

foreign publishers for commercial reasons, are, on the other hand, much more tenuous. Among the classical Russian authors, the example of Anton Chekhov is far more germane.

Like Chekhov, Solzhenitsyn brings to the art of literature methods of precise observation derived from the exact sciences (physics and mathematics in his case, medicine and biology in Chekhov's); like him he questions all the basic assumptions, all the *idées reçues* of his age. The two writers share a deep understanding of peasants and peasant life and are alone in Russian literature in their freedom from the traditional Russian idealization of this class. Both manage to love mankind while having no illusions about its potential for evil, and both shun overt preaching, preferring to present the uglier aspects of reality objectively and to leave it up to the reader to

decide which character is a villain. In "August 1914" the confrontation between the idealistic young revolutionary Sasha Lenartovich, able to think only in slogans and clichés, and the perceptive Vorotyntsev, loyal to the regime but able to see the evils of the system with far greater clarity than the sullen youth, is quintessentially Chekhovian in its subtle violation of all established expectations and traditions.

It would be wrong, however, to restrict Solzhenitsyn's literary antecedents to the 19th century. Much of his verbal art has its origins in the word-conscious, oral speech-oriented tradition pioneered before the Revolution by Alexei Remizov (despite his overwhelming impact on Soviet literature, Remizov became an unperson when he emigrated to Paris in the early 1920's; in his letter to the Writers' Congress in 1967 Solz-

henitsyn urged Remizov's rehabilitation) and continued by the early Soviet writers who developed Remizov's discoveries, e.g., Mikhail Zoshchenko and Andrei Platonov (the latter is currently enjoying a revival after decades of downgrading and oblivion). This, incidentally, is a point that Georg Lukács totally missed when he tried to establish Solzhenitsyn's literary genealogy in his two enthusiastic but misinformed essays on the writer.

If American critics and readers remain unaware of the innovative aspects of Solzhenitsyn's style and continue to describe him as an "old-fashioned realist," it is because most available translations of his work have ignored his stylistic complexity or were unable to find adequate English equivalents for his verbal inventiveness. Discussing a pirated German edition of

Solzhenitsyn: Writer Caught Between

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, now 53, is a man caught in a bind between the Communist and capitalist worlds. In his Russian homeland he is a non-person, a writer whose works no publishing house will touch, whose books must be circulated surreptitiously in typescript. For the past three years he has been supporting his wife and small son in the frugal style to which he became accustomed while an obscure high-school teacher, dependent on the hospitality of friends and a legacy left him by the grand old man of Russian children's literature, the late K. I. Chukovsky.

In the capitalist West he is counted one of the century's great writers, garlanded by the Swedish Academy with the 1970 Nobel Prize. In the United States his first three novels have sold millions of copies: "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" in five different translations; "The First Circle" in two; "Cancer Ward" in two. Most of the publishers paid no royalties on the ground that the books were not copyrighted. The quality of translations varied greatly.

Late in 1969, deep into the writing of "August 1914," Solzhenitsyn was expelled by the Union of Soviet Writers with the suggestion that he exile himself. He refused to take the hint, presumably because to do so would cut him off from his material. Meanwhile, he began girding himself to cope with the free-for-all ways of capitalist publishing. In Zurich an "intermediary" (the phrase was accepted as specific enough by a British court later in ruling on a case) brought to a lawyer named Dr. Fritz Heeb a

proposal that he act as Solzhenitsyn's literary agent outside the U.S.S.R. Messages went back and forth, a contract was signed by Solzhenitsyn and Dr. Heeb.

Thus it was that in the spring of 1971, after seven Russian houses had declined even to consider "August 1914" for publication, Dr. Heeb delivered the manuscript to the YMCA Press, a small firm run by White Russian émigrés in the shadow of Paris's Notre Dame. The press's publication of the Russian original that May established an international copyright in Solzhenitsyn's name—a right since upheld in the courts when German and English publishers attempted to market unauthorized editions. Dr. Heeb began collecting royalties to deposit in a Western bank in Solzhenitsyn's name.

With Solzhenitsyn's claim to control publication of his own work thus established, Dr. Heeb contracted with Luchterhand Verlag, the West German publisher of Günter Grass and other distinguished writers, to bring out "August 1914" in German and to arrange for its publication in France, Italy, Israel, Britain and America. In the United States, heartland of the free-enterprise competitive system, things took an unexpected twist. Little, Brown, a subsidiary of Time Inc., offered \$600,000 for the American rights. Roger W. Straus Jr., head of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, an independent house, flew to Germany to make a counterbid: "nearly \$500,000" and the understanding that the book's publication would be carried out in conjunction with Bodley Head in London, like

Straus's a firm noted for the literary distinction of its line. Farrar, Straus had been one of the few U.S. publishers to offer royalties on the two earlier Solzhenitsyn novels it had published.

For a translator, Farrar, Straus and Bodley Head settled on Michael Glenny, 45-year-old Briton, Oxford graduate, sometime Army interpreter and businessman, at present a university lecturer on German and Russian subjects. His translations include 12 books from Russian, two of them by Solzhenitsyn, praised by many critics but objected to by some Americans as "slack" and filled with irritating "Anglicisms." He was allowed little more than eight months to get the 280,000-word "August 1914" into shape for his editors.

Americans with some knowledge of Russian will have a chance to check for themselves the quality of Glenny's translation with the paperbound edition of the original Russian version just published here by Association Press. Robert W. Hill, editor-in-chief of this small general publisher of English-language works, heard about the YMCA Press's plan to publish the novel during a business trip to London in the spring of 1971. He hurried across the Channel and, although the YMCA Press people had not yet received the final version of the manuscript, contracted to publish it sight unseen. He arranged to buy what he considered at the time an adequate supply of unbound sheets from the YMCA Press people, but now, in the light of the storm the book is stirring up, wishes that he had ordered more.—Editor ■