

*The Adventures of a Monkey* is not a thing apart from the general run of Zoshchenko's stories. It is merely as the most vivid expression of all the negative qualities in his "literary work" that it has attracted the critics' attention. Since he returned to Leningrad after the evacuation, he has, we know, written several things demonstrating his inability to find anything positive whatever in the life of Soviet people or any positive character among them. He is in the habit of jeering at Soviet life, ways and people, as he does in *The Adventures of a Monkey*, and of concealing his jeers behind a mask of empty-headed entertainment and pointless humor.

If you take the trouble to read his *Adventures of a Monkey* more closely you will find that he makes the monkey act as a supreme judge of our social customs, a dictator of morality to Soviet people. The monkey is depicted as an intelligent creature capable of assessing human behaviour. The writer deliberately caricatures the life of Soviet people as unattractive and cheap, so as to have the monkey pass the judgment, filthy, poisonous and anti-Soviet as it is that living in the zoo is better than being at

liberty, that you can draw your breath more freely in a cage than among Soviet people.

Is it possible to fall morally and politically lower than this? How can the people of Leningrad tolerate such rubbish and vulgarity in the pages of their journals?

The Leningraders in charge of *Zvezda* must indeed be lacking in vigilance if a "work" of this sort is offered to the journal's Soviet readers, if it is found possible to publish works steeped in the venom of bestial enmity towards the Soviet order. Only the scum of the literary world could write such "works," and only the blind, the apolitical could allow them to appear.....

Zoshchenko's thoroughly rotten and corrupt social, political and literary attitude does not result from any recent transformation. There is nothing accidental about his latest "works." They are simply the continuation of his literary "legacy" dating from the twenties.

Who was he in the past? He was one of the organisers of the literary group known as the Serapion Brothers. And when the Serapion Brothers group was formed, what was he like socially and politically? Let me turn to *Literaturniye Zapiski* (3, 1922) where the founders of this group expounded their creed. This journal contains, among other things, Zoshchenko's *credo*, in an article entitled "About Myself and a Few Other Things." Quite unashamed, he publicly exposes himself and states his political and literary "views" with the utmost frankness. Listen to what he says:

... It is very difficult to be a writer, on the-whole. Take this business of ideology. ... Writers are expected to have an ideology nowadays. . . . What a bore! How can I have any "definite ideology," tell me, when no Party really attracts me? From the Party members' point of view I am not a man of principle. What of it? For my part,

I may say: I am not a Communist, nor a Socialist-Revolutionary, nor a Monarchist but merely a Russian, and a politically amoral one, at that ... Honest to God, I don't know to this day what Party, well, Guchkov ... say, belongs to. Heaven knows what party he's in; I know he isn't a Bolshevik, but whether he's a Socialist-Revolutionary or a Cadet I neither know nor care.

And so on and so forth. What do you make of that sort of "ideology"? Twenty-five years have passed since Zoshchenko published this "confession" of his. Has he changed since? Not so that you would notice it. Not only has he neither learned anything nor changed in any way in the last two and a half decades, but with cynical frankness he continues, on the contrary, to remain the apostle of empty-headedness and cheapness, a literary alum-rat, unprincipled and conscienceless. That is to say, now as then he cares nothing for Soviet ways, now as then he has no place in Soviet literature and opposes it.

If he has nevertheless become something approaching a literary star in Leningrad, if his praises are sung on Leningrad's Parnassus, we can but marvel at the lack of principle, of strictness, of discrimination, in the people who paved the way for him and applauded him....

#### LENINISM AND LITERATURE

What is the cause of these errors and failings?

It is that the editors of the said journals, our Soviet men of letters, and the leaders of our ideological front in Leningrad, have forgotten some of the principal tenets of Leninism as regards literature. Many writers, and many of those working as responsible editors, or holding important posts in the Writers' Union, consider politics to be the business of the Government or of the Central Committee. When it comes to men

of letters, engaging in politics is no business of theirs. If a man has done a good, artistic, fine piece of writing, his work should be published even though it contains vicious elements liable to confuse and poison the minds of our young people.

We demand that our comrades, both, practising writers and those in positions of literary leadership, should be guided by that without which the Soviet order cannot live, that is to say, by politics, so that our young people may be brought up not in the spirit of do-nothing and don't-care, but in an optimistic revolutionary spirit.

"We know that Leninism embodies all the finest traditions of the Russian nineteenth-century revolutionary democrats and that our Soviet culture derives from and is nourished by the critically assimilated cultural heritage of the past.

Through the lips of Lenin and Stalin our Party has repeatedly recognised the tremendous significance in the field of literature of the great Russian revolutionary democratic writers and critics Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Plekhanov. From Belinsky onward, all the best representatives of the revolutionary democratic Russian intellectuals have denounced "pure art" and "art for art's sake," and have been the spokesmen of art for the people, demanding that art should have a worthy educational and social significance.

Art cannot cut itself off from the fate of the people. Remember Belinsky's famous *Letter to Gogol*, in which the great critic, with all his native passion, castigated Gogol for his attempt to betray the cause of the people and go over to the side of the Tsar. Lenin called this letter one of the finest works of the uncensored democratic press, one that has preserved its tremendous literary significance to this day.