. Von Schönau is presented with greater consistency. In him the author shows his contempt for German militarism and for the upper class. In keeping with his personality are such acts as the destruction of all Kurt's paintings just because the artist turned Bolshevik, and his informing Andrey, after the latter saved his life, that he was Marie's first lover.

Many other characters in the novel who make only a short appearance are also never explained properly and the reader is obliged to take them for granted. Their presence, however, is far from being futile: in many instances they add a certain colour and liveliness to the story.

The presentation of such characters as 'Dyadya Kisel' Lependin, and "Okopnyj" Professor is short but vivid. The author describes their appearance and then shows them in action, which is sufficient to form a picturesque image. In general, these characters represent the striking personalities who stand out among the masses of people and the presentation of whom brighten the given episode.

Fedin introduces 'Dyadya Kisel' in the following way, for example: -

«Рядом с Андреем устроился громадный бородач в овчинном полушубке и шапке. Он был нескладен в необычном своем одеянье, среди потрепанных гимнастеров и фуражек. Волосы его и мощная русая борода завивались спиральками, как сосновая стружка, лицо было станно маленьким, в этой гуще волос, прозрачные веки наполовину затягивали горящие черные глазки. Мужик был очень высок, и плечи его катились широкими отлогостями, но он с трудом держался на

ногах и сразу, как вошел в вагон, вытянулся на лавке, подложив под голову полушубок и спрятав под него шапку.»<sup>19</sup>

And then:

«Дядя Кисель приоткрыл веки, горящими глазками блеснул на Андрея, на Лепендина и покашлял.

--Что, правду говорят, --спросил он тихо,-- на родине большие деньги все стали иметь?»<sup>20</sup>

Colour is also added by such digressions as the festive day at Erlangen, the sunny morning in Bischofsberg, the digging of the trenches in Petrograd, and many others. Often these digressions preserve Fedin's florid style of his early stories. Here is an example:

«Сидеть в коляске, залитой позументами карусели, сидеть, прижавшись, впившись всем телом в кружевную, жаркую, пышногрудую, подкрашенную, чуть-чуть вспотевшую девушку, с которой встретился, столкнулся, сблизился минуту назад в толпе, где каждый человек, как пыж в патроне, сидеть, -- ах, ах, нет! -- лететь, нестись, кружиться, точно в облаках.»<sup>21</sup>

It is plain that the author is still under the influence of the Serapion Brothers. In its style and the poetic rhythm this passage is so much like many of Fedin's digressions in "THE WASTELAND" stories. The language is emphatically expressive. There are obvious repetition, rhythmic regularity and excessive metaphors. Although it might evoke in

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 263, 264.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 78

the reader a certain aesthetic satisfaction, this style was attacked by the Soviet critics and even Gorky reproached Fedin for his unnecessary verbosity.

In 1926 Fedin published the story "Transvaäl" in HARCHOV's ALMANAC. The story was based upon material gathered by the author in the mid-twenties in the forests of Smolensk. It deals with the fate of the peasants during the period of the New Economic Policy.

"Transvaal" is a character study of Svaaker, a Boer by origin who had been driven from Estonia by the war and who was living in a Russian village in the Smolensk district. Ugly in appearance, with a glass eye, speaking broken Russian, this man is regarded by the simple villagers as almost a super-natural being. He despises the peasants and through his strong will and energy he exploits them. He even manages to exploit them after the Revolution by masking his greed with an outward appearance of kindness and humility. He succeeds in bringing the whole economy of the village under his control. He marries the cultured daughter of the local landowner, whom he afterwards drives out. The story ends with Svaaker's dream of spreading his influence over the next village and with his wife's meek admission that he is able to do anything he wants to do.

Some Soviet critics attacked Fedin for this story, seeing in Svaaker a glorified 'kulak'; others praised him, seeing a satirical approach in the presentation of Svaaker. Perhaps, to a certain degree they are both right. It seems, however, that they missed the main point, namely,

that Fedin tried to show, through the success of this negative hero, the ignorance of the peasants.

In his next novel, "The Brothers", (1927) Fedin again deals with the problem of the intellectual in the new revolutionary era. This time his hero is an artist -- a musician and composer. Again, much of the material is based on the author's own experience. The hero of the novel is Nikita Karev. Nikita's childhood memories, his love and then his hatred for music and, partially, his life in Germany, have parallels in Fedin's life.

Nikita is a lonely individualist who evades any social involvement. Yet he tries hard to produce a great musical work which will reflect the revolutionary time. Life forces him to accept the Revolution and after he does so he tries to adjust to it. The process of adjustment is very painful and his artistic nature is almost crushed. He finally manages to produce a successful symphony. His artistic glory, however, appears to be a result of his European past and his private and personal inspiration, rather than the result of socialistic environment.

In "The Brothers", Fedin tries to reconcile in his hero the old world and the new, in contrast to "Cities and Years" where the hero Andrey Startsov is a product of the old who cannot accept the new and consequently is destroyed by the Revolution. Nikita is also a product of the old, as Andrey is. He goes through a critical period of adjustment, but where Andrey fails he appears to succeed. Thus, Fedin shows the transition from the old to the new, from individualism to conformity.



Yet this transition is not complete. Nikita remains an individualist. Music is the only means of communication he knows. He expresses a desire to compose for the people because he realizes that they will appreciate his music. After a concert he says to his niece Irina:

«Вот сегодня я чувствую, что музыка нужна не только музыкантам. Что музыку понимают все, почти все. ...Тогда я подумал, что неприме но должен писать, скорее кончить и -- пусть слушают;»<sup>22</sup>

As an artist he needs an audience and he sees this audience in the masses. Thus his motives have nothing to do with socialism.

His ability to write also depends wholly on the state of his personal affairs. When he falls in love with the German girl, Anna, he successfully composes, when she dies he stops writing. Then he begins to write again because he finds a comfort in his relationship to Irina, who reminds him of Anna. He severs this relationship as soon as the image of Anna in Irina begins to fade and again he falls into inactivity.

Pursuing an emotional security he turns this time to Varvara, his childhood sweetheart, only to be rejected by her shortly afterwards. Having failed completely in his private life, Nikita does not turn, as one would expect from a Soviet man, to a search for comfort in socialism, but rather to the security of his glory as a composer.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Vol. III, p. 308.

Fedin ends the novel with the statement:

«Мир отвергал Никиту Карева,  
чтобы принять. Обогащал одну его  
судьбу опытом несчастья и утрат в  
другой»<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to Andrey Startsov, Nikita manages to adapt himself to new times, but at the same time he remains an individualist, and is thus far from being a real Soviet man.

However, there is an attempt by Fedin to present the new man. There are three Communists who could fit into the pattern of the new Soviet hero. One of them is the youngest Karev, Rostislav, whose brief appearance serves no other purpose than to contrast his youthful political convictions with the apolitical nature of Nikita, and whose meaningless death and meagre glory -- (a street was named in his honour) -- undermine the significance of this contrast. Another is the old Bolshevik Shering, an important party member, whose image comes from the author's reminiscences about him rather than from his actions in the novel, and who is on his deathbed accused by his son of an ideological deviation. The third is Rodion Chorbov, who is fully drawn by the author and whose life in many ways is connected with the lives of the other main characters of the novel.

Chorbov is regarded by some Soviet critics as one of the prototypes of the Soviet positive hero. Of peasant background and a child-

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 416.

hood playmate of Nikita, he becomes a sailor at an early age, joins the revolutionary movement and is arrested. After the Revolution he dedicates his life to the building of the new society.

Fedin attributes few sympathetic traits to Chorbov, but in order to stress the symbolic victory of the new he allows him to triumph at the end by his marriage to Irina. This marriage of a peasant to the daughter of an intellectual may also be looked upon as Fedin's answer to the question of the old and the new.

The problem of the Intelligentsia versus the new world, so vividly raised in "The Brothers", is by no means solved by Fedin. It seems that he saw not only the process of change between the old and the new at the time, but also the change that would come in the future. The accusations of Shering's son support this point:

«Товарищи, вы устарели! Ни  
одного житейского факта вы не можете  
разрешить без сусульничанья...Мы  
люди нового практического века, а  
вы становитесь музейным экспонатом.»<sup>24</sup>

The author realizes the difficulty of finding a place in this rapidly changing world for an intellectual whose development is rooted in the past even if it is directed towards the future:

«Мы носим в себе такие чувства,  
против которых вы ополчились не

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Vol. III, p. 365.

потому, что они вредны, а потому, что вы не обладаете ими, не хотите видеть их значения. Мы бережно храним чувство прошлого...нас всегда вдохновляло желание кинуть мост в будущее, и для этого мы старались крепче стоять в прошлом.»<sup>25</sup>

says the old professor Bakh to Rodion. Fedin sees cultural continuity in all processes and he cannot reject the old in order to accept the new. He tries, it seems, to prove this point through Nikita. While he is not entirely successful in this novel he achieved greater success in his trilogy.

Analysing "THE BROTHERS" stylistically, we see that Fedin has not freed himself as yet of, as he puts it, "грехов стилизации".<sup>26</sup> There are a number of inversions and some misuse of folklore all of which sound artificial. Here is an example from the description of Varvara:

«Варя, Варенька, Варварушка,  
--с засученными по локотки  
рукавчиками, -- Варюшенька,  
Варечка -- в шелковом платице, в  
лисьей душегрейке!

Только бы и любоваться тобой  
приказчицей родне, угождать твоему  
нраву шерстобитским приживалочкам,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Vol. III, p. 356.

<sup>26</sup> I. S. Zilberstein, The Creation of K. Fedin, Nauka, Moscow: 1966 p. 173.

смотреть не насмотреться на тебя  
 купеческой дворне! А уж мамаша  
 то ненарадуется, что ни слово,  
 то золотко, что ни вздох, то-  
 любушка, красота, свет души  
 Варварушка, Варя Варенька,  
 Варюшечка!»<sup>27</sup>

There are also abundant metaphoric images which create unnatural tension. Describing a city Fedin writes:

«Он еще полон химер, окутанные  
 сыростью камни кажутся сквозными,  
 здесь нет простора, какими глаза  
 привыкли видеть его, здесь утро  
 наступает в полдень, и лампы вновь  
 загораются, не успев остынуть.

Не признаки -- живые люди  
 скользят вдоль скользких стен,  
 струятся по мостам, перекинутым из  
 мутной пустоты, колышутся испариной  
 над бледными площадями.»<sup>28</sup>

In the early days of his literary career Fedin was under the influence of Dostoyevsky, and latterly he came under the influence of Tolstoy. The evidence of this change may be looked upon as a mark of Fedin's literary development. "The Brothers" was written while still under the influence of the former. Such characters as Varvara, turned in on her own problems and passions, reflect the Dostoyevskian woman. In the subsequent novels this trend becomes less obvious and completely disappears in his trilogy.

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<sup>27</sup> K. Fedin, Collected Works. The Government Publishers of Artistic Literature. Moscow: 1959. Vol. III, p. 141.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

During the period when he was writing "The Brothers", Fedin carried on an extensive correspondence with Gorky, often asking his advice on style and character development. When Fedin contracted tuberculosis shortly after he finished "The Brothers", Gorky secured for him a passport to go to Europe.

Between 1928 and 1934 Fedin travelled extensively in Western Europe. He may be considered one of the Soviet writers who has had the most experience with the people and the nations of the West. The influence of this experience is apparent in his writings. There is a definite authority in the handling of scenes laid in Germany in his first two novels and, in contrast, a hesitancy in the treatment of life in the Soviet Union. He seems to be more confident in describing the West than the Soviet Union. This also is quite apparent in his next novel, "THE RAPE OF EUROPE", published in two volumes in 1934 and 1935 respectively.

The main material for "THE RAPE OF EUROPE" came from Fedin's impressions gained from his travels in 1929. The plan of the novel is very simple -- a contrast and a comparison of the deteriorating social and economic life of the West due to the Depression with the full employment and economic boom that resulted from the five-year-plan in the Soviet Union.

The story is centered around the Dutch family of Van Rossum, who are importers of lumber and ship owners. The family had grown rich and prominent during the fifty years that it controlled a timber

concession in Russia. In the novel the author describes the family during the Depression when its fortunes are beginning to decline. Franz Van Rossum, the nephew of the two brothers Lodevick and Philip, is the agent in Russia and he writes that the Soviet government is interfering with the concession and that the workers have gone on strike. In order to recoup the losses, the firm ventures into questionable dealings, such as buying up heavily insured old merchant ships with the expectation that they will sink.

Fedin presents the symbolic image of the West by showing a comparison of the life of the rich with that of the poor. On the one hand there is the extravagant life of the Van Rossums and their associates and their speculation on the Rotterdam Stock Exchange. On the other there are the beggars on the streets, the life in the slums, the lay-offs because of a lack of orders in a Silesian town, and the pathetic story of the stoker Rudolf Kvast who commits suicide because of unemployment. Although the Soviet propaganda is easily sensed in these comparisons, the pictures drawn by the author are very realistic. They are unlike the bloated caricatures of Soviet fiction and the portrayals of the wealthy are very convincing. Philip Van Rossum, for example, is a logical product of the successful business world and of the high society in which he has lived for over sixty years. He is a cultured man, an art lover, a student of international affairs and of foreign languages. Though his feelings are dulled by the ruthless business world he can still respond to a plea for help from an unemployed

worker, or express deep sorrow over the death of his beloved daughter Elena. Profiteering, however, is part of life and it governs his emotions and dulls his spiritual life. When his older brother Lodevick is dying, Philip's chief concern is with the terms of his will, and after his nephew's death he worries mainly about finding a new agent. The state of his business affairs also governs his political views, and he opposes the proposed hostilities with the Soviet Union only because he is involved in some profitable dealings with that country.

During his travels Fedin must have heard many discussions of the problems of the relationship of the West to the Soviet Union, for this subject is one of the main themes of the novel, and some arguments are reproduced in it. To mention a few, some of the businessmen, fearing depression, were eager to trade with the Russians but were afraid of competition; others, like the oil king, Eldevig Heuser, wanted to boycott the Soviets because they belonged to a country with a communist system, the intention of which was to destroy capitalism. Others, like Philip Van Rossum, were deeply involved in business with the Soviet Union and rationalized that Communism would ultimately fail while the capitalist system of the West would go on as before.

It appears that Fedin intentionally emphasizes the West's self-interest in its dealings with the Soviet Union and he places this interest above human and social problems. As in some of his earlier fiction, in "THE RAPE OF EUROPE" the author is concerned with "the simple people" and, describing the misery of the deprived and unemployed



workers of the West he tries to show that the Soviet system offers them some hope. In this he is in accord with official Soviet demands, but he proves by his book that he arrived at this conclusion after his observation of economic conditions in the West during the Depression, not because someone forced him to it.

According to the canon imposed upon Soviet writers, love, and any personal involvement, should either serve to promote socialist ideas or play a secondary role.

In "THE RAPE OF EUROPE" however, love tends to overshadow the political message because its presentation is striking and all the involvements are very absorbing. The love affair between Ivan Rogov and Klavdia, the beautiful Russian wife of Franz Van Rossum, is unique in the way in which it is handled. Rogov is far from being a hero in the accepted sense. Lamed by a bullet in the Civil War, always quick to resent the slightest criticism of his country, he represents a rather sorry figure amongst the rich Westerners. His main attribute, however, is his intellect. He roams over Europe as a Soviet journalist without any apparent assignment, and finally comes to Holland where he meets Klavdia Van Rossum, whose husband he had known in Leningrad. They are attracted to each other because they are both Russians in a foreign land and because they stimulate each other intellectually, having opposed political views. In fact, Klavdia is completely apolitical and she insists that she is not a heroine who is prepared to sacrifice her comfort for a noble cause, but an ordinary woman.

Rogov accuses her of being disloyal to her homeland and of preferring a life of luxury as the wife of a rich man to the harsh existence which his socialist idealism justifies. Despite the contradictions Rogov cannot resist her when she seeks him out in his loneliness and pain on a beautiful Amsterdam night.

«Он остановился и обнял ее. На один миг глянув ей в глаза, он притянул ее голову к себе. Он целовал ее, и ему было так, как будто он целует свою немного одинокую, но все-таки любимую жизнь, и чувства, которые испытывались ночью в городе, и самый город, и прелесть путешествия -- влекущего и утомительного хождения в чужие земли, и губы -- жаркую награду поисков и ожиданья. Ему было странно и хорошо.

Когда это кончилось и, отдышавшись, они посмотрели вдаль -- на перекрестке, в конце переулка они различили полицейского. Он стоял неподвижной альфой, раздвинув ноги, накрытый треугольником накидки. Они повернулись и пошли назад. Но и там, с другой стороны, на перекрестке стоял, словно отраженье, такой же полицейский и глядел на них застыло, как удав.

Они засмеялись. Махнув рукою, Рогов опять обнял и опять поцеловал Клавдию. Оторвавшись друг от друга, они увидели, что полицейских нет: целоваться было разрешено, закон не возражал против поцелуев.»<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> K. Fedin, *Collected Works*. The Government Publishers of Artistic Literature. Moscow: 1959. Vol. IV. pp. 189, 190.

In the second volume, the action of the novel shifts to the Soviet Union, where Philip Van Rossum comes to improve his timber concession. Fedin is less successful as an artist in his description of life in the Soviet Union and in his presentation of Soviet socialism as an answer to the economic defeat of Western capitalism, because here he is crude and unconvincing. The author himself admits in one of his letters in 1959 that he could not find an antipode to Philip Van Rossum. The reason he gives is that the Soviet man at that time was in the process of developing and was far from complete. Hence, instead of one hero, he presents a number of them, but they are, it seems, no more than stereotyped robots. When Philip arrives at the village of Sorok in Northern Russia he finds the Soviet people a humorless lot. In their heroic feats they are, indeed, far less plausible than the author's portrayals of the poor workers in the West. The workers' brigade leader, Volodia Clushkov, the Komsomol member Senia Ershow, the pretty Shura and Sergeich, the boss of the local sawmill and leading Communist of Sorok, are images of virtue. When, for instance, Shura is introduced to Klavdia she immediately senses that the latter is a real White Guard and her heart begins to beat faster. It appears that in this case Shura is the subject of gentle satire rather than of realistic depiction.

The impression that Fedin is trying to convey is one of a huge release of national energy during the early five-year-plan. Although he achieves a certain realism, somehow it lacks conviction. One may argue that the author himself had his doubts about the whole affair, for in

the novel Philip Van Rossum sceptically observes on the one hand the illogical eagerness of some of the Russians to participate in the unpaid collective work, and on the other hand the low standard of their existence. He remarks to Sergeich that they ought not to propose an industrial plan for the country at the expense of the hungry population. To this Sergeich calmly agrees, but he insists that in the end it will be rewarded and that in the meantime people will not starve.

The main fascination of the story in the second volume, as in the first, is to be found in the continuing love affair of Klavdia and Ivan Rogov, who meet again in the Soviet Union. While Klavdia regards their relationship as passing romance, Rogov is greatly attached to her and he strives to master her mind. Each of their meetings ends in bickering. Klavdia cannot raise any enthusiasm for greatness in statistical achievements: Rogov cannot understand her desire for security and comfort, and her escape from reality. This affair, however, is doomed from the moment Klavdia is labelled a White-Guard by the Communist Shura, for a real Soviet man, such as Rogov is supposed to be, should not ultimately marry one. Their relationship ends by Rogov's revealing to her husband his love for Klavdia and demanding her release. Klavdia is afraid of losing her security, so she severs her relationship with Rogov. After her husband's death she readily becomes the mistress of the aged Philip Van Rossum and leaves the Soviet Union.

If one tries to judge the novel by what Fedin has set out to do, it may be regarded as something of a failure. Life in the Western world,

presented on several economic levels, is more complete, absorbing and interesting than in the Soviet Union. The portrayals of Philip Van Rossum and Klavdia, which ought to be satirical, are the best character creations in the novel. Ivan Rogov, on the other hand, fails completely as a representative of the new Soviet intellectual, and remains interesting only because he retains some general human traits, such as an un-communistic passion for Klavdia. His last act, by which Fedin, it seems, tries to dignify his Soviet nature appears somewhat artificial. Rogov reveals Philip Van Rossum's financial conspiracy and delivers a moralizing speech to the Komsomol of Sorok, in which he proclaims that the Soviets are a society of peace and equal rights, and that only when there is equality will they be ready to trade with the West.

Although, structurally, "THE RAPE OF EUROPE" is a weak novel, because it is disjointed, and its motley episodes are not well-integrated, and some of the main characters lack depth, it is a marked change from Fedin's previous novels. The author deals with much wider problems of Socialist reality in comparing them with Capitalism. Fedin calls his work a political novel and it represents an important period in the development of his ideological ideas in the direction of Socialist Realism. It appears, that the problem of the hero's identification with the Soviet regime is resolved by Fedin. His heroes are Soviet men. Yet the artistic presentation of these men leaves much to be desired. It seems that stylistically the novel is split into two parts. The ideologically well-developed and artistically successful representation

of the West and the poor presentation of the Soviet counterpart. This creates a sense of imbalance which is felt when the action moves to the Soviet Union.

Also, in this novel Fedin did not free himself completely from early influences on his style, which tends at time to be complicated. For example, presenting the Rotterdam Stock Exchange, the author uses a grotesque series of metaphors:

«Биржевой день был в разгаре.  
Круговращались жуки и черви, сплетали  
непрочные сети пауки, мошки отчаянно  
бились в тенетах, тарантулы то живо  
бегали, то замертво свертывались в  
комочек. Притворно дремали крокодилы.  
Каждое создание этого Ноева ковчега  
судорожно ждало своего часа, чтобы  
исполнить закон, готорый привел его  
сюда -- закон взаимного уничтожения.»<sup>30</sup>

In an article written shortly after the publication of the novel, Fedin once again points to his failure to find a counterbalance to Philip Van Rossum in Soviet society and he states further that a search for such a hero is an issue in Soviet literature.

In his next short novel, "ARCTUR SANATORIUM" published in 1940, Fedin goes even further from the true image of the Soviet hero. Levshin, a patient in the sanatorium at Davos in the Swiss mountains, is undoubtedly a product of Soviet society. He dreams of the productive

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Vol. Iv, p. 61.

life back home and wants to join in purposeful work for the future. This gives him the impetus to help him overcome his illness. His ideas about the society which produces such men are reflected in the inquiries of Dr. Shturm, an able practitioner, and in the suicide note of Dr. Klebe, the main hero of the novel. In it he wrote that if he were in this promised land he would not have to take his own life. This is about all that one can say about the Soviet qualities in Levshin. As in the previous novels, this Soviet man is overshadowed by personalities from Western society. Dr. Klebe, Inga, a beautiful dying patient, and the other people in the sanatorium are far more interesting and plausible than Levshin.

"Arctur Sanatorium" is partially based upon Fedin's own experience in a Swiss sanatorium. The purpose of the novel was to present a picture of Western Society "crushed by the contradictions of those years."<sup>31</sup>

The victim of this system is Dr. Klebe, who owns and runs the sanatorium. He is a good doctor who loves his work and is dedicated to his patients. Financial difficulties, however, force him into such unethical practices as misinforming his patients as to the state of their health and falsifying their negative laboratory reports. Under this financial pressure he becomes an escapist. He refuses to face the fact that he has contracted tuberculosis. He tries to forget reality by retreating into the imaginary world of Edgar Wallace's detective

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<sup>31</sup>E. J. Brown. Russian Literature Since the Revolution. Collier Books, New York, 1963, p. 130.

stories in which he sees himself a hero. When he is forced to face reality, however, it proves too much for him and he commits suicide. He leaves a note in which he says that he is tired of waiting for a miracle, the money which could save him.

The other victims of Western society are the patients in the sanatorium. One of them is Inga Krechmar. Describing her, Fedin shows a deep insight into the psychology of the sick. Alternate hope and fear obsess the girl as she strives for life. With the help of Dr. Shturm, who is half in love with her, she tries to achieve a spiritual triumph over her condition but fails, succumbing to reality and despair. She falls in love with Levshin who responds more out of pity than from sincere emotion. Love is something she needs to give her the strength of will to go on living. This relationship, however, gets in the way of the frantic Dr. Klebe, who is afraid of losing the profitable patient Levshin, thinking that he is annoyed by Inga's advances. He persuades Levshin to leave the sanatorium for a short period but, when he does so, Inga also leaves. The scene of Inga's departure is described by Fedin with much emotion. Aware of her hopeless condition, Inga plays the role of one who is cured and who goes away to a new life. Gathering the remnants of her strength, she says goodbye to each patient, expressing her regret that they must stay in the sanatorium. Her apparent triumph is short, however, for she is returned to the sanatorium in a semi-conscious state from the railroad station and dies the following day, taking a pathetic farewell of Levshin who has just returned from his leave.



As in his previous novels, Fedin is quite successful in presenting life in the West: its financial harshness, the passivity of the people and their lack of motivation. But again he failed to create a convincing image of Soviet society and of the Soviet man. Again, artistically, he is at ease in his presentation of the West. Such characterizations as Dr. Klebe and Inga with their personal problems and involvements are excellent. But, as in "The Rape of Europe", the author's art fails him when he is faced with the task of creating a convincing Soviet hero. Levshin is the least interesting character and is not explained with psychological depth.

Soviet critics are aware of this weakness in Fedin but do not criticize him harshly for it. For instance, B. Brainina says that the author was carried away in his description of the biological process of recovery and is lacking in his presentation of the social image of Levshin.

The critics stress, however, the importance of the novel in its relationship to the West. Indeed, "Arctur Sanatorium" was written under the influence of Western literature. In Fedin's words, the novel is a "polemical answer" to Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain" with its emphasis on the tragic helplessness of man before the cruel laws of biology. B. Brainina states that the novel was written to explain the degeneration of Western culture. Gorky and Fedin discussed through correspondence D. H. Lawrence's book "Lady Chatterly's Lover" and his bet with Norman

Douglas as to who would write the more erotic novel. Both Russian writers were disgusted with the incident and Fedin took up the task of exposing the decay of the West.

The style of the novel has undergone a notable change. The form has become simple, realistic and more effective. Here is an example of the author's description of a ski-jump:

«Забравшийся на самый верх просеки, лыжник стоял, не шевелясь, поперек дорожки. Вдруг он подпрыгнул и, повернув лыжи вдоль дорожки, ринулся вниз по отвесу. Он камнем прочеркнул просеку, за ней -- кривую трамплина, оторвался от него, слегка взметнулся вверх и полетел по воздуху. Он махал руками, как большая птица -- крыльями. Он приблизился к земле, а земля убегала из-под него падающим склоном горы. Он наклонялся вперед и летел, летел. Люди, стоявшие на склоне по краям дорожки, задрав головы, придерживая шляпы, следили за полетом. И вот прыгун коснулся лыжами дорожки, подогнув колени, приседая, мчась по снегу, как по воздуху, и, наконец, круто заворачивая в бок, чтобы остановить едва удержимый раскат. Снежная пыль заслоном взвилась из-под лыж, и, когда села, все увидели, что прыгун не удержался на ногах и лыжи -- крест-накрест -- раскачиваются над ним, беспомощно цепляясь друг за друга.»<sup>32</sup>

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32 K. Fedin. Collected Works. The Government Publishers of Artistic Literature. Moscow: 1959. Vol. V. p. 36.

Such a style begins to resemble Tolstoy's simplicity, and to a certain extent it is reminiscent of the famous description of the steeple-chase in "Anna Karenina". The influence of Dostoyevsky is also less apparent in "Arctur Sanatorium". The only person who might fall into the category of a Dostoyevskian character is Inga, but even her behaviour and involvement with Levshin could be excused by the hopeless state of her health.

Structurally, the novel is well integrated. In contrast to previous novels the field of action is limited to the environment of the sanatorium where the plot is logically and consistently developed.

## CHAPTER III

### TRILOGY

"Arctur Sanatorium" is the last novel in which Fedin deals with a Western theme. In his next major work, the trilogy, he uses purely Russian material. This change came about under the influence of the 1941-45 war. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Fedin spent much time at the front as a reporter where he observed the terrible depredation of the villages by the enemy and a dreadful loss of Russian life. This evoked patriotic feelings in Fedin and strengthened his convictions about the destiny of the Soviet regime. Fedin writes about his shift to Russian material:

«Обращение к чисто русскому материалу, после того как все прежние мои романы были, больше или меньше, связаны с темой Запада, являлось не только давно созревшим сильным желанием, но было выражением моих поисков большого современного героя. Когда войной решалась судьба родной страны, еще крепче, чем прежде, упрочилось убеждение, что будущее русской жизни нераздельно с ее советским строем и что истинно большим героем современности должен и может быть признан коммунист,

деятельная воля которого однозначна Победе » 33

During this period Fedin reached maturity as a writer and resolved some artistic and ideological problems with which he had been dealing from the beginning of his career. His trilogy is his masterpiece. The first two novels, "Early Joys" (1945) and "An Extraordinary Summer" (1949), won him in 1949 the First Stalin Prize. The third one, "Conflagration", although not published yet in complete form, has received many favorable comments from the critics.

In these novels Fedin finally realizes the concept of the Communist hero. This is a new man with formative roots in the past, in a period when revolutionary idealism was ennobled by the simple virtues of sincerity and integrity. The past is important for Fedin, and in his trilogy there predominates an awareness of the historical continuity between the past and the present.

The author presents a correlation between man and history. Time changes man, but the heroic action of man also influences historical time.

The novel consists of a mosaic of movements, numerous characters, and various circles of society in which realistic pictures of daily life blend with history.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p. 19.

The three separate novels are linked by the leading characters and an inner unity of theme. The action is concentrated in three separate years within a total period of some thirty years.

The story of "Early Joys" begins in 1910 in Saratov, the birthplace of the author. Fedin recreates the way of life and emotional atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Russia. Some of the scenes are recollections of his boyhood. The central figure is Kirill Izvekov, a strong, manly, idealistic youth of eighteen, a bright student at the technical school. The early joys are his joys of love for Liza, the pretty daughter of a grubby merchant, his participation in the revolutionary organization, and his dreams for a better future.

Although Fedin does not spend much time describing his revolutionary activities, he does present Kirill as a dedicated party member. Yet his character is not completely formed. In many ways he is a combination of youth and maturity. Mentally he is quite mature and his ideas presented in the arguments with Pastukhov and Tsvetuchin carry enough weight to make the others think. Emotionally he is not yet stable. He is too straightforward in criticizing Tsvetuchin's act in the play "Na Dne" only because he is jealous of the actor's influence on Liza. When Tsvetuchin in a greeting offers to shake hands with him, Kirill

«...шагнул за дверь и подал руку из коридора.»<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 242.

Trying to appear older, Kirill is wearing his jacket

«...внакидку, что отличало  
мужественных взрослых техников от  
гимназистов, реалистов, комерсантов, ...»<sup>35</sup>

He likes to show his superiority, especially with Liza whom he  
lectures

«...в тоне назиданий Меркурия  
Авдеевича...»<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, Kirill shows his maturity by being able to keep  
the secret of conspiracy even from Ksana Ragozin.

«...молчал, ...сосредоточенный,  
каждой черточкой лица нелюдимо  
отвергающий всякие расспросы.»<sup>37</sup>

The youthful and mature sides of his character are well shown in the  
scene where he parts with his mother at the time of his arrest:

«...он сморщился, постарев на  
миг на много-много лет..., он  
вырвался из ее объятий и в то  
же время больно мям и гладил  
ее пальцы.»<sup>38</sup>

Kirill preserves his dignity in front of the police, but at the same  
time cannot restrain himself from filial tenderness.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 178.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 241.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 195.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 252.

In the trilogy Fedin often shows the changes in the heroes' emotional lives through the expression in their eyes. In the case of Kirill it is disclosed through the «горячую темную желтизну» of his eyes:

«Усилилась желтизна глаз, но они не потеплели, а сделались угольными и сухими.»<sup>39</sup>

This is how the author describes Kirill's appearance during the investigation.

Liza retains the picture of Kirill's eyes in her mind long after the separation:

«...желтые, темно-желтые. Почти карие... У Кирилла они быстро менялись. То вдруг тяжело блеснут матовым отливом старой меди, то посветлеют, как табак.»<sup>40</sup>

And when they meet again, Liza recognizes this now estranged man only by his «пронизывающей желтизне глаз».<sup>41</sup>

Liza is a charming composite of gentleness and ardour, of dutiful submissiveness to the wishes of her stern father and flights of rebellion against his oppressive demand. Her dilemma lies between

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 314.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Vol. V. p. 228.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., Vol. V. p. 314.



a protest against her family's way of life and her responsibility to this family as a daughter. Her father subdues all her progressive ideas and eliminates her wish for personal freedom. Finally, he pushes her towards marriage with an unwanted man.

The author shows obvious sympathy toward Liza. To no other character are attributed so many variations on the word "beautiful":

«прелестная, очаровательная,  
прекрасная, чудесная, лучистая»<sup>42</sup>

Liza has a talented, poetic and responsive nature. Describing her, Fedin tries to create a sense of femininity and frailty:

«подбородок... нежен, волосы  
тонки. слишком тонки и полны  
воздуха.»<sup>43</sup>

Often the description of Liza is on the verge of poetry:

«...ее юность еще жила в ней  
нетронутой едва украшенной  
первым женским расцветом.»<sup>44</sup>

In connection with her the author uses many metaphors. He describes her memories as follows:

«Это были медленные облака,  
проплывавшие перед взором из  
конца в конец прожитых лет.»<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Vol. V. p. 190, 228.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Vol. V. p. 183

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 474.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 227.

Later he talks about her love of the theatre:

«Мир дома и даже мир Кирилла  
отступали перед третьим миром,  
недоступным, как божество...  
Глубоко наедине со своим сердцем  
она признавалась, что сцена для  
нее такая же несбыточность, как  
перелет с лебедями за океан...»<sup>46</sup>

He often refers to her eyes in order to describe her emotional  
state:

«...зеленовато-голубой цвет ее  
глаз был чист и мягок.  
...в глазах Лизы блеснул налет  
внезапного испуга, вот-вот должна  
была скопиться в них прозрачная  
детская слеза.  
Ее глаза ... говорили о смущении,  
о любопытстве, о стыде, об  
удовольствии, о детской растеренности  
и вспыхнувшем женском всепонимании.»<sup>47</sup>

The delightfully described love between Kirill and Liza is treated with charm and psychological insight. Their secret walks on warm spring evenings, the arguments on philosophical subjects, their excitement of accidental physical touch, and their dreams of the future are very captivating.

Their love is the novel's central motif which touches the lives of nearly all the other characters, who represent a cross-section of Saratov society.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., Vol. VI. pp. 216, 217.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 441.

The intellectuals are represented by the actor Tsvetuchin and the playwright Pastukhov. These two are friends and they often discuss such subjects as the significance of art. In these discussions Fedin discloses some of his own ideas and thoughts on different subjects. In one of the conversations Pastukhov condemns the idea that art is an imitation of life and he does not discern any man-made rule of political necessity as guiding principle. His authorities are Balzac and Tolstoy who believed that the creative instinct manifests itself independently of the artist's will. He says

«Жизнь воображения -- вот сущность  
художника или выдающегося ума»<sup>48</sup>

Later, another element is presented in Pastukhov's consideration of art. Once, after a performance, Kirill accuses Tsvetukhin of having overplayed and sentimentalized his part. Tsvetukhin objects, saying that an act must stir the public, and that the audience was stirred. Liza, also present, remarks that the actor's conception of the art was a revelation. But Kirill insists that it is the author who made the revelation by looking beneath the surface of life. Then he goes on:

«Не всякий драматург видит в жизни,  
что скрыто... Для этого мало быть  
даже поэтом, для этого надо быть...  
революционером!»<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 148.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Vol. VI. p. 241.

These ideas lead Pastukhov to wonder whether imagination is enough and whether such things as foresight and the power of prophecy are not higher manifestations of the artistic mind. Further, he wonders whether art is directed by any laws, and he decides that the laws are embodied in action; if art is effective then it is legitimate and if it is dead to perception then no law can animate it. On Pastukhov's departure from Moscow, Tsvetukhin expresses regret that they did not drink to art, and he replies:

«Что ж--искусство? В искусстве  
никогда всего не решишь, как в  
любви никогда всего не скажешь.  
Искусство без недоразумения -- это  
все равно, что пир без пьяных.»<sup>50</sup>

Pastukhov is a self-centred man whose social conscience is dormant. By juxtaposing men like Kirill and Ragozin, who act upon their convictions, to such intellectuals as Pastukhov, Fedin shows the superiority of the former in the new revolutionary times. Pastukhov confesses to himself that in 1905 he wanted to take a place at the barricades, but he lacked the courage. Yet, his slack social conscience is stirred for a brief moment by the death of Tolstoy who had been his literary hero.

He tells Tsvetukhin:

«Я не пророк, вещать не хочу.  
Скажу только одно. Он оставил

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 496.

нам правило, понятное, как слово.  
 Вот земля. Вот человек на земле..  
 И вот задача: устроить на земле  
 жизнь, благодатную для человека.»<sup>51</sup>

In short, Pastukhov begins to see a vision of a new life for man on earth. He begins to notice the difference between himself and those whose objective in life is the common good. He remarks to Tsvetukhin before leaving Saratov:

«А где-нибудь неподалеку от нас  
 кто-нибудь делает наше будущее.  
 Сквозь дикие дебри, весь  
 изодравшись, идет к цели...Какой-  
 нибудь испорченный мальчик.»<sup>52</sup>

This reference is to the exiled Kirill Izvekov.

Imprisonment matures Kirill, but it does not embitter him. He develops a philosophy which compels him to probe his relation to society in terms of the progressive movements of his day. His bitter experiences during his trial strengthens his love for Liza. He manages to smuggle a letter to her from his place of exile in Siberia and he writes that she must feel free to give her affections to another and that he will not be hurt. Her freedom and independence are dearer to him than anything else. The beautiful Liza is not as strong as Kirill,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 494.

however. She tries desperately to preserve their mutual pledge, but she is worn out by the dogged persistence of her father, and marries Shubnikov, a foppish and unstable young man who is spoiled by his aunt, a rich merchant. Liza cannot overcome the sense of duty to her parents inculcated in childhood, though she fully realizes that she has a still more important duty to herself. Her sensitive nature is crushed by the loveless marriage and she understands too late that she has transgressed against love, for the image of Kirill remains as strong as ever in her mind.

Although Fedin dedicates so much time to Liza, she is obviously not meant to be the main heroine of the novel. In her struggle for new ideas she gives way to reactionary conservatism and becomes an insignificant figure in the progressive revolution. The real heroine is Anochka Parabukin who, in "Early Joys", is just a child. Yet she plays an important role in the first novel. The author found it necessary to begin and end with descriptions of her. She is developed in comparison with Kirill and in contrast with Liza. In the future she will be the main representative of the artistic world in the new society and Fedin develops her attitude toward the theatre with optimism, while Liza's interest in the theatre is predominantly pessimistic. Liza is aroused during the performances and daydreams about it, but she does not get involved in it actively. Anochka takes an active part right from the start. She visits backstage, watches the actors closely and learns from them.

The parallel between Anochka and Kirill is shown through some similarity in their characters. She is a mixture of childlike innocence and adult seriousness. The bitter experiences in her poor family make her look at things with sober eyes. And through her eyes Fedin shows her maturity:

«...темные синие глаза..., большие и не быстрые, тяжелее, чем обычно для такого маленького возраста, поэтому взгляд ее казался чересчур сосредоточенным.

...грусть и любопытство больших глаз делали ее взор еще тяжелее.

...взгляд медленный не по возрасту вдумчивый.»<sup>53</sup>

This mixture of child and adult is displayed in her speech. The words of an innocent child alternate with more mature expressions. With one breath she uses such words as "маненько"<sup>54</sup> and declares that "мама захотела родить Павлика"<sup>55</sup> and then talks to people as to equals:

«Вы ступайте, а я буду хозяйничать.»<sup>56</sup>

Her physical appearance is energetic. Her movements are quick, in contrast to the expression in her "медленных"<sup>57</sup> eyes. Only in connection

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 126, 140, 239.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 186

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

with her does Fedin use such words as:

«юркнула, шмыгнула, подлетела, стремглав понеслась»<sup>58</sup>

For instance, he describes Anochka running away from her father:

«...понеслась вверх по взвозу,  
притрагиваясь на бегу к заборам  
и стенам, как делают все дети.»<sup>59</sup>

The wide panorama of life in pre-revolutionary Russia in the first novel is the background for the Revolution,--

«острейший рубеж между прошлым и настоящим»<sup>61</sup>

In Fedin's words, in "Early Joys" «господствовал царизм»<sup>62</sup> and the heroes, the future builders of the new society do not predominate in this novel. Much attention is given to the servants and supporters of the old regime. Such characters as Attorney Oznobishin, interrogator Polotentsev, the conservative merchant Meshkov, and his modern equivalent Shubnikov, create the atmosphere where tsarism is predominant over revolutionary progress.

In the next novel the roles of the prosecutors and the prosecuted are interchanged and the contrast in the behaviour of these people supports Fedin's view of the importance of the influence of active people upon history.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 273, 137.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Vol. IX. p. 569.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 568.



The revolution comes. It is a struggle between the old and the new, accentuated by the civil war which has overtaken Saratov and its inhabitants. Fedin is aware of the pathos of the individual tragedies involved, although he appears to accept them as the inevitable consequences of history. He explains everything by historical determinism. Kirill expresses this view when he says:

«Народ чувствует, что в самом главном мы делаем как раз то, что отвечает его желаниям. Это не просто совпадение. Наши цели идут в ногу с историческими интересами России. Как раз в решающие моменты народной жизни они сливаются.»<sup>62</sup>

After his release from exile, Kirill serves the Party under an assumed name as propaganda agent among workers and soldiers, and when he returns to Saratov he is given the job of secretary of the town Soviet. Now he is an experienced man, a tireless fighter for the cause of the Revolution. He even looks like a fighter -- he is a stocky, broadshouldered, square-jawed and clear-eyed man. One of the qualities that he possesses which Fedin's previous Soviet men did not have is normal humanity. There are some spiritual and emotional depths in his nature as well as moments of profound doubt as to the rightness of his behaviour, if not of the cause he serves. In "The Extraordinary Summer" he is the same youthful, idealistic and lovesick fellow of "Early Joys",

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 278.

but he has developed. Now he gives his energy and his soul to the Party; at meetings he makes recruiting speeches, helps to mobilize volunteers and then leads a punitive expedition against counter-revolutionaries. During his scant free time he goes to the theatre, visits museums, collects books for his library and goes fishing on the Volga. His personal life is not entirely sacrificed to his duties, but his dedication to his obligations creates some conflicts in his life.

On the punitive expedition, Kirill sits as one of three judges who are to judge Liza's husband Shubnikov, who has committed an act of sabotage. Because Shubnikov accuses him of a personal grudge, he will not sign the death warrant, even though he votes for his execution. He thinks of what those who are close to him will say of his condemnation of the husband of his first love. However, when the fellow conspirator Zhubinsky comes to trial he signs his execution warrant without any qualms, even somewhat eagerly, as if he were trying to convince the other judges that he is not against the death penalty.

Again Kirill's moral scruples, those of a Bolshevik, and his personal feelings are tried in another incident. During the same expedition Liza's father, Meshkov, is caught with some concealed gold on him in the company of the disguised ex-police officer of the "okhranka" from pre-revolutionary times. Meshkov is sent to prison, and when Liza learns about it she goes to Kirill and appeals to him, despite the shame that holds her back from seeing her former lover. It is an intensely moving scene compounded of the memories of a once tender love, now fore-

sworn, and the blind cruel tragedies of the revolution. Kirill sticks to the law and is unkind enough to remind Liza of the part her father played in determining her fate. She protests that he is her father and that she would defend him as much as she would defend her husband, even though she hates him, because he is the father of her child.

«Почему такое ослепление?! Разве вы не слышите, что это только заклинания -- муж, отец! Ведь за этими словами -- люди, а за людьми -- их дела.» 63

Says Kirill the Bolshevik. Liza indignantly demands:

«В чем вы меня обвиняете? В том, что мои родные -- это мои родные? Что они мне близки и дороги?» 64

In the end, the human sympathy which communism could never subdue in Kirill takes over, and he uses his influence to release Liza's father.

Liza's betrayal of their love is very painful to Kirill, but he does not love her any more. The love he once had for her as an eighteen-year-old girl is transferred to Anochka who has now grown into a lovely young lady of spirit, humour and intelligence. The story of their love is one of the most stirring descriptions in "The Extraordinary Summer". Here Fedin is superb in his delicacy, understanding and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 606.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 606.

psychological grasp. Sublimating the Bolshevik hero in the ordinary but eternally human and interesting theme of a man in love, Fedin puts Kirill above his previous Soviet men and, for that matter, above many heroes in Soviet literature.

Towards the conclusion of "The Extraordinary Summer" Fedin presents the symbolical future of Kirill Izvekov. Shortly before he leaves for the front to fight the counter-revolutionary forces of the White Guards, Kirill reveals his hopes and dreams to Anochka, as though gently warning her that her love must be strong enough to stand the test of living with a man who is compelled by his nature to serve something higher than their love. He tells her:

«Никакой полет в небо невозможен без земли. Чтобы взлететь, нужно твердое основание. Мы сейчас отвоевываем себе это основание. Строим аэродром будущего. ...Перемениться мне невозможно. Я буду укатывать землю, пока она не станет годна для разбега. Чтобы оторваться потом в такую высь, какую люди никогда не знали.»<sup>65</sup>

These visions of heights are always with Kirill and they are reflected in his meeting and talks with Voroshilov and Stalin.

The juxtaposition of the Bolshevik Kirill to the intellectual Pastukhov that started in "Early Joys" is continued in the second novel.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 672, 673.

Here, Pastukhov is a successful and well-known playwright. Hunger has driven him from Petrograd with his beautiful wife and son, and he returns to Saratov. He and his well-dressed family seem to be out of place in this provincial town, impoverished by the Revolution and Civil War and torn by divided loyalties. Pastukhov understands what has happened to Russia, but he cannot reconcile himself to it intellectually or emotionally. He is not sure whether people have risen for a new way of life or just for a myth. He feels out of place in the new society. He realizes that his writings are out-of-date, but he is unable in his art to grasp the present and the search for the new which demands a rejection of the old, and wonders whether he himself is also a part of the past.

Trying to establish some continuity between the past and the present he reads Russian history. The only continuity he finds is the fact of the rebellion, in which the masses in the violence of their vengeance deepen the roots of the past they are trying to uproot. Chapaev, Pugachev, Sten'ka Razin, the Battle on Kulikovo Field -- in all these cases dark masses of people with clinging arms formed a history of their own glory, their own dissatisfaction and their own rage.

Pastukhov begins to feel that:

«История, время, календарь, часовая  
стрелка»<sup>66</sup>

are crushing him and for a moment he dares to challenge them. The

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 343.

circumstances press him to make a choice.

«Выбор, выбор, вот что должен  
был сделать Пастухов! Все  
содержание жизни, вся ее  
сущность сводится к одному, и  
это одно -- выбор!»<sup>67</sup>

thinks Pastukhov. But for the time being he will not make a choice. In a discussion that arises between him and Kirill when he comes to appear for aid to retain his lodgings, Kirill presents the usual arguments in defence of the Revolution, the Civil War, and the dispossession of the middle class. Pastukhov effectively refutes these and shows a great intellectual superiority over Kirill. When, for instance, Kirill defends the Leninist principle that the war the Reds fight is a just one because it is for a noble purpose, Pastukhov replies:

«Я не так наивен и в конце концов не так жалок, чтобы бояться осмысленной борьбы. Но, признаюсь, меня ужасает, что в битве за добро человек вынужден делать так много зла!»<sup>68</sup>

In the end, Kirill demands that Pastukhov make his choice for the Reds or be considered a deserter. Saying that:

«Дезертир тот, кто нарушает присягу.  
Я присяги не давал.»<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 345.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 348.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 350.

Pastukhov leaves Kirill and decides to leave Saratov.

In his new location, Pastukhov goes through a series of harsh experiences which eventually convince him of history's right to exact a choice as the price of human happiness or even of survival. He is thrown into a stinking prison by the Whites, and then, in the face of possible death he re-examines his life. He realizes that he is subject to nature's laws, the biological law that makes him want to live, and the socio-historical law that compels him to live within society. He becomes aware that he seeks justice for himself because life has become hard for him. Yet he has not sought it for others when life was easy for him. Always he wanted to receive without giving, and only now does he begin to perceive that if man could build life unerringly, like nature, then we could have a happy society.

When the White Guards are driven out of the town, Pastukhov is released and, hardly believing that he is alive, he rejoins his family. He continues, however, his re-examination. Answering his wife's statement that history directs man's course like an instrument, Pastukhov says that he does not wish to analyse which interpretation of history is true or false, but he has at least learned that

«Надо быть там, где заложено  
развитие истории вперед»<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Vol. VII. p. 559.

Only the first part of the third novel in the trilogy has so far been published. In "Conflagration" the circumstances surrounding the Soviet hero have changed. In "Early Joys" Kirill participates in the preparation for the Revolution. In "The Extraordinary Summer" he is fighting for it -- the Revolution is with him and he is with the Revolution. But now, the Revolution is over and the time has come to build Communism.

The action in the third novel takes place during 1941. Kirill is a very happy man within his family circle, although he sees his wife Anna only intermittently, as she is a famous actress and has to travel a great deal. When Anna is away they either write to each other daily or telephone. They have a lovely daughter in her late teens.

In this book, even more than in the previous one, Fedin presents Kirill as a man full of humane qualities whose personal life is integrated with his duties. For many years Kirill is an organizer of new factories in heavy industry, and he puts his heart and energy into his work. He finds, however, that besides his fight for socialism he is forced to fight for himself to keep his place among the builders. A man whom he recommends for a position in foreign trade defects to the West and Kirill is held responsible, and consequently he is demoted to a less important post. There is an obvious implied criticism here by Fedin of the mechanics of a false accusation and the mistrust and alienation that accompany it. Kirill receives a tremendous blow to his morale from the accusation, from the doubts of his best friend Ragozin in his innocence



and from his demotion. Despite the blow, however, he remains a good Bolshevik and finds a good use for his energy.

There is an indication that with the outbreak of war Kirill assumes a new role, that of a defender of his homeland. Despite his personal worries about his separated wife who is in Brest which is being attacked, he dutifully attends the emergency meeting of the council. Undoubtedly his civil war experiences will make him one of the leaders in the fight against the Germans.

The parallel between Kirill, whose concern for the general welfare is above everything, and Pastukhov, whose social concern follows his own well-being, continues in this last novel of the trilogy.

Pastukhov in "Conflagration" is an established playwright whose social position is well-defined. He has acquired fame and wealth. He is spoiled by success and he likes to see his plays being produced in the theatres. He is very sensitive to his reputation and when people praise him he assumes an air of indifference. He likes to impress people and he goes out of his way to do so. He knows that he is vain, but he calls it aspiration or merit.

Mental work becomes his habit and the need for it increases with age. He knows how to control his thoughts, and when he works he puts his mind and soul into it; and when he rests, he empties his head of all thoughts. He continues to analyse his position in the new society and seeks an answer to the question of history and art. When the war breaks out he asks himself a question he has tried to solve many times

before. Does history repeat itself? And if so, then to what extent? On his way to his cottage he passes Fili, the place of the war council before the famous battle of Borodino in 1812, and this sets off a sequence of thoughts about approaching historical events.

«Во многом, слишком многом есть сходство между тем, что когда-то бывало и что происходит нынче. Но ведь неизбежно и различие. Чего больше! Существует прогресс, и, значит, различий между минувшими и нынешними временами становится все больше. Но одно меняется быстро, другое медленно. Сколько раз за десятилетие отыщет себе новое русло какой-нибудь ручей, а леса стоят веками и скалы неподвижны тысячелетья.

Из века в век цезари не только побеждают, но и просчитываются. И, однако, за одним цезарем является другой, гонимый неумиравшей жаждою господства над миром, уверенный, что хорошо обучился истории и не даст ей над ним посмеяться. Повторится ли история на этот раз, несмотря на все различия времен!»<sup>71</sup>

Later, Pastukhov visits Tolstoy's house in Yasnaya Pol'ana and visualises the famous author appealing to him for an answer as to what he is to do in this hour of national distress, but he gets no answer. However, he obtains a message from a meeting with his son who,

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Vol. VIII: p. 152.

in a spirit of patriotism rather than from a belief in Communism,  
says:

«...если бы Толстой был жив,  
то не странники, не пришельцы  
теперь дожидались бы его, чтобы  
он к ним вышел из дома, а старик  
сам выбежал бы, и начал бы бить  
набат в этот колокол, и звал бы  
людей, скликал бы их на защиту  
сердца, о котором ты так хорошо  
мне сказал.

Но сердца, сердца...  
сердца у нас никому не вырвать.  
Оно слишком у нас велико!»<sup>72</sup>

Pastukhov realises that:

«...много на свете хороших  
людей и что, наверное, только  
хорошие люди будут решать  
судьбу событий. Что как ни  
страшны эти события, хорошие  
люди их не страшатся, а ведь  
вероятно, что самое главное в  
жизни -- нечего не страшиться.»<sup>73</sup>

With the further realization that he is not one of these good people,  
Pastukhov expresses a wish to be one, and he directs his footsteps to-  
wards the grave of Tolstoy, saying:

«Пойду просить прощения, что я  
не такой, каким мне хочется  
быть,»<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Literaturnaya Moskva, Vol. I, 1956 p. 18.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

Thus, Fedin brings Pastukhov close to the image of the positive hero, but not to the image of the Soviet man. The latter remains with Kirill and it is quite likely that Fedin will reconcile both in the ultimate meeting of the two men. For, until now, whenever they have met the main ideological dispute has been aired between them.

There is no definite plot in the trilogy. Fedin intended it to be a historical novel:

«...я смотрю на свою трилогию  
как на произведение историческое.»<sup>75</sup>

And in order to introduce the history of the era, he tries to picture it in all its social aspects. There are the intellectuals, the revolutionaries the rich merchants, the inhabitants of the flop-house, the officials, the peasants, etc.

The Revolution changes the lives of all these people and the author tries to show the necessity for this historical event. In "Early Joys", the lower classes are represented by the inmates of the flop-house. Their environment, the lodgings, and their working conditions give good reason for the Revolution. The Parabukin family belongs to this class. The father is an unemployed stevedore and chronic drunkard. A handsome man, he combines the dignity of the poor with the clownish behaviour of the incurable toper. The mother is an overworked woman who alternately scolds and cherished her children and who in her poverty seeks comfort in

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p. 19.

memories of better days. Their children play an important role in the novel for they serve as an example of what the revolution has done for the poor people. They assume active roles in the new society. Anochka becomes a leading actress and her brother Pavlik an engineer.

In presenting the merchant class, Fedin shows the exploitation of one class by another, and again he leaves no doubt that the Revolution was necessary. A typical representative of this class is Meshkov. A strong believer in God, he always rationalizes and adapts his religious ideology to justify his gains. With the ruthlessness of a fanatic, he forces his daughter to marry Shubnikov, a man she does not care for. He evicts the Parabukin family from his dosshouse only because he is suspected by the police of seeing the revolutionaries, and in order to appear favourable in the eyes of the police he readily becomes an informer. After the Revolution, he cannot reconcile himself to the fact that all his riches are confiscated and he remains an enemy of the new system. His antagonism is on the personal level, however, and he is but a harmless opponent of the new regime.

The other merchant, Victor Shubnikov, is very different. He is a conceited, empty man, who could not even graduate from high school, and whose main concern in life is to put the proper curls in his hair, or, on a whim, to redecorate his apartment, or select new clothes. He is an active enemy of the new regime and he plans an act of sabotage and an escape to the counter-revolutionaries. He is caught, however, and executed.

The officials and the police represent the brutal and vulpine force with no other morals but obedience to their superiors. Knowing that any social change will bring about their ruin, they are ready to use any means in order to suppress hostile political activities and to extract confessions from their prisoners.

Besides Kirill, Fedin introduces another revolutionary, the experienced underground worker Ragozin. He is another new Soviet man and the Soviet critics often liken him to Kirill. Ragozin is a real proletarian. Of working-class background, he remains plebeian in his behaviour and in his manner of speech. He is a loyal Communist and in relationship to Kirill he represents a fatherly figure. He introduces Kirill to revolutionary activities and remains his ideological inspiration. While the author allows Kirill to make an occasional human mistake, Ragozin remains infallible so far as the Communist doctrine is concerned. After the Revolution he purges the unwanted element from the new society, and leads the fleet down the Volga to fight the advancing armies of the White Guards. Finally he assumes a high post in the Party and tends to forego his close relationship with Kirill when the latter is accused of an association with the man who defected to the West.

The main event of the last novel of the trilogy is the German invasion during World War II. As the Revolution has changed the lives of everyone, the invasion obviously will do the same. At the same time it will also serve as the ultimate test of their characters. In the

first part of the novel Anochka and Tsvetukhin have already undergone this test, and it is quite apparent that Fedin will put all the other heroes to the same test. Judging by what has already been published, the great calamity and the conflagration of emotional patriotism should unite the strong and eliminate the weak. Fedin uses as the epigraph for the novel a folk saying:

«Ветер задувает свечу и  
раздувает костер».<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 7.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Fedin's first book was published in the period during which the Soviet literati were neither sure of their ideology, nor had they developed any kind of stylistic tradition. In fact, they were in the process of a search for a new Revolutionary philosophy and a form for its expression.<sup>77</sup>

Not only is this search reflected in Fedin's first books, but it remains with him through all his writings. It is expressed mainly in his constant quest for the new man who represents the post revolutionary times.

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<sup>77</sup>Abram Tertz: On Socialist Realism, Pantheon Books, New York, 1960 p. 68 States: 1920's were the formative years of the positive hero.

Meilakh V. S.: "Судьба классического наследия в первые послеоктябрьские годы 1917-1919. Русская Литература (1967) 3:35.

V. S. Meilakh states: "Проблема судеб классического наследия решалась в обстановке ожесточенной борьбы различных идеологических направлений.

George Reavey: Soviet Literature Today, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1947:

"This was time of groups and Literary apprentices centred around some master of theory: there were the "Serapion Brothers" with their charter of artistic Liberties, the "Left", the "Constructivists", the "Formalists", the communist "On Guard", and the "Proletarian" associations. It was a time of literary and political debate and the various groups were trying to impress their own panaceas on the public and on each other."



In his early stories, Fedin continues the tradition of nineteenth century critical realism and deals with the problem of the simple man burdened with life. Thus the author defies the policy of the new regime to emphasize in his writings the strong revolutionary man. He adheres, however, to their demands to associate the revolution with the theme of the "people". But again he does not show that the Revolution is the simple man, but rather that there is a misunderstanding between them, if not an outright alienation. In "The Orchard", for instance, Silanti does not conform to the new system but becomes its victim. Instead of converting the orchard to collective use, he burns it down. For him, stability and security are in private ownership, and the change is a negative change. He says:

«Теперь все как рукой сняло...  
Не для кого хоронить».<sup>78</sup>

The various themes in the early stories indicate the search for his hero. It is interesting to note that, although no story deals with the same problem, in some cases an interesting parallel may be drawn. For instance, while in "A Tale of One Morning" Saveliy, a physical and emotional monster, displays a passionate fondness for beauty in nature, the hero in "Anna Timofevna" is inwardly beautiful and is emotionally attached to moral and physical monstrosities.

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 105, 107.

Soviet critics<sup>79</sup> have either criticized or tended to minimize Fedin's involvement with the subjective aspects of man, on the ground that in the early stories the simple man is presented as a passive and innocent victim of life. He is introduced in his own environment and not within the context of the ultimate Revolution. He is not, as the principle of Socialist Realism later required, the bearer of popular strength, with a belief in his own power, ready to revolt against his oppressive environment. All the heroes merely respond to the external stimuli on their lives, rather than aspiring to higher and abstract ideals. Silanti burns down the farm, Saveliy worships wild life but exterminates human beings, Anna Timofevna readily becomes a slave in exchange for a meagre affection.

In spite of the criticism, however, the fact remains that Fedin was deeply interested in the psychology of human nature, apparently with no other purpose than to comprehend its function. This interest is evident in his novels. Those heroes whose characters he develops in the sphere of their personal aspirations, who show doubts as to the rightness of their behaviour, who express their weakness and wickedness, always seem alive and interesting. On the other hand, there are characters whom he fails to develop and who therefore remain rather dull and uninteresting. It is curious to note that in all his novels, except the trilogy, all his Soviet men belong to the second group, and in the first group, judging by Soviet ideology, are the negative heroes.

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<sup>79</sup>Brainina B. Konstantin Fedin, Sovetskiy Pisatel', Moskva: 1951  
Tomarchenko Put' Reclizmv, Izdateljstvo Pisateley v Leningrade.  
Leningrad: 1934.

Stating that he could not find an antipode of Philip Van Rossum in Soviet society, Fedin says that the Soviet man was in the making and was far from being completed, and that he did not know him. Yet, it seems to me that in addition his failure to present a comprehensible Soviet man can be interpreted in two ways. Either he was not interested in presenting one or he did not want to. In either case, one suspects that this was because of limitations imposed upon writers which left no room for the manipulation of the nature of the Soviet man. His Soviet men do affirm the positive aspects of their society, and this is all they do. They are: «ТОЛЬКО ИСПОЛНИТЕЛИ».<sup>80</sup> There are no other sides to their personalities which would somehow balance this image. The Soviet men act in the name of a higher cause, but we do not see their emotional involvement in it, since it is not questioned but accepted as fact. The negative heroes on the other hand, despite their faults, emotional involvements and weaknesses, are balanced people and thus are interesting and plausible. Andrey Startsov, Von Schönau, Nikita Karev, Philip Van Rossum, Dr. Klebe, and even Svaaker are fascinating because of their well-rounded characters, with all their weaknesses and strengths. Of all the Communist heroes, Ivan Rogov is the least insipid character, as for instance in his emotional entanglement with Klavdia Van Rossum. As soon as he gives up this intimacy, however, and in the name of the Communist goal exposes the Van Rossums' plot, he becomes wooden and unnatural.

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<sup>80</sup> Zil'berstein N. S., Tvorchestvo Konstantina Fedina, Nauka, Moskva: 1966, p. 299.

The image of the Soviet man, in my opinion, is further at a disadvantage because he is presented side by side with the other characters to whom the author dedicates considerably more space. It seems that Fedin takes time and effort to develop a character whom in the end he condemns. It further appears that this subsequent condemnation allows him meanwhile to manipulate his characters, to question, to analyze and to develop. In his letter to A. R. Krandievskaja he writes:

«Меня радует, что вы сумели полюбить Андрея... (Он, конечно, человек с негодной для наших дней 'идеологией'). Признаюсь, я полюбил его именно за это его качество -- одним видом навлекать на себя ярость плевателей... Курт мне чужд. Вы правы: я наделил Андрея лучшим, что мне известно. Но я наделил его тоже самым горшим: отчаянием». 81

Being free to analyze and develop a negative hero, Fedin preserves 'писательскую честность'<sup>82</sup> as Fadeev calls it. The effect is that reader exposed to these lengthy analyses and developments is fascinated by them against his will and this high degree of fascination pushes the Soviet man into the background.

Until 1932, when the principle of Socialist Realism was formulated, it seems that Fedin was guided in his writing by the resolution of the Twelfth Party Conference which promised active assistance to those writers

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 388, 289.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 418.

who in essence understood the significance of the great changeover, and who expressed a genuine desire to help the Workers' and Peasants' State. Indeed, it seems that Fedin understood the significance of the Revolution. He was concerned, however, with the problems rather than with the benefits and it appears that he tried to help the state by exposing these problems. The central figures of his works are the characters with the problems, whereas the Soviet men are there merely as a point of reference -- to indicate what these negative characters have not become.

After 1936 Fedin published "Arctur Sanatorium" and the Trilogy. The Soviet man in the former is placed in a completely different environment and consequently his social image gains a slight advantage over the other characters in the novel. Since the characters are judged not by their attitude to socialism but to their illness, Levshin gains the upper hand, and, for that matter, restores, his health by optimism inspired by socialism.

Interpreting in this manner the ideological position of the hero, again we cannot help but notice his disadvantageous position as far as the reader's interest is concerned. After giving Levshin the status of the Soviet man, the author apparently avoids any further enquiry into his nature. But he spares no effort in his enquiry into the nature of all the other characters who hold a spell over the reader, because through them the author reveals a psychological insight into the sick, with their alternations between fear, hope and a desire to live.

Only in the trilogy does Fedin finally manage to draw the Soviet man closer to the centre of attention. Kirill Izvekov is one of the main heroes of the novel, both in attractiveness and ideology. He stands out among the many other characters with his qualities as a human being and as a socialist. I think Fedin achieves this through the development of Kirill's personal emotional life, seen in his love for Liza and Anochka, and through the introduction of doubts about moral values, such as the signing of Shubnikov's death warrant. Kirill is Fedin's first Soviet man who is happy in his love.

There is one aspect to Kirill, however, that the author does not broach any more than he had done with respect to his previous Soviet men. This is his hero's status as a Communist. The reader has to accept the fact that the hero is unquestionably a Communist, as naturally as he accepts the fact that he was born. In any dispute, Kirill always represents the Communist view and, no matter what happens to him, he remains a Communist and never questions his adherence to the Party. Yet this does not mean that the author does not dwell upon the problem of Communism. In his early novels the problem is obvious in the quest of the hero's adjustment to the new system, ("Cities and Years" and "The Brothers"), or in his comparison of early Soviet society with that of Western Europe ("The Rape of Europe"). In the trilogy this problem is displayed in the ideological disputes between Kirill and Pastukhov or in the latter's political waverings before his final acceptance of the new system.

Pastukhov is a writer and thus represents the intellectual class who, it seems, in the author's opinion, cannot accept the new way of life without a period of doubt and questioning. Obviously Fedin chose not to allow any misgivings to his Soviet men, since no Communist in the trilogy hesitates, but, it appears to me, as an honest man he felt a compulsion to question Communism and he did this with another hero, the intellectual, who is developed on a parallel plane.

In the previous novels the parallel between the heroes is present, if not in their development, then in the mere fact of the presentation of the two sides, (Andrey vs. Kurt; Nikita vs. Radion etc.) This becomes fully developed only in the trilogy. The ideological relationship between the heroes in this work becomes unique. Although Kirill and Pastukhov are engaged in an ideological polemic with each other, neither is condemned by the author. It seems that the author wanted them to complement each other in order to present an image which reflects the era. Kirill the Bolshevik occupies the central position in the novel, but he does not displace Pastukhov from an equally central position. Indeed, Kirill becomes a more convincing figure when his rigid Socialist ideas are balanced by Pastukhov's questions and wavering. The author devotes equal time and attention to both and, as a result, both arouse equally the interest of the reader.

Here, finally, in brief summary, are what appear to me to be Fedin's main emphases in the presentation of his heroes.

His concern in the early stories with the immediate experience of the simple man is in accordance with the official Soviet policy only insofar as he deals with the theme of the "people". He defies this policy, however, in his failure to present his heroes as the carriers of the popular strength or as the representatives of the new revolutionary times.

This interest in personal experience is transferred in Fedin's first two novels to an interest in the immediate experience of the intellectual under the stress of the Revolution. At that same time the author begins to distinguish the two kinds of heroes -- the intellectual and the Soviet man. The former is the central figure in the novels, but he is the negative hero as far as Soviet ideology is concerned. Yet he overshadows the Soviet man who does no more than reflect the pure virtues of this ideology.

In the next two novels the Soviet man comes closer to the ideological centre, but his importance is diminished by the interesting personalities of the other heroes. In the trilogy the Soviet man assumes the centre of attention, but he shares it with the parallel hero -- the intellectual.

This summary, in my view, can serve as an indication of Fedin's search for the "ideal" man. At the same time it strongly suggests that this ideal man is not in accordance with the official policy with its tendency towards the positive man, and that in many of his writings Fedin had to make an effort to adjust to this policy.



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