“The best poem will be the one ordered by Comintern and helping proletariat to win”: structure and dynamics of Soviet literary field during the 1920th
Retrospectively, one might conclude that the development of the soviet literature after the Revolution of the 1917th was logically going to end up with Stalin’s totalitarianism. From the autonomous point of view it was highly politicized and unprofessional and, except the Russian avant-garde tradition, has a very low artistic value. However, using the theory of the field of Pierre Bourdieu1 in the early Soviet literature studies has considerably changed the vision of the artistic processes and their relations to the social and political modernization. The analysis of the literary field as the whole entity allows discovering that in its partial loss of autonomy and high degree of political engagement early Soviet literature was developing along with the international tendencies and had similarities to the structure of the French literary field, for example. The field analysis also allows to raise the question about the link between politicization of art and complex processes of modernization.

After the Revolution of the 1917th the literary field was relatively autonomous and couldn’t be reduced to serving the State. There was differentiated system of media and editions that corresponded to the situation of “the class-struggle” in the country. In the 1920th with the transfer of the periodicals into self-financing the Soviet press competed with numerous private editions. After the first year of New Economic Policy2 around 220 private editions were registered in Moscow and 99 ones in St. Petersburg. By the 1924th the number of copies of the Soviet press was about 3 million3. The largest edition was State Edition but its power was limited. In the 1922th the edition of fiction “Circle”, editorial community “Land and Factory”, editions “Red fallow”, “Young guard” and “Academia” were created. In the 1922th the Glavlit (General department of literature and editions) was created. This department was responsible for censure

2 NEP – New Economic Policy is the liberal economic course of Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia between 1922 and 1929.
of the whole before-printed and after-printed books and periodicals. Since the competition for the reader was quite high the Glavlit allowed printing texts with any ideological orientation, except anti-Soviet ones.

Thus, in the 1920\textsuperscript{th} s the differentiated editorial and press market with a high competition for the reader was created. In correlation with this media space there was literary field structured according to the transformed autonomous principle of the literature of the XIXth century. Mostly it was the space of struggling literary groups and bands, often bohemian, with their charismatic leaders declaring their programs in the manifests. As a rule, they were self-organized by writers and didn’t have any state support. Depending on their relation to the Party these organizations can be recognized as more or less politicized but the division of the field followed its inner logic.

The crucial document for the history of the field in this period was the Resolution of the Party “About the policy of the Party in literature”, July 1925\textsuperscript{th}. The resolution declared: “As soon as the class- struggle in our country continues it continues in our literature. In class-society there cannot be any neutral literature”. In the resolution all Soviet writers were divided into 3 major groups: proletarian writers, peasant writers and followers. Before the resolution the field was in a free competition. Since now it became clear that there are literary groups closer to the Party than the others. In the resolution the Party staked on the proletarian writers presuming them as the future of the Soviet literature: “There is no hegemony of proletarian writers yet, the Party should help them to earn this historically honorable right”. At the same time the Party didn’t associate itself to any certain literary group: “The Party can’t be committed with a certain literary movement. Governing the literature at the whole the Party can’t support any certain fraction of literature”\textsuperscript{4}.

Proletarian writers are opposed to the “followers”. The followers are the writers who followed communist ideology but who didn’t have proletarian origin. They are “bourgeois professionals” whose qualification and education should be used for the socialist development while the new proletariat intelligentsia hasn’t emerged yet. The situation of the followers is very unstable: they never know when they will be asked to leave the “ship of the history”. Their “shameful” origin doesn’t leave them the right to hope for stable and long careers. The most important quality demanded from the followers was “self-possession” in their political and ideological hesitations. Thus, the hardest competition in the 1920th s was going on between proletarian writers from one side, and avant-gardists – followers, from another side. The “aesthetes” and the pure art were on the periphery of the field and were not involved in the struggle. They were presented by the group “Serapionov’s brothers” and composed with the most talented authors who would be privileged by the Stalin’s regime 10 years later (M. Zoschenko, K. Chukovsky, K. Fedin, M. Slonimsky). But in the competition of the 1920th their voices were almost silent.

The social origin both of the proletariat writers and of the avant-gardists was far from the worker class. The core of both camps was composed with intelligentsia but the level of education and economic capital was different. The avant-gardists were, as usual, Moscow or St. Petersburg intelligentsia by birth, with excellent higher education, regularly travelling abroad. By contrast, the proletarian writers were mostly coming from provincial intelligentsia, the environment that from the very beginning trained them to serve the common good (provincial teachers and doctors). Many of young proletarian writers couldn’t graduate not only the university but even the high school because the left the high school to participate in Revolution. The fact that they didn’t graduate even high schools sometimes affected the level of “cultural competence” of some groups of proletarian writers. Social origin of biographies of many followers was more or less the same. But the followers, usually, were a few years older so they could
accomplish higher education. Another important common fact of biographies of proletarian writers was that almost all of them were not only members of the Party but started their literary career after they worked for some considerable time at the Party or the Komsomol. Almost all of them spent some years doing administrative job in the Komsomol, the Party or the Red Army, then usually worked as editors, in Part or Komsomol magazine.

Inside the opposition “proletarian writers – followers” there were a lot of “stratums” and subdivisions. The largest and the most pluralist was “Young guard”, a literature organization united “comsomol writers” around the magazine of the same name. This organization was the first that neither appeared “by itself”, neither only tried to meet wishes of the power (as the lest artists did after the Revolution) nor were in opposition to the power (as Proletcult or Kuznitsa) but was created by the power. In compare with authoritarian organizations, such as “RAPP” or “Pereval”, “Young guard” looks weak and dependent. But in fact it became the startup ground for the party literature. It was for the first time when the state showed a readiness to participate in political-aesthetic activity. Many literature groups with different ideological orientations collaborated with the “Young guard”, including the LEF, the Pereval, former Proletcult and Kuznitsa. Thus, the magazine pretended to form a large platform for the whole komsomol literature.

However, the polarization inside the “Young guard” separated the “right” proletarian writers and the “left” followers. In the middle 1920th s editors of magazines “At the post” and “Young guard” L. Lelevitch and S. Rodov started aggressively attacking a powerful writer- follower, editor of the “Red fallow” A. Voronsky. Also they attacked other famous followers, especially the group “Serapionov’s brothers” (B. Pylnyak, A. Akhmatova, I. Erinburg). Using the bolshevik’s principle “either …or” (either with us or against us) they applied it with fanaticism writers - followers. MAPP (Moscow association of proletarian writers) and its magazine “At the poste” attacked followers so atilt that 36 writers-
followers had to appeal to the Central Committee of the Party with the demand to protect them.\footnote{Klark K. RAPP i institucionalizacija sovetskogo kulturnogo polya v 1920- nachale 1930 g. // Socealisticheksiy kanon. SPb., 2008, s. 210 / RAPP and the Initialization of the Soviet cultural field in 1920th – 1930-th. // Canon of Socialist realism, St. Petersburg, 2008, p. 210.}

This polarization of the literary filed was mostly provoked by the resolution of the Party that we already mentioned. The writers from “At the Post” and “Young Guard” didn’t want to accept that “their” literature wasn’t protected from the competition, they are not given any power but the requirements to their production were higher. Without doubt, “proletarian” literature couldn’t compete with the one of the followers in terms of artistic quality. But in the 1920\textsuperscript{th} s the power still preferred to pay for good literature. The demand of “Young guard” of monopoly in “komsomol literature” was a simple haggle: as soon as the Central Committee refused it they joined the stronger RAPP and announced in their manifesto in 1928 that “Young guard” “comsomol literature” can never be separated from other literary movement.

As we can see the Party even had to refuse to support these actively servile proletarian writers. Later the power realized the possible benefits from such persistently knocking its door helpers and in 1928 created the first fully party literature organization RAPP (Russian association of proletarian writers). At the 15\textsuperscript{th} Congress of the Party the new policy of “reinforcement of the struggle at the ideological front” was announced. RAPP used this resolution to reinforce its power in the literary field. Right after the party resolution RAPP announced its new policy with the followers. According to this policy, disengaged writers now can be divided into 2 groups: the first one was on its way to integrate into the Soviet society; the second – and the largest- one was hesitating and moving away from the Party. That’s why the second group is the most dangerous for the Soviet state and should be treated according to this potential danger. Relying on the support of the Party RAPP started aggressive policy of purges against the followers and of exclusion of non-proletarian writers from the Party. Most of other literary
groups were absorbed by RAPP. But this almost unlimited power of RAPP unexpectedly ended when it almost didn’t have adversaries. In 1932 the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Party founded the Union of Soviet writers abolished all other literary groups.

On the other pole of the literary life there were disengaged followers. They can be divided into two most important and opposing groups. The most powerful literature organization in the early 1920\textsuperscript{th} was the one that got together around the magazine LEF (left front of the art) in response to the consolidation of the “right” writers. LEF was composed with the writers and poets such as V. Mayakovskiy, O. Brik, B. Arvatov and others. The main principles of LEF were life-constructing, machinism, cultural assemblage, labor culture. After the Revolution LEF pretends to be in the head of the struggle with the old way of life. To the consolidation of the “right” LEF reacted by increasing of radical ideologism and pragmatization of their creative work. All these measures were supposed to prove its serviceability to the revolution and new cultural situation. In the second part of the 1920\textsuperscript{th} the left art was already in isolation in the Soviet literature. Instead of idea of short cadres and assemblage there appeared the demand of “big epic” style, “representation of life” instead of avant-gardist “life-constructing”. To these tendencies the left art responded with even bigger ideologism underlining the role of the literature in the class-struggle.

In the middle 1920\textsuperscript{th} among the members of LEF the idea of “social order” was created and discussed. It was the turning point for the avant-gardist movement when the writers clearly realized that the society and the reader had considerably changed. The “social order” is not a synonym of administrative pressure. It is more likely about the feeling of “utility/serviceability” or “inutility” for their creative work for the revolution. LEF used the discussion about the “social order” in the literature of the middle 1920\textsuperscript{th} to show their utility for the new society and their connection to the working class (as soon as the criteria of “proletarian origin” became one of the powerful mechanisms of selection in the literary field at the
time). LEF realized that at the time to be leaders in the Soviet literature meant to be politically and socially engaged, elitism of the early avant-garde of 1900\textsuperscript{th} -1910\textsuperscript{th} should be forgotten. In the discussion about the “social order” O. Brik argues that the term “social order” means the refuse of any universal value of the art, the relation between the innovation and the proletariat and the identification of writing with any other kind of production. What concerns the proletariat writers, they didn’t see the need to use the term of “social order” because, according to them, it was invented to compensate the real alienation of the left art from the working class\textsuperscript{6}.

During this important polemics about the social order the left writers were criticized not only by the proletariats but also by less radical followers from the group “Pereval”. Pereval was created by the editor of the “Red fallow” A. Voronsky as a response to the attack of RAPP against the followers. Pereval opposed to the partisanship of RAPP the idea of the “organic creative work” that made a link between the art and the subject of creation understanding the art as “the artistic cognition of reality”. Voronsky defended the “objective value’ of the art that can’t be reduced to the class-struggle. He perceived the art as engaged in the social context but acknowledged the art as a relatively autonomous activity. That’s why the concept of the social order introduced by LEF was presumed by Pereval as the encroachment on the sovereignty of the artist. According to Pereval, the creative work should be “organic”, that is natural, for the artist, it should be appearing from his personal subjective experience. There shouldn’t be a rupture between the “social order” and the inner tune of the author. Pereval complained that such “normal” literature concepts as “inspiration”, “creation”, “intuition” had been replaced by technical terms like “labor”, “technique”, “energetic word-treatment” etc. They criticized both the avant-garde and the proletariat writers for their utilitarianism in the literature. Thereby, the group “Pereval” was one of the most autonomous among the leaders in literary competition of the 1920\textsuperscript{th}.

Thus, the field of the Soviet literature was a dynamic structure with considerable amount of the autonomy from the state. It can be characterized by its increasing politization after the 1917 and progressive shift to the heteronomy during the 1920\textsuperscript{th}, if we understand under heteronomy the demands and the appeals to writers that were alien to the inner logic of the field. Firstly, all participants of the competition at some point realized the importance of the “state resource”, of the party support in realization of their own cultural projects of the new society, although their visions of relations to the power were different. The “right” writers added to their armory the “aesthetics of servility” and solicited the alliance with the Party without any inner conflict or creative crisis. They had nothing to lose since their symbolic capital (that is, specific literary capital) was merely modest. The left art, by contrast, generated a huge symbolic capital before the revolution when it proclaimed the absolute freedom of creation. From the middle 1920\textsuperscript{th} they had to battle with themselves and to force themselves to lose some of its power to the party. LEF were pragmatics, so they went to meet the party demands without giving up their main aesthetic principles. The most apolitical group of followers “Serapionov’s brother” and “Pereval” decided to use their symbolical literary capital and to fight for the autonomy of the art trying to accord it with the demands of the epoch.

Secondly, the shift of the field to the heteronomy is characterized by the search of the reader. All writers in the 1920\textsuperscript{th} realized that the successful writer is not the one who is read by a few of his friends – writers but the one who got the massive reader. The renewal in the left literature was going by two main channels. LEF held up to the principles of ignorance of public taste proclaimed in the manifest of futurists “The slap in the face of public taste”. They defied the “right” writers for their readiness to give up their aesthetic principles to the reader. According to LEF the mission of the art was to shake the bourgeois consciousness in order to build new society and to hypnotize it. The modernists from Pereval and
“Serapionov’s brothers”, by contrast, understood that the rupture between the mass reader and the literature should be overpassed.

The polarization of the field under the pressure of the “social order” and the partial loss of the autonomy was typical for the French field of literature after the First World War. In the Soviet postrevolutionary cultural field, as well as in the French one at the same time, the only aesthetic conception was not enough to justify the position of the group in the literature field. This “additional” political and ideological charge to the literature had a common for all modernizing countries where the natural continuity of tradition was interrupted by the processes of modernization and there appears the need to fill the gaps in identities. The analysis of the field of Soviet literature in terms of autonomy/heteronomy allows concluding that the gravity of the field to the heteronomy corresponds to the international changes and some modernization processes between two world wars. An addition, it’s getting clearer for the researcher how the writers were interested in these changes and were ready to collaborate with the power in the project of the new society, which questions the thesis about the violent and initiated by the totalitarian regime war against the “truth free literature” in the 1930th-1950th.