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DEAR ANDREY SIN-
YAVSKY,
DEAR ALEXANDER
SOLZHENTSYN,

I have been asked by the director of the Ullstein-Verlag, Wolf Jobst Siedler, to write a few words of welcome to the new journal *Kontinent* with which you are associated. And in-

asmuch as I—along with many of my fellow-writers in Western Europe—sympathised with your plight and tried our best to help when you were being persecuted and sentenced and imprisoned, or being prevented from working as professional writers in the Soviet Union, I take the liberty of telling you, without mincing words, what I think of your project.

It should, after all, be known to you that as authors in the journal *Kontinent* you will be working together with a certain power empire, famous under the name of the Springer-Konzern, whose reactionary intolerance is an expression of the same mentality which, under different ideological markings, forced you in the Soviet Union to protest and to resist.

I cannot understand how you, as writers with moral criteria, could through such a collaboration offer support to a power complex so dangerous to Western democracy. Each day in the publications of the Springer-Konzern (whether they're called "*Bild-Zeitung*" or "*Welt am Sonntag*") there is disseminated exactly that which you experienced in the Soviet Union, if in totalitarian extent, namely, falsification of information according to doctrinaire opinions, demonisation of political opponents, appeal to the latent violence in the so-called silent majority, the condemnation of the accused as already guilty—all of which has led your fellow-writers to feel anxious about the future of democracy in the Bundesrepublik. In terms of politics the ideological anti-Communism of the Springer-Konzern is only a reflex action in response to Leninism-Stalinism; and just as Western private capitalism and Communist state capitalism can find themselves united throughout the world when it comes to blocking a third way and to repressing—whether in Chile in 1973, or in Czechoslovakia in 1968—democratic socialism, so is the Springer-Konzern a part of that Power of Money or Statism, whose corrupt activities both you and I fear so much.

Must one, in order to express a justified opposition to totalitarian communism, seek support from those forces who were never seriously annoyed by Western dictatorships and who in anti-Communist blindness are altogether prepared to drive out the communist Devil with the fascist Beelzebub?

For all my respect for the courage which you demonstrated in the Soviet Union in your struggle against an autocratic State power, I cannot approve your cooperation with the Springer-Konzern. I beg you to reconsider your venture. You are keeping very bad company.

With friendly greetings,

Yours,

Günter Grass



DEAR GÜNTER GRASS,
I found it very strange to read, in your open letter to Alexander Solzhenitsyn and myself, that we who will be contributing to the new journal, *Kontinent*, would be collaborating with certain dark forces and with the "power empire" of Axel Springer, and thereby becoming, if unwittingly, accomplices of fascism.

I am not very well acquainted with the situation in the West. I have no experience at all of the conflicts within Western democratic societies, and it is not really my business to conduct investigations into this or that publishing house, or this or that "moneyed power", in order to decide whose financial support may be better or worse.* Your apparent point of departure is a partisan struggle between various groups. But our concern, mine and those of my friends, is simply the magazine, *Kontinent*, itself. Our venture is, to my mind, a challenging and promising beginning—a journal which attempts to bring together a whole group of writers in Eastern and Western Europe, among them not a few in Russia whose work is done in the shadow of the prisons, camps, and lunatic asylums.

This, our new journal, which wants in a democratic spirit to keep strictly above all parties, is now being helped by the old and traditional German publishing house of Ullstein-Propylaen—a house which was destroyed by the Hitler régime.† And it is a publishing house which asks nothing of us; there are no guide-lines, and we shall write as we please. Or can it be that you actually believe that we can be made to dance to somebody's tune? Do you doubt that it will be the shared ideals of liberty, generosity, and tolerance which will shape our editorial cooperation?

THE PHRASE "Springer-Konzern" comes from your lips in a very malicious tone—not unlike the phrases about the "Tito-Clique" or "the Fascist de Gaulle" with which they used to frighten us so long in Russia. Again, without going into the affairs of the "Konzern", for I know little about them, I would like to observe that this "bad company," even if one were to judge them by the criteria of your letter, has not killed a single author or sent one poet to a concentration camp. Your comparison of the activities of the "Springer Group" with the publishing conditions of present-day Soviet Russia, with the ruling state system bent on destroying all dissidents, is—forgive me—simply scandalous.

Your point of reference is a pile of opinionated newspaper clippings which you found unjustifiable. But our point of reference is a mountain of corpses, and among them writers and poets. Can it really be that you equate a Hitler or a Stalin with a distasteful polemic in a newspaper?

* Among the publishers of other European editions of *Kontinent* are: Gallimard (Paris), Mondadori (Milan), André Deutsch (London).

† Ullstein-Verlag, a German-Jewish Berlin publishing house, was liquidated by Goebbels during the Third Reich. It was returned after the War to the Ullstein family, who sold it to Springer in 1959.

Can it be that you do not know that the whole press, including all publishers of books and magazines, in present-day Soviet Russia is not only under the complete financial control of the Central Committee's Department of Agitation and Propaganda, but under its total ideological (and physical) domination, bolstered up by the State Security forces deployed to keep an eye on all the works of Soviet writers? The free writer in present-day Russia is put on a par with the criminal and the lunatic.

BUT THESE ARE supposed to be "liberalising" days. Yet I am afraid I cannot see the least comparison between an honourable Western publishing house and the Soviet secret police (and it is the same secret police which controls cultural life in the East European lands). You once came to my personal defence, and I will always remember it with gratitude. But had you been sentenced for this personal and individual opinion to seven years in a work camp (as was the case with Alexander Ginsburg or with Yuri Galanskov, who died in camp), then I think you would appreciate a little better the distinction between publishing in East and West.

The journal *Kontinent* is an independent publication, planning a cultural and editorial programme of great breadth and variety. It is completely beyond my comprehension why you should feel it necessary to speak out against a venture which has not even seen the light of day—to disrupt a magazine whose first number you have not yet read and whose quality you presume to judge only by the imprint of the publishing house.

What would you think of Russian readers of Western books—from Faulkner to Böll—who passed judgment on writers and works without

having read them, and only on the basis of the imprint of the Soviet periodical or publisher who happened to put them out (always, of course, by permission of the KGB)? The permission of the KGB, even when it comes to foreign authors, is surely stricter than the controls of any Western publishing house over any of its publications.

I can understand this much: that you think in other categories, that you concern yourself with who is behind what and why, and who in secrecy and with clever financial tactics influences political life. Back home it used to be referred to as "the claws of Imperialism", but in the meantime we have ceased to look at history with the eyes of a detective. We have gone through the concentration camps, and money will neither buy us nor intimidate us.

HERR GRASS, why don't you and I talk about books, about writers and their works—and not about financial corporations. Not so long ago I was condemned because I had not only been published in the West but evidently also because I received no Western royalties. According to the logic of my Russian judges, I was writing my books not because I had sold myself (that would have been from their point of view more understandable and even forgivable), but—far worse—out of private impulse and hence inner malice.

But I hope, and I share this with my colleagues on the journal *Kontinent*, that on one point nothing will change to the end of our days: that we write according to our inner convictions.

Respectfully yours,

Andrey Sinyavsky

LONDON TIMES
28 September 1974

Russian writers open a dialogue with the West

CPYRGHT

Several of Russia's best-known recent émigrés—for instance Alexander Galich, Andrey Sinyavsky and Vladimir Maximov—are in London this week to launch *Kontinent*, a new Russian-language journal that appears for the first time on October 10. It will be different from other such journals in two important respects. The first number will contain original contributions from East European writers who are well known in the West, such as Solzhenitsyn, Sinyavsky, Joseph Brodsky, Milovan Djilas and Ludek Pachman. And it will be aimed not only at the Russian émigré communities, but also at the Western public and, the editors hope, at readers inside the Soviet Union.

"Our aim is to build up a dialogue with the west", says Mr Maximov, the editor-in-chief. In the first number he clearly outlines his journal's principle, the main one being "the struggle against totalitarianism

of any type—Marxist, nationalist or religious". But he will be ready, he says, to consider for publication contributions or letters from people who disagree. The dialogue will be made possible by the ambitious and unusual plan of multilingual publication. The first number is already being translated into German and will be published in November by Ullstein Verlag, with a printing of, they say, 50,000. Deutsch in England, Gallimard in France, and Mondadori in Italy also plan to produce it shortly.

Such journals have in the past lost credit with some western liberals through suspicions that they were financed from secret sources. But this will not be the case with *Kontinent*, which is financed openly by Ullstein, part of the Axel Springer group. The editors hope that all they will need is initial funding to get them started and that soon they will be able to survive finan-

cially on their own. "If our Russian edition of 7,000 sells out, it will cover its costs", says Mr Maximov. *Kontinent* will then profit from the non-Russian sales of some of its "goodies", for instance an unpublished chapter from *First Circle* by Solzhenitsyn and a remarkable essay on the Russian literary scene by Sinyavsky, which will be offered to the foreign publishers on a commercial basis.

A further departure from émigré publishing is the plan to print the work of writers still living in the Soviet Union, openly, with their knowledge and consent. Usually in the past journals like *Possev* and *Grani* have tried to protect their contributors from the Soviet Union by saying that their work appears without their consent. Soviet adherence to the Universal Copyright Convention makes this more difficult, and anyway the editors of *Kontinent* believe that their ideas are served more by open contribu-

tions than by clandestine ones. Those who do send them their work from Russia run a risk, of course, but contrary to popular belief a Soviet citizen does not commit a criminal offence by publishing his work abroad, so long as the work is not judged "anti-Soviet".

In fact one man still living in the Soviet Union, Andrey Sakharov, is a member of *Kontinent's* editorial board. In a letter welcoming the new enterprise he writes: "The reality of these (socialist) countries is a historical phenomenon that is very badly understood in the west. Its social, economic and spiritual qualities cannot be grasped from the window of a tourist bus or from the semi-official Soviet press. Therefore these people do have something to tell the world." He ends with the hope that the journal, "will be available not only in the west, but also to many people in the east". Mr Maximov says that he already has several cor-

tributions from Soviet writers, as well as the promise of more. For the moment the "star" of *Kontinent* is bound to be Solzhenitsyn. "For 50 years writers have been crying out from the Soviet Union. No one ever listened. Now at last we have found one man whom the west will listen to", says Maximov. As well as his unpublished chapter, Solzhenitsyn has contributed a letter to the editors in which he says that *Kontinent* raises new hopes that the Russian intelligentsia will for the first time "unite its ideas and works, ignoring both the will of

officialdom and the fact of its division by states' frontiers". He sees particular hope in the fact that bitter experience has united so many thinking people in Russia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Germany and the Baltic. Forty years ago such unity would have been unimaginable. He hopes that *Kontinent* will be able to express this unity and predicts imminent woe to the west, should it fail to heed the warning.

The Russian editors and contributors will need not only talent and energy, but also unity and tolerance. If they are to

achieve their purpose. They have got the better of two of their enemies, censorship and repression, but they will find others in the west—indifference to the problems of seemingly far-away countries and a natural liberal suspicion of the strong opinions which conflict and suffering create.

They believe that they have something to tell us, and doubtless they do. To have worked out the physical means of transmitting this "message" is in itself a great administrative achievement. But perhaps most

exciting of all is their plan to provide a *dialogue*, not merely to try out to the west with facts and warnings, though this is an important aim, but also to open their pages to western writers, in the editor's words "to support all democratic institutions and tendencies in modern society", so that these ideas can find their way, as they undoubtedly will, in a Russian-language journal across the Iron Curtain. *Kontinent* would then allow Russia both to teach and to learn.

Nicholas Bethell

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, Frankfurt
12 September 1974

CPYRGHT

A FREE FORUM FOR EAST EUROPE

"KONTINENT"- A European Magazine to Depict Literature and Problems of the East Bloc Countries-with Maksimov, Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn

The preliminary preparations for "KONTINENT", the magazine which was announced some weeks ago, have reached the point where the first volume can be presented in London in late September. "KONTINENT" is an attempt to create a forum for the literature of Eastern Europe; one in which - under the free conditions of the West - the voices of authors from these countries are heard uncensored. Leading Soviet scientists and authors, such as Vladimir Maksimov; Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who only recently had to leave the Soviet Union; and Andrey Sakharov, are included. The magazine, which seeks to continue the liberal tradition of "Noviy Mir", once directed by Aleksandr Tvardovskiy, does not intend to be an anti-Soviet publication, nor a publication of Russian emigres. The expectations are that so many texts will come out of the countries of the East Bloc itself that there may be a true picture of the literary production and the political, social and religious development there. The news of the founding of "KONTINENT" got around quickly among authors in the East Bloc. The first volume is announcing the following contributions: a chapter-previously held back-from Solzhenitsyn's novel "The First Circle of Hell;" and essay by Andrey Sinyavskiy on the situation of literature in the Soviet Union; poems of Josip Brodskiy, the lyric poet who was expelled from the USSR in 1972; and the first half of a new novel, "Without Hands, Without Feet", by Vladimir Kornilov, who still lives in Moscow. The manuscript came into the West a few weeks ago. Moreover, the volume contains a rather long interview with Milovan (sic) Djilas.

The editorial site of the magazine, which is at first appearing in Russian and German, is London and Paris. The Circle of Friends of Russian Authors decides jointly on the incorporation of the contributions. The Ullstein/Propylaeen Publishing House in Berlin, which is publishing the magazine, intends to channel all profits to a fund for the support of Russian literature. Numerous foreign publishing firms, such as Gallimard and MacMillan, are at the moment negotiating on the rights to national editions. The magazine is to appear quarterly. Managing editor Vladimir Maksimov is contributing a foreword for the editorial staff to the first volume, Aleksandr wrote an introduction and Eugene Ionesco a salutation. We are publishing these three texts which formulate the high intentions of the international project and the expectations for it.

VLADIMIR MAKIMOV: FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY

The birth of a new magazine is associated with joy and sorrow. With joy because it opens new perspectives, arouses new hopes and attempts to create a new

social and historical situation. With sorrow because of the many intellectual and social doubts which arise during its planning and on account of the disquieting presentiment of the forthcoming struggle and responsibility which the initiators of such a project assume.

One could be tempted to draw a parallel with Alexander Herzen's magazine "Kolokol". Unfortunately, under present conditions such a parallel is hardly appropriate. The magazine "kolokol" was a purely political publication for the simple reason that in the "dark times of reactionary tsarism" in Russia, truly great world literature could arise and develop unimpeded. In that time of "slavery" no one - from Pushkin and Gogol to Tolstoi and Dostoevski - had to seek a publisher abroad. Any of the important Russian authors were able to publish their works at home.

For the first time in world history a situation has come about in which - from China to Cuba, in all countries of "victorious socialism", where "liberty, equality and fraternity" finally triumphed - any literature which does not conform to the ideological guidelines of the leading apparatus is punished as a crime. The book becomes a corpus delicti, proof of guilt, an offense and cause for punishment. Because of a book, one is exiled like Josef Brodski; because of a book, one rots in a camp for years like Andrey Sinyavskiy; because of a book, one is locked up in a madhouse like Mikhail Vavitsa.

Not one of the dictatorships existing in the West today can boast of having annihilated, driven to death and into poverty and exiled so many among the most brilliant representatives of their literature during their rule; nowhere are there as many sacrifices as in the martyr history of the countries with the "most progressive" and "most revolutionary" systems.

Just for this reason we see the task of our magazine not so much in the political polemics against totalitarianism, but rather to contrast - with this aggressive totalitarianism - the creative power of the literature and intellectualism of Eastern Europe, enriched by bitter personal experiences and the personal version gained therefrom.

This seems to me a sufficiently broad and at the same time also fundamental basis for the unification of all anti-totalitarian forces of Eastern Europe in their dialogue with the West.

He who has ears, hears!

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

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Since in the USSR all attempts to publish magazines in the Samizdat, which do not follow the party ideology, were nipped in the bud, and also since "Noviy Mir", the only magazine which got to the bottom of things with honest questioning, has been brought into (the party) line, the founding of the magazine "KONTINENT" signifies the first attempt of the Russian intelligentsia to find a new forum for its intellectual creation, against the political rulers' will and across all national borders. It would of course be best - and we would be yet gladder at heart - if an independent Russian magazine, its authors and publishing house were located on native Russian soil; but we know that under present conditions that is not possible.

And this magazine yet opens up a new perspective: initially it will appear in Russian and German, but soon is expected to appear in other European languages. And thus the plight of us scattered throughout the world changes into a new hope: since this magazine is planned as an international organ, it will also address non-Russian authors and readers. Such a development would be extraordinary fruitful,

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for the menaces to today's society - and the tasks resulting there-from - are general and not limited to national territories.

Looking more closely at the magazine's editorial staff and its plans, we come across generally known and respected East European names. Voices of East Europe will thus set the intellectual tone of "KONTINENT". This circumstance opens up a still more interesting prospect: "KONTINENT" could be a true voice of Eastern Europe and at the same time reach people in West Europe who do not shut themselves off from the truth, but are open to it.

Only forty years ago Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Romanian, German and Lithuanian authors could not possibly have the same experiences, draw the same bitter conclusions and aspire to almost the same for the future. This miracle for which we paid dearly, has come about today. The intelligentsia of Eastern Europe speaks a single language; that of knowing about suffering. We will express our esteem for the magazine "KONTINENT" if it succeeds in effectively procuring an audience for the voice of Eastern Europe. Woe be Western Europe, if its ears remain deaf. The result of our efforts does not infrequently fall short of our hopes and expectations. May it not be so this time.

EUGENE IONESCO: YOU PEOPLE ALONE ARE CAPABLE . . .

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My dear Maksimov,

I bid you welcome. I feel very honored to be numbered among your colleagues beside the great Solzhenitsyn and others.

In point of fact, it is very likely a question of finding a new basis on which a more acceptable order of society may be erected than that which has been accomplished to date. We know all too well that the profit society is damnable and damned. We also know that the so-called "socialist" societies are worse than the so-called "liberal" societies. In the name of justice and liberty, tyranny, corruption, arbitrariness, injustice, censorship and crime have seized power. That has become gradually known. But the intellectuals of the Western countries, or very many of them, do not want to admit it.

In France, a part of these intellectuals is "on the left". The other part is "on the right" or stands "in the middle". That means that the country finds itself virtually in a civil war. We are at the mercy of any economic crises - and everything can collapse. And yet the "leftwing" bourgeois can so little tolerate the rightwing bourgeois that they want to settle accounts with them. Come what may afterwards - it's all the same to them" dictatorship, prison, suppression of every freedom, and if necessary, collective annihilation - who cares? In reality, it is clear that every person detests himself in someone else. And in fact, man nowadays is not a pleasant picture in terms of ethics, and we must muster a lot of self-control and courage in order not to hate our fellow men.

What we lack is a new ideology, a non-Marxist left (such as Emmanuel Mounier and Denis de Rougement had in mind and like the editors of the review "Esprit" want around Domenach (sic) still today.) This ideology could be based on love or friendship, "Eros" and not "Thanatos". I have had to struggle against my self-critical mind in order to use the word "love". Speaking of love, friendship, religion or humanism in France means bringing scorn and derision upon oneself. It is true that these words are discredited to the extent that it is longer known what they actually mean; that anyone who dares use them is stamped as a hypocrite.

If one no longer speaks of love these days, one does speak all the more of "justice". But what is actually meant by this word is not justice, but persecution, chastisement, the guillotine. As soon as a revolution leads to the seizure of power, the tribunals follow close behind; and that has been the case from 1789 up to Stalin.

What can we do when everything has failed? To love someone else as we do ourselves, would mean hating him. Is a reversal still possible after we feel so close to the apocalyptic catastrophe?

You - Solzhenitsyn, Bukovskiy, Amalrik and yourself, the hundreds of thousands of heroes, martyrs - indeed, saints - who perish in Soviet camps - you are the ones who can still do something for this world.

We others - I mean those among us who do not shut ourselves off from your message - who lived in freedom and comfort while you died every moment and arose again to then die anew - we have neither your experience or your authority.

Who knows whether in your place we would not have given in to the fear, the pain, the temptation, to live comfortably and safely in your country, in the manner of those who are willing to serve the regime.

Yes, you are the ones to enlighten us; you alone are able to do it.