

# The Modern Literary Process as a Factor of the Socialization and Integration of Russia and China

(On the Example of the III Forum of Young Writers of China and Russia)

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## ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the historical analysis of the socializing and integrating role of literature and the justification of the need for systemic socialization management by the state. The thesis on the use of literature as a factor in the state ideology formation in our days is proved. The role of Soviet literature as an important tool of political socialization is revealed, its significant influence on the literary process and the formation of state ideology in China is emphasized. The dynamics of Russian-Chinese relations is considered in connection with the transformation of the literary process of the both countries. The modern stage of literary and political integration is considered on the example of the III Forum of young writers of China and Russia (Shanghai, 2019). The interpretation of the main Forum's cooperation vectors and relevant topics is based on the experience of direct participation in the work of the Forum of one of the article authors. The conclusion is drawn about the integration potential of modern literature, its focus on the restoration of the traditional values of Russian and Chinese cultures, their interpenetration and optimal coexistence.

**Keywords:** China, Russian-Chinese relations, literary process, Forum of young writers of China and Russia, integration potential of modern literature

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In most modern states, there is a need to manage socialization as a process of entering the individual into the social system, mastering its norms, values and attitudes. Socialization is often seen as a way to form a certain type of citizen. The main tool for controlled socialization is the state ideology, in which the historical destiny of the nation, its place in the world, the problems and prospects of development are understood and the values integrating the nation and specifying, however, the accepted political course are formulated [1]. Fiction that has in its arsenal all the main mechanisms of socialization (encouragement and censure, imitation, reflection, identification), and is both the

carrier and source of the most important means of socialization (such as language and speech, elements of spiritual culture) can act as a significant factor in the formation of state ideology.

As the philologist M. M. Golubkov rightly noted, "it is literature that informs us through decades and centuries about the norms of national life, the system of values accepted in society, the life and moral orientations of its best representatives, shows the ideal and anti-ideal of a person, forms in the public consciousness ideas about what is due and what is not... Literature is the carrier of a peculiar genetic code, without which a person and society lose their continuity in the vertical of time. Through literature, a person receives the accumulated experience of national life, private behavior, manners of feeling and thinking" [2, p. 7]. Literature performs the functions of education and upbringing, setting moral guidelines for the individual, connecting him/her with the past, expanding the boundaries of the present and opening the veil of the future [14]. However, the peculiarity of the socializing influence of literature is that it captures not only the rational, controlled sphere of consciousness, but also acts at times on an unconscious affective level, changing the orientations of the individual and rebuilding his/her identity.

The history of Russia shows that it was often the writer who was considered by the state as a "ruler of thoughts" (an important agent of socialization), able to direct the reader's thoughts in the direction both pleasing and objectionable to the official authorities. In this context, we can recall the examples of A. Radishchev's publication of "Travels from St. Petersburg to Moscow", which led to serious proceedings at the highest state level, the southern exile of A. S. Pushkin for a number of freedom-loving poems (first of all, the ode "Liberty"), the expulsion to the Caucasus for the provocative poem "Death of the Poet" by M. Yu. Lermontov... But no matter how many "instructive" historical examples there are, including the ones in modern history, writers continue to play the role of the voice of conscience, calling for a critical, personal understanding of social problems.

It is not surprising that the state, interested in managing society as conflict-free as possible and maintaining its power over it, has always sought to influence fiction. It was especially evident in the Soviet years, when literature and art were integrated into the state system through the creation of creative unions. At the same time, it was literature that was traditionally given the role of translator and educator of the main spiritual values of the Soviet citizen.

As early as 1905, in the article "Party Organization and Party Literature", V. I. Lenin wrote: "...it will be a free literature, because it is not self-interest and not a career, but the idea of socialism and sympathy for the workers will recruit new and new forces into its ranks" [4]. According to Frants S. V. and Lubutin K. N., there was no question of any "true freedom of literature" at that time — it was only imposed the role of a "servant" of the new state with a clearly defined set of functions: propaganda, artistic illustration and interpretation of Marxist and later Leninist ideas [5]. However, we should note that this view of Soviet literature began to spread actively at the end of the XX century in the wave of the struggle against the Soviet system.

Reflecting on the fashionable trend to scold social realism, the Soviet government and the "nationalization" of literature, Golubkov M. M. notes that not only to the total control and destruction of writers and entire trends reduced the attention of the state to the literature of that time. There was also another (much broader), positive aspect of the development of relations between literature and power, "when literature becomes a state matter" [2]: A Union of Writers is created, A Literary Institute is formed (for the first time in the world history) that trains professional writers, writers' work becomes popular and socially significant.

Commenting on the trend of devaluation of the Soviet literary experience, researchers Kuleshov V. E. and Tsareva N. A. noted that: "...not a bright post-perestroika future still receives justification in the minds of the incoming generation, if the picture of the

past drawn in the information space is terrible” [3, p. 148]. With the decline of the importance of literature as a whole characteristic of modern time, they also note a rethinking of educational standards of literature as a discipline (“harmful” works are excluded from the school curriculum, and the number of hours allocated to study the subject falls). This shows not a forced “cooling” of the state focused on solving difficult economic problems to the literature, but its active desire to form the worldview of a new type of an individual / a person — a conformist consumer. For this purpose, the literary content “must be indifferent in its views on the current socio-political reality” [3, p. 148]. However, as N.A. Yagodintseva rightly noted, the project of the human consumer has already suffered a crushing collapse, since “it leads to the complete destruction” of everyone, because it begins to directly contradict the laws of nature, the psyche, and the viable human community” [14, p. 10]. “The Saving role in this disastrous process”, according to the Professor, is again assigned to literature: “with its help, we gain spiritual experience and, while remaining free in our actions, we are guided not only by personal egoistic interests, but also by higher considerations of collective experience, the common good, and higher justice. Needless to say, these principles create the people as a unique national and cultural community...” [14, p. 4].

Similar thoughts are voiced today by the head of the Russian state. Speaking at the Congress of the Society of Russian Literature, Vladimir Putin said: “...preserving the Russian language, literature and our culture is a matter of national security and preserving our identity in the global world. Russia has repeatedly experienced radical changes in traditional cultural foundations and has always found strength in returning to its spiritual and historical values, and Russian literature and the standard Russian language have always been and still are the foundations of these values”<sup>1</sup>. According to the President, the problem of national identity crisis can be solved only through consistent work, appeal to the best world traditions, to the best world practice in promoting national languages and culture abroad (the experience of the Spanish Cervantes Institute, the German Goethe Institute and the Chinese Confucius Institute) and the implementation of large-scale cultural projects. One of these promising projects is the Forum of Young Writers of China and Russia, held in December 2019 in Shanghai.

Traditionally, Chinese readers and writers’ interest to Russian literature is great. After the May 4 1919 Movement, there was a period when Russian literature, according to the Chinese writer Lu Xin, was “the torch of a new Chinese literature”, was its “good teacher and good friend” [6]. According to the statistics of the “New Chinese literature — bibliography of the translated literature series”, during 1917–1927 the number of Russian books was one-third of the total number of foreign literature translated into Chinese. Russian translated literature was an active participant in the cultural life of China [15]. Chinese writers saw in it a high sample of foreign literature that could inspire them to promote the ideas of national liberation, and sometimes resorted to open imitation of Russian writers. Vivid examples: “Notes of a Madman” (1918) by Lu Xin in continuation of the work of the same name by N.V. Gogol; the play “Thunderstorm” (1933) by Cao Yu, created under the influence of “Thunderstorm” by A.N. Ostrovsky [15]. However, the most popular during the “honey decade” of Soviet-Chinese relations (1949–1960) was the so-called “red classics”: “How Steel Was Tempered” by N.A. Ostrovsky, “Chapaev” by D.A. Furmanov, “Iron Stream” by A.S. Serafimovich, “Rout” and “Young Guard” by A.A. Fadeev, “Forty-first” by B.A. Lavrenev, and others. For historical and political reasons, the literature of the socialist “big brother” became the only choice for Chinese readers of that time [15]. According to Jia Mingzhi, during the formation of the new

<sup>1</sup> Speech by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Plenary Session of the Congress of the Society of Russian Literature on May 26, 2016 // Vera and Vremya Portal [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.verav.ru/about.html> (accessed: 20.04.2020).

China's own "red culture", the Soviet "red classics" integrated social values and moods bringing them in the rank of state ideology into a given orbit through the literary forms available to ordinary people [9].

In the recent period (after the reform policy in China), the content and role of Russian literature began to be rethought [6]. Lei Sun connects it with two parallel processes: firstly, thorough and in-depth analytical analyses of Russian literature by Chinese writers of the twentieth century (before the formation of the People's Republic of China), which previously had either a negative or simply inattentive attitude due to historical and political reasons, became open. Second, new books were published in which the authors turned to the study of national codes of Russian literature [6]. With the decline in the ideological significance of Russian literature in China, interest in it has not weakened.

At the same time, we can also observe a counter movement — the increasing interest of Russian readers in Chinese prose. According to Maria Semenyuk, the coordinator of the "Russian-Chinese Library" Programme, the novels "Brothers" by Yu Hua, "Predestined by Fate" by Feng Jikai, "Song of Endless Longing" by Wang Anyi, "The Plot" by Mai Jia, "Chinese Massage" by Bi Feiyu and "Old Ship" by Zhang Wei, and the children's book "I Will Be a Good Girl" by Huang Beijia have already received high praise in Russia. And this new trend for the Russian book market is only gradually beginning to gain strength: more and more Russian readers are immersed in Chinese literary works, "in order to better feel and understand modern China"<sup>1</sup>.

The mutual penetration and interest of Russian and Chinese literature undoubtedly serve as proof (and at the same time as a factor) of the rapprochement of the two states. Today, the high intensity of contacts is characterized not only by the state of Russian-Chinese economic ties. On a regular basis, delegations are exchanged through specialized committees and commissions, as well as Deputy Groups of Russian-Chinese friendship established in both parliaments [13]. Cooperation in the humanitarian-social sphere remains one of the most important areas of bilateral relations. Thus, Vladimir Tolstoy, the Russia President's cultural adviser, who took part in the opening ceremony of the four-day Forum of young writers of China and Russia, pointed out that cooperation between the two countries in the humanitarian sphere is currently of particular importance, and expressed confidence that the partners need to know each other well, and "to get to know each other is best through modern literature, because it reflects the processes that take place within the society of each of the countries"<sup>2</sup>. Designated by V.I. Tolstoy, focus on the cultural integration of Russia and China is reflected in the composition of the organizers and participants, the programme of events and the selection of topics for discussion [8].

The forum was organized by the Shanghai University of Foreign Languages, the Institute of World Literature among the members of which there was Vice-President of the International Association of Teachers of the Russian Language and Literature Professor Zheng Tiu, as well as the Shanghai Writers Union and the Union of Writers of Russia. The participation of professional writers' communities in international literary contacts ensures a high artistic level of works and their translations, as well as the re-creation of traditional national literary values in them at the present stage of historical development. The Union of writers as a form of organizing a literary community combines the functions of developing aesthetic and ideological values, organizing labor, and ensuring the rights of writers. This principle was first applied in world history in 1934 (the creation

<sup>1</sup>Cankao Xiaoxi (China): What Chinese writers do Russian readers like? // Online publication — an Internet project of InoSMI.RU [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://inosmi.ru/social/20200112/246578574.html> (accessed: 24.04.2020).

<sup>2</sup>Young writers of Russia and China discuss issues of creativity and interaction in Shanghai // TASS: News in Russia and the world [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://tass.ru/kultura/7433821> ((accessed: 20.04.2020).

of the Union of Writers of the USSR), and the Soviet experience was later used in China. The fact that writers unions, rather than PEN-clubs or commercial publishing houses, participate in literary meetings between Russia and China nowadays shows that they are guided by a long tradition of cultural exchange.

Holding a meeting of young writers reflects the orientation of the forum organizers on the long-term perspective of cooperation and the perception of literature as an important factor of socialization. Both in China and in Russia, young writers are considered to be authors younger than 40 years old — who have been realized in literary creativity relatively recently, in the modern socio-cultural situation.

The issues of the reports presented by young writers reflected the integration potential of modern literature, its focus on recreating the traditional values of Russian and Chinese cultures, their mutual influence and optimal coexistence. For example, Hou Lei and Gu Wenyan devoted their reports to the influence of Russian literature on their oeuvre/works. Alena Belousenko revealed the theme of the mythological path of the literary hero on the example of Mo Yan's work. Evgenia Dekina highlighted the problems of modern Russian literature caused by the orientation to American schemes of writing "hit" works and the rejection of the author's reflection of the surrounding reality. Yuri Lunin dedicated his speech to the general trends in the search of Russian and Chinese writers.

Other reports also had a social and cultural integration orientation. For example, Irina Ivannikova shared her impressions of the previous II Forum of Young Writers of Russia and China, which was held in Moscow. This topic was continued by the Chinese participant of the Moscow Forum, Teng Xiaolan. Dmitry Lagutin and Ekaterina Ignatieva spoke about the significance of cultural tradition for a modern writer. At the end of the plenary session, the authors moved to a free discussion of literature issues through translators. The conversation was also attended by senior colleagues from the Russian and Chinese Unions of writers and guests of the forum, in particular, Li Weichang, a publisher and organizer of the literary events in Shanghai.

The writers' conference showed that many modern Chinese writers are concerned with the problem of finding relevant forms of national identity in the modern cultural space. For example, when discussing the prospects of Chinese poetry, Xiao Shui voiced his own concept of "From China to China", according to which literature should not obey the trends of modern culture, but should form them. According to the author, Chinese poetry needs to "return from "China", where Chinese and foreign cultures are mixed, to "China" where Chinese cultural traditions and values come to life" [8, p. 79]. However, the return to Chinese national values in literature does not negate the need for dialogue with other national traditions. Modern Chinese literature is "an open system that is included in the world culture and interacts with other literary traditions" [8, p. 80]. As Professor Zheng Tiu noted, modern Chinese literature is closely related to translated one, and their separation is unthinkable [12, p. 160]. At the same time, the most priority foreign-language reference point for the development of the current Chinese literature in the modern world is still Russian literature.

Representatives of the host country during the forum noted the special importance of Russian literature for the Chinese one. According to Li Jingze, Vice-Chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, "there is a spiritual connection between Chinese and Russian literature. The works of all Chinese writers reflect the spirit of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Pushkin." The fact that the main models for the development of Chinese literature are Russian authors was stressed by the Deputy Chairman of the Shanghai Writers Union, Wang Wei. Arisen and developed in the XX century, the continuity of Chinese literature in relation to Russian literature is still relevant today.

The works of modern writers of the two countries are characterized by similar problems, reflecting the spiritual and psychological background of the relationship of the individual with the surrounding world. For example, the theme of understanding

the historical experience and national fate is characteristic of the work of Karina Seidametova [7, p. 36–38] and Miao Kegou [7, p. 69–73], the motives for understanding and transforming the world through creativity are revealed in the prose of Yuri Lunin [7, p. 147–180] and Li Hongwei [7, p. 207–211], in the poetry of Zhang Qingzhu [7, p. 91–92] and Roman Kruglov [7, p. 10–11]. The main point of contact in the approach to literature in Russia and China is the perception of the art of words as a search for truth and service to society; writers and scientists of the two countries do not tend to treat literature, art and science as a way to earn money or a way of entertainment.

The general trends in the work of writers participating in the forum, as well as the work of Chinese literary critics, allow us to specify the existing Chinese demand for modern Russian literature as a traditional type of literature. Russian literature, according to Sun Lei's generalization, draws Chinese readers' attention to the world of the human soul, the spirit of repentance, and the idea of the freedom of the human person, which is characteristic of Russian literature in historical perspective [6]. As Zhao Xue noted "tradition as a kind of presupposition plays the role of a criterion in the mind of the Chinese reader" [11, p. 58].

The past events were widely covered by the Chinese media<sup>1</sup>. The result of joint work of young Chinese and Russian authors was the publication of translations of their works in literary journals of both countries. The forum has become a platform for professional communication, finding common ground in creativity and discussing topical issues of concern to Russian and Chinese writers<sup>2</sup>. Undoubtedly, the forum contributes to the strengthening of relations between the two countries.

There is a huge interest in Russian literature in China, and if the classical literature is well known, then the modern literature is either unknown at all, or presented one-sidedly. The forum initiated by the Chinese side is not enough to solve this problem. To understand its causes, it is necessary to focus on the negative trends in the literary process and self-representation of Russia through literature.

As it was mentioned earlier, the cultural integration of Russia and China is promoted by literature that has a socializing function, reflecting traditional values in the modern world, while "often the break with tradition is seen as a defeat, a mistake, a dangerous trend" [11, p. 58]. Of all the variety of post-Soviet literature, postmodern literature that denies or ridicules the core of Russian culture is being actively popularized today. The popularization of such works harms Russia's international prestige, as their translations come to the attention of foreign readers and critics, creating the impression of cultural decline and making the prospect of integration unattractive. Naturally, according to the researcher of post-Soviet literature Zhang Jianhua, "the multiplication and variation of boundless cultural plurality have led to the crisis of traditional culture, the cultural elite have become marginal" [10, p. 109]. The lack of state support for the Union of Russian Writers that currently operates as a public organization reduces the effectiveness of Russia's foreign cultural policy. As a result, the existing request in China for translations of new works of traditional Russian literature remains largely unsatisfied.

<sup>1</sup> "走了那么远的的路", 中中青青家家家在 [Electronic resource] // 新 新民. URL: [https://www.360kuai.com/pc/95603c5016c7317c5?cota=3&kuai\\_so=1&sign=360\\_e39369d1&refer\\_scene=so\\_54](https://www.360kuai.com/pc/95603c5016c7317c5?cota=3&kuai_so=1&sign=360_e39369d1&refer_scene=so_54) (date accessed: 13.04.2020), 中俄文学交流悄然升温, 当下如何重读经典“金库” // WHB.CH [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.whb.cn/zhuzhan/xinwen/20191228/311104.html> (accessed: 20.04.2020).; 重温俄罗斯“白银时代”: 理解它的璀璨和美 // 新浪新闻 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://news.sina.cn/2019-12-29/detail-iihnzahnk0754166.d.html?pos=3> (accessed: 20.04.2020).

<sup>2</sup> Forum of young writers of Russia and China is held in Shanghai // Electronic portal of the Russian World Foundation [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://ruskiymir.ru/news/267118/?ut> (accessed: 20.04.2020).

The current stage of relations between the two states and cultures is characterized by the fact that for China, which has the opportunity to freely choose partners in accordance with its goals, the focus on cultural exchange with Russia remains a priority. It is due to both the course of history in the twentieth century and the similarity of traditional values of the Russian and Chinese peoples (the primacy of the general over the individual and the assessment of the individual in terms of his service to others). The need for axiological understanding of modern reality that exists in Russian and Chinese society can be met to a large extent thanks to the support and development of literature and, in particular, international writers' forums.

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