

# Problems with the New Way of Thinking

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### *New View of War*

First people perceived there was a problem and then they found words to express it. Witnesses say that after detonation of the first nuclear device American Professor Kenneth T. Bainbridge exclaimed: "Now we are all scoundrels!" Thus physicists were the first to recognize the consequences of bringing these weapons of cosmic power into a world already divided and disturbed. Subsequently the rest of us have come to the same point, albeit later and more gradually.

Several years ago one of our famous mathematicians phoned me and accusingly read a quotation from my story *The Chastisers* which had just been published. In it I state: "It's not yet known whose formulae – physicists' or poets' – will be used to blow up the earth." The mathematician seemed pleased to read this self-criticism of us lyricists. And indeed there will be no guiltless ones, if this most terrible event occurs. It appears as if the public does not take this problem seriously, or has drifted into the state described by Byelorussian novelist Eduard Skobelev in *Catastrophe*: "Having lost faith, people repressed the thought of victims and being a victim. No one climbed a pyre convinced that they would die and that is why they all perished there."

Yes, a feeling of personal identification with the problem and a historical perspective is mandatory in today's world, not only for physicists who have brought these doomsday weapons into existence, but also for politicians, military people, and we the public – the rest of the lyricists.

Today, everything depends on our thinking. Its content and character will determine whether mankind itself has a future and whether there will be a future for the world, as well. It all depends on our mode of thinking, the ability, or the inability, of the majority of people to think in a manner appropriate for the reality of our nuclear times.

Poets in the 1940s and 1950s complained – “It seems physicists are respected and lyricists are shoved into the background.

“Now times have changed and today poets are respected. It is to their credit that they did not invent nuclear weapons. However, this happened only because they did not directly participate. On the other hand they have made recent positive contributions. They have worked effectively to save the environment – to rescue the rivers, forests, soil, as well as cultural and spiritual values in our country. Still, their contribution to the present critical issue, that of changing dangerous mind-sets concerning war, is not even noticeable.

Writers certainly understand the meaning of growing up under military-patriotic influences. But even today, if anyone says to them that it would be better to have antimilitary-patriotic influences, notice their expressions. Many will stare back in bewilderment, some even with fright.

If a military victory in the present nuclear age is impossible and is, instead, a crime against mankind, then it is logical to reason that the highest level of patriotism, a wish for the best for your people, and others (inseparable today), must coexist with a profound disgust for war. Outrage is not for an enemy, but for everything that provokes war or hostility and for anyone who is ready to unleash it.

There is some urgency to reconsider the way our literature is being used, rather than in the way it is formatted. For example, in all the world there is no collection of antimilitary literature which is better. No one speaks, or can speak more eloquently about war's dangers, because of our past experiences. Yet at the same time it is senseless to talk of maximized security and greater military strength. We can no longer have it both ways.

What M. S. Gorbachev said at the 27th Party Congress is an example of new thinking. He said it again at Reykjavik. He said it so clearly and concisely that it will undoubtedly be recorded for posterity: “We cannot accept ‘no’ as an answer to the question of whether mankind is to be or not to be.”

This is true regardless of how many times the other side says “no,” true even if they say it in a deliberately offensive and provocative manner; true no matter how one would like to reply by slamming the door or answering

bellicosely and implacably in kind. We have no right to do so. In the final analysis, it is no longer a question of systems of socialism and capitalism, but of life on Earth itself - for “man to be or not to be.”

New thinking has become our state policy. This fact is significant in itself, but this doesn't relieve any of us as individuals from the need to work for the goal of developing a new mode of thinking. It is not an easy process and cannot be done at once.

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In 1984 the magazine *Friendship of People* published an unexpected article. The author, a major-general and doctor of philosophy, obviously belonged to the military-scientific establishment and had won over the editorial staff. He wrote:

At present one thing has been clearly demonstrated: with local wars imperialism has not attained a single major historical objective against revolutionary forces. Viewed from political goals, there is an ever more obvious trend for diminishing the effectiveness of predatory and unjust imperialist wars against revolutionary forces. Unjust wars cannot resolve the historical contraindications of imperialism.

This would all seem convincing. But let us read further:

On the other hand, if the effectiveness of the use of military force by aggressive circles decreases, just wars by revolutionary forces remain important and sometimes an essential means for struggle against imperialism. (1)

For the militarist, this latter situation makes everything simple. It provides the perfect excuse. There is still hope of inventing military solutions – possibilities already cancelled by the nuclear age. During the war there was a saying that can be paraphrased: A Russian is special. He can bear and endure conditions which would cause the death of even his most vicious enemy.

But one should carry the thought through to its end: Where does this lead us in the present world situation? What if the most just war of all ends with a nuclear holocaust?

During World War II, grave mistakes and miscalculations occurred in the resistance movement. Good demolition men were blown up because of seeming trifles: A Bickford slow-burning fuse was very similar to a fast-burning one. The time was calculated correctly, but the fuse happened to be the wrong one. An explosion occurred in one's hands, or underfoot. We are moving to make these same kind of miscalculations today, but this time we risk losing our entire world.

*Reality of Nuclear Age – War Is Obsolete*

It didn't happen at once, but even the most far-sighted politicians have grasped the reality of our present nuclear age, stated so simply and precisely in the now famous Russell-Einstein Manifesto: "There can be no victory in a nuclear war!"

The manifesto also says: "In order to eliminate the threat of a nuclear holocaust, one should refrain from any wars." The logic is simple: If a conventional war starts anywhere, nothing can prevent it from escalating into a nuclear one. Even if nuclear weapons are eliminated, war is still a problem. Both sides will continue to live with fear and suspicion that the other side may once again restore its nuclear capabilities. Today this is a danger more than ever before, as the world sits on top of ever-growing nuclear stockpiles.

Is war obsolete? What about just wars? It is true there are many in the world who are robbed and deprived, even entire countries. There are also many who are ready to plunder others and profit at another's expense. But one thing is important today - the end of all war. No one knows what type of a fuse one has in his hands, where it leads, and how much time there is. One can ask a childish question: If there are permitted wars, what weapons are permitted? Clearly not nuclear. Then, chemical? This is not possible. Conventional? These forces are getting very close to nuclear in killing power. This means that the improvement in conventional weapons is abolishing any warfare. Therefore, those who live with the old thinking of yesterday's policies drive themselves and all of mankind into an ever more discernable trap. The superpowers must take this into account as they presently engage in small wars such as those in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Iran-Iraq, and Africa.

*Diversity*

Soviet experts who study the United States know very well how hard it is to converse with our Western opponents – our partners in survival. Whatever is discussed, the question always comes up: "Do you still want to bury us?" If not by military, then by other means. Do you want to standardize social systems, reducing them to one?

It is these facts that Western harangue uses as a basis for continuing the confrontation, whether military, economic, or psychological. This has produced large obstacles to overcome, fostering projections of what is going on over there, promoting fear, stirring patriotism, or anything else that might incite bad feelings. And sooner or later the precept is posed: "Better dead than red"; or in our dogma, "Better dead than nonred." Once I saw a small poster carried by a schoolgirl in the Federal Republic of

Germany (West Germany) that read: “Better Star Wars than to come under colonial rule of Moscow.”

But let us think about the crux of the matter and put aside propaganda and its passions. If one does not submit to the hypnotism of stereotypes, there is a way out. This comes from the realization that our world is full of diversity. It is the strength of our survival, not an obstacle to it. This is most obvious when we view nature with its wealth of diverse biological forms and complexity of genetic makeup. These conditions are responsible for stability of the life process and guarantee the continued presence and a future for our flora and fauna. This same process applies to all mankind. V. I. Lenin said that diversity is a sure way to guarantee vitality. This statement certainly applies today.

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*“What if the most just war of all ends with a nuclear holocaust?”*

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The same applies to nations, cultures, and languages. Thank God we have already abandoned the simplistic notions that variety of nations, cultures, and languages hinders progress and the unity of mankind. It became obvious that from such wealth and variety, from the flourishing of cultures and languages, the groundwork had been laid for a genuinely open-ended future and the possibility for an increasingly united mankind. Clearly nature and society must have a choice of options; we cannot leave them only one single choice, or “thread.” The thread could break, and also, nobody knows what the choices should be, or their impact in a hundred or a hundred thousand years.

How far ahead can people see if they are surrounded by the walls of their own time? Can they see far enough to decide for thousands of subsequent generations? Don’t such considerations also apply to the issue of the variety of social forms as well? The old axiom applies to this situation: “Better to be different in life, than the same in death.”

The time for such intolerance has passed, both for their side as well as ours. Although some social philosophers would hardly agree with such a course, we must leave tomorrow alone. The future will take care of itself. Our first concern is just to have this future be, to have it come. No one has a right to risk the life of billions of people out of an egoistic concern that they receive their future life in a specially packaged form. Future generations will sort everything out themselves when they come into this life! To let, to permit them to come – that is the most important thing.

At a meeting with writers participating in the Issyk-Kul Forum, M. S. Gorbachev said: “Look at the whole world – we are all different. Is this a disadvantage? It is reality. We must learn how to live with this variety and

to respect the choice of each nation.”\* (2) Let’s follow our leader’s advice and that of the old proverb: “The sun will continue to rise and set, people will continue to be born and die.”

How is the process of new thinking and new perception proceeding in a specific field such as literature? This can best be handled by breaking our discussion into three concerns: humanitarian issues, morality in the nuclear age, and specific artistic issues.

*Humanitarian Issues.* Tolstoy once wrote this thought: “...throughout history people worked, traded, waged wars... but what they were really doing all this time was finding out what is good and what is evil.”

Yet, contemporary life has introduced an amendment to Tolstoy’s observation. This is best expressed by contemporary author Sergei Pavlovich Zalygin: “... before we used to solve two equations – what is good and what is evil? The whole of world literature and aesthetics were occupied with this issue. Now we have a third equation: ‘What is nothing?’ That is the reality we are facing at the moment.” (3)

This must inevitably exert a powerful influence on the whole of literature. But, what is really happening? It’s not quite like that. In fact, we live as we did before, we write basically as we always have. This means that we write much worse from a moral perspective, than we did in the prenuclear age. From the perspective of that previous age, literature that was considered to be adequate, just right, sufficient, must today be judged totally inadequate. Even right now, we overindulge ourselves in our writing and philosophizing, mainly about trifles, neglecting the major concerns of the nuclear age. And many say: “Who really cares about that!” But fortunately things are beginning to happen in literature, if not consciously, then subconsciously.

This is occurring because the concept of humanism is changing, along with moral and artistic values. And slowly along with these have come changes in literary form and content. Humanism is ridding itself of various definitions that served as past limitations. Today its concern is for nothing less than all of mankind. Now formerly competing aspects and ideas have become partners in a system to promote survival and preservation of life. Why? Because no one individual can or will survive in the present nuclear age without and at the expense of others.

Finally, we fully understand the issue of so-called arithmetic humanism, debated so intensely just several years ago. Life in that process was disposable in order to obtain the goal. It was quite impersonal. In this scheme one can calculate how many lives might be sacrificed for the

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\* Lake Issyk-Kul, near Alma Ata, capital Kazakhstan Republic, USSR.

happiness of others: If more of those others are lost, then the goal is attained, since there would be many more survivors. This is so-called active humanism! What would “the tear of a child,” or the sacrifice of a single child matter in such a case – survival of the group is all that counts, survival at any price!

It is now a different time. The atom bomb has erased arithmetic thinking. Behind every coldly calculated figure now looms the nothing of Zalygin. The gap between killing a single man and killing all of mankind has narrowed to a gnat’s eyelash in the age of nuclear weapons.

This very notion of nothing jeopardizes our immediate future and inevitably permeates all moral values and categories and changes them – sometimes quite drastically.

*Morality in the Nuclear Age.* On an intellectual level, our species is back at the same stage at which primeval man started. Then, as now, the moral issue of the time was survival – “Is *homo erectus* to live, or not live?” was the question.

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Having come full circle, humanity has returned to the situation it faced at that far distant beginning - that of survival. But now all life on the planet depends on whether or not we will continue to kill our own kind.

All previous commandments developed in the prenuclear age such as, “Do not kill,” and “Don’t do to another what you would not wish done to yourself and your own tribe or clan,” still do not carry the import of today’s mortal danger and threat and now we need to add: “Otherwise you will all perish.” This time death will be absolute, all will die.

One can say: We are killing each other now and nothing has happened! We have made so many bombs and we are still alive! We live in debt to chance. As our minister of Foreign Affairs reminded the whole human community at the General Assembly of the United Nations – this debt to chance is more terrible than that demanded by Shakespeare’s Shylock: If payment is demanded, we shall not get away with cutting off a piece of flesh: We shall have to pay with the life of every human being living on the planet.

That is why new humanism and new morality are not words hastily tacked onto the concept of new thinking. They are an integral part of the practical process needed for an adequate response to the unprecedented situation into which people have driven themselves: We must change in every way.

*Specific Artistic Issues.* Modern Soviet literature, with its best novels *Fire* by Valentin Rasputin\*, *Sad Detective* by Viktor Astafyev†, and *The Executioner's Block* by Chingiz Aitmatov††, has become directly involved with today's controversies about how we must lead our lives. It has aroused considerable and diverse comment particularly from certain writers and critics who have judged their material from criteria of style – whether these novels were written according to previously accepted artistic rules; or content – whether their message had gone too far or was too extreme.

*The Executioner's Block* by Aitmatov provides a particularly interesting and instructive example of this process. It received mixed reviews from “Round Table” in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and raised similar commentary from television critics. On one hand, readers said that Aitmatov's novel had failings in taste and language; very often his sense of proportion fell short of the mark. On the other hand it contained a power, unprecedented even for this writer. Where did this power come from? What fed it? How can one explain the nature and source of this power if this novel had significant shortcomings and some things weren't quite right and others simply bad? Nobody has provided a convincing argument one way or the other. I am sure that I would arrive at the same position using past criteria.

Two years ago when I had a friendly argument with Vasiliy Bykov, whom I tried to seduce into making antinuclear statements in the literature, we came up with the new word superliterature. After all, life faced a super threat to its existence from super weapons! So shouldn't we think about matching this with an adequate expression in literature – “superliterature”? Let the damned bomb blow up inside ourselves, in the consciousness of literature. Why not? We had failed to make any other adequate response to all that was happening and threatening existence in our outer world. It seemed quite clear. If our consciousness is moved to a new level, we would automatically start writing in a new way.

This approach has subsequently caused much debate among writers and critics, as would be expected. There is a lot of disagreement. First, this approach is considered both presumptuous and offensive to those steeped in classic literature. We postulate that the classic writers have missed something. And how can we, such geniuses, produce it? In reality it is most confronting to us. We have been writing a lot up to now. But wasn't this

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\* Considers moral values and changes in our modern age. Attacks the “comfortable position between good and evil.” Individuals walk back and forth across the line constantly.

† Revival of family values. “Dynasties, societies, and empires turned into dust” as the result of family disintegration.”

†† Emphasizes individualism, criticizes party hacks. Raises religious questions and the struggle against drug use.



merely going through the motions and therefore wasted effort?

Yet all the same - even more confronting and threatening is the truth that today our life depends on chance. Life exists due to the fact that nobody, as yet, has pushed the nuclear button. We live in a world where such a disastrous global calamity like Chernobyl is just a warning of the holocaust that menaces all of us, every moment of our lives. One cannot simply stand still and let it happen.

With such knowledge, it is no longer possible to work and write with an Olympian calm, hoping that your work will be recognized, perhaps if not now, then in a decade or a century. One might manage to squeak by, but what kind of writers are we then, and who needs that kind of literature?

It was just this kind of discussion that was aroused by *Fire* and the *Sad Detective*. The more recent publication of *The Executioner's Block* by Aitmatov started the process anew, again with critics attempting to measure it with the same old yardsticks. But let us think for a moment: What if the criteria and standards for measuring this literature are out of date? What if the critical yardsticks are wrong? Hence our ability to grasp things and to appreciate their literary worth is inadequate. The real merits, since they are not well understood, seem to be demerits. There seems to be shortcomings and lack of public appeal. This is understandable, since we have a greater tendency to praise things that are familiar, that fit old standards of reference. Take *The Executioner's Block*. It is a pyramid built of huge blocks, so why should we scan it for roughness that may need some polishing? Shouldn't we stop, instead, and admire the way the author cut out these blocks, put them together, and built the pyramid? But we lack the time and the urge to do so.

Actually such points as desire and skill in interpreting this kind of literature are not that important. The main point is whether literary criticism evidences an awareness of the truth concerning our modern world which is the central message of *The Executioner's Block*.

It is interesting sometimes to register the stream of one's own thoughts. To this end I feel like calling today's literature a superliterature because of the powerful flash of new consciousness it is capable of providing. I also realize that the image of this new literature emerged some time ago, at the 1983 Minsk conference on "war" literature. A discussion was held then on whether literature should deal with the truth about the nuclear threat. We came up with this expression: "Let the damned bomb blow up in the heads of writers, in the consciousness of literature."

A young girl who had no standing in literary circles a few years ago, has become today one of the best writers in the past forty years. It is Svetlana Aleksiyevich who wrote *The Face of War Is Not Feminine* and *The Last Witnesses*. She is skillful not figuratively, but literally. She likes to use a

tape recorder, not a microphone. Following the leads of writers of the older generation, she went out to listen to life, to record it, and an old truth was reconfirmed: There is wisdom in life! You have to just listen and grasp this wisdom. Document the facts as they occur on tape and on play-back catch the nuance of voices, truth, and psychological state of the times, now passed.

At first I remember being astonished (later I accepted it as normal), by the overwhelming truth revealed about man and his soul through this process. They were contained in stories told by ordinary, often illiterate women, others in letters or diaries. It was as if this material had been written by Dostoyevsky. In many cases as if the person were quoting or retelling some unknown work of Dostoyevsky, or of Tolstoy! I would like to retell at least a couple of the best ones.

During the siege of Leningrad a woman was dying from starvation. She was surrounded by her children who crowded around her fear-stricken, waiting for the inevitable. As soon as she closed her eyes, they burst out crying. Their tears called her back to life. The suffering seemed to go on forever. Finally the eldest girl said: "Turn away! Let Mommy die!" Where can one go to find a measure of this compassion, or find a similar measure of this truth – only among the best material that has ever been written. It was previously only contained in the classics.

In the Byelorussian village of Borki where the fascists burned to death more than 2,000 people, in a new house built after the war on the very site where an older house had been burned down, we were recording a woman who remembered it all. She looked out of the window, as if the Nazis were still there, as if they were still coming to her doorstep (as happened in June 1942). She was recalling about a neighbor woman from next door who ran into her house with her eight-year-old boy, saying: "...my son, why did you put on these rubber boots? Your feet will burn for a long time in the rubber!"

I have been thinking for a long time: Isn't this same kind of oral history necessary for describing events in villages in the 1920s and 1930s. It could shed new light on and explain today's events as well. We could hear tales about the villages themselves, but a great deal more about life in those times would be revealed. This art form exists. It really works.

Thinking back upon events that occurred at the Minsk Conference in 1983, there seemed to be much argument (the ideas were still in a developmental stage) about whether one should frighten oneself and others and whether it is possible to create a literature while standing with one foot at the very edge of an abyss. Wouldn't it be better to step back a little bit and then create?

Today no one argues about this any longer, although in practice only a few are able to walk along the edge of the abyss. But it is they who have become the spokespersons for new perceptive literature and new thinking.

(Or, as philosopher Yuri Karyakin says, with a new chronotype, a new breed in time.) This literature is slowly becoming the accepted norm, it has not retreated, but dared to meet the danger and more so because the bomb has exploded in it. This is Aitmatov's *The Executioner's Block*. As critics and the literary community fixate all the harder on the unevenness and flaws of the work, they are becoming increasingly irritated at their own inability to accept and interpret this new literary realism.

Of note is the fact that Chingiz Aitmatov was one of the first to be deeply touched, so deeply as to actually become obsessed, by the persistent and agonizing realization that there is a lack of clear expression as to what awaits people and the planet. How can this best be said, shouted, so as to be heard? How does one express the unspeakable? How does one write so that resultant literature will somehow influence the course of events? His articles, speeches, and communications were not just timely, but serious pieces of work that came from the bottom of his heart and from his deep concern, and his novel *The Executioner's Block* is proof of that.

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One must get used to such books as *The Executioner's Block*, *Sad Detective*, and *Fire*. The global problems that they introduce become the most important parts of their novels. Probably it was once also difficult to become accustomed to seeing new volcanic mountains. At first there surely were feelings of discomfort and disbelief. One would wonder: Where did this all come from? What is it? Later it would be just as impossible to imagine that those very mountains and landscape had not always been there.

#### *Soul on Fire*

At the time of such Roman tyrants as Tiberius and Nero, there existed, paradoxically, a moment of great personal freedom for their subjects, who were normally totally dependent on their brutal whims, wishes, and wild paranoia. This moment, however, was side-by-side with death. Preparing to commit suicide by order of the tyrant, a Roman citizen could sit down at a table and write what we would not have dared to even think about the day before. The whole truth. This last moment of life raised up to the human level anyone who had been bowing and scraping at the tyrant's feet.

It is exactly the same for a writer. To live every instant as if it were the last has always been important in literature: to write as if it were your last

word, and to live life openly, so as to fear that nothing could not be revealed for everyone in the world to see.

This was the attitude of Dostoyevsky. Besides his painful conscience and rare gift of compassion, there was another point of his life to consider. In various recent academic publications of his works, there are hosts of dates listed when the author suffered attacks of illness.\* We know how exhausting these attacks were and that each of them could have cost him his life.

These attacks combined with his talent created that burst of psychological energy that allowed Dostoyevsky constantly to look beyond the threshold of death. This closeness to death intensified in Dostoyevsky a feeling of catastrophe for the world as a whole. He sensed that this catastrophe would occur unless people started to turn from self-involvement to look for truth outside of themselves and to kindness for their fellow man. A century before we contemplated the militarization of space, Dostoyevsky foresaw this possibility in his writing, as embodied by an axe launched into outer space. He saw the similarity between this axe in space and the axe under Raskolnikov's cloak and the very bottom of the human soul.† He was reproached for being a pessimist and a misanthrope. Today we are astonished by his foresight.

Today we could compile a different list of attacks of illness afflicting entire countries, with the whole human race sweating in cold fear: a list of insane plans for nuclear bombing of cities – new crises like the one in the Caribbean. The literature we are talking about must not take its eyes off this list for even a moment.

There have always been liars in literature. Some even more than that. But what would you call the Roman citizen who, before his ordered death, with a blade in his hand, ready to commit suicide, would praise and flatter his murderer in his last message?

While in the United States, at the Kennan Institute to help in their Russian studies program, I raised the subject of spacebridges. I argued that they would eventually generate a new art form. There was a special conference devoted to the issue at the Moscow Art Institute.

I might have been naive, but I started to dream how the very scale of this new art form might raise the level of dialogue among nations and enhance social self-criticism: just imagine an audience of 2 billion to 4 billion people! Would anyone dare to keep mumbling the same old thing: You are all wrong, I alone am right?... One would have to be Khlestakov (Gogol's hero in *Inspector General*) on a planetary scale to be able to look into the eyes of all mankind and keep lying like that.

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\* Dostoyevsky suffered from repeated attacks of epileptic seizures.

† Main character and assassin in Dostoyevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*.

Someone objected and stated that I was wrong: The larger the audience, the easier it is fooled. It is more difficult to deceive one man; while so many ways have been found to fool a crowd. History bears witness to this!

I was confused by this reasoning, but not for long. There are new and emergent forms in contemporary literature, mainly due to meditative and intuitive connections with something bigger than oneself. This is present in Aitmatov's novel and others like his. They provide a new yardstick for everything to be measured against. Yes, and for a sense of one's own responsibility to one's fellow man as well.

I recall Valentin Rasputin's words at Irkutsk University where we were making a public presentation a few years ago related to efforts to stop the damming of local rivers to provide water to Central Siberian deserts. He was asked a question: What if all these efforts of his and his friends' become stymied due to ministerial and bureaucratic barriers? Good intentions like these have been thwarted in the past. The writer answered very quietly, even growing pale. "Yes," he said, "these were not words spoken lightly." He was totally serious. He knew there was opposition: "An executioner's block will remain, there still is a 'scaffold'!" Rasputin and his colleagues took the risk. They won their battle.

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"Art... requires one to be like an ancient Roman. Instead of idle talk and going through the motion, it requires from its creators a total and complete dedication, including laying down of the artist's life," said Boris Pasternak, describing the poetic nature of a real artist. But never before has an artist's profession so seriously challenged him: He may burn to death, to try to get someone to put out the fire!

For me, as for most of us, the appearance of *The Fate of the Earth* by Jonathan Schell was of great significance. I also had the opportunity to see how very different people, from simple workmen to those high in the government, after having read that book, somehow became alike in the way they saw the realities of our world. One may think that these books and films should help people to understand each other in a new and better way.

New thinking requires a radical change. It does not refer to cosmetic changes such as buying a new calendar or setting the clock a few hours ahead.

It means basic alterations in everything we think and do. It involves assuming a feeling of personal and historical responsibility for everything

on the planet. I repeat this for emphasis.

In the past, as individuals we used our creativity to invent, then produced anything we chose. Later, we came to understand that it was wrong. This certainly was the case with the atomic bomb. "I am death, the destroyer of worlds," said J. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of nuclear weapons.

New thinking compels us to calculate our steps in advance. We can no longer do anything we choose. We must now reject those ideas and creations that are not for continuing the life process before they lead us to the verge of disaster. And logic alone is not sufficient to achieve this goal. What is needed is the intuition generated by a great love of man for others. This is more essential today than anything else.

This has always been the subject matter and concern of literature. What is new is the urgency of the task: We must not be too late!

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