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FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY AS UNDERSTOOD BY ANDREI SINIAVSKI IN THE LIGHT OF A LINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE ESSAY *LA CIVILISATION SOVIÉTIQUE*

Abstract: The year 2022 marks the 25th anniversary of the death of Andrei Siniavski, a Russian writer known to the Western world for his work in defence of the public. Siniavski, who died in France in 1997, is known as the author of *Soviet Civilization*, published in France in 1988. The aim of this article is therefore to analyse the process of the conceptualisation of freedom and democratic ideas undertaken by Siniavski in the essay *Soviet Civilisation*, using the writer's own linguistic means. For this purpose, we will proceed to a definitional analysis of the lexemes naming the concept of freedom, an etymological analysis to trace the history of the concept and its subsequent semantic evolution, and a contextual analysis.

Keywords: writing and freedom, Russian dissidence, conceptualisation of freedom and democratic

Introduction

Freedom is a concept that is close to the heart of every human being who seeks to realise their life's projects, from the simplest ones related to their immediate environment to those that require the cooperation of a wider community. Each of these forms of realising the ideas of freedom requires the consideration of a broad moral, political, social, economic and civil perspective, which constitutes the platform for the establishment of personal freedom. Therefore, in the process of realising civil liberties, it is necessary to focus on both duties and rights, with the inevitable ontological question of what freedom is, and the answer to this question indicating the means of realising freedom.

This question also allows us to consider the concept of 'freedom' in the context of other concepts such as 'causality', 'necessity', 'determinism', 'contingency',

'possibility'. A regime that values individual and civil liberties would seem to be a democracy in which, in Lincoln's famous phrase, government of the people, by the people, for the people is exercised. However, the ability not to govern but to challenge the practices of governance when they prove destructive of the fundamental values of equality and liberty seems to be one of the privileges of democratic freedom. C. Colliot-Thélème reminds us:

> Democracy is not about governing or, as we say today, managing, but about constant monitoring. Democracy is a movement, an uncoordinated movement of many forms of control over the institutions of power – and therefore over the law, which is always suspected of being merely an instrument of consolidated power (2009, 231ff.).

The freedom of action and choice is an openness to the new, to change, to the future in its constitutive multiplicity. The action takes into account the exchange of words and the meanings given to them in a constant movement of thoughts and concepts that takes place among people. Words are at the heart of the action. The action, in turn, becomes the basis of politics, which organises and exercises power within institutions and interpersonal relationships.

A. Siniavski was known in Western Europe as a Russian writer who, in the post-war years and during the Stalin era, identified himself with the struggle against the regime, for the freedom of his people, and for the freedom to express himself, for which he paid by going to prison. France was a special place for the Russian dissident intelligentsia. Immigrants spoke in French about the issues that mattered to them and made them universal.

Siniavski died in France in 1997, where he was part of the intellectual offensive in France aimed at rolling back the influence of the totalitarian system and developing moderate, liberal and post-modern political solutions. These would come to dominate the Western vision of society and civilisation in the decades that followed. Most of Siniavski's early works, *Le Verglas* (1963, Ed. Plon), *Lyubimov, ville aimée* (1966, Ed. Julliard), *Pensées impromptues* (1968, Ed. Christian Bourgois) and *Plaidoyer pour la liberté de l'imagination* (1971, Ed. Hachette), *La civilisation soviétique*, (1988, Ed. Albin Michel) were also published in France.

The Siniavski case opened Western thought to a discussion about democracy, about the mechanisms of totalitarian power, where the coercion of power was combined with the concept of the so-called "new man", formed in accordance with an ideology – which can be interpreted as a new religion with the promise of paradise, relics (Lenin's body), holy images, ceremonies and rituals.

The new person must be the means, the condition, the result and the witness of an ideological, cultural and, above all, spiritual transformation. The renunciation of individual freedom in favour of the freedom of the masses in the broadest sense becomes the main key, in which the notion of the freedom of a person and their

freedoms are reduced to subjugation. This results in the nation and its culture being destroyed. In the introduction to the 1981 edition of the *Syntaxis* journal, Siniavski writes about this:

> On the one hand, what is happening in Russia is disturbing: Nothing is happening. However, what has happened there – the dissent movement and more – is very interesting. The destruction has been done. The whole culture has been reduced to ashes, there is nothing left. And here, on this dead land, there are little green shoots growing. So, have the people, the nation, the country kept the lifeblood in them? (1981, 11).

The essence of freedom is the exchange of ideas and the movement of dissent. It is the ferment of thought with an ethical and moral dimension. As Siniavski writes, "people began to write, think or manifest a moral position, and all this has a value in itself, whether victory comes or not" (Siniavski 1981, 9). Freedom begins with the human mind and should be formed within the framework of social and political life and a fully democratic system of government. The concept of democracy in the modern era has different meanings. Definitions are easier to establish than during the Cold War, when the line between democratic and totalitarian countries was clearly drawn. Today, as J. Rancière writes, "after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in countries called 'democracies', we face a kind of distrust, a disguised or open contempt for democracy" (Rancière 2012, 105). Because of the influence of the context, the economic situation, and the ideological situation of a country, the meaning of words receives a particular value. Rancière defines democracy as follows: "Democracy is equality born of inequality". What was Siniavski's definition of this concept in his works? What was the relationship between the concept of freedom, civil liberties, freedom of religion and the concept of democracy? Our analysis in this publication will be guided by these questions.

The study we propose is part of interdisciplinary research. We will outline Siniavski's worldview from the perspective of the history of ideas, using the linguistic tool of lexical and conceptual analysis. The subject of our study will be Siniavski's work, which was dissident and critical of the totalitarian regime prevailing in the USSR in the period following the Second World War. Our aim will be to analyse the process of the conceptualisation of freedom and democratic ideas undertaken by Siniavski in his essay *Soviet Civilisation*. Indeed, the aim is to demonstrate what linguistic term Siniavski uses in his effort to construct in a reader a reading effect aimed at convincing them of the values he promotes, to understand the concepts of the struggle for the formation of a free man, committed to understanding his historicity, his responsibility for the future, the time line in which the concepts of democracy, equality, and community are important for the functioning of a person and the community.

We will present a lexicographical overview of the nouns used to denote the concept of freedom in the first part of our study. The focus of our attention will be on the connotations of the concept in question that we find in Siniavski's lexicon. We will proceed to a definitional analysis of the lexemes naming the concept, an etymological analysis allowing us to trace the history of the concept and its subsequent semantic evolution, and a contextual analysis. The second part will be devoted to the discussion of the conception of freedom in the world in our time. A critical analysis will be proposed.

1. Lexicographic study

What is the meaning of *freedom* for representatives of certain linguistic cultures who conceptualise reality, their immediate environment in a specific and unique way? What does *freedom* mean in general? And what does *freedom* mean in a particular literary text, where the author has their own vision and 'constructs' concepts in accordance with the needs of the situation and their own abilities, in accordance with socio-historical experience and his life experience?

Before answering these questions, it is worth mentioning that the concept of *freedom* is an object of interdisciplinary research. It has been studied by philosophers and psychologists, it has been constructed in the context of a theological discourse, it has been described in the metalanguage of jurisprudence, and it has been and remains in the centre of political debates. The idea of *freedom* remains one of the foundations of literary thought. It is at the heart of all languages. *Freedom* can be classified as a key concept of the national mentality.

Here we need to clarify what is meant by a concept in order to go further. In our research we start from linguistic processing. In the broadest sense, a concept is a multidimensional entity. In its semantics, the rational and the emotional, the abstract and the concrete, the universal and the ethnic, the national and the individual are brought together (Vorkachev 2001).

This semantic content gives rise to the structure of the concept. This structure consists of a core and a periphery. The core provides verbal support for the conceptual content. It is reflected in its names. On the periphery, there is the subjective experience, the various pragmatic components of the lexeme, the connotations and the associations.

As we can see, the concept results from a collision of the lexicographical meaning of the words that designate it and the personal ethno-cultural experience of an individual. The lexicographical study allows us to see that defining *freedom* is not easy. Usually, *freedom* is understood as an expression that reflects the subject's attitude towards their actions, in which they are the determining the cause of these actions. These actions are not directly conditioned by natural, social,

interpersonal-communicative, individual internal or individual generic factors. However, this definition seems to be very general: it does not reveal all the connotations present in the word *freedom*.

The definition found in the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Russian Language* by V. I. Dal' may be a valuable addition to these considerations (the fundamental lexicographical reference):

> СВОБОДА – своя воля, простор, возможность действовать по-своему; отсутствие стесненья, неволи, рабства, подчинения чужой воле. Свобода понятие сравнительное; она может относиться до простора частного, ограниченного, к известному делу относящемуся, или к разным степеням этого простора, и наконец к полному, необузданному произволу или самовольству (1999, 151).

This means that *freedom* is defined as one's own will, spatial freedom, the ability to act in one's own way; the absence of coercion, servitude, slavery, submitting to the will of others. The concept of *freedom* is comparative. It can refer to private, limited freedom, linked to a known case, or to its different degrees, and finally to complete and unbridled arbitrariness, i.e. to "licence", to freedom without control. It is interesting to note that the lexicographer uses the word *простор* / *prostor* in his definition. This word has a double meaning. On the one hand, the name conveys the idea of freedom and is therefore one of its closest synonyms. On the other hand, *простор* / *prostor* means the immense, free, unlimited space where one can act without being prevented by others, where there are no obstacles or restrictions, where they feel at ease and can enjoy what they like. This is their moral and spiritual space of freedom.

A philosophical understanding of *freedom* is reflected in this interpretation. According to philosophers, the concept of *freedom* is multiple and polysemantic. Its extreme meanings are 1) an individual's ability to determine their life goals and take personal responsibility for the results of their activities; 2) the ability to act towards collective goals. The first one refers to what is called individual freedom, and the second one to collective freedom. From the point of view of individual freedom, collective freedom appears as an obvious 'unfreedom'. From the point of view of collective freedom, individual freedom is 'formal', 'unnecessary' and even 'repressive' (Podoprigora | Podoprigora 2013, 383ff.).

It is therefore possible to identify some constitutive elements that allow us to draw the concept of *freedom* in the semantic profile of the noun in question.

On the one hand, *freedom* implies an individual's capacity for self-determination in their actions. From this perspective, freedom can be consistent with the concept of positive freedom[1], i.e. "свобода для" – literally: "freedom for". However, there

[1] The concept of positive freedom was proposed by I. Berlin. This British philosopher contrasts this with the concept of negative freedom. Positive freedom is based on the possibility and avail-

is one point here that we think deserves special attention: *Freedom* can be understood as something given arbitrarily by another person. This semantic connotation is quite obvious in expressions such as *giving sb. total freedom*; *depriving sb. of freedom*.

Freedom is seen as the ability of a person to do what they want to do, but within certain limits imposed by society. This view stems from the etymology of the name. Originally, *свобода – freedom* was used to mean both *independence* and *colony of free men*. The word was also related to the Church Slavonic lexemes *свобьство* (*svob'stvo*), *собьство* (*sob'stvo*) 'person', where **svobь* comes from *svojь* (lit.: *his*), which meant *положение свободного, своего члена рода* (Fasmer 2022), i.e. the position of a free member of the people, a member who is their own. As we can see, the lexical meaning of the word *freedom* indicates the existence of a community or society in which "independence" or "the condition of a free man" can be achieved.

On the other hand, the semantic effects captured in the noun *freedom* correlate with the view of negative freedom: *свобода от – absence of.* Freedom is understood as the opposite of slavery. To be free, then, means to be free from dependence, to be free from external interference. In the interpretation of freedom as sovereignty, the relevant theme of "independence" is explicitly marked[2].

Lightness, *ease* is an important aspect of *freedom* that emerges from the use of the word in question. This semantic component is opposed to the semes *obstacle*, *hindrance*, *constraint*. And this is no coincidence. According to A. Wierzbicka, almost all Russian interpretations of *freedom* mention the lexemes *стеснять* (lit.: *to constrain, suppress, squeeze*) or *стеснение* (lit.: *constraint, hindrance*). In support of this observation, the researcher cites a very typical example from Dahl's *Dictionary*: "Никакой свободишки нет, теснят всем, отовсюду" ([There is no freedom, everything is repressive, and on all sides – translated by the authors][3]. In this respect, such freedom would be a liberation from some kind of, material or psychological, straitjacket. In this context, according to the linguist, the concept of freedom corresponds perfectly to the image of an unfettered child who enjoys the possibility of moving their arms and legs without any restrictions (Wierzbicka 1999, 434ff.).

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ability of resources to realise one's own potential, one's authentic self, which also implies the absence of internal barriers. Positive freedom is also determined by citizens' ability to participate in governance. The essence of positive freedom can be illustrated by the statement "I am my own master". Negative freedom consists of the absence of external restrictions and violent interference from others. A statement such as "I am nobody's slave" is characteristic of negative freedom. For more details, see: Berlin (1969, 118ff.); Taylor (1991, 211ff.).

2 *Cf. Sovereignty*: "independence from foreign powers"; "the quality of a self-governing political community"; an "absolute, […] unrestricted character.

3 It is interesting to note that in the Russian version the noun *freedom* is used in a diminutive form *svobodishka*, which is typical of colloquial language. Literally translated, the lexeme means "small freedom", i.e. a minimum area of individual freedom that is guaranteed to everyone.

The semantic content of the word freedom can also have a negative connotation. Freedom then becomes an artificial freedom, a freedom without control. It leads to blind obedience to one's own desires, and it is the cause of anarchy, tyranny or the invasion of violence. In certain contexts, the word *freedom* is also associated with inappropriate behaviour, casualness or over-familiarity.

The elements are associated with another conceptual image of *freedom*. *Freedom* is often identified with the raging sea, with the wild waters, with the free wind, or even with the storm. And freedom could be seen as the same destructive force that is characteristic of a force of nature. Freedom, like water, refreshes. It gives a powerful impulse, ideas. This is where its creativity lies. It is also not accidental that *freedom* is associated with the Air element. Air as such is the element of freedom. Air gives the right to choose. Air is personal freedom, the state of belonging to nothing and nobody (*cf.* expressions *воздух свободы – the air of freedom*). The representation of freedom as a free and empty space, a vast and infinite space, "a space in its three dimensions", is inseparable from the mentioned conceptual images. (*cf.* the definition by Dal').

And lastly, *freedom* implies free time, outside of work, outside of service. It is a time of celebration, of relaxation, when one is free and can indulge in pleasure, entertainment, personal and recreational activities.

Although our overview is brief, we are obliged to say a few words about the synonyms of the noun freedom. For the purposes of this study we will mention only two nouns: *воля and демократия* (*will* and *democracy*). These lexical units were identified on the basis of their obvious semantic relationship to *freedom* and their frequency.

Will is generally understood as one of the main mental faculties of a person, involving the conscious control of one's behaviour and actions, or the conscious intention to achieve one's goal. The contiguity of the concepts of *freedom* and *will* is evidenced by the overlap of their associative subfields. This is a common semantic component, a 'space' which allows for the synonymous use of the nouns in question. In particular, the semantic content of *will* is associated with nature and elements. *Will* can also be identified with freedom, unrestricted from the outside, with the state of someone who is not held in prison, in captivity. From this point of view, *will* evokes the image of a fresh wind, of a beautiful clear sky above, of the vastness of the land.

Will, lived with all its intensity, all the power of its energy and impulses, is transformed into a rebellion, which is its extreme manifestation. It is also a desire, a fanciful demand based on a whim; it is power, the ability to command, to dominate, to control someone's actions and behaviour. Such a view brings will closer to licence, to uncontrollable freedom.

As we can see, *will* is semantically closer to psychological concepts such as 'desire', 'pleasure', 'wide field', 'space'.

The stable correlation of *freedom* with the social concept of *democracy* is based on common terms: 'law', 'power', 'human rights', 'independence'. *Freedom* associated with equality, fraternity and creativity clearly refers to *democracy*[4], because only such a political regime can allow the exercise of freedom by citizens and grant equal benefits to all.

Freedom and *democracy* are interdependent and inseparable. Guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms of an individual is one of the conditions for the existence of democracy. Thus, *freedom* is one of the main characteristics of a social person living under the political regime of *democracy*.

Thus, the variety of stylistic uses, as well as the broad semantic potential of the noun *freedom*, conditions the variety of interpretative possibilities, depending on the intention of the personality, their individual linguistic worldview, their linguistic awareness.

However, the analysis is much more interesting if we refer to the study of a literary text. This type of text has an aesthetic concern to capture the reader's interest and is therefore characterised by a particular verbal motif. According to V. Larbaud, "in addition to its material and literal meaning, every piece of literature […] has a less obvious meaning, which alone creates in us the aesthetic impression intended by the poet" (Larbaud 1997, 65).

2. Democratic values in the *Soviet Civilization*

The analysis of the original text (Siniavski 2002) allows us to understand the vision of freedom, will and democracy that Siniavski wants to share. The conceptualisation takes the form of a severe critique of the understanding of democratic values in Soviet society. The author brilliantly reveals various implicit aspects of the semantic content of the concepts in question.

The basis of this positive freedom is collectivity. Only a collectivised society, planned by a centralised state, can be a free society. The role of the state is to empower people, to enable them to exercise their freedom by fighting inequality, ignorance, misery and disease. However, in reality, it is the tutelary power of the state that has the right to interfere in all aspects of citizens' lives. And Siniavski says so explicitly: "Государство […] остается единственным хозяином и господином" ["The state remains the sole master and lord" – translated by the author] (Siniavski 2002, 100).

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4 "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" is the motto of the French Republic. France is a liberal democracy, whose government takes the form of a republic. According to Article 1 of the Constitution, "France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic".

Paradoxically, this state hypocritically recommends itself as the will of the people. Siniavski notes, however, that the expression "according to the will of the people" is transformed into a dead formula that means nothing more than "according to the order of the rulers", "according to the will of the state" (Siniavski 2002, 100).

Siniavski goes on to speak of the total enslavement of the country, of the enslavement of people in their condition and mentality: "полное превращение страны в рабское государство, с рабским положением людей и рабской психологией" (Siniavski 2002, 1214), of slavery, which creates an ideal human mass, devoid of any personal opinion and subject to all the reversals of the sovereign's policy: "человеческую массу, идеальную для власти над нею, не смевшую иметь никакого собственного мнения и покорную любому повороту [..] политики" (Siniavski 2002, 126). This enslavement deprives an individual of all personal will. So, we are before a slave state, but slaves who are satisfied with themselves, and consider themselves the freest people alive.

> Но это был не свободный человек, а самодовольный раб. […] раб не только не чувствует своего рабства, но считает себя самым свободным человеком на свете […] [But he was not a free man, he was a satisfied slave. […] the slave not only does not feel his slavery, but sees himself as the freest man alive […] – translated by the author] (Siniavski 2002, 211-212).

Thus, we can see that the 'Soviet style' freedom becomes unfreedom, a spirit of servitude that weighs on the country: 'дух несвободы в Советском Союзе' (Siniavski 2002, 102).

In the *Soviet civilization*, freedom was understood as independence, absence of control, (*свобода от…*) is translated in terms of a "war for the liberation of oppressed peoples" (Siniavski 2002, 49).

Moreover, war, as a very practical tool, makes it possible to justify any form of violence (in the name of freedom, of course). Hence this ideological formula:

> Насилие – есть свобода (свобода от эксплоататоров, от капиталистов и помещиков). [Violence is freedom (freedom from exploiters, capitalists and land-owners)] (Siniavski 2002, 93).

or the interpretation of humanism:

> истинным гуманизмом оказываются иногда массовые расстрелы [true humanism is in the executions] (Siniavski 2002, 299).

This military style, embedded in the *Soviet civilisation*, gives rise to the concept of "Soviet democracy". However, what does the "Soviet democracy" mean? Siniavski gives an exhaustive answer to this question. In his book, he writes:

> Что такое "советская демократия"? Это равенство всех. И во имя такого равенства была подавлена свобода. Но, как выяснилось, народ жаждет не свободы, а равенства. […]. В обществе, где все люди равны, не может быть никакой свободы, ибо свобода возвышает одного над другим и допускает различия, а равенство, запрещая свободу, делает всех одинаковыми. [What is "Soviet democracy"? It is equality for all. And it is in its name that freedom is suppressed. But it turns out that people do not seek freedom but equality […] in a society in which all people are equal, there can be no freedom. For freedom elevates some above others and allows for differences. Equality, on the other hand, by forbidding freedom, makes everyone the same] (2002, 107).

The idea of democracy in the Soviet community, according to the writer, is based on a false understanding of freedom and equality. The problem is that the people of physical labour, the disadvantaged strata of the population, experience their equality as a state of freedom. This illusory feeling makes the masses identify themselves with "the State, which rules and takes away all rights, except the right to consider it one's own" (Siniavski 2002, 108). This is what Soviet democracy is all about.

This perception changes true democracy into dictatorship, "истинная демократия – диктатура" (Siniavski 2002, 299), the absolute power of the State or the Party, which holds low-income people in thrall, in effect depriving them of freedom and democracy. The absence of democracy is therefore the most total democracy, "отсутствие демократии – есть самая полная демократия" (Siniavski 2002, 93). However, the most absurd thing is that such a misconception about democracy, created by the Soviet power, makes the people support it. The mythical feeling of freedom, equality and even primacy are very appealing to the masses, who prefer the interference of the state in their private lives to individual responsibility. The Soviet society accepts this democracy without democratic freedoms, democracy under dictatorship. It accepts this fictitious freedom based on fear which makes denunciations and lies flourish. And the 'incantatory' slogans of the Soviet press and state legitimise war and violence, absolute sovereignty; prison turns out to be a method of education, and the principle of free consent regarding the right of nations to self-determination, and even to separation, becomes an empty formality. These are the democratic values of the Soviet civilisation. And Siniavsky is absolutely right when he says that words mean something other than what they say, perhaps even the opposite. However, what they really hide, what concrete facts, remains difficult to guess. "Трудно проникнуть в этот язык и советскому человеку, желающему что-то узнать и осмыслить" (Siniavski 2002, 300).

3. Andrei Siniavski and the French affinities in his conceptions of freedom

During the Cold War, the division between the sphere of democratic freedoms associated with Western thought and the sphere of influence of the totalitarian regime was clear. By studying the story of Siniavski, we can see in him what was significant for many Russian thinkers in terms of their perception of the relationship between the East and the West, namely an interest in the particularities of Russian spirituality and, on the other hand, a fascination with freedom and the valorisation of civil liberties. Stalinist Russia was deprived of the latter to the point of terror. The Iron Curtain reinforced the sense of isolation and subjugation, which explains why Russian thinkers so intensely looked to the West, including France, as a promised land of freedom when it allowed, for example, the publication of works that had been banned and confiscated by the authorities in Russia.

In his study of the history of the USSR (Heller | Niekricz 1987), M. Heller analyses the sources of the spiritual renewal of the Russian people after the death of Stalin and the dismissal of Beria, citing the creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning the truth about the past, but also to the struggle for the liberalisation of ideas in the Soviet society. Heller writes that there was a strong desire to renew the spirituality and historicity of the nation. This manifested itself in many literary and journalistic publications.

> Just one year after Stalin's death, works such as V. Pomerantsev's article On Sincerity in Literature, Ilya Erenburg's Thaw, Vladimir Dudintsev's novel No Bread Alone, Nizim Hikmet's drama Was He or Wasn't He by Anton Bak, articles on the February and October Revolutions by E. Burjatov and others appeared in the journal *Voprosy istorii* (Heller | Niekricz 1987, 231).

This does not mean, however, that the goals of the liberal intellectuals were easily achieved. The centres of Stalinist power, concentrated in all parts of the party-state apparatus, used every pretext to obstruct the development of the democratic spirit in the Soviet society.

Moreover, a number of French intellectuals, starting with Breton, Sartre, Malraux, Aragon, Gid, who initially saw Russia as a land of progress and the embodiment of communist ideals, which in practice turned out to be a pure utopia, consistently distanced themselves from the Stalinist regime. The confrontation with reality, which Siniavski, among others, helped to demystify, led to a movement of support for Russian dissidents by Western intellectuals, including French ones, to promote their anti-Stalinist ideals, which also became a testimony to the victims of the totalitarian system, who were imprisoned in forced labour camps, psychiatric hospitals or declared missing in unknown circumstances.

The Siniavski-Daniel affair of 1965, which portrayed the new post-Stalinist regime as equally cruel and oppressive towards its citizens, was publicised in the international press, particularly by the French intelligentsia. The publicity given to this lawlessness has raised awareness in the Western world of the injustice being done to the Russian people on an unprecedented scale, and has forced the Russian authorities to maintain at least the appearance of respect for human rights in the international sphere. H. Peletier-Zamojskaya's testimony was important in promoting Siniavski's dissident thought and its influence on French and European thought. She transported Sinavski's manuscripts, as well as those by Yuri Daniel, to France. Sinavski published his works in French under the pseudonym of Abraham Tertz.

An essay on socialist realism, published in France, entitled *Du réalisme socialiste la vingtième année* and its critics led the Russian authorities in Moscow to charge him with hypocrisy for preaching contradictory ideas in Russia and France. Siniavski was born in 1925, and his upbringing was typical of that time, heavily indoctrinated by the purges of the 1930s, which saw the consolidation of the Stalinist power. As a young researcher and writer, he was not free from moral dilemmas and critical assessments of the reality presented in diametrically opposed ways by the Stalinist propaganda.

> Was he shocked by the cruelty of the procedures used to establish the better world his father dreamed of? Certainly not as much as I, who was an outsider… He explained to me that the law of historical progress unfortunately required sacrifices. But his conscience could not be satisfied with this easy explanation. It is significant that one of our first, slightly more in-depth discussions was about Ivan Karamazov's dilemma: "Can the Crystal Palace be built on the corpse of a child?" (Tikos | Peppard 1973, 20).

Unsurprisingly, Siniavski radically chose expository writing. He systematically published his works in France, which were then circulated in the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the following opinion was formulated: "What the Russian has most precious, in my opinion, is his inner spiritual freedom" (Forgues 1967, 68).

Russian intelligentsia's efforts gained international support. On 16 February 1966, Louis Aragon, the director of "Lettres Françaises" (LLF), denounced the repression of Russian writers in "L'Humanité", the central press organ of the French Communist Party. A French writer with communist ideological roots condemned the use of criminal proceedings against writers as a violation of democratic rights.

In 1973, Siniavski left the USSR and settled with his family in France. He became a professor at the Sorbonne. He was widely active as a journalist, including the *Syntaxis* magazine – conflicted with the world of exiles, whom he scandalised with his statements "in which the obscene vocabulary of the Gulag borders with free meditation of art" (Nivat 2023).

Siniavski was a promoter of the freedom of expression, as it can change people's attitudes and actions. In his American lectures in the mid-1990s, published as *Russian Intelligence* (Siniavski 1997), he sharply criticises the Russian elites of the late 20th century. It seems that his predictions about the effectiveness of the formation of the new person according to the concept presented in the essay *Soviet Civilisation* (1990) have not lost their relevance.

4. Conclusion

During his stay abroad, Siniavski did not cease his writing activity, even though it was accompanied by a feeling of rejection from the Russian émigré community. In 1988, he published an essay entitled *Soviet Civilisation*, published in French by M. Albin, in which he summarised his experiences as a citizen of the former Soviet Union.

Despite its novelty, Soviet civilisation is a solid and unusual formation, governed by its own internal laws, in spectacular contradiction with each other. To accomplish the task of presenting this Soviet civilization in all its complexity, Siniavski methodically examines what he calls its cornerstones, analysing such concepts as a revolution, a revolutionary utopia, a way of life, a Soviet language, the state, the new person, hopes and alternatives. He is interested in the symbolism of the content carried by the concepts as it translates into the human being, "what interests us first are the symbols; they endure, as important witnesses of their time". The unmasking of illusory meanings and representations is important insofar as it is a utopia that is enacted, but the process is nevertheless very convincing. However, living in a utopian world only leads to the desert of unreality. Believing otherwise becomes another form of enslavement, i.e. the lack of freedom and the genuine freedom of choice. Siniavski describes this civilisation as follows:

> From utopia to realisation. But it is precisely this practice and this awareness that makes the man who finds himself in this world for the first time suddenly perceive it as harmonious and comprehensible. It is as if he has come out of the deep, dark forest into a bright, spacious barracks: the barracks of Soviet civilisation. It is not just a dream come true, it is a utopia – scientifically constructed and scientifically organised. It is, after all, a rational world that lends its rationality to everything that came before it and to everything around it (Siniavski 1988, 49).

To sum up the life of Siniavski with a certain loop, one can say that the desire for freedom and democratic solutions for himself and his nation, or rather his human community, accompanied him from the very beginning of his writing, research and criticism. Political thought was a constant background to his expressions.

The interdisciplinary method of studying the text from the point of view of the history of ideas, as well as a lexicographic and conceptual analysis show that the writer was able to express his ideals, but also to observe their influence on the course of history and the development of political, social and economic events. The trial of his publications in France shook up the French political life in the 1960s, contributing to a particular awareness of democratic values and the exercise of power in the community. On the other hand, similar transformations did not take place in such a profound way in the USSR. The loop of life ends with the essays of the 1990s, *Soviet Civilization* and *The Russian Intelligentsiya*, which forcefully show that the effort to understand and respect democracy and human freedom requires a constant reflection and action on the part of the civil community.

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