



The prohibited Nietzsche: anti-Nitzscheanism in Soviet Russia

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Abstract

This article discusses the reception of Nietzsche's philosophy within the USSR. It covers the four phases of Soviet Nietzscheanism between 1920 and 1980, paying specific attention to the Soviet Nietzsche studies of the Stalin epoch. By making use of publications and archive materials, this article reconstructs the historical and logical formation of Nietzsche's negative image in post-revolutionary Russia that characterized him as an ideologist of imperialism and National Socialism. In addition to this, this article examines the facts impeding the process of Nietzsche's denazification in Russia.

Keywords Russian Nietzsche studies · Soviet philosophy · Fascism · Stalinism · Party censorship · De-nazification of Nietzsche · Anti-Nitzscheanism in Russia

Since the late twentieth century, the topic of “Nietzsche in Russia” has been very popular in both Western Slavic studies and in scholarship on the Russian history of philosophy. These days it is most frequently discussed as a part of the question of whether Russian Nietzscheanism has exerted a positive or negative influence over the socio-political, cultural, and religious contexts of Russian society. In this paper, I will refrain from making value judgments (in as far as this is possible). Instead, my goal is to describe the most characteristic features of the criticism of Nietzsche's philosophy in the USSR, focusing primarily on the peak of Soviet Nietzscheanism which occurred in the 1930s–1940s and the publications and archive materials written during that time.

Paradoxically, Soviet-era Nietzschean studies are currently the most thoroughly researched parts of Russian Nietzscheanism. However, this can be readily explained by the fact that almost all the works written on Nietzsche between 1920 and 1980 were ideologically driven (expect, perhaps, for the texts written between 1970 and

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1980 by Vladimir Bibikhin, Anatoly Mikhailov, Valery Podoroga, and Karen Swasjan). Thus, I believe that the texts of this period are practically of no interest for academic Nietzschean studies. Indeed, the official publications of that time largely promulgate Soviet ideological clichés and stereotypical criticisms of Western bourgeois society, with its militarism, imperialism, racism, chauvinism, and social inequality, instead of academically addressing Nietzsche's philosophy.

In foreign studies on Nietzsche's reception during the Soviet-era, the emphasis is largely placed on understanding the insidious yet determining influence the philosopher's ideas had on the creativity of Soviet writers, artists, and the USSR's political leadership. In this area, being experienced in the nuances of communist propaganda and the subtlety of the intelligentsia's Aesopian language, looking for the grains of new meaning in this ideological agglomeration, is not a very gratifying and enticing task. Still, this work is necessary to fully understand the specificity involved in the contemporary interpretation of Nietzsche's books within Russia. Even if we fully agree with the argument that the Russian Nietzschean studies of the Soviet period largely amounted to wasted time, it is still important to identify and describe the anti-meanings and stereotypes which were developed during the time when Nietzsche's philosophy was rejected. As I will later show, these interpretations still influence current post-Soviet reality.

After World War I in Germany, Nietzsche became *persona non grata* because of his links with fascism, and this sentiment was repeated in Russia during the 1930s. Due to the efforts of the French Left, in particular of the philosophers Deleuze, Foucault, and Derrida, the stereotype of treating Nietzsche as an ideologist of National Socialism was largely discredited. By the end of the 1960s, the number of texts written by European authors who aimed to present Nietzsche's works impartially appeared to be comparable to (if not more than) the number of pamphlets written in the late 1930s and 1940s. In the 1960s–1970s, this effort was continued by the Italian philologists, Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, when they undertook the study of the Nietzsche archive, and their critical edition of the complete collection of Nietzsche's works became an important landmark in developing a new image of the philosopher within Europe.

Despite these efforts, the Post-communist rehabilitation of Nietzscheanism did not entirely clear Nietzsche from accusations that connected him with National Socialism. Despite numerous recent Russian academic publications, including the publication of the first volume of what is currently the most complete 13-volume edition of *Nietzsche's Collected Works*,¹ the "syndrome" of enmity against the German philosopher still prevails to this day. Not infrequently do those who study Nietzsche's work in Russia face the problem of surmounting anti-Nietzschean sentiments that criticize their work. As a recent example, in 2007, L.E. Balashov, an author from Moscow, published a book under the title *F. Nietzsche—the Hitler of Philosophy*, which is written in the spirit of 1930s–1940s. It is obvious that the author is resentful:

¹ The Russian edition of Nietzsche's Works (Nietzsche 2005–2014) is published by *Kul'turnaya Revoliutsiya* Publishing House under the aegis of the Institute of Philosophy, RAS. It is based on the German critical edition prepared by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. See Nietzsche (1975–2004).

It's just boiled up! Nietzsche is again in fashion. His works have been published over and over again. There are attempts to whitewash and present him in favorable light, and students enthusiastically (and on their own initiative) write papers on him. This is on the one hand. On the other, there is a growing feeling in society akin to that of German National Socialism. All this is very disturbing. Who is Nietzsche really? Not as a person or a philosopher but as a Phenomenon. I believe he is the Hitler of philosophy and should be treated accordingly. Nietzsche is like Hitler. The devastating effect of Nietzsche in philosophy and culture resembles the atrocities of Hitlerism. (Balašov 2017, p. 2)

Such views are not foreign to the academic community as well. For instance, take a recent collection of essays authored by young educators from the department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Moscow City Pedagogical University (MGPU). In the essay that opens the volume, we can find an entire set of old clichés:

In the grim times [during] the struggle against fascism, the rigid hostility to Nietzsche's ideas was justified... [since] it is clear that irrationalism, a mistrust of intellect, an unconditional call for the reevaluation of values, an appeal to mythology, the rejection of morals and compassion for the weak, and the preaching of the 'Will to Power' and the 'Overman,' can all be used for reactionary purposes. In this sense, a thinker disseminating these ideas is, no doubt, held historically responsible [for the fact] that [these ideas] were, and still can be, used by reactionaries. ... Still, both time and intellectual honesty prompt the reevaluation of many of Nietzsche's ideas as well as of his entire legacy. (Bessonov 2017, p. 35)

It seems to be clear that in order seriously to reassess and read anew the corpus of Nietzsche's texts, it is necessary to work earnestly with the Soviet legacy of Nietzsche studies and not to gloss it over.

Soviet Nietzsche studies are characterized by an extremely small amount of literature when compared to the stream of works published on Nietzsche during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, when Russia led the world in terms of Nietzsche studies.² The reasons for this discrepancy are two-fold. For one, it was expressly prohibited to mention the philosopher's name in publications during the Soviet-era, and two, it was extremely difficult for Russian readers to access his works during that time. Furthermore, studies and interpretations of Nietzsche's works that were free from ideological clichés carried a serious threat to their authors, and as a result, many of the philosopher's former admirers were subject to ruthless "de-Nietzscheization." It was not until the 1970s that censorship became less rigid in

² The first world edition of Nietzsche's works was undertaken in Russia in the early years of the twentieth century. The beginning of the World War I interrupted the publication process, and only four volumes were brought to completion. In addition to Nietzsche's own works, numerous scholarly publications (books and journal articles) devoted to the philosopher's legacy came out during this period. For more details on publications of that period, see: Sineokaya (2001, pp. 971–1007).

Russia, when it became much easier to include references to and citations from Nietzsche's works in official publications.

It is worth mentioning that, in the USSR, in the period from 1938 to 1988, only ten dissertations on Nietzsche were defended: nine were PhD theses, and only one was a Habilitation work (Dr. hab. thesis), authored by Stepan F. Oduv, the official Nietzsche scholar of the Soviet era.³ The first Soviet dissertation on Nietzsche, entitled *Nietzsche's Philosophy and Fascism*, was written by B.M. Bernardiner, the leading Nietzsche expert in Stalin's time (Bernardiner 1938). The second dissertation was defended by I.P. Staroverov some thirteen years later, in the waning years of the Stalin period (Staroverov 1951). However, archival documents show that in the 1930s, L.G. Prussakova, an influential philosopher from Leningrad, was also in the process of writing her doctoral thesis on Nietzsche. In 1937, she started working on a thesis, *Nietzsche as a Precursor of Fascist Ideology*, but as the political objectives of the time were at odds with her work, soon she had to give it up. She did not publish anything after this.

During Nikita Khrushchev's rule, the only Soviet expert on Nietzsche was Oduv, who, in that period, defended his Ph.D. thesis (see Oduv 1957), and later, during Brezhnev's time, went on to write his Habilitation. When the ideological situation changed in the 1970s, the themes, geographical origin, and frequency of submitted theses written on Nietzsche testified to the declining Party censorship of the pre-Perestroika period.⁴

In 1923, Nadezhda K. Krupskaya issued an official order that would stymie Nietzsche studies in Soviet Russia for 65 years. This led to removing Nietzsche's works from circulation and putting them into a "special deposit" for forbidden books. Until 1988, they were not reprinted, translated, or sold on USSR territory. No one was permitted to access Nietzsche's books in Soviet libraries unless authorized to do so, but even then, one only had "restricted use" privileges. However, from conversations with older colleagues, I learned that many libraries of capital and provincial cities had pre-revolutionary German (and some other foreign) editions of Nietzsche's books which one could freely access. The first of Nietzsche's texts published in the post-communist period was *The Anti-Christian* (Nietzsche 1988, pp. 9–44), which was banned by the censorship office before the revolution of 1917. Ironically, this book came out in the same year as the millennium of Christianity in Russia, and it coincided with the official date of Orthodoxy returning to post-Soviet Russia. The years between 1988 and 1992 witnessed the rehabilitation of religion in the Russian public consciousness. As a result of these and other factors, the period saw an impressive amount of publications on the theme "Nietzsche and Christianity."

³ Stepan F. Oduv, whose career peaked during the 1950s and early 1960s, was the only Soviet historian of philosophy who the authorities allowed to engage in scholarly work on Nietzsche, and who was permitted to publish results of his research in official Soviet venues, such as academic publishing houses, encyclopedias, and censored professional journals.

⁴ Six out of ten dissertations during the entire Soviet period were defended in the decade between 1979 and 1988. See, for example Siluyanov (1979), Mochkin (1981), Lavrova (1985), Kambay (1986), Yaroslavtseva (1988), Šapovalov 1988.

If we try to classify Russian studies on Nietzsche in the USSR in chronological order, we could single out several time periods. The first begins after the revolution of 1917, when only a handful of Nietzsche's works were published, and lasts until the early 1920s, when Nietzsche's works became officially prohibited. The texts written during this period are largely inspired by events of the Revolution and were carried out in the paradigm of the Silver Age.⁵ The second period marks the fierce criticism of Nietzsche during the latter half of the 1920s, which increased in the pre-war period and grew during World War II. During this time, many accused Nietzsche of being an apologist of imperialism and creating the theoretical basis for fascism. The third period is the epoch of Soviet Nietzsche studies that lasted from the second half of the 1940s through the 1960s, when the number of works on Nietzsche was close to zero. The fourth period is marked by the revival of Russian Nietzsche studies in the 1970s and 1980s, when, along with the traditional, but already cynical, critique of "bourgeois philosophy," new Nietzsche studies emerged that began focusing on contemporary philosophical topics (Podoroga 1986, 1989; Bibichin 1981). The typical publications of Russian philosophers for those years largely echoed the process of Nietzsche's de-nazification, launched in Europe in the 1970s–1980s. Concurrently, criticism of Nietzsche's ideas developed among nationally oriented groups of the Soviet intellectual elite.

Popularity of the philosopher's peaked twice throughout the six decades between the 1920s and the 1980s; these peaks serve to delineate the dark period for the reception of Nietzsche's legacy in Russia. One can call the pre-Soviet epoch of the Russian religious renaissance (the first decade of the twentieth century) the "Golden Age" of Russian Nietzsche studies; this is the first peak. The second peak is marked by the "Silver Age" of domestic Nietzsche studies during the post-Soviet period under Gorbachev and the thaw arising out of the Perestroika at the turn of the twentieth century.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the main anti-Nietzschean sentiments of the Soviet period, it is important to remember that Nietzsche's philosophical debut in Russia during the last decade of the nineteenth century was marked by an extremely negative attitude held by many classical idealists of the older generation. Among numerous anti-Nietzschean pamphlets at the turn of the nineteenth century, I would like to mention three thinkers whose radical criticism had the most significant impact on the subsequent tradition of Soviet philosophical Nietzscheanism. They are Nikolai Fedorov (who inspired Nietzsche's adversaries in the pre-war years), Vladimir Solovyov (whose judgments on Nietzsche were implicitly in demand in the 1960s and in the years prior to Khrushchev's thaw), and Peter Astafyev (whose criticism of Nietzsche echoed throughout the 1970s–1980s). It is also important to note that these criticisms, while influential, were implicitly grounded in ideological differences.

⁵ In the 1920s, the only officially allowed aspect of Nietzsche studies which remained, if only for a short while, was the philosophy of culture, most notably, of the ancient Greek. This theme appeared in the works of Vyacheslav Ivanov, Faddei Zelensky, Vikentiy Veresayev, Aleksei Losev.

Perhaps surprisingly, the radical rejection of Nietzsche by Russian Marxists after the victory of the 1917 revolution was preceded by an overall enthusiasm for the philosopher's oeuvre before the Bolshevik party (then a marginal organization) came into power. However, this was before the rebels turned into party leaders. Afterwards, the official ideology of the victorious proletariat class became irreconcilably hostile to Nietzsche, and the "cultural policy" of Soviet Russia thereafter sought to develop a pervasive anti-Nietzschean mythology.

The tradition of comparing Nietzsche and Marx can be traced back to the works of Nikolai Mikhailovsky, who was the first to see the proximity between these two thinkers in their approach to fighting for individual rights. At the turn of the century, authors from different political orientations (including Pyotr Struve and Evgenii Trubetskoy) adopted a similar view. In terms of Russian religious thought, what marked the relationship between Nietzscheanism and Marxism was the fact that for some thinkers, who later became prominent figures in Russia's religious revival, Nietzsche had played a "fatal role" in the ideological evolution "from Marxism to idealism."

In the history of Russian thought, there was a unique spiritual trend, originating around 1903–1912, called "Nietzschean Marxism," a descriptor introduced by George Kline in 1969. Its proponents included such talented writers and publicists as Maxim Gorky (Peshkov), Anatoly Lunacharsky, Alexander Bogdanov (Malinovsky), and Stanislav Vol'sky (Sokolov), all of whom later became well-known Soviet political leaders. The synthesis of Marxism and Nietzscheanism helped many prominent Soviet Russian figures to reconcile the ideals of social justice and individual perfection, while also reinforcing the heroic aspects of Marxism. Unlike other Marxists, Nietzschean Marxists were keenly aware of the impact of "irrational propaganda" (by means of myths and symbols). With this in mind, it is not hard to see why Marxists' suddenly changed their views on Nietzsche: Nietzsche's doctrine was openly hostile to socialist ideas, and his criticism of the French revolution (which, according to Nietzsche, scared off the spirit of the enlightenment and progressive development) appeared inadmissible for the official Soviet ideology.

The first Soviet treatise devoted to Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and Financial Capital* (1928), was written by M.G. Leyteyzen,⁶ an airship designer and diplomat who was executed in 1939. After his death, his work was rehabilitated. The message of this book is that Nietzsche was ideologically affiliated with financial oligarchy and capital, and that his views express the class interests of the bourgeoisie monopoly. This point was later made by Leyteyzen when he represented Nietzsche and Lenin as antipodes: "If we were to oppose the most prominent ideologist of the hostile bourgeois camp to Lenin, we should refer to Nietzsche" (Leyteyzen 1928, p. 141).

The preface to this book was written by Lunacharsky, a Marxist revolutionary who was trying to excuse his juvenile attraction to Nietzsche:

⁶ Moris Gavrilovich Leyteyzen was an officer of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and a member of the Soviet Diplomatic Mission in Switzerland and Sweden. Together with F.A. Tsander and other scholars, he worked on a project for rocket engines and spaceships and corresponded with K.E. Tsiolkovsky.

We, Marxists-communists, at the dawn of our revolutionary movement, were somewhat carried away by Nietzsche. To varying degrees, of course. I, for example, while being critical of Nietzsche's social tendencies, [which were] alien to us, was very enthusiastic about his fight against Christianity [and] petty bourgeois philistinism, with all its mumbling and spineless pacifism inherent in humanists and sentimentalists à la Tolstoy. (Lunacharskij 1928, p. 20)

Aligning himself with the author of *Nietzsche and Financial Capital*, Lunacharsky claimed that "the essence of Nietzsche's social tendencies" coincided with the class interests of the bourgeoisie monopoly. At the same time, he never seemed to consider that Nietzsche's works were written prior to the time when free-competitive capitalism was finally converted into monopolistic capitalism:

In essence, the contours of financial oligarchy, the contours of the coming dictatorship in their anti-democratic form, were still poorly drawn against the background of Nietzsche's world. That is all the more reason why we should pay tribute to his sensitivity. Being neither an economist nor a sociologist in the proper sense of the word, he could instinctively foresee the emerging class in the same way that Marx foresaw [the] proletariat, when the latter still existed more "for itself" than "for others." (Lunacharskij 1928, p. 17)

The last officially censored attempt of Nietzsche's rehabilitation in the late 1920s, just before the total rejection of his works, was probably Faina Mesin's review⁷ of M.G. Leyteyzen's book. In her review, Mesin openly accused both the author of the book and the author of the preface (Lunacharsky) of an inaccurate presentation of Nietzsche's ideas. Mesin consistently withstood Leyteyzen's attacks on the Nietzschean concepts of *amor fati*, *the eternal recurrence*, and *nihilism*. In passing her strict verdict, she writes that:

Contrary to the view of the author of the preface, the book under review does not offer keys to the materialistic analysis of Nietzsche's philosophy. The careless treatment of facts, forcible schematizing and constructing, and a play on arbitrary analogies have nothing in common with Marxist methods and can only slide [one] down into the Shulyatikov swamp.⁸ The development of ideologies is in general far more difficult than it appears to ... comrade Leyteyzen. (Mesin 1928, 122)

⁷ Faina Mesin is a pseudonym of Faina Abramovna Kogsan-Bernstein, a well-known translator of Renaissance philosophical classics.

⁸ The vulgarization of Marxism was called the "Shuljatikov swamp," after Shuljatikov (1872–1912), who was a literary critic, party, and trade union leader, as well as the author of the book, *Opravdanie kapitalizma v zapadnoevropejskoj filosofii (ot Dekarta do E. Macha)* (Moscow, 1908). In this book, he claimed that bourgeois philosophy defended the interests of ruling classes and was looking for the theoretical acquittal of mercenary expediencies during its entire historical development. Thus, the genesis of spiritual phenomena was grotesquely oversimplified. Lenin wrote in the margin of this work: "an example of extreme vulgarization of Marxism" (Lenin 1969, p. 474). For more details see Michaylova and Shuljatikov, (1990, pp. 419–422).

The most fruitful years of Soviet (anti-)Nietzsche studies emerged during the 1930s, the years when Karl Löwith, Karl Jaspers, and Martin Heidegger worked out the classical interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy. The maxim that prevailed in Soviet publications of the time was: "What best illustrates the true content of Nietzsche's ideas is the bloody fascist regime" (*Kritika ideologii fashizma* 1935). During the late 1930s–early 1940s, in debates on the value of German philosophy, Nietzsche played the role of the "whipping boy," being contrasted with the "respectable" classic German idealists. The Party guidelines required everyone to interpret Nietzsche's works as the chief source of fascism which spurred the developing bourgeois ideology taking root during World War I. In addition to this, the Party held that Nietzsche's bourgeois ideology would later go on to be crowned by National Socialism. However, this conclusion was not an inevitable outcome of soundly identifying Nietzsche's thought with fascism, but rather the appropriation of Nietzsche's legacy (with intentional distortion and falsification) by the ideology of German National Socialism. The suspicion with which Nazi theorists themselves treated Nietzsche could be explained by Nietzsche's dissociation from fascism over the course of several decades of bourgeois ideological decline. György Lukács, one of the most irreconcilable of Nietzsche's adversaries, who successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, *The Young Hegel* in 1942 in the Institute of Philosophy at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, wrote in summary of his thesis:

Nietzsche is the ancestor of all arbitrary historical constructions and mythmaking of the monopolist era: from impressionism to expressionism, from Simmel to Gundolf, Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck, Jünger, and finally to Rosenberg and Goebbels. (Lukács 1934, 53)

Several notable Soviet philosophers who lectured and wrote on Nietzsche in the 1930s–1940s include B.M. Barnadinner, B.E. Bykhovsky, I. Vainshtein, A.M. Deborin, L. Kait, M. Kammari, I. Lezhnev, G. Lukács, F. Mering, M.B. Mitin, S.F. Oduev, L.G. Prussakova, P.I. Staroverov, and A.K. Toporov. Their works survive in the form of publications and archive materials.

There are records of meetings held by the Editorial Board of the Institute of Philosophy that were devoted to the collection of articles entitled *The Ideology of Fascism and Racism* (later retitled as *The Critique of Fascist Ideology*, and finally published in 1936 as *Against Fascist Obscurantism and Demagogy*). These meetings were held between April and December 1935 (Protocols of the meeting of the editorial board of the anti-fascist treatise *Kritika ideologii fashizma* 1935, pp. 1–47). During this period, the editorial staff discussed B.M. Barnadinner's article "Nizsheanstvo v ideologii fashizma" [*Nietzscheanism in the Ideology of Fascism*] (Barnadinner 1936, pp. 265–293), which became a model interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy at that time. The work contained concise statements from the earlier brochure "Filosofija Nietzsche i fashizm" [*Nietzsche's Philosophy and Fascism*] written by Bernardiner (1934), which had set a paradigm for the Soviet criticism of Nietzsche. The main thesis asserted that the practical implication of Nietzsche's doctrine, which was used by the National Socialists (here reduced to the concept of the will to power), expressed the policy of German and Italian fascists who sought to repartition the world through imperialist wars and interventions against the USSR. The article written by Barnadinner offers profuse quotations from texts written by

so-called “Nietzschean Socialists,” a term used by Bernard Bykhovskij to describe Benito Mussolini, Alfred Baeumler, Moeller van den Bruck, and Alfred Rosenberg (Bykhovskij 1942, p. 113). In his article, Barnadinner criticized several of Nietzsche’s views. As he understood them, these include Nietzsche’s conception of cognition as an instrument of power, his devaluation of the mind in favor of illusions and instinct, and his preaching of hierarchy and slavery directed against individual liberty. He regarded the concept of eternal recurrence as a means to oppose the idea of social progress and to manifest racism (meaning that, under his interpretation of Nietzsche, the races that could not stand the thought of recurrence should perish and give way to those who rejoice in it).

The main philosophical and socio-economic journal during the 1920s and first half of the 1940s, *Under the Banner of Marxism*, which was also the center of anti-Nietzschean propaganda in the 1930s–1940s, went on to publish a series of sternly anti-Nietzschean pamphlets. One could clearly discern the differences between the anti-Nietzschean line (which included Lagard, presented as an ancestor of fascism) and advocacy of Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte against the Nazi interpretation of their philosophical work. Soviet philosophers proceeded from classical Marxism’s view on “the German theory of the French revolution” and from the claim that German classical philosophy was one of the sources of Marxism.

One of the most extensive publications declaring anathema is that by B.E. Bykhovskij, Head of the History of Philosophy Sector at the Institute of Philosophy, Soviet Academy of Sciences. An ardent defender of classical German philosophy he wrote “Nietzsche and Fascism” (1942), an article in which he opposed Nietzsche, on the one hand, to Bacon and Spinoza, who glorified the power of mind, on the other, as well as to Hegel, whose ideas found their application in Marxism. Bykhovskij claimed that the ground for the identification of Nietzsche’s philosophy (“a reservoir of Nazi propaganda”) with the ideology of National Socialism was the common hatred of European civilization and the Paris Commune, which had declared the principle of Europeanism—“liberty, equality, and fraternity”. Along with Nietzsche, Bykhovskij viewed Jacobi, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and German Romanticism in general as the forerunners of Nazism. In his article, he also addressed several widely discussed subjects. The first, *the pathos of distance*, is interpreted as the distance of social hierarchies, exploitation, and the new slave-owning aristocracy. The interpretation of the *master–slave morality* is an ethics of “rulers, rapists, and masters directed against man with his feeling of freedom and thirst for happiness” (Bykhovskij 1942, 120). Finally, *eternal recurrence* is interpreted as directed against socialist ideals of progress: “Nietzsche universalizes Hegel’s denial of evolution in nature, [which is] ostensibly subject only to recurrence” (Bykhovskij 1942, 123).

Besides the published works of this period, a significant bulk of unpublished texts, rough drafts, and transcripts of lectures on Nietzsche is kept in Russian archives. An illustrative example of a public address in accordance with Soviet philosophical discourse is found in the surviving transcript of a lecture by the academician, A.M. Deborin, delivered at the Institute of Red Professors of Philosophy in April 1935. This is the only evidence of A.M. Deborin’s work against Nietzsche, as there is no other work on this subject among his publications. The lecture’s aim was to prove the absence of any connection between Nietzsche’s and Marx’s ideas and to put an

end to attempts to interpret Nietzsche's philosophy (which Deborin called "nihilistic illusionism") in the spirit of anarchism, socialism, and materialism. By highlighting Nietzsche's perspectivism (which Deborin understood as "absolute voluntarism and optical illusion" (Deborin 1935, 3)) and suggesting that Nietzsche's thought was inclined toward the doctrines of Makh, Avenarius, and Berkley, the academician claimed that Nietzsche was a theoretical failure who was, in the author's view, the creator of fiction, illusions, and concoctions.

Hastily crossing out Nietzsche's name from the list of legitimate philosophers in the first post-revolutionary years became an ominous precedent in the attempt to ensure that German classical philosophy should be regarded as the forerunner of Nazis ideology. This attempt, which had far-reaching consequences, was undertaken by Zinovij Jakovlevich Beletsky in 1943. In the early 1940s, Beletsky, the secretary of the Party Committee of the Institute of Philosophy, researching his doctoral thesis, "The Role of German Philosophy in Preparing Germany for World Domination," tried to prove that, in addition to "reactionary philosophy" in the name of Nietzsche, classical German philosophy was also an ideological basis of Hitlerism. However, his colleagues denounced him in 1943, declaring that "his work was at variance with reality and with the assessments of Marx, Engels, and Lenin". Dismissed from the Institute of Philosophy because of his "unfitness for research activity," (Korsakov 2016, 176), he wrote Stalin an accusatory letter in which he argued that "German classical philosophy in the name of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel is an aristocratic reaction to the French revolution and one of the sources of Nazis ideology," (Korsakov 2016, 166). Due to Beletsky's denunciation, and following Stalin's order,⁹ studies of German classical philosophy in the USSR were interrupted, and historians of philosophy who defended classical philosophy were publicly denounced and deprived of their rights to conduct research.

Professor Valentin Asmus' lecture, "Nietzsche," which was presented on May 25, 1936 at the Institute of Red Professors of Philosophy (10 Kropotkinskaya Str., Moscow), can be regarded as an act of professional dignity in the context of the anti-Nietzschean officialdom of the 1930s. The surviving transcript of the lecture is kept in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. However, the published version of Asmus's article is missing.

Asmus's speech contained many necessary yet derogatory ritual phrases and judgments against Nietzsche. Nevertheless, it not only presented a highly academic account of the meaningful links between Nietzsche's philosophy and the vicissitudes of his creative path, but—iwhat must have seemed incredible during those years—it also managed to analyze and comment on the principle propositions of Nietzsche's doctrine that were inconsistent with fascist ideology. Apart from this remarkable fact (and keeping in mind the inaccessibility of Nietzsche's texts for Soviet readers), Asmus's lecture was also unique in that he drew on quotations from Nietzsche's main books, his early writings (which were not translated

⁹ In 1944, the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) issued an order declaring German classical philosophy to be an aristocratic reaction to the French revolution and a forerunner to Nazi ideology.

into Russian and which were almost unknown in Russia), as well as his late works (which were prohibited by the tsarist censorship).

Asmus's first thesis was that National Socialists were falsifying Nietzsche's works in the same way they were falsifying the legacy of the classical German philosophers such as Fichte, Hegel, and Leibniz.

Thereupon, Asmus pointed out the two specific features of Nietzsche's outlook—his atheism and his apolitical stance. As to atheism, he noted that Nietzsche, the author of *Antichrist*, the harshest book in bourgeois literature directed against Christianity, accused Germans of hindering the spread of atheism in Europe. Yet in terms of his political engagement, Asmus said expressly that Nietzsche's works lacked a well-articulated stance. On the one hand, Asmus claimed that Nietzsche was opposed to big capital and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals; on the other, he called Nietzsche an adversary of socialism, communism, and the nationalization of land (observing, however, that Nietzsche foresaw the future of Germany as heading toward the accumulation of small property).

Asmus then interpreted one of the most controversial subjects of Nietzsche's philosophy (due to National Socialist propaganda). This is, of course, his doctrine of the Superman. On this subject, Asmus said that "Nietzsche hoped to find the embodiment of an ideal man in great personalities and political figures of the Italian Renaissance, [or, in other words,] the symbol of the future Superman in the great history of antiquity" (Asmus 1936, p. 36).

Making brilliant use of official rhetoric, Asmus conveyed important meanings that would otherwise be fraught with the risk of repressions. In particular, he says that the "Nietzsche criticized the modern culture of the developing bourgeois society from the abstract philosophical standpoint, [and that] the most important concept for Nietzsche [was] the concept of culture, which he developed to study antique history and [the] history of the Renaissance" (Asmus 1936, pp. 35–36).

Much of his talk was devoted to the problem of nationalism and aestheticism. On this topic, Asmus convincingly demonstrated that Nietzsche was a staunch adversary of ideologically driven nationalism, intolerance, chauvinism, and antisemitism, and that he argued in favor of the abolition of national states. Asmus condemned Alfred Boimler, the author of the treatise *Nietzsche as a Philosopher and Politician* (1931), and an ideologist of the Third Reich, for his concealment of Nietzsche's genuine beliefs and thoughts. Asmus' conclusion was unambiguous: "Among the points [which show that] Nietzsche cannot be entirely identified with contemporary fascism, his criticism of state-worshipping and antisemitism [should be mentioned]" (Asmus 1936, 2).

Asmus then concluded his lecture by discussing Nietzsche's project of building a European alliance between peoples of the near future: "In the future Nietzsche foresaw, beyond doubt, the abolition of nations ... It is important to note this point, which surely does not coincide with the theory of contemporary fascism" (Asmus 1936, 31).

Summing up his speech, Asmus guardedly characterized "Nietzsche's reactionary philosophy" as idealism, absolute relativism, absolute functionalism, and agnosticism.

We come now to the 1940s–1950s—the dead period of Soviet Nietzsche studies. From the second half of the 1950s until the late 1970s, there were only two publications on Nietzsche. Both were Oduev’s revised thesis, given that for more than twenty years he was the only “Soviet expert on Nietzsche” officially acclaimed by the authorities.

The only study on Nietzsche published during the Khrushchev period was *The Reactionary Essence of Nietzscheanism* (1959). Here, Oduev followed the tradition of asserting “the genetic relationship” between Nietzsche and fascism while offering stiff “Marxist” resistance to Nietzsche, characterizing the German philosopher as “an unscrupulous apologist of the barbaric “will to power,”” “zoological anti-humanism,” violence, militarism, chauvinism, and nationalism. In addition to this, Nietzsche’s social ideals were also stigmatized as cosmopolitan and racist. In 1961, Oduev’s book was translated into Mandarin and later into Rumanian.

Oduev’s next book, *Following Zarathustra: Nietzsche’s Influence on German Bourgeois Philosophy* (1971), implemented the official position on Nietzsche during Brezhnev’s time. The author claimed that Nietzsche’s admirers had always been exclusively attracted to his anti-democratic, anti-humanistic, and anti-socialist pathos. The book was an ideological response to the intellectual trends of the 1960s. During this period, studies relating Nietzsche and Marx were becoming prevalent in the West, Nietzsche’s de-nazification was on its way, and he was becoming attractive to the “new Left”. Oduev saw the growing interest in Nietzsche in Europe as a danger emanating from radical forces dissatisfied with capitalism, but which did not understand the nature of the social order. As a counterpoint to these general trends, Oduev writes that “Marxism never tried to legitimize Nietzsche, and any attempts to unite Marxism and Nietzscheanism cannot have anything in common with the critical revolutionary method of Soviet philosophy” (Oduev 1971, p. 414). In 1976, the second edition of Oduev’s book was published. It was translated into French, German, Arab and Czech.

Until the 1980s in the USSR, Nietzsche was associated with the “will to power”, irrationalism, nihilism, and individualism (Bogomolov 1969; Švarc 1964; Vercman 1962). Perhaps the only exception to this general sentiment was an entry on Nietzsche in the fourth volume of the famous *Philosophical Encyclopedia* (1967), written by Anatoly Mikhailov. Despite the inevitable ideological stigma that would come from its publication in the USSR, Mikhailov’s entry nonetheless provided an ideologically-free account of the philosopher’s work.

While the pre-revolutionary Russian tradition of broadly discussing the opposing viewpoints of Leo Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (initiated by N.Y. Grot) did not continue in the USSR, the popular topic of comparing Nietzsche’s and Dostoevsky’s ideas was still relevant in the early twentieth century, although never was the comparison in Nietzsche’s favor. For Soviet critics, the German philosopher remained the symbol of Western immoralism and decadence, while Dostoevsky was presented as the true role model for ethical thought (see Latynina 1972; Dudkin and Azadovskij 1973; Dostoevskij 1973; Fridlander 1985). The antimony of Dostoevsky contra Nietzsche was set within the paradigmatic search for the ideal of daily life within socialist Russia. The theme of comparing these two thinkers was largely a response to Walter Kaufmann’s interpretation of Nietzsche as an existential thinker in his

Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (1950) (Kaufmann 1950). This was also the point of view of a series of Nietzsche studies in West Germany beginning in 1972. Another important factor that contributed to this existential interpretation of Nietzsche was critical edition of his collected works by Colli and Montinari. This publication contained previously unknown works by Nietzsche in the eighth volume, and these showed that Dostoevsky's influence on Nietzsche was much stronger than previously believed. In particular, Nietzsche was familiar with Dostoevsky's novels *The House of the Dead* (1860), *The Notes from Underground* (1864), *Idiot* (1868), *Crime and Punishment* (1866), and *Demons* (1872).

In 1982, Yuri Davydov's *Ethics of Love and Metaphysics of Self-will* cast Nietzsche as an existentialist who exemplified the Western bourgeoisie's moral nihilism, while Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were presented as the incarnations of higher moral ideals preserved by the Russian people. It is important to note here that Davydov was not a Nietzsche specialist, and that in fact he treated them with deep suspicion. In his research, he tried to convince the reader that Nietzsche used Dostoevsky's ideas to prove his own views, and that these would have been absolutely unacceptable to the great Russian writer. As opposed to Nietzsche, who, according to Davydov's research, defended the immoral ideals of the Renaissance (and was only preoccupied by the problem of personal happiness and self-promotion), Dostoevsky stood for the idea of duties towards others. Alexander Filippov, Davydov's pupil and a well-known political scientist, wrote, in defining the essence of *Ethics of Love and Metaphysics of Self-Will*:

Immediately after the publication of Davidov's book, it was sharply criticized in *Communist*, the principal Communist party journal. A member of the Editorial Board (under the pseudonym of R. Pyetropavlovsky) wrote a devastating article, "In connection with a certain book" (Petropavlovsky 1983, pp. 102–114), which accused the author of *Ethics of Love and Metaphysics of Self-will* of deducing moral values from religion and not from class interests. According to an eyewitness:

Repression might be on the way, but the times were already unsettling. Brezhnev had died, Andropov was dying, and Chernenko had not taken office yet. Davydov wrote a letter addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist party of the USSR: 24 typed pages with the accusations of Nietzscheanism made against the author of *The Communist*. No response followed, in fact, nothing followed. (Filippov 2006) yes, he does!

Davydov's book enjoyed extreme popularity and was republished in 1989. In 1988, during a conference at Fordham University (USA) devoted to the Nietzsche's influence on Soviet culture, Davydov maintained that Nietzsche's impact on Russian and Soviet culture was exclusively negative (Rosenthal 2002, 426).

A major landmark in establishing new Nietzsche studies in Russia was the brochure by I. Andreeva, *Contemporary Foreign Studies of Nietzsche's Philosophy: Scientific and Analytical Review*, which was issued in 1984 with restricted use for the research associates of the Academy of Sciences (Andreeva 1984, pp. 65–73). The review contained ideologically neutral information on the emerging political situation and an analysis of recent trends in global Nietzsche studies since the

1970s. In particular, the author interpreted the growing interest in Nietzsche in Western philosophy as resulting from the crisis of bourgeois science.

During the 1970s in the USSR, illegal (self-printed) copies of Nietzsche's works appeared in circulation. It is clear that the communist regime's prohibition of the philosopher's works stimulated interest, as the official sources of information about Nietzsche's ideas were still Soviet literary theorists, historians, and philosophers, who did not present Nietzsche's views as such, but rather criticized his views from their ideological positions.

In an interview published on the website *Nietzsche.ru* in 2006, a prominent philosopher-ethicist, Abdusalam Guseynov, was asked if Nietzsche was represented widely enough in contemporary Russian historical and philosophical discourse. His response was:

Nietzsche is present and has always been present (even during the reign of Orthodox Marxism). Back in 1966–1967 I delivered a lecture on Nietzsche as part of the course of philosophy for the students of the faculty of journalism at the Moscow State University. That was interesting both for my students and myself. As for today, in view of Nietzsche's renaissance in the West and so-called post-modernism in philosophy and culture, one can observe renewed interest in Nietzsche in Russia. The publication of the complete Collected Works alone means a lot! Besides, Nietzsche is one of those philosophers who has always had ardent supporters. (Guseynov 2006)

Today, as the second decade of the twenty-first century nears its end, a new burst of anti-Nietzschean sentiments in Russia has caused a scandal around the publication of Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*. Specifically, Nietzsche has come to be regarded as Heidegger's teacher, and thus as someone who influenced the latter's outlook. After this revelation, instead of searching in Nietzsche's texts for the sources of Heidegger's concerns with a new beginning and overcoming metaphysics, critics sought a basis in these writings for Heidegger's Nazism and anti-Semitism. I would like to believe that the last three decades, which saw the publication of a large body of texts and literature around Nietzsche's works, will have a healing effect on this situation, and that the history of Soviet anti-Nietzscheanism will not be repeated. The features of Nietzsche's "Russian portrait" are gradually changing, and domestic scholars in philosophy of language, philosophy of politics, philosophy of science, philosophy of psychology, philosophy of religion, philosophy of education, etc. still look to his works. However, the negative image of Nietzsche that was deeply rooted in the minds of Russians during the years of Soviet power requires reassessment, both at the academic and popular levels. It is by no means an easy matter, for it must be recognized that Stalin's convincing criticism of Nietzsche during the Soviet era arose not just because of the repressive state apparatus of the time, but also because of its anti-fascist pathos and rejection of nationalism.

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