

# A VOICE FROM THE DEAD

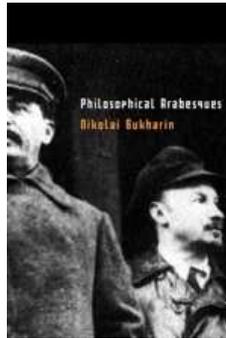
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Introduction to

## *Philosophical Arabesques*

by Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin

(1888-1938)



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This is a voice from the dead. It is a voice speaking to a time that never heard it, a time that never had a chance to hear it. It is only speaking now to a time not very well disposed to hearing it.

This text was written in 1937 in the dark of the night in the depths of the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. It was completed in November on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the socialist revolution to which its author had given his life, the revolution that was in the process of devouring its own true believers, the revolution that was not only condemning him to death but demanding that he slander his whole life. This text lay buried in a Kremlin vault for more than half a century after its author had been executed and his name expunged from the pages of the books telling of the history he had participated in making. After decades, his name was restored and his memory honoured in a brief interval where the story of the revolution was retold, retold in a society to which it crucially mattered, just before that society collapsed to be replaced by one in which the story was retold in another and hostile way, a society in which his legacy no longer mattered to many. Only then, due to the determination of his biographer and family, did the thousand plus pages of his prison writings emerge from the vault to be published into a world he could never have imagined.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this text is that it was written at all. Condemned not by an enemy but by his own comrades, seeing what had been so magnificently created being so catastrophically destroyed, undergoing shattering interrogations, how was he not totally debilitated by despair? Where did this author get the strength, the composure, the faith in the future that was necessary to write this treatise of philosophy, this passionate defence of the intellectual tradition of marxism and the political project of socialist construction?

Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin was a tragic true believer. He was the youngest, most intellectual, most sensitive, most sparkling of the original bolshevik leaders. He was extremely popular, both at home and abroad. Lenin held him in particular affection and esteem, despite polemicising against him in key controversies along the way. Such was possible then. The early years of the revolution were full of problems and possibilities, of dreams and dilemmas and debates. The bolsheviks were stunned to find that they had seized state power and they scurried about trying to figure out what to do with it. They were trying to do something that had never been done before. Everything was open to question. Everything needed to be re-thought and re-created. They were in new territory with no maps to guide them. Bukharin was energetically engaged in exploring and mapping the new terrain. He was involved in virtually all of the important debates of the era: from agricultural and industrial policy to scientific and artistic questions. He was always on the move, striding around Moscow in his peaked cap, russian blouse, leather jacket and high boots, generating an atmosphere of intellectual excitement and fun, embodying “an aura of bohemia come to power”.<sup>1</sup>

Bukharin is the personification of a path not taken. His life and death will always be particularly poignant because of that. He was 29 at the time of the revolution and 49 when he died. He was a member of the politbureau and central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, editor of *Pravda*, head of the Communist International. After the death of Lenin, he was at the pinnacle of power and was a possible successor. He advocated the continuation of the new economic policy, a conciliatory approach to the peasantry aimed at achieving agricultural productivity and steady industrialisation. Stalin sided with Bukharin against the “left deviation”, associated with Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, which emphasised world revolution, rapid industrialisation and collectivisation. When this strategy was defeated in 1927 and its exponents expelled from the politbureau and even the party, Stalin reversed himself and turned on the “right deviation”, associated with Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, and in 1929 defeated them in turn. They were removed from the politbureau and higher echelons of power, but remained on the central committee and worked productively in industry, trade unions and academic institutions. Bukharin was editor of *Izvestiya* and member of the USSR Academy of Sciences (and head of its commission on the history of knowledge) and still active in many sectors of soviet life, from the arts and sciences to economic planning.

Bukharin stood for what he called “socialist humanism”, socialism with a human face, socialism with an open mind, socialism with an honest voice, socialism with an outstretched hand. He advocated a more evolutionary path to socialism, an opening of a process where a society would grow into socialism, where those who questioned might be persuaded and not necessarily coerced or executed, where theoretical questions were settled by theoretical debates and not by accusations of treason, purges of editorial boards and disappearances in the night. Bukharin was inclined to be bold and passionate in open polemics and to be somewhat guileless and sometimes even naïve in the face of covert political manoeuvring. It has been the downfall of many a politician intellectual. It is a sad fact of life that unscrupulousness confers a decided advantage in struggles for power.

After this most consequential struggle for power came the frenzy of the first five year plan, a titanic and turbulent struggle to collectivise agriculture, to build heavy industry, to achieve in ten years what took a hundred years in other countries. It was declared to be the time of “the new turn on all fronts of socialist construction”, the time of “shattering transformations”, not only in politics, industry and agriculture, but in philosophy, art, education, science, in absolutely every aspect of the social order. There was intensified pressure to “bolshevise” every institution, every academic discipline, every artistic form. The intelligentsia was told that the time for ideological neutrality was over. They had to declare themselves for marxism and for the dialectical materialist reconstruction of their disciplines or evacuate the territory. All the debates that had raged in the 1920s, whether between marxism and other intellectual trends or between different trends within marxism, were sharply closed down through the 1930s. There was to be one correct line on every question. Any deviation was considered to be not only mistaken but treacherous. There was resistance in many areas. Geneticists fought back against attempts by brash bolshevists to override the process of scientific discovery. Bukharin sided with those such as Vavilov who were standing up to Lysenko.

In philosophy there had been a debate throughout the 1920s between those who were grounded in the empirical sciences and emphasised the materialist aspect of dialectical materialism and those who were more grounded in the history of philosophy, particularly Hegel, and emphasised the dialectical dimension of dialectical materialism. It has been an ongoing tension in the history of marxism and it was healthy and natural for it to play itself out in the atmosphere of intellectual ferment and institutional transformation in the early days of soviet power. Philosophy was considered to be integral to the social order. Political leaders, particularly Lenin and Bukharin, participated in philosophical debates as if these issues were matters of life and death, of light and darkness. Even while preoccupied with urgent affairs of state, they polemicalised passionately on questions of epistemology, ontology, ethics and aesthetics.<sup>2</sup>

Bukharin developed in and through these debates. At first he sided with the mechanists. At one point, he even confessed to “a certain heretical inclination to the empirio-critics”.<sup>3</sup> He believed that marxists should study the most advanced work in the natural and social sciences and cleanse itself of the lingering idealism inherent in quasi-mystical hegelian formulations. In *Historical Materialism*, published in 1921 and used as a basic text in higher party schools, he interpreted

dialectics in terms of equilibrium: of conflict of forces, disturbance of equilibrium, new combination of forces, restoration of equilibrium.<sup>4</sup> Although Bukharin was not uneducated in classical german philosophy, others who were more steeped in this tradition underlined the origins of marxism in this intellectual culture and criticised Bukharin accordingly. Lenin was one who did so and stated that Bukharin, although he was the party's outstanding theorist, had not quite understood dialectics.

Prominent comintern intellectuals, such as Korsch and Lukacs, associated with a neo-kantian-neo-hegelian interpretation of marxism, which went even further in this direction than the soviet neo-hegelian school of Deborin, both criticised Bukharin. Korsch did so quite bitterly, even shouting during a speech of Bukharin at the 5<sup>th</sup> world congress of the comintern. Lukacs accused Bukharin of bias toward the natural sciences, but saw this as being in conflict with his frequently acute dialectical instincts. At the 5<sup>th</sup> comintern congress, Zinoviev railed against Korsch and Lukacs in a display of shameless anti-intellectual demagoguery. Bukharin made his criticisms of them in more intellectual terms as relapses into outmoded hegelianism. He refused to go along with the bullying proletarian anti-intellectualism and saw fit to remark that a worker was not always right, no matter how black were his hands. Interestingly, Deborin also criticised Korsch and Lukacs for going too far in the direction of Hegel and being hostile to the natural sciences.<sup>5</sup>

Although there was growing pressure to short circuit such debates with demagogic rhetoric, Bukharin considered contending arguments seriously. In the midst of these debates, Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* and Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* were published and both sides were emphasising different passages and claiming the texts as authority for their views. Bukharin seriously studied them and was particularly influenced by Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, which dealt with problems in philosophy and the natural sciences, but paid great attention to the history of philosophy in general and Hegel in particular. He also reflected on Lenin's earlier criticism of him on the question of dialectics. In his writings in the 1930s, he came to a new understanding of dialectics and to the relationship of marxism to its philosophical progenitors.

In 1931 Bukharin led the soviet delegation to the international history of science congress in London. His paper, published in the ensuing book *Science at the Crossroads* and translated into many languages, indicated this philosophical transition. He set out to convey the intellectual vitality of marxism to a sceptical audience. He placed marxism within the context of all contemporary currents in philosophy and emphasised how dialectical materialism had overcome the narrowness of mechanistic materialism by superceding its ahistoricism, its quietism, its individualism.<sup>6</sup> Reading it in his prison cell in Italy, Gramsci still thought that this did not represent a significant change in Bukharin's tendency to emphasise materialism to the neglect of the dialectic and wrote an extended critique of Bukharin, whom he regarded as the embodiment of a positivistic tendency within marxism.<sup>7</sup>

In 1933 Bukharin edited *Marxism and Modern Thought*, a collection of essays published by the academy of sciences to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Marx. Here he took greater note of the hegelian roots of marxism. He underlined Marx's excellent knowledge of the history of philosophy and argued that marxism took up all that was rational and progressive in the thousands of years of philosophical development. He considered dialectics to be the "algebra of revolution", demonstrating the transitory character of every form, the interrelatedness of all things, the indivisibility of analysis and synthesis, the logic of contradictory processes and universal connections. Nevertheless, he still put a heavy emphasis on natural science and repudiated "hegelian panology". He engaged in a polemic contrasting marxism with all other philosophical trends of the times, even while acknowledging the grains of truth in all of them: logical positivism, pragmatism, gestalt, neo-kantianism, neo-hegelianism.<sup>8</sup> These were the themes he took up again at much greater length in his prison cell in 1937 in this manuscript.

Bukharin was a cosmopolitan intellectual, exposed to an array of intellectual influences and accustomed to mixing with intellectuals of many points of view and arguing the case for marxism in such milieux. So were others who found themselves between the covers of *Science at the Crossroads* and *Marxism and Modern Thought*: Hessen, Zavadovsky, Vavilov, Kolman, Uranovsky, Deborin. They were coming under increasing pressure from a younger generation who had come up under the revolution, never been abroad, knew no foreign languages, had no detailed knowledge of either the empirical sciences or the history of philosophy, had never read books enunciating other points of view. They were brash and often ruthless. They were more inclined to cite the authority

of the classic marxist texts and current party decrees than to engage in philosophical argument. They were taking over as professors, directors of institutes and members of editorial boards, increasingly occupying positions of authority over learned scholars of international reputation. Not that all of the younger generation were in this mould. There were others, many of them trained by and loyal to Bukharin, but they did not survive. They were arrested, interrogated and executed.

These developments in soviet intellectual life were inextricably tied to the rhythms of soviet political and economic life. The way forward with the first five year plan was far from smooth and uncomplicated. There was violent resistance to the collectivisation of agriculture and peasants were burning crops and slaughtering livestock rather than surrender. There was one disaster after another in the push to industrialisation. There was a fundamental contradiction between the advanced goals that were to be achieved and the level of expertise in science, engineering, agronomy, economics, indeed a general cultural level, needed to achieve them. There was panic and confusion and desperation. There was reckless scapegoating. Breakdowns, fires, famine, unfulfilled targets were put down to sabotage and espionage. There was a blurring of the lines between bungling and wrecking, between association with defeated positions and treason, between contact with foreign colleagues and conspiracy with foreign powers.

The country was pictured as full of spies and wreckers and agents of imperialist powers who wanted to disrupt every aspect of soviet life in every possible way, from agriculture and industry to philosophy and physics. Fascism was on the rise in Europe, but there was little evidence of a nazi fifth column within the Soviet Union. There was in fact little evidence of sabotage or espionage or even organised opposition on any significant scale by this time. Nevertheless the population was urged to revolutionary vigilance, to root out traitors in every form of soviet activity in every corner of soviet society.

The assassination of Kirov in 1934, of which Stalin was probably both prime mover and chief mourner, simultaneously eliminated a rival and provided the pretext for a new wave of repression. These purges swept through the entire population. There were no strata where the NKVD did not reach to uncover spies, wreckers and traitors, but the accusations bore down most heavily on party members. Every day brought new reports of arrests of commissars, army officers, trade union officials, central committee members, komsomol leaders, old bolsheviks, foreign communists, writers, doctors, philosophers, scientists, economists, agronomists, engineers, construction workers, teachers and even children, and finally the agents of the purge themselves. Interrogators found themselves in prison and on trial with those they had only recently interrogated. The accusations and arrests brought a frenetic turmoil to the institutions from which the accused and arrested had come. Those remaining were called together to denounce the accused and to criticise themselves and/or others for not unmasking the traitor sooner. This often led to further accusations and a terrifying atmosphere of accuse or be accused. It escalated beyond all rationality and morality. Under threat and even torture, false confessions were extracted and esteemed colleagues and close comrades were implicated in the most fantastic conspiracies.

Through these years, Bukharin could feel the social order unravelling. His own room for manoeuvre was constantly shifting. He was often denounced, but occasionally honoured, in the official discourse. In response to periodic demands that he not only accept defeat but renounce his views, he sometimes refused, sometimes capitulated, often compromised. He was always negotiating the terms in which he could speak or act. He continued to embody a critical alternative, although in increasingly aesopian forms of expression. He sincerely acknowledged the successes of the five year plan, accepted the drive to intensified industrialisation and threw his energies into state planning. He did continue to advocate freedom in intellectual and artistic life and agonised over the climate of fear overtaking every area of life. "Cats are clawing at my soul" he told the young Anna Larina.<sup>9</sup>

His relationship with Stalin was a merry-go-round of mixed signals. Stalin played with him, expressing admiration and affection, all the while scheming against him, jealous of his intellectual acuity and all round popularity and vengeful against any alternative to his absolute authority, as his megalomania swept all into a hurricane of destruction. Bukharin had reason to know of Stalin's personality and plotting and he did know, yet he was sometimes seduced into believing in a better side to him and hoping that appealing to it would bring results. They lived and worked in close proximity to each other, first in exile and later in the Metropol and Kremlin. After Stalin's wife Nadya committed suicide, Stalin asked Bukharin to change apartments with him, as the memory

was too painful. In the same bedroom, where she was driven to her death, Bukharin went through his last agony before his arrest, feeling all the possibilities of life closing down on him. Nevertheless, all through the terror, right to the very end, he wrote "Dear Koba" letters, refuting the charges against him, protesting his innocence, believing, not believing, that, if only Stalin could see what the NKVD was doing, where things were going wrong, that he would put it right.

There were three spectacular show trials in which whole original nucleus of the party, with the exception of Lenin and Stalin, were represented as involved in a fantastic conspiracy to assassinate party leaders, to sabotage industry, to foment peasant uprisings, to spy for foreign powers, to overthrow socialism and to restore capitalism. Zinoviev, Kamenev and others were sentenced to death in August 1936. Radek, Pyatakov, Sokolnikov and others were sentenced to death or long terms of imprisonment in January 1937. There was much testimony at these trials implicating Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, preparing the scenario for the third trial.

To Anna Larina, who became Bukharin's wife, we owe an intimate account of his last months as he awaited arrest, humiliation and death. For the most part he confined himself to the bedroom of his Kremlin apartment "like a caged beast". His mood changed constantly. He received mounting depositions of testimony against him, much of it from trusted comrades, describing a vast conspiracy to subvert soviet power, to restore capitalism, to cede soviet territory to foreign powers, to assassinate Lenin, Kirov, Stalin. At times he was totally mystified by what seemed to be "some inexplicable witchcraft". At times he became numbed to the horror of deceit and betrayal and wild irrationality and he became detached and listless. Then it would seem sharp and vivid again and he would flare suddenly into a fierce rage. He plunged into the depths of despair. He felt "banished from life like a leper". He heard of the suicide of Tomsky. He considered suicide himself, as did Rykov. At other times, he had surges of hope that the truth would triumph and he would be vindicated. He imagined scenarios in which he might live in the countryside with his young wife and see his new son grow and pursue his interests in art and science. There were times when he found the composure and commitment to write a book on the culture of fascism. He went on hunger strike to try to bring the central committee to its senses. He was immersed in an excruciating internal struggle:

"Nikolai Ivanovich both understood and refused to understand"<sup>10</sup>

He attended the central committee and was confronted with monstrous allegations, face to face with his accusers impeaching themselves as well as him. He returned home to say "I have returned from hell, a temporary hell, but there can be doubt that I will fall into it for good."<sup>11</sup>

He resigned himself to this hell, this disgrace, this death. He decided to reach across the hopelessness of his time to hope in posterity. On the eve of his arrest, he composed a letter to a future generation of party leaders and asked Anna to memorise and then destroy it.

"I am leaving life...I am helpless before an infernal machine that seems to use medieval methods, yet possesses gigantic power, fabricates organised slander, acts boldly and confidently...Storm clouds hang over the party...I knew nothing about secret organisations. Together with Rykov and Tomsky, I expounded my views openly. Since the age of 18, I have been a member of the party, and always the goal of my life has been the struggle for the interests of the working class, for the victory of socialism. These days the newspaper with the hallowed name *Pravda* prints the most contemptible lie that I, Nikolai Bukharin, wanted to destroy the achievement of October, to restore capitalism...If I was more than once mistaken regarding methods of building socialism, may my descendants judge me no more severely than did Vladimir Ilyich. We were the first to pursue the same goal by an as yet untrodden path. The times, the mores, were different. I turn to you, the future generation of party leaders, on whom will fall the historic mission of clearing the monstrous cloud of crimes that in these terrible days is growing more and more grandiose, spreading like wildfire and smothering the party...In what may be the last days of my life, I am certain that sooner or later the filter of history will inevitably wash the filth from my head. I was never a traitor. I would have unhesitatingly traded my own life for Lenin's. I loved Kirov and never undertook anything against Stalin....Know, comrades, that the banner you bear in a triumphant march towards communism contains a drop of my blood too!"<sup>12</sup>

It was many years before that letter could be received by those to whom it was sent.

On 27 February 1937 Bukharin said goodbye to his family. He assured Anna that truth would win out and he exhorted her to raise their son as a bolshevik. He proceeded to the plenum of the central committee where he, along with Rykov, was expelled from the party and arrested for treason.

Bukharin and Rykov had declared all accusations against them to be slanderous. Bukharin insisted: "I am not Zinoviev or Kamenev and I will not tell lies against myself".

For thirteen months he was imprisoned and interrogated in the Lubyanka. For three months, he resolutely refused to confess. Then came a period of extended negotiation, threats and promises. It is likely that he made concessions to save the lives of his family and to have his prison writings published. He had little reason to believe that any promises made to him would be honoured, but he held on to whatever thin thread of belief he could grasp.

During this period of thirteen months between his arrest and execution, he wrote four book length manuscripts.<sup>13</sup> He also wrote letters to Stalin about his prison writings, begging him to let them be published:

"I wrote [the prison manuscripts] mostly at night, literally wrenching them from my heart. I fervently beg you not to let this work disappear ... Don't let this work perish... This is completely apart from my personal fate"<sup>14</sup>

The first was *Socialism and Its Culture*, a sequel to his book *The Degradation of Culture and Fascism* that he was writing before his arrest. Together these were to constitute a two part work to be called *The Crisis of Capitalist Culture and Socialism*. Bukharin considered the quick publication of this work "at a crossroads of history" to be an urgent matter, devoted as it was to positioning the Soviet Union at the forefront of the anti-fascist struggle. He begged Stalin to have it published, even under a pseudonym if necessary, and to write a preface himself. There was no chance of this, as Stalin was already engaged in the secret diplomacy heading in the direction of the nazi-soviet pact of 1939 that had such tragic consequences for the anti-fascist movement.

The next was a collection of poems entitled *The Transformation of the World*. Most of them were poetic reflections on the same themes as preoccupied him in his prose writings. These were of epic scope, sweeping though the history of the world and seeing socialism as the culmination of humanistic struggle of the centuries. Some were also a chronicle of his emotional state, his love for Anna, his longing to be free.

The third was *Philosophical Arabesques*. This loomed large in his struggle to speak in a substantial voice to his own times as well as to later times. He desperately hoped that it could be preserved and somehow published. He must have had surges of expectation that this could be possible, in spite of so much evidence to the contrary, to invest such a massive effort in it and to address the world in it as he did. He wrote to Anna that she would be given the manuscripts in his cell at that time, putting particular emphasis on *Philosophical Arabesques*:

"The most important thing is that the philosophical work not be lost. I worked on it for a long time and put a great deal into it; it is a very mature work in comparison to my earlier writings, and, in contrast to them, dialectical from beginning to end"<sup>15</sup>

*Philosophical Arabesques* was an ambitious systematic work of philosophy. The title might arouse an expectation of a collection of fragmentary or even whimsical epigrams, but it was not that. It marshalled the motif of arabic art to refer to a series on discourses on various themes interwoven with each other to form an intricate pattern. This approach to philosophy set marxism within the whole history of philosophy, within the whole battle of ideas of world culture of his times. It was a highly polemical text, engaging seriously with virtually every major intellectual trend of its times. It displayed an astute knowledge of the intellectual life of the epoch and the world historical context from which it emerged. He saw the grain of truth in every previous philosophy and saw marxism in continuity with the centuries long struggle to conceptualise the universe. He acknowledged the partial perspectives in each of the contemporary trends contending with marxism and argued that marxism superseded every one-sided view of the world to bring philosophy to a higher synthesis than had ever been achieved. It was an integrative and grounded way of thinking that offered a fresh way into the complex new problems of the era.

This was in contrast to another approach to marxism, which was prevailing in the Soviet Union at that time, isolating it from all outside forces, shutting down all internal debate. Marxism was reduced to a simplistic scheme where canonical formulations were recited repetitively, where all philosophical arguments were set in the past, where all philosophical questions were presented as basically settled. The philosophers busied themselves with writing textbooks, dictionaries,

encyclopedia. In doing so, they stuck closely to the classics of marxism and to current party decrees.

Bukharin began his treatise in a sweeping world historical style, characterising the epoch with exuberant energy as a time of titanic struggle between an old order dying and a new order being born, a time of revaluation of all values. As an integral part of this struggle, marxism was proving to be the ultimate philosophy, holding its head high, winning the battle of ideas, interacting and arguing with all other philosophies, uniquely aware of the socio-historical context of all texts, supremely involved in shaping the world that other philosophies only conceptualised at a distance, indeed going on to the street as a fighting force. He portrayed opposing philosophies as turning away from an integration of reason and emotion and action into one cul de sac or another, each seeking one at the expense of the others, whether fixating on exact sciences or categorical imperatives or solemn hymns to blood and iron. From this launching pad, he addressed his readers (presumably the world audience there for his previous books):

“Here the author wishes to proceed along an avenue of thought, an avenue lined with enigmatic sphinxes that have torn many brains apart, but have also been able to play on the sublime harp of creativity. Let us go then to look once again at these old familiar figures and to gaze into their mysterious eyes.”

There were shifts of style in the manuscript, some of them due to the circumstances in which it was written, which allowed for little proofreading or revision, but also because he was consciously making concessions to the style in which philosophical polemics of the day were written in order to convince adherents of alternative positions on their own terrain that their arguments were full of holes. Some of such passages taking up battle on the “field of pure reason”, on the terms of adversaries, might have been a bit tedious, but certainly no more so than the texts being addressed. He was at his best, however, when putting their arguments into wider and earthier context and highlighting the contrasts in the light of day.

In his polemic against solipsism, for example, he called attention to the irony of a world where people ate and drank, killed and died, made stone axes and electric generators and learned to determine the chemical composition of stars, while philosophers argued that it was all an illusion, that the whole symphony of the world played only in the solitary consciousness. Arguing constantly that ideas were social products and not immaculate conceptions in the minds of philosophers, he linked solipsism to the trajectory of class societies and how thinkers had become more and more remote from material practice. Going through a whole panoply of forms of subjective idealism, encompassing a cast of characters from Pyrrho to Kant to Eddington, he played out the polemic in several acts: from a purely logical exercise, where they at first seemed invincible, but could be reduced to a series of non sequiturs; to a demonstration of the contradiction of word and deed, where the world inevitably asserted its iron priority against the arrogance of spirit attempting to swallow all; to an argument based in sociology of knowledge, showing how class societies divided all of humanity’s vital activities and fixed them in different sections of the population and could not achieve an integral overview.

So he argued on multiple levels, traversing the whole history of philosophy and taking on the whole array of modern currents, showing their roots in previous ideas as well as in contemporary experience. He engaged in polemics against positivism and mechanistic materialism, but the weight of his emphasis was on many forms of idealism from hegelian rationalism to primitivist mysticism. Always he stressed the resurgence of the world and the flesh against the arrogance of spirit and the tendency of the “I” to consume the world. He traced this through the evolution of the division of labour in which the theoretician became possible, but became one-sided, impoverished, atomised as mental and manual labour became increasingly disconnected. With the degeneration of capitalism, its radius of cognition tended to diminish.

There was a strong emphasis on the sociology of knowledge. Every concept was a condensation of collective labour, a product of centuries of social history. Every mode of production generated a characteristic mode of thought. He portrayed capitalist intellectual culture as flying off in all directions, chasing one myopic version of reality after another and argued that only socialism could generate unified vision.

The picture of socialism articulated here was by this stage highly romanticised, but it was an attempt to reconnect with the vision of the society that they had sought to create and had believed

was really coming into being. Indeed something had been created, however imperfectly, and he was clinging to that in a kind of desperate hope that it could reassert itself against the forces that were destroying it. His prison writing was a struggle to play a role in that still.

The gap between the picture of soviet society in the text and the society imprisoning and defaming its true believers was a product of prison conditions and complex bargaining and compromising in order to achieve publication. Certainly the genuflections to Stalin as great thinker as well as great leader must be read primarily in this way. Nevertheless I believe that there was a more complicated, more conflicted psychology involved. There had to be some kind of complex dialectic of hope and despair, a striving that was surging and falling, powerful and powerless, not only in relation to his own fate, but for the whole world historical experiment in socialism, playing itself out within him for him to persist in this work. He still believed, despite everything, that the foundations for true human liberation were being laid in a new mode of production and a new mode of representation.

There was much attention to classical german philosophy. He wanted to prove himself, even posthumously, to Lenin, on questions of philosophy and to vindicate himself against the charge that he had not adequately grasped the meaning of the dialectic and that he had not given due weight to the origins of marxism in hegelian philosophy. His knowledge of the history of philosophy was impressively erudite and his references were remarkably accurate, particularly considering the scant resources available to him in prison. He did have access to a number of philosophical texts from the prison library and through the indulgence of his somewhat intellectual interrogator Kogan. He did become more consciously dialectical, but he did not go in the direction of a neo-hegelian interpretation of marxism. Quoting Lenin, he was wary of the “mysticism of the idea” and remained resolutely materialist in emphasis.

He stressed the study of the empirical sciences as well as the history of philosophy. He believed that theoretical tensions in various disciplines, including the natural sciences, were at root questions of philosophy, but that problems of philosophy could only be resolved by a transformation of the social order. Only marxism provided the grounding for a unity of theory and practice, for a new form of theoretical practice (a term not invented by Althusser). A synthesis of knowledge was only possible in the movement toward socialism. There was formidable thinking being done along these lines, thinking at the foundations of science, but it was being done by those who were being purged, by those who were dying. NI Vavilov did not have long to live, nor had Hessen or Uranovky, but Lysenko and Prezent were thriving and denouncing Bukharin as representing the “powers of darkness” for soviet science. Nevertheless Bukharin wrote in glowing terms of what was being accomplished by soviet science, not only in compromised conformity to the stultifying official discourse, but in buoyant aspiration for it to be so.

There are other passages that might make a contemporary reader wince. His references to “old women of both sexes” as an image of cringing superstition make it hard for a 21<sup>st</sup> century feminist, and a no longer young one at that, to come to his defence. He was a man of his times, an advanced thinker and an ardent revolutionary, but still a man of his times.

Perhaps the most jarring note to those of us who live today is the breathless talk of capitalism in its death throes. He exuded a strong sense of living at a time of an old order dying and a new one being born. Perhaps my generation had our own sense of a crisis of social order and radical new possibilities during the rise of a new left that an old bolshevik would have found strange indeed. But we have lived on to see capitalism not only survive but thrive and to be succeeded by another generation, who might or might not be critical of it, but find it increasingly impossible to imagine an alternative to it.

And what a sad story to tell them is that of the attempted alternative that was the USSR. Some of us still struggle to do this, sometimes like Sisyphus rolling his rock up the hill, but it is vital to tell it in a way that defends its ideals and its accomplishments against slanders that are relentless even now. It must be done without in any dimension or detail failing to look fully into the face of the dark side of it. As I have been writing this, I have been playing a song called “I see a darkness” and imagining the terrifying darkness of the world Bukharin inhabited as he wrote this text. Yet the last words of this manuscript were astonishingly “full of the joy of life”. The song playing too proclaims “I have a drive to live I won’t let go”.<sup>16</sup> Anna Larina, writing of these horrors from her

own experience, as she was transported deeper into a world where a child began each letter to his grandmother saying “once again I did not die”, nevertheless proclaimed:

“Despite all the horrors prepared for us prisoners by fate, life went on. Life! It is all powerful! It cuts a path for itself, like the delicate fairy-ring mushrooms pushing up through hard thick asphalt”<sup>17</sup>

This, along with the particular determination of one who had at core a philosophical vision and a political cause, is all that could explain what Bukharin wrote next, the last thing he ever wrote. It pulsed with energy and zest for life. It was an autobiographical novel called *Vremena* (literally *The Times*), published in Russian in 1994 and in English in 1998 as *How It All Began*. The title reflected his desire to show the origins of the revolution in the higher impulses that gave birth to it. It represented a radical shift in style from his previous writings. It was more personal, more vivid, more earthy, less alienated. Communists of his generation were not much inclined to write in an experiential mode. It was virtually a memoir, even if names were changed. He must have believed, even if by a tattered thread, that this would give it a chance of publication, even if under a pseudonym. There was, however, no chance. As Cohen, who played such an important role in finally bringing it to publication, observed:

“Multicolored pictures of pre-1917 Russia, sympathetic portraits of doomed classes, and humanistic characterisations of future Leninists were already forbidden. And writers were being shot for less literary sedition than Bukharin’s fleeting mirror images of Stalin’s regime in its considerably paler tsarist predecessor”<sup>18</sup>

The book was beautifully written. It was full of the colour and detail of the natural world, of social classes, of religious traditions, of literary texts, of philosophical systems, of political debates. The portraits of personalities were psychologically astute. In contrast to his polemics on Kant in the philosophical manuscript he had just completed, he went back his first encounter with Kant and conveyed how phenomena and noumena and antinomies and categories had all danced in his head like mysterious monsters, how transcendental idealism and categorical imperatives were like cold pieces of intestine that you could fill with whatever you wanted, but could give no living answers to living questions. He also recaptured his discovery of Marxism and how the world seemed in ferment and how arguments flared and passions blazed as they moved toward the revolution of 1905.

Knowing that he was about to die, he was reviewing his life and the very meaning of life. He did so in a way that was remarkably, even astoundingly, full of the joy of life, considering what tragedy was engulfing him and extinguishing the joy of life on such a grand scale. The book broke off in mid-sentence. Reading it, even knowing it to be an unfinished work ended by its author’s death, there comes a jolt, bringing some kind of unexpected immediacy to the realisation of what a living striving person had life seized from him, the sort of person who was taken to be shot dead just as he was writing this text so full of life. In his last letters, preparing to die, while still pleading to live, he had particularly asked not to be shot, but instead to be given poison “like Socrates”. Nevertheless he was shot. He was dead.

While writing the novel, he went on trial, one of the most famous trials in the history of the world. He confessed to the general charges, but he sparred with the prosecutor on specific charges, refuted testimony of others, denied even knowing some of his alleged co-conspirators. He formulated his very confession with subordinate clauses that virtually contradicted the main assertions:

“I plead guilty to ...the sum total of crimes committed by this counter-revolutionary organisation, irrespective of whether or not I knew of, whether or not I took direct part in, any particular act”<sup>19</sup>

He was walking a tightrope, hoping that he was playing enough of the role written for him in this drama to save his family and his manuscripts, yet departing from the script enough to communicate as much of the truth as he could rescue within this act of the tragedy. He refuted charges of espionage. He denied any involvement in political assassinations, especially of Lenin:

“I refute the accusation of having plotted against the life of Vladimir Ilyich, but my counter-revolutionary confederates, and I at their head, endeavoured to murder Lenin’s cause, which is being carried on with such tremendous success by Stalin.”<sup>20</sup>

The voice of the true believer constantly burst through, even in the guise of a tortuous twisted logic:

“The extreme gravity of the crime is obvious, the political responsibility immense, the legal responsibility such that it will justify the severest sentence. The severest sentence would be justified, because a man deserves to be shot ten times over for such crimes. This I admit quite categorically and without any hesitation at all. I want briefly to explain the facts regarding my criminal activities and my repentance of my misdeeds. I already said when giving my main testimony during the trial, that it was not the naked logic of the struggle that drove us, the counter-revolutionary conspirators, into this stinking underground life, which has been exposed at this trial in all its starkness. This naked logic of the struggle was accompanied by a degeneration of ideas, a degeneration of psychology, a degeneration of ourselves... As this process advanced all the time very rapidly under the conditions of a developing class struggle, this struggle, its speed, its existence, acted as the accelerator, as the catalytic agent of the process which was expressed in the acceleration of the process of degeneration...It took place amidst colossal socialist construction, with its immense scope, tasks, victories, difficulties, heroism. And on this basis, it seems to me probable that every one of us sitting here in the dock suffered from a peculiar duality of mind, an incomplete faith in his counter-revolutionary cause... Hence a certain semi-paralysis of the will, a retardation of reflexes... this was due not to the absence of consistent thought, but to the objective grandeur of socialist construction... A dual psychology arose...Even I was sometimes carried away by the eulogies I wrote of socialist construction, although on the morrow I repudiated this by practical actions of a criminal character...We came out against the joy of the new life with the most criminal methods of struggle...The logic of this struggle led us step by step into the blackest, quagmire. And it has once more been proved that departure from the position of bolshevism means siding with political counter-revolutionary banditry. Counter-revolutionary banditry has now been smashed, we have been smashed, and we repent our frightful crimes.”<sup>21</sup>

As other commentators have suggested, his trial testimony, as well as his prison manuscripts, must be read as a coded attempt to communicate covertly something sometimes utterly at odds with what he was asserting overtly. Certainly this final declaration in court was that. The dual psychology could better be read as an analysis of the prosecutors rather than the defendants.

Nevertheless, despite all the codifications and equivocations and refutations, he admitted to leading a counter-revolutionary bloc engaging in terrorist activities devoted to restoring capitalism. It was a bitter slander against himself and his comrades. It was acquiescing in deception and humiliation. His declarations of loyalty to his prosecutors, most particularly to Stalin, were insincere or conflicted, but his affirmation of the cause of socialism was utterly sincere. Looking back on his testimony and trial, Anna Larina asserted:

“But the most amazing thing is that, despite everything, the time of shining hopes had not passed for him. He would pay for these hopes with his head. Moreover, one reason for his preposterous confessions in the dock - incomplete, but sufficiently egregious confessions - was precisely this: he still hoped that the idea to which he had dedicated his life would triumph”<sup>22</sup>

The sentence of death was passed on Bukharin as well as on Rykov, Yagoda and others, including Trotsky in absentia. The world looked on. A number of international observers were convinced as were many soviet citizens. Those who were not convinced were often fearful or confused. Communists abroad were disoriented, even traumatised, by the drama. They might have found the scenario of betrayal and espionage unbelievable, but the alternative interpretation was unthinkable.

The whole history of the revolution was rewritten. Books of Bukharin, indeed of all the purged, disappeared from libraries. Photographs were doctored to erase their presence from seminal events. Soon after the trial came the publication of *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik): Short Course*. It set the trials within the panorama of a brazenly falsified version of soviet history. Millions of copies were printed and it became the basic text for the study of marxism in the USSR. The section on dialectical and historical materialism was hailed as the pre-eminent work on philosophy, such that nothing else ever needed to be said. As philosophy for the masses, it was pedagogically astute, but it was highly derivative and had a stultifying effect on the further development of marxist philosophy.

The interaction between philosophy and politics in these decades was quite complex. During the political debates and the purges and accompanying all the abrupt twists and turns of comintern policy, the exhortation to “think dialectically, comrade” was used to justify the wildest

irrationality and arbitrariness. When war came, Stalin worried about the suppression of habits of rationality and ordered that textbooks on formal logic be written and disseminated in the belief that rational thinking was necessary to the war effort. There was a corresponding de-emphasis on the dialectic and on Hegel. Stalin declared Hegel's philosophy to be an aristocratic reaction to the french revolution, which had as much to do with whipping up anti-german feeling after the nazi invasion of soviet territory than with any considered judgement on the history of philosophy. There was an increasing emphasis on russian patriotism, even in the approach to history and science and philosophy. Many theories and discoveries deriving from elsewhere were re-attributed to russians.<sup>23</sup>

After the war, life normalised in some respects, but the stultification of intellectual and political life continued. There was a new campaign against bourgeois cosmopolitanism that re-inforced all of the worst tendencies to intellectual conformism and cowardice. After the death of Stalin in 1953 and a new struggle for power came the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1956 and Khrushchev's devastating revelations and condemnations, full of vivid details of false accusations and mass repressions, even quotes from agonised letters of the accused and their last words before execution.

There was a time of thaw when truth was spoken in public, when victims were released from camps, when economic and political reforms were debated. Bukharin's wife and son were reunited. Many of those who had been purged were rehabilitated, including a number of defendants in the big show trials. Bukharin and the other most high profile defendants, Rykov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, were not rehabilitated, even though the quashing of the charges against their supposed co-conspirators made the charges against them even more incredible and incoherent. There was ongoing resistance, especially from those implicated. It applied particularly to Bukharin, because of his association with an attractive alternative. In 1961 Anna Larina finally delivered Bukharin's last testament to a party control commission investigating the case for his rehabilitation. In 1962 Pospelov, a central committee member close to Khrushchev, stated unequivocally to an all-union conference of historians, that neither Bukharin nor Rykov was a spy or a traitor.<sup>24</sup> However by 1964 opponents of reform were again ascendant and Khrushchev was replaced by Brezhnev.

There was a revival of Bukharin's ideas, even though his name was still under official ban, from 1956 in the Soviet Union and also in the newer socialist states of eastern Europe. The cause of reform communism, of socialism with a human face, flared up particularly powerfully in the Prague spring of 1968. It might have been put down in the east later in 1968, but communist parties in the west did not fall into line in giving their support to the "fraternal assistance" rendered by soviet tanks. Substantial sections of most of these parties criticised or condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Euro-communism flourished for the next decades. It made Bukharin's name and ideas still dangerous to neo-stalinist forces intent on holding on to power. For years, his widow and son had petitioned the party to clear him of criminal charges, to restore his name, to readmit him posthumously to the party. In 1978 there was an international campaign for the rehabilitation of Bukharin, which drew considerable support from euro-communist quarters, particularly from the PCI in Italy.

I lived in Moscow for five months of 1978. I resided at what was called the Institute of Social Sciences on official documents, but was the semi-clandestine Lenin School where foreign communists were educated in marxism. I did not attend classes, as I had during my first visit there in 1977, but pursued my own research programme investigating soviet philosophical debates for the chapter on soviet marxism in my book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History*. At a meeting with soviet philosophers at the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences, I asked why Bukharin's name did not appear in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. They replied: "He has not been rehabilitated". They seemed not to grasp what a weird, crude and alien concept *rehabilitation* was for a western academic, even if a communist. I had read the western sovietological literature on these debates and had access to a number of primary sources in western libraries, but I wanted to penetrate further and to get soviet perspectives on these debates. I rarely got direct answers to direct questions. I constantly had to guess what the rules of the game were, so as to calculate whether I was up against breachable barriers or unsurmountable walls. I discovered that I had an interesting space in which to move, that I could do certain things that soviet academics couldn't do because I was a foreigner and certain things that other foreigners couldn't do because I was a communist.

On one occasion, when I was asked to give a lecture outlining my research at the Institute of Philosophy, I spoke of Bukharin as well as Trotsky, Sten, Hessen, Uranovsky. It almost didn't matter

what I said, which was controversial, of course, but it was the fact that I had mentioned the unmentionable names at all. The atmosphere in the hall was amazing. It was the frisson of forbidden fruit. I can't remember what anyone actually said, but I got the clear impression that many were delighted that I had done it and got away with it, even if they couldn't or wouldn't do so. I became known to the precursors of glasnost and perestroika and sought out to speak at various events, to broadcast on Moscow Radio, to write for various publications (not that the articles always appeared) by those who wanted to push out (or even test) the boundaries. I also encountered a bruising backlash, but that is another story. I fared better than foreign communists who had done lesser things in the days of the comintern. I did not disappear. I did not die.

Despite fabricated charges, forced confessions, judicial execution, banned books and falsified histories, Bukharin did break through to posterity and did so with a frayed but unbroken thread of continuity. Wolfe asked in 1957:

“Why is it that [Bukharin's] heresy, so often condemned, so often refuted, so often punished, is so often resurrected? Why does this ghost not keep to his grave, though the stake is driven into his corpse again and again?”<sup>25</sup>

He was known, not only to scholars who wanted to know history truthfully, but also to activists who wanted to shape history meaningfully and progressively. He had been a prominent political figure internationally in the 1920s. He was known throughout the world as a theoretician of the revolution. His books were published abroad in many languages and many editions, particularly *The ABC of Communism* and *Historical Materialism*. They were manuals in political schools. Even after he fell from power as a politician at the highest level, he continued to publish at home and abroad in the 1930s. He led the soviet delegation to the international history of science congress in London in 1931, where he made a lasting impression on the british intelligentsia. The book *Science at the Crossroads*, hastily put together from the soviet papers at that congress, was a milestone in the development of history, philosophy and sociology of science. He addressed an audience of french intellectuals and workers at the Sorbonne in 1936. His international audiences were somewhat stunned and disoriented by his arrest, confession and execution, but his name could not be expunged from books in international libraries and continued to be known.

Bukharin was fortunate to have attracted a biographer of the stature and persistence of Stephen Cohen. His work *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* published in 1973 brought Bukharin to life for me as for many others. It was an important source in writing about Bukharin in my own book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science* that I was writing in the 1970s. It was influential in keeping the profile of Bukharin alive and clear of corrupting calumnies. Bukharin's son Yuri Larin discovered it and began a prolonged underground project of translating it into russian. Among those who read it eventually was Mikhail Gorbachev. The other key figure in mediating between Bukharin and future generations was, of course, his young wife Anna Larina, although it was decades before she could break into the public arena to say what she had to say. She knew him from the time she was a child, as a daughter of a prominent bolshevik and friend of Bukharin. She never saw him again after his arrest in 1937 and suffered prison, exile, separation from her baby son. When widow, son and biographer teamed up in the 1970s and began to gather others, his path to posterity opened into the process that would eventually bring his prison manuscripts out of dark vaults into the light of day.

With the ascendancy of Gorbachev came glasnost and perestroika and recovery of history. These were ideas associated with the legacy of Bukharin as well as ideas creating an atmosphere favourable to his rehabilitation. This time it happened. Bukharin was judicially exonerated of all criminal charges and restored to party membership in 1988. What followed was a bukharinist boom. The memoirs of Anna Larina were a publishing sensation. After years of captivity, then obscurity, she became a celebrity. There were many books, articles, broadcasts, films, plays and exhibitions featuring Bukharin. His last testament was finally given to the mass of party members. It was read at party meetings to tearful and powerful responses. For many soviet citizens, it was “an emotional excursion into their long forbidden past”<sup>26</sup> It was highly charged and much of the charge from this spread to other socialist countries in Europe and also China. It was not only part of a revelation of the past but also a revaluation of paths into the future. There was a strong sense of hope, of renewal, of possibility of really building socialism with a human face, socialism with economic efficiency, socialism with political democracy, socialism with cultural creativity. Everything opened up just before it closed down again.

Then came the next act of the tragedy. The world turned upside down again. In 1992 Anna Larina finally received a letter written to her in 1938. Bukharin on the eve of his fateful trial, exhorted her to:

“Remember that the great cause of the USSR lives on, and *this* is the most important thing. Personal fates are transitory and wretched by comparison.”<sup>27</sup>

She read it in a world in which the USSR had just fallen. We read it now in a world in which the USSR has disappeared from the map of the world. We encounter these manuscripts in a world that has moved on and considers socialism to have failed and to be forever off the agenda. A first year student at Dublin City University, who heard a colleague of mine refer to the debate about whether socialism had failed, asked “what is socialism ?” Nevertheless it persists in collective memory and higher human aspiration, even to the point where those who insist that it is dead believe that they must vanquish any vestige of mourning from those who keep coming to the grave and speak of what they have lost; that they must wipe the wistful smile from the face of anyone who takes pride in having ever called another “comrade” and remembers meaningful common effort; that they must not allow another generation to imagine a future in continuity with this past.<sup>28</sup>

Whatever may come in the future that may draw something deeper than dominant ideology cliché from this past, the USSR is gone. Nevertheless this past keeps pouring into our present. Neither those who honour it in whatever conflicting and complex ways nor those who revile it will let it go. Its story is one of the most momentous in the history of the world. Its story must be told fully and truthfully. Bukharin’s life and work and death constitute a major stand in this story. So are the stories of all who built, as well as all who betrayed, the movement that sought to put the world into the hands of those who labour in it. Although the allegations against original bolshevik leaders were finally and fully exposed as ludicrous and false, it seemed that their communist party did eventually give rise to leaders who would conspire to restore capitalism. There were enormous forces in play and a movement of history that was perhaps inexorable, but the role of communists turned anti-communists adds a note of bitter irony to the story of how it all began and how it all ended.

This manuscript is a document in that story. Its author had the astonishing composure and commitment to want to move the story onward not only in his life but after his death. He believed that the brightness of the original vision was strong enough to overcome the darkness. It did break through somehow throughout all of those years even if the darkness prevailed. Those who accused those who dreamed of socialism of conspiring to restore capitalism, those who kept the truth of it in forbidden vaults, were the ones who sowed the seeds of reaction and restoration.

He could not have envisioned when labouring in his bleak cell to write the 310 tightly handwritten pages of this text that it would be buried in a vault for 54 years, that it would be published in a Russia that had renounced the legacy of the USSR, that it would come to me via 41 e-mail attachments from New York to Dublin in 2001 as I faced the task of bridging his world and ours. We all write into a vast unknown. We imagine an audience, but our published words move into the world along paths previously unimagined.

So how relevant is this text written so long ago and now published in our world of gloating globalised capitalism ? Is it only a documentation of doomed dreams or is it a voice from the dead saying something substantial to our post-modern post-philosophical times ? I believe that it is a voice reminding us of the capacity of marxism to take on the battle of ideas in our own times, to signpost the blind alleys of our own era, to rise up in the world again as an illuminating and transforming force. It is a voice inciting us to deal with the darkness of our own days and to reach for the future.

Helena Sheehan  
Dublin 2002

## Notes:

1. Stephen Cohen *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography* New York: Vintage Books, 1975, p 219
2. Helena Sheehan *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History* New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993, chapter 4 on soviet marxism.
3. Nikolai Bukharin "Avtobiografiia" p55, cited in Cohen, op cit, p14
4. Bukharin *Historical Materialism* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969
5. Sheehan, op cit, chapter 5 on the philosophy and politics of the comintern.
6. Bukharin *Science at the Crossroads* London: Frank Cass & Co, 1971.
7. Antonio Gramsci *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971
8. Bukharin *Marxism and Modern Thought* London: Routledge, 1935
9. Anna Larina *This I Cannot Forget* London: Pandora, 1994, p 114
10. Larina, *ibid*, p314
11. Larina, *ibid*
12. Bukharin "To a future generation of party leaders" appendix to Larina, *ibid*, p343-5
13. For all information about these manuscripts I am indebted to the work of Stephen Cohen, primarily in the form published in his introduction to *How It All Began*. I am also grateful to him for a number of letters, telephone conversations and a meeting in New York relating to this project.
14. Bukharin to Stalin, 1937, cited by Cohen, "Bukharin's Fate" introduction to *How It All Began* New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p vii
15. Bukharin to Larina, 15 January, 1938, received in 1992, published as appendix to *How It All Began*, *ibid*, p336-8
16. Will Oldham *I See a Darkness* CD Palace 1999.
17. Larina, op cit, p152
18. Cohen, op cit, p xxvii
19. *The Case of the Anti-Soviet Block of Rights and Trotskyites* Moscow: People's Commissariat of Justice of the USSR, 1938. These days it can be found on world wide web at [www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1938/trial/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1938/trial/index.htm)
20. *ibid*
21. *ibid*
22. Larina, op cit, p305
23. I have written in much greater detail the trajectory of Soviet intellectual life from 1917 to 1945 in chapter 4 of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History*. Sections of this lengthy chapter can be found on the web indexed at [www.comms.dcu.ie/sheehan/mxphsc.htm](http://www.comms.dcu.ie/sheehan/mxphsc.htm)
24. Cohen *Rethinking the Soviet Experience* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, p83
25. Bertram Wolfe *Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost* NY 1957, p135,139
26. Cohen "The Afterlife of Nikolai Bukharin" introduction to Larina, op cit, p29
- 27 Bukharin to Larina, op cit
28. This is the stance taken by Martin Amis in *Koba the Dread* London: Jonathan Cape, 2002. Although it adds nothing to our knowledge of this period, it has been massively reviewed and discussed as I was writing this. It seeks to drain any lingering credibility from either the old or new left as implicated in indulgent laughter at the death of 20 million. His attempt to link history to memoir is an act of smug and stunning disproportion. Most reviewers lazily acquiesced, believing that they have a right to pronounce on this period without any real study or coming to terms with it. Hitchens responded that Amis had taken a himalayan topic and pygmified it. "Don't be silly" *Guardian* 4 September 2002.