

The role of the magazine "International Literature" in the Franco-Soviet cultural dialogue of the 1930s¹

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Abstract: The role of the Soviet journal "International Literature" in maintaining Franco-Soviet literary contacts in the 1930s is investigated, materials of correspondence between the editorial board of the magazine and French authors are analyzed. The main directions of the journal's activity are shown, French writers, whose work was presented on its pages, are revealed. The ideological component of the Franco-Soviet dialogue, which was conducted by the editorial staff of the journal, is demonstrated.

Keywords: Franco-Soviet Cultural Dialogue, International Literature magazine, International Association of Revolutionary Writers.

In the 1930s, there was an increase in Franco-Soviet literary contacts. The rapprochement was mutual and was largely based on the ideas of anti-fascism. For their part, the Soviet cultural authorities were interested in the most significant writers in the West expressing a favorable position towards the USSR in their works and public speeches. The Franco-Soviet rapprochement in the field of culture was maintained in the USSR in various ways: from the publication of huge editions of works by foreign authors to the demonstration of the "illusory" reality created thanks to the activities of AUSCRA (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Abroad) during the travels of French writers across the Soviet country. Great attention was paid to the press, which became the conductors of Soviet cultural policy and had to maintain a dialogue with French authors. The Soviet magazine International Literature played an important role in fulfilling these tasks.

The journal was published in the USSR from 1933 to 1943 in several languages, including French. Its predecessors were the journals Vestnik Foreign Literature and Literature of the World Revolution. Until 1939, the journal was headed by the Soviet literary critic Sergei Sergeevich Dinamov. The editors of the French edition were Paul Vaillant-Couturier and E.D. Stasov. The

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French were represented on the international editorial board by Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse.

In the "International Literature" published works of art by contemporary foreign authors, as well as critical articles about the work of foreign writers. At the same time, despite the political preferences of the magazine to print mainly the texts of left-wing writers of the West and anti-fascist writers, "the magazine managed to acquaint the Russian reader with many outstanding works of modern Western literature, and in first-class translations" [3, p. 314]. Indicative in this sense is the publication in the International Literature of the novel by Drieu la Rochelle in 1935, whose political position was condemned, and the literary talent and artistic value of his works were highly appreciated by the editors.

As for French authors, the leader in the number of publications in the "International Literature" until 1936 was André Gide. In addition to his works of fiction, the magazine published theoretical articles about his work, published speeches by Andre Gide (including a speech at the International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture in 1935 in Paris), and an autobiography of the writer. Such attention to the person of A. Gide is explained by careful preparation for the writer's visit to the USSR in 1936. However, such a powerful treatment of the author did not give its results, the book "Return from the USSR" [4], written as a result of the trip, containing criticism of Soviet reality, was a blow to Soviet literary and party circles. After this work of A. Zhide and his name is not mentioned on the pages of the journal "International Literature". In addition to A. Gide in the 1930s, such French authors as Henri de Montherlant, Jean-Richard Block, André Malraux, Romain Rolland, Jean Gionot, Charles Wildrac are most often published. In the mid-1930s, the magazine pays special attention to the personality and work of Henri Barbusse. The interest in the writer on the part of the editorial staff of the magazine is explained by the following events: firstly, the publication of the book by Henri Barbusse "Stalin - the man through whom the new world is revealed" [2], and secondly, the death of the writer in the USSR in 1935. Barbusse's book was given special importance, it is known that many eminent Soviet writers were ready to write a biography of Stalin. However, "Stalin believed, and not without reason, that it would be much better if his biography was written by one of the popular European writers" [5, p. 100], which met the objectives of the Soviet cultural policy of creating a benevolent image of the USSR by authoritative Western intellectuals. Accordingly, the magazine reacted to this most important event by acquainting the reader with the work of A. Barbusse.

Critical articles on the work of foreign authors occupied a significant place on the pages of the journal, as a rule, they accompanied the publication of the work itself. In the 1930s, International Literature published articles by such Soviet critics as I. Anisimov, E. Galperina, J.

Fried, B. Pesis, V. Dmitrevsky, and also published critical articles by French writers - L. Aragon, P. Nizan, L. Mussinac, J. Giono, P. Gzell, J. Cassu.

The magazine also introduced its readers to the creative and personal destiny of the authors. So, in 1935-1936 the editorial board of *International Literature* published biographies of French writers R. Rolland, A. Gide, J. Giono, L. Durten, V. Marguerite, as well as obituaries in memory of Eugene Dhaby, A. Barbusse. Despite the varied manner in which these biographies and autobiographies were written, in general, they reflected the social origin of the writer, his career, the writer's worldview, and the political and social significance of their work.

The journal also worked out theoretical questions in the field of literature, in particular, gave an analysis of French and Soviet literature, showed the state of modern literature in France, the specific features of Soviet literature as reflected by French authors. A fundamentally important point in the literary problems of the 1930s was the question of understanding the role of the revolutionary writer. In connection with this aspect, Soviet specialists attached particular importance to the work of the so-called "progressive authors" [1, p. 147-151], on the other hand, the editorial board often criticized the political position of some writers, for example, the French surrealists [10, p. 152-156].

The ideological and political aspect of the Franco-Soviet dialogue was reflected in the pages of the *International Literature* magazine with reports on the activities of the International Association of Revolutionary Writers (IARW) and its sections. In 1932, the AEAR (Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists) was created - the French section of the IARW. AEAR activities, political views of its leaders were devoted to separate notes in the magazine, as well as chronicles, messages. In accordance with the tasks set by the party leaders, the magazine published favorable reviews of French writers about their visit to the USSR, showing their admiration for the deep economic and social transformations in the country of socialism [6, p. 124-125]. The most important international events dedicated to cultural issues were reflected in special issues of the magazine. On the pages of "*International Literature*" were shown the events associated with the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, as well as the International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture in 1935. In particular, the speeches of delegates loyal to the USSR, the program, decisions of these forums were published.

One of the forms of maintaining the Franco-Soviet cultural dialogue was the correspondence of the editorial staff with foreign writers. "*International Literature*" was in constant regular correspondence with Jean Freville, René Bleck, Georges Friedman, J. Cassou. The current correspondence with L. Durten and A. Amber has been preserved. The Soviet side showed interest in communicating with Romain Rolland, but the correspondence with him was unequal: the

editorial staff besieged the writer with letters to which he responded extremely reluctantly, referring to workload and health problems [8. 1. 12].

Correspondence with French authors concerned mainly their creative plans, the publication of novelties in French literature, current affairs of the publication of works in "International Literature". Another interesting form of Franco-Soviet dialogue that the magazine carried out was the exchange of contemporary French and Soviet literature, sending books from the USSR and receiving publications from France. A study of the correspondence of the editorial board with foreign authors shows that in the 2nd half. In the 1930s, she was interested in the works of Gabriel Odisio, Henri de Montherlant, Eugene Le Roy, Luc Durten, Georges Duhamel, Georges Bernanos, François Mauriac. It is also known that the editorial board received the authors' books, marked with literary prizes in 1938 [9, p. 36].

In addition, the editors carried out ideological work with foreign writers. In particular, it stimulated the preparation of articles by them on the occasion of a particular anniversary date in the USSR [8, p. 5-5a; 8, 1. 7], the creation of notes on the successes of the USSR in the socio-economic and cultural sphere, the compilation of a dossier on the political predilections of colleagues - French writers [7, p. 5].

Thus, in the 1930s, the journal *International Literature* played an important role in maintaining the Franco-Soviet cultural dialogue. In addition to publishing works by French authors, critical articles of a literary nature, acquaintance of Soviet readers with the biographies of French writers, the magazine conducted ideological work with French authors, corresponding to the tasks of Soviet cultural policy.

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