



*Formula of the Petrograd Proletariat,*  
1920-21, Pavel Filonov,  
The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

of concentration camps descending on the land for several decades. In his series *Faces* (1940), the portraits are no longer alive. Workers dissolve into a uniform background. The collective farmers see no way out of their new condition. During this period the canvases inspired by his vision of a "universal flowering" would no longer flourish.

Filonov died of pneumonia and starvation in December 1941 during the Blockade. His sister transported the collection by sledge across the famished, frozen streets to the Russian Museum. They lay hidden in the reserves till 1989 when the first full retrospective of his works was mounted. For the first time the public could see his nightmarish canvases, many drenched in blood, a sombre witness to the Soviet period

In the Soviet Union there was only one sponsor – the state which was served by an entire class of officials. Yuri Neprintsev is the artist-bureaucrat *par excellence*: a recipient of the highest honors of the state, the Lenin Prize. His most famous painting, *Rest After Battle* (1951), conceived as a tribute to the Great Patriotic War, served Stalin's primitive propaganda aims.

In 1952 he was summoned to Moscow by Malenkov, the First Secretary of the CPSU. He briefly informed Neprintsev that Stalin wanted him to create a copy of *Rest After Battle* in two

months. His original in the Tretyakov Gallery was to be presented to Mao-Tse Tung for his sixtieth birthday on behalf of the CPSU. So this second canvas was for the Tretyakov.

At Stalin's death he was one of several artists summoned to sketch the dictator as he lay in state. He recalls Stalin's body set upon a decorated gun carriage: a transparent protuberance had been made which allowed the millions thronging forward to glimpse the Great Leader. Neprintsev witnesses the jejune rendered significant by the figures' historical claim to ignominy: Beria's face "in a black hat...pulled down almost to his eyes," Foreign Minister Molotov's "mouth and neck which seemed to continually experience convulsions" as he read the farewell address.

Perestroika and glasnost left Neprintsev untouched: on his 80th birthday he received a host of tributes proclaimed "as a man, of civic feeling, unusually sensitive and sympathetic to the needs of his native land." In 1997 Neprintsev is still teaching monumental painting at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg.

Leningrad underground artist, Gleb Bogomolov, whose canvases embrace pure colors and abstract forms, lived next to the Academy of Arts in the fifties: "So-

cialist realism like Newton's law of gravity instilled a strong desire to go to the opposite extreme." His works like *Fragmentary Portrait* (1988) and *Goblet* (1988) was a way of confrontation and of understanding reality." Bogomolov's main persecutors were artists occupying official positions in the Union of Artists. Their principal weapon, ideology, was wielded to preserve their positions on art committees and councils.

Back in the seventies young Moscow artist, Tatyana Nazarenko, had her own problems with the various Ministry of Culture committees. In 1982, in one typical incident, her painting, *Pugachev*, caused her a great deal of trouble. The picture had passed all kinds of committees: the Moscow Party Committee, the CPSU Committee in Charge of Culture etc. The Department of Culture now summoned her and suggested she remove the picture. "Why did they tell me this, she asks? "Because Suvorov was a great general. He was always used in history textbooks as an example to our soldiers. In this picture he is seen leading the peasant rebel Pugachev to execution." The Department of Culture told her: "Your picture shows the general leading our first revolutionary to be executed. We won't tolerate this."

Tatyana considered her task as an artist to bring attention to the "Lie" of socialism. Another controversial work was *The Execution of the Members of the People's Will* which ironically received the Moscow Komsomol Prize in 1972. "They



*To The Victims Of Stalin,* A. Fatkhutdinov, 1992, Kazan, Rep. of Tatarstan