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## OSIP MANDELSTAM: A RUSSIAN POET'S STRUGGLE FOR TRUTH

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*Literature ought to be a powerful medium for the expression of faith. As such it should contribute to the building of genuine culture. Peter Krok is much concerned with all three—literature, culture and faith—in the following sensitive treatment of the Russian poet, Osip Mandelstam. Hounded for his views by no less a figure than Stalin himself, Mandelstam proved to be possessed of remarkable strength and vision. His work survived largely through the equal strength and vision of his wife, and together the couple challenges men of all times and civilizations to seek only Truth—without which no faith endures, and no culture exists. According to the author, Mandelstam's work provides something more as well: the revelation that the service of truth is to resist the self-serving official lies of the modern secular world.*

“**W**HO ELSE WILL YOU KILL? WHO ELSE WILL YOU WORSHIP? WHAT OTHER LIE WILL you invent?” are testamentary lines that epitomize the individuality and tough sustaining dignity of the Russian poet, Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938). In the same poem, *January 1, 1924*, Mandelstam, who as Clarence Brown noted “is the greatest Russian poet of the modern period”,<sup>1</sup> wrote, “Could I ever betray to gossip mongers/ the great vow to the Fourth Estate/ and oaths solemn enough to tears.” That great vow was the commitment to truth.

Mandelstam stood like Eliot's Teresias “watching the hooded hordes swarming over the endless plains”, lamenting not only the crumbling of cities but the mighty tyrant boot in the face of conscience, freedom and the family. He not only witnessed man's alienation from culture and society (the predominant theme of twentieth century Western literature) but watched the “bare-chested Ossete” (Stalin) ravage Russia and spread havoc and terror into the living room of every individual thought.

Like so many others, Mandelstam could have toed the party line and sought to fit his poetry into the current ideology and thereby appease his persecutors. He could have yielded to the latest party dictates and enjoyed the satisfaction of added food coupons or a *dacha* (country house). One might either compromise with the system in small doses only to be eventually petrified with its salt of lies or be a revolutionary. Mandelstam chose to be a revolutionary, for he clung stoically to truth and refused to prostitute his convictions.

He believed that the dying nineteenth century, the age of relativism and tolerance, had summoned up a monstrous and barbaric successor, a new Assyrian-Egyptian age.<sup>2</sup> He saw poetry as providing material for defense against the monumental slave cultures to come. In an essay *Humanism and the Present* that appeared in a Berlin newspaper in 1923, Mandelstam wrote:

There are epochs which contend that they care nothing for man, that he is to be used like a brick or cement, that he is to be built with not for.... If the social architecture of the future does not have as its basis a genuinely humanistic justification, it will crush man as Assyria and Babylonia crushed him.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of his greatest short essay, *The Word and Culture*, written in the early 1920's, the poet stated:

In relation to this new age, with its immense cruelty, we are colonizers. To Europeanize and humanize the twentieth century, to heat it with a theological warmth—that is the task of those who have managed to emerge from the wreckage of the nineteenth century, thrown ashore by the will of the fates on a new historical continent.<sup>4</sup>

Mandelstam was implacably aware of the power of the word just as he understood the power of the state. He said, "Poetry is respected in this country because people are killed for it. There's no place where more people are killed for it."<sup>5</sup> In a conversation with the Russian poetess Akhmatova, he stubbornly maintained that "Poetry is Power" and that "if they killed people for poetry, then they must fear and respect it—in other words that it too was a power in the land."<sup>6</sup>

Refusing to carry the devious waves of lies and deception in the Soviet air, Mandelstam embodied a stubborn antenna of personal honesty. In 1929 he announced to a group of local writers in Tiflis that the Formula, "National in form; Socialist in content", was stupid and illiterate. It was Stalin's prescription for correct writing. Mandelstam captured the Plowman, as Solzhenitsyn called Stalin in *The First Circle*, with apocalyptic vision in the Stalin poem of 1933. When he was exiled to the Russian province of Voronzeh, the poet said to his wife, Nadezhda, "Why is it when I think of him I see heads, mounds of heads? What is he doing with those heads?"<sup>7</sup> An historical note reveals the significance: the Tatar conquerors of Russia piled heads outside the cities as landmarks to the folly of opposition to their rule.

Mandelstam, like Solzhenitsyn whose novel *The First Circle* refers to the first circle of the Inferno, was a devoted reader of Dante. Is there a more vivid parallel of suffering than that between Dante's hell and Stalin's Gulag Archipelago? Mandelstam used to leave a small volume of Dante in his jacket in case he would hear a midnight knock, and in fact when they did commit him to Siberia he took with him one of his few permitted possessions, Dante.

Inevitably the same voice that snapped "What other lie will you invent" and who proclaimed his oath to the Fourth Estate was doomed, just as many of the

scribes and spokesmen for the new creed of obsequy were doomed. On a night in May, 1934, Mandelstam was arrested and grilled in the infamous political prison, the Liubianka. It so happens that a few days earlier he had read his sardonic poem on Stalin in Pasternak's apartment, and one of the nine friends there had informed the authorities. Since that poem sealed Mandelstam's fate, it would be aptly instructive to present it. Here is that poem as translated by Max Hayward:

We live, deaf to the land beneath us,  
Ten steps away no one hears our speeches,

But where there's so much as half a conversation  
The Kremlin's mountaineer will get his mention.

His fingers are fat as grubs  
And the words, final as lead weights, fall from  
his lips,

His cockroach whiskers leer  
And his boot top gleams.

Around him a rabble of thin-necked leaders—  
Fawning half-men for him to play with.

They whinny, purr or whine  
As he prates and points a finger.

One by one forging his laws, to be flung  
Like horseshoes at the head, the eye or the groin.

And every killing is a treat  
For the broad-chested Ossete.<sup>8</sup>

Mandelstam was not eliminated as everyone supposed but spared death by what Nadezhda called a "miracle". Through the efforts of Nikolay Bukharin, Pasternak and others, he was granted a four year respite. The poet was exiled first to a small Asiatic town in the Urals where, nearly insane from his prison experience, he attempted suicide by hurling himself out of a hospital window. Afterwards he was sent to Voronzeh and stayed there for nearly all of his enforced exile. For the next four years he and Nadezhda survived on meager rations and donations of friends. His exile expired in May, 1937, and for the following twelve months the poet lived a nightmare of terror while the wave of second arrests were under way. Although he had just suffered two heart attacks, Mandelstam was sentenced in May, 1938 to five

years of hard labor in Siberia. In January, 1939, a package which Nadezhda had sent her husband was returned. A stamped note informed her the sendee was deceased. What happened? Somewhere in the mounds of Asia stripped of his clothing with a tag attached to his leg, Osip was left in a common pit. Osip Mandelstam had died of heart failure in a transit camp on December 27, 1938.

But the spirit of Mandelstam would not die. It lived on in the furious zeal of his rebellious wife. The authorities had confiscated and destroyed every line of writing by Mandelstam that they could find. Thus for twenty years, during which time it was a criminal offense to possess his writings, she preserved the poetry and notes of her husband when he was a non-person and an outcast. For a generation she labored in silence, secretly copying, memorizing, and at nights, while working in a clothing factory, knitting his poetry into her blood. As Clarence Brown, Mandelstam's biographer, wrote, Nadezhda carried the poems and prose of Mandelstam in the most ancient of repositories, the human memory. She carried his poems "entire in the interior dark" until 1956 when the Supreme Court of the USSR "rehabilitated" Mandelstam. Yet his poetry is still not available to the Russian public.

The Soviets have published Mandelstam in very small editions which are not on general sale in the Soviet Union, but are shipped abroad for sale or sold in Moscow at special hard-currency shops patronized by foreigners. There is no little irony that when Mrs. Sakharov arrived in Moscow to give her husband the Nobel Peace Prize medal and the diploma, the customs officials searched her and removed four copies of Mandelstam's poetry that had been published in the Soviet Union.

The fact that the collection of Mandelstam's work mushroomed from a small brick-red book in 1955 to a three volume set is due to the heroic love and unrelenting faithfulness of his widow. The collected works of Mandelstam, edited by Gleb Struve and Boris Flipoff, grew slowly from copies and copies of copies smuggled out of Russia. I can think of no such instance when two such minds married and in their lives and characters embodied such genuine symbols: Nadezhda the wife who endured and Osip the husband who prevailed through her endurance. Her devotion to him was like an ancient drama; I think of the greatest heroine in literature-Antigone. Nadezhda would not rest until the remains of her husband

were properly serviced, and so she pursued his memory with noble vigilance. In fact her two volumes totalling 1300 pages, *Hope Against Hope* and *Hope Abandoned*, both published and translated in the 1970's, are recognized as two of the great testamentary documents of our century.

Mandelstam was born and reared in what he called "the Judaic Chaos". His parents were prosperous Jews who settled in the alien and anti-Semitic city of St. Petersburg in 1894, just three years after Mandelstam's birth in Warsaw. His leather merchant family were outsiders not only in their land of settlement but also in their religion, for they had only a perfunctory attachment to Judaism. Osip attended the Tenishev School, an academy of very advanced learning from 1899 to 1907. When he graduated at the age of 16, he had completed two years of university study. For the greater part of the next three years he wandered throughout Western Europe, settling in Paris for awhile, and later attending for a semester at Heidelberg. Returning home in 1911, Mandelstam continued studies in the Faculty of History and Philology at the University of St. Petersburg, but never received a diploma.



1910 was the year of Mandelstam's first appearance in print and his entry into literature coincided with certain developments in the literary life of Russia that were to change the complexion of Russian poetry completely. It was the year of what is commonly called the crisis of Symbolism, which had been the reigning school of poetry for some two decades. Other movements replaced the decaying Symbolism, particularly Futurism and Acmeism.

The year 1913 is considered the beginning of Mandelstam's writing career, when he published at his own expense his first book of poems, a green brochure of some 33 pages entitled *Kamen* (Stone). The title is not only significant in understanding Mandelstam but also in focusing on the Acmeist movement of which he became the most inspired representative. Unlike gem, diamond or marble, the glitter that would have appealed to the Symbolists, stone is an ordinary material. The Acmeist's principles were similar as a reaction to styles and as a criterion of verse to Ezra Pound's *Don'ts for Imagists*. Images were

to be concrete and sharply realized and the statement of the poems rigorously logical.<sup>10</sup> During a reading in the 1920's when a "provocateur" asked Mandelstam the loaded question, "What was Acmeism?", which by then was a thoroughly impugned movement, he answered to the rousing cheers of the audience that Acmeism was "a longing for world culture".

The Acmeists considered themselves a guild of craftsmen with a moral commitment. Unlike the Symbolists and Futurists they were not fishers of men but masons intent on laying their stones to the Dom of the spirit. In an essay on Villon in 1910 Mandelstam wrote, "The man of the Middle Ages thought himself just as indispensable and as joined to the universal building as any stone in a Gothic structure.... Without being conscious of it, the medieval man regarded the unadorned fact of his own existence as service, as a kind of feat."<sup>11</sup> He saw a relationship between his period and the Middle Ages, as he wrote in another article, *The Morning of Acmeism*: "the perception of the world as a living equilibrium makes us kin to this epoch and impels us to derive strength from works which arose on Romance soil around the year 1200."<sup>12</sup> Mandelstam, who held a medieval conception of himself as a craftsman, said he was not a "creator" of verse, for he was too sincere and humble for such a label; instead, he said he was "a builder".<sup>13</sup>

His attitude can be regarded as a par exemplum for the artist. As Nadezhda wrote, "he did not regard himself as someone standing above the crowd, but as part of it. Any self-exclusiveness was anathema to him—this was no doubt connected with his sense of belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition."<sup>14</sup> Nadezhda set down his principles in *Hope Against Hope*:

the work of the poet [is] as a vehicle of world harmony—that is, it is concerned with the doing of the poet's fellow men, among whom he lives and whose fate he shares. The poet does not speak "for them" but with them, nor does he set himself apart from them; otherwise he would not be a source of truth.<sup>15</sup>

The period after 1913 was for the most part spent in wanderings and odd jobs across European Russia. In 1920 he married Nadezhda, and three years later his second volume of poetry was published in Berlin, *Tristia*. Judging by publications alone, 1928 was the height of his career. The following books appeared: *Poems*, *On Poetry*, and *The Egyptian Stamp*, which included his famous no-

vella, *The Noise of Time*. The latter half of the Twenties dried up his poetry for an agonizing period of five years in what Mandelstam called his "deaf-mute" period. At this time he was unsure of himself and afraid of succumbing to falsehood.

Nadezhda suggests that perhaps the reason Osip stopped writing verse in the middle and late Twenties was that in this period of confusion he was no longer certain of being right. In *The Morning of Acmeism* (1913), Mandelstam had written: "The architect says: I build—that is to say, I am right. For us the consciousness of our rightness is dearer than all else in poetry."<sup>16</sup> Listening to the chorus of those who accepted the new reality, he must have been sorely troubled by his isolation from it. Attacked by the Symbolists, the Left Front (LEF), the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), and all the other groups which unreservedly supported the new system, he could scarcely help feeling that he was indeed a "drying crust in a loaf long since taken out". Assailed, by such doubts, he could not possibly feel certain of his own "rightness". Mandelstam's efforts to come to terms with the new era ended in failure, yet this troubled period helped him to define his place in the new world.

Osip was not the only writer to be torn with doubts. As Nadezhda pointed out, "The same thing happened for a time with Akhmatova, and with Pasternak it lasted a good ten years. 'It must be something about the air',—said Akhmatova." Nadezhda went on to say, "there was indeed something in the air, the beginning, perhaps, of that general drowsiness which we still find so hard to shake off."<sup>17</sup>

Nikolay Bukharin, who was later a victim in the first Stalin purge in 1936, liked Mandelstam and valued his poetry and saved the poet from several formidable campaigns of vilification. In 1928 Bukharin had a particularly bitter campaign stopped and arranged for Mandelstam and his wife to be sent off to Armenia. It was there that the Muse returned and in 1930 Mandelstam wrote his last book, *Fourth Prose*.

The book was literally his fourth book of prose, but there was also an association with the "fourth estate". Mandelstam considered himself a member of the "fourth estate", the *raznochinstsy*, intellectuals from the lower classes.<sup>18</sup> In the *Fourth Prose*, to signify his break with fellow Soviet writers, he stripped off his "literary fur coat" and stamped on it.<sup>19</sup>

Mandelstam continued to write poetry from 1930 until his death. In his next group of poems, the “Wolf” cycle, preparation for exile as well as the feeling of being cast out and rejected were the dominant themes. One can appreciate his apprehension best through his poetry. The following poem, *Leningrad*, written in December of 1930, conveys his premonitions poignantly:

I've come back to my city. These are my own old  
tears,  
my own little veins, the swollen glands of my  
childhood.

So you're back. Open wide. Swallow  
the fish-oil from the river lamps of Leningrad.

Open your eyes. Do you know this December  
day,  
the egg-yolk with the deadly tar beaten into it?

Petersburg! I don't want to die yet! ,  
You know my telephone numbers.

Petersburg! I've still got the addresses: ;  
I can look up dead voices.

I live on back stairs, and the bell,  
torn out nerves and all, jangles my temples.

And I wait till morning for guests that I love,  
and rattle the door in its chains.<sup>20</sup>

What is Mandelstam's achievement in poetry? Victor Terras claims he is “a poet second only to Pushkin. He is Russia's finest Parnassian poet.... He said in Russian verse what heretofore had been said only in Greek, or Latin, or Italian.”<sup>21</sup> In the introduction to the *Complete Poetry of Osip Mandelstam*, Sidney Monas wrote, “There is a growing realization that not only was he an important poet of the twentieth century, but perhaps as much as Rilke, or Pound or Yeats or Eliot, the poet.”<sup>22</sup> W.S. Merwin, one of the foremost poets of America, has translated Mandelstam with Clarence Brown, and their translation has been recommended as one of the best poetry volumes of 1974. Mandelstam is no longer a stranger to world audiences.

To the writer of this appreciation, the first criteria for evaluating a literary statement are zealous honesty of feeling and luminous intensity in the author's presenta-

tion of his experiences. The artist must cling to truth in himself and in his words, or his lines fail of life-for they do not bear the blood of his experience and so become anemic. Above all, Mandelstam, just as did Orwell, Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak, particularly sought to reflect his feelings and insights with truth.<sup>23</sup> This search for truth stemmed from a moral commitment and provides an insight into the cultural environment that kindles that commitment. The fact that Russia (not the Soviet system) is such a religious country is one of the strange ironies of history. In an article, *The Literature of Dissent in the Soviet Union in Modern Age*, Edward F. Ericson, Jr. noted the following dissenters: Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, Nadezhda Mandelstam, Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Pasternak and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Ericson wrote that “the thing that unites them all is their robust humanism ...religion almost always figures as a significant component in their separate world views.”<sup>24</sup>

Humanism is a living force in Russian literature, while in America so much of our literature (notably fiction) concerns the psychology of personal disintegration, sexual inadequacy and a “trousered ape” view of man., An obvious problem is that too much of our reading and literature is pressed with publicity. Yet the real difference is that in a state of lies, the truth is much more treasured and precious. The American book-selling and book-buying public is preoccupied with problems of boredom, frustration, acedia and satisfaction. Ultimately, these are problems that stem from not knowing one's place or mission on this earth. As Faulkner admonished in his Nobel Prize address, and as the post-World War II English literature confirms, the American and English writers do not grasp problems of the heart. It is through the heart which understands suffering that recent Russian writers and Mandelstam have sought to project their feelings.<sup>25</sup> Edward Ericson adds substance to this point of view:

They [the dissenting Russian authors previously noted] seek to recover precisely that image of man which has been so severely castigated by the cultural pacesetters of the twentieth century both in Marxist Russia and in the West.... These writers provide startling clear evidence that traditional humanism, even humanism with a Christian basis, while it has largely gone underground in the twentieth century, has not disappeared. Indeed, it is not going too far to suggest that it is among Soviet authors that we may find the most vigorous contemporary revival of the traditional image of man in literature.<sup>26</sup>

Mandelstam's encapsulating of time and generation is a significant contribution to the poetic experience—the very seamless web that is tradition and literature. As Terras wrote, Mandelstam had an “absolute pitch” for time.<sup>27</sup> Monas described this pitch further: “In a phrase, a line, a strophe, a paragraph, an aphorism, he could characterize a century, an epoch, a cultural milieu. Thus, the eighteenth century, in his essay on Andre Chenier: ‘like a dried out lake; no depth, no moisture; what was submerged, now all surfaces.’”<sup>28</sup>

Like most Russian intellectuals, Mandelstam welcomed the Russian Revolution, but as time passed his attitude became more critical until eventually he wrote in the beginning of the Twenties: “he was living among an alien tribe.” He favored the revolution “but without the death penalty.”<sup>29</sup> As Monas stated, “it was not so much the violence of the revolution that repelled him ...but rather the tendency within it for the Party, and the intelligentsia dazzled by the Party, to constitute itself a power over language and therefore over the truth.”<sup>30</sup>

Mandelstam never doubted that a new era had begun with the victory of the Revolution. In the *Finder of the Horseshoe* in 1923, he wrote that “the fragile chronology of our age nears its end” and that of the old world only a sound remained, though, “the source of the sound has gone.” He lamented the end of the nineteenth century and the disruption in the “new order”. Mandelstam, in the *Slate Ode*, called himself “a double dealer with a divided soul” and felt he was a double dealer for trying to join “the broken vertebrae of two centuries” and for not being able to change his values. In *The Age* he symbolized time as a wild animal with a broken backbone looking around at its footprints, and he asked: “Who will ever glue back together the vertebrae/ of two centuries with his blood?” Poem number 227 compared the age to an incompetent wolfhound that does not know a sheep from a wolf and attacks the lamb it was meant to guard.

Mandelstam's poetry reaches out with an ecumenical humanism and intensity of compression so that his verse rings with the personal voice of a Yeats, and, like Yeats, his poetry is a metaphor for his relations vis-a-vis his age and society. In the *Ode to Stalin* the haunting suggestiveness of foreboding and the dramatic allusion to “the Judas of the future” remind one of Yeats' evocative symbolism in *The Second Coming*. Here is the *Ode to Stalin* as translated by Burton Raffel and Alla Burago:

And what do we do with these crushed plains,  
the drawing hunger of this miracle?  
Anyway, that openness we see  
in them we see for ourselves, falling into sleep,  
we see—  
and the question keeps growing Where are they  
going?  
Where are they from?—  
And isn't he crawling slowly along them,  
him, the one we cry out at in our sleep—  
him, the Judas of the future?<sup>31</sup>

The “openness” is not merely the vastness of steppe and sky beyond the Voronezh hills but the historical and cultural “openness” of Eurasia.

To describe some of the features of Mandelstam's verse, it would be instructive to point out literary and social correspondances between him and Yeats. Both Mandelstam and Yeats were epigrammatic, rhythmical and highly structured and profound poets. Both used sophisticated rhymes, powerful classical and national allusions, and each felt a deep-rooted attachment to his homeland. Both witnessed apocalyptic violence and offered their verse as a European testament. Both were humanists with strong moral convictions, but while Yeats was a Homeric disciple, Mandelstam was ultimately an upholder of Christianity. In a conversation with another writer, Mandelstam said “he regarded himself as the last Christian-Hellenic poet in Russia.”<sup>32</sup>

Just as Yeats said he would settle in the rag and bone shop of the heart, the Russian described himself as “the drying crust of a loaf long since taken out”. Mandelstam, in January 1, 1924, saw his own position in the age as that of “a sick son of the age, with quicklime in my blood”. He refused to tuck his soul under the enticing hospitality of subservience. It was during the time of this particular poem that Mandelstam inaugurated what his wife called the “fantastic homelessness”.

As a Jew and a poet, he was forever an outsider. Yet out of this rootlessness, Mandelstam sought Christianity. Out of the heap of Soviet chaos, like Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, he saw the desperate need for Christianity as a civilizing force. Like Pasternak, but without the ceremony attending his conversion, Mandelstam was a Jewish convert to Christianity. He was baptized at a Lutheran church in Finland about 1910.

Is it not of immense significance that out of the disruption of the “new order” Mandelstam saw the desperate need for Christianity and felt that Christianity was the foundation of European culture? As he wrote in 1920 during the disruptions of the Russian civil war, “like the eternal noon the Eucharist endures.” Nadezhda remarked that what appealed to him most in Christianity was “the doctrine of the free will and the inherent value of the person.”<sup>33</sup> Mandelstam felt that the principles of Christianity were the necessary foundation to insure man’s fundamental freedoms and to counteract the trends of totalitarianism that he saw enslaving the individual. His Christianity was not a matter of liturgy or forms of worship. Rather it was rooted in the awareness of man’s sins and the tradition of freedom.

The deep extent of Mandelstam’s attachment to Christianity is not yet fully understood or recognized. As Monas wrote, “Except for the brilliant Russian essay by George Ivask entitled *The Christian Poetry of Mandelstam*, it is a subject that critics have spent more energy evading than confronting.” Monas went on to say that “Mandelstam is the most Christian of modern poets.”<sup>34</sup> Mandelstam, in a fragmented essay, Pushkin and Scriabin, written before 1923, stated:

All of our two-thousand year old culture, thanks to the charitableness of Christianity, is the release of the world into freedom for play, for spiritual gaiety, for the free

“imitation of Christ”. ...Christian art is not threatened by the danger of inner impoverishment. It is inexhaustible, endless, since, as it triumphs over time, it condenses grace into magnificent clouds and empties them out as life-giving rain. One cannot sufficiently emphasize the fact the European culture is beholden for its everlasting unfading freshness to the charitableness of Christianity towards art.<sup>35</sup>

As Clarence Brown pointed out, the title Pushkin and Scriabin seems to be little more than a pretext for the real subject: a definition of Christian art.

Above all, Mandelstam was committed to man’s inalienable right to freedom and to man’s dignity. His humanism was an artery of conviction that permeated the entire body of his life’s work. Osip Mandelstam embodied the indomitable spirit of man’s yearning for truth. Yet the tragedy of Mandelstam is not a singular tragedy, for there are many more martyrs, and the purges that consumed his breath are still crushing others like him. Mandelstam understood his fate, but he believed in the power of his words to prevail:

Mounds of human heads are wandering into the distance; I dwindle among them. Nobody sees me. But in books much loved, and in children’s games I shall rise to say the sun is shining.<sup>36</sup>

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## NOTES

1 Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope: A Memoir*, trans. Max Hayward, intro. by Clarence Brown (New York, 1970), xii.

2 Others recognized the connection between totalitarianism and the slave empires of the past, notably Yevgeny Zamyatin, a contemporary of Mandelstam, and George Orwell. In fact, Zamyatin’s novel of the future, *We*, greatly influenced Orwell’s conception of 1984. Zamyatin’s book, Orwell wrote, gives the regime of the future “the colour of the sinister slave civilizations of the ancient world.” Later in a letter Orwell said Zamyatin “takes account of the diabolism and the tendency to return to an earlier form of civilisation which seems to be a part of totalitarianism.” Cf. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, IV, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York, 1968), 74-75 and 485-86.

3 Clarence Brown, *Mandelstam* (Great Britain, 1973), 102-103.

4 *Complete Poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam*, trans. by Burton Raffel and Alla Burago with intro. and notes by Sidney Monas (Albany, 1973), 4. (Hereinafter references to Monas cited from introduction to this volume).

5 *Hope Against Hope*, 159.

6 *Ibid.*, 170.

7 *Ibid.*, 203.

8 *Ibid.*, 13.

9 Mandelstam, 4.

10 *Osip Mandelstam: Selected Poetry*, trans. by Clarence Brown and W.S. Merwin, intro. by Brown (New York,

1974), vii. and ix.

11 Mandelstam, 152.

12 Ibid., 146.

13 *Hope Against Hope*, 264.

14 Ibid., 170.

15 Ibid., 188.

16 Mandelstam, 144.

17 *Hope Against Hope*, 162-3.

18 Ibid., 176. “Raznochinstsy” is a Russian term difficult to define in a phrase in English which means “educated commoners”. “A Raznochinists”, writes Mandelstam in his autobiography, “has no biography other than the books he has read.” Cf. *The Prose of Osip Mandelstam*, trans. with critical essay by Clarence Brown (Princeton, N.J., 1965), 122.

19 *Hope Against Hope*, 178.

20 Brown and Merwin, 42.

21 In a book review article, *Russian Parnassian*, in *New Republic* (December 1, 1973), 23.

22 Monas, 1.

23 These writers are obsessed with truth because they realize the cancer of the lie on the spirit of culture. Orwell recognized with great prescience in 1946 that, by the 1950’s, it might be “as dangerous to praise STALIN as it was to attack him two years ago. But I should not regard this as an advance. Nothing is gained by teaching a parrot a new word. What is needed is the right to print what one believes to be true, without having to fear bullying or blackmail from any side.” Quote taken from Alex Zwerdling, *Orwell and the Left* (New Haven and London, 1974), 52. In two famous passages from *Doctor Zhivago*, trans. by Max Hayward and Manua Harari (New York, Signet Books, 1960), Pasternak wrote, “what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel but an inward music: the irresistible power of unarmed truth, the powerful attraction of its example.” Zhivago says further on, “Politics doesn’t appeal to me. I don’t like people who don’t care about the truth.” Cf. pages 39 and 216. In his exile in Zurich, Solzhenitsyn said, “Our program is a moral revolution. ..for our country our specific task is to venture a moral deed. There must be a stop to the support of official lies.... All you have to do is reject lies.” Cf. *Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 28, 1974 (AP Wire Service).

24 Edward E. Ericson, Jr., *The Literature of Dissent in the Soviet Union in Modern Age*, XVII, No. 1 (Winter, 1973), 40.

25 The question of suffering is intimately linked with Russian literature. Pasternak in his autobiography wrote, “In life it is more necessary to lose than to gain. A seed will only germinate if it dies.” Cf. *I Remember: Sketch for an Autobiography*, trans. David Magarshack (New York, 1960), 81. Solzhenitsyn said about himself, “For my entire life I have had the soil of my homeland beneath my feet.... Only its pain do I hear, only about it do I write.” Cf. *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record*, ed. Leopold Labedz (London, 1970), 43 and 30.

26 Ericson, 40.

27 *The Time Philosophy of Osip Mandelstam in Slavonic and East European Review*, 48, No. 109 (July, 1969), 346.

28 Monas, 15.

29 *Hope Against Hope*, 101.

30 Monas, 13.

31 *The Complete Poetry of Osip Mandelstam*, 265.

32 *Hope Against Hope*, 250. One can go into greater detail in describing the classicism of Mandelstam. Suffice it to add, as Brown pointed out, “His classicism is in a sense thoroughly unclassical, for the lofty, objective, and impersonal mode is always imbued with the naturalism and the homeliness of the New Testament.” Cf. Mandelstam, 254.

33 *Hope Against Hope*, 250.

34 Monas, 9.

35 Brown, Mandelstam, 233-4.

36 Brown and Merwin, 84.