

1956: MOSCOW'S SILENCED SPRING

An NCEEER Working Paper by

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Executive Summary

University students in 1956 belonged to a generation that had grown up wholly under Stalinism. They internalized Soviet definitions of virtue—being brave, honest, and loyal to the collective—and expectations that the Party-State was always striving to create a better life for its people. Evidence from Moscow State University (MGU) students in the spring of 1956 demonstrates that as these idealistic young people began to encounter social injustices in their adult lives, they attempted to create their own solutions. They discovered, however, that the post-Stalin Party was not prepared to accept independent actors. The “thaw” only meant that consequences for forming unofficial associations and for public protest were less severe than they had previously been. Though disappointed in their efforts to use boycotts as a tool for justice and to create spaces for free exchange of scientific ideas in 1956, members of this generation would bring their idealism to bear again during perestroika.

Introduction

1956 was a pivotal year in Soviet history—a year that is justifiably best known for Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech” denouncing Stalin in February and the Soviet invasion of Hungary that autumn. 1956 was a tumultuous year in society as well, most notably due to the return of thousands of political prisoners from labor camps or exile and a burst of activism in the universities. Young people who came of age in 1956 had the chance to participate in the grand schemes of the Khrushchev era, such as the sowing of the “virgin lands” of Kazakhstan and the construction of hydroelectric stations in Siberia. They also, however, created their own opportunities for social engagement outside of official channels.

This paper examines the latter—the ways in which university students attempted to carve out some autonomy for themselves, to gain some independent civic voice. In particular, it analyzes two instances in which student idealism ran afoul of the authorities at Moscow State University in the spring of 1956. The form and outcome of these early post-Stalin conflicts contributed to the political consciousness of the generation behind perestroika.

University students of 1956 belonged to a cohort born in the mid-1930s. These were Soviet children who had not lived through revolution, civil war, or the building of a new state. They grew up entirely under Stalin, and consequently often had childish perceptions of Stalinism. Most did not remember the purges. Too young to fight in World War II, they nonetheless suffered as part of the civilian population that experienced evacuation, occupation or other hardships. They rejoiced at the USSR’s victory. While living in poor housing and eating badly in the hungry post-war years, they sincerely boasted of their state’s accomplishments. Many of them grew up fatherless, orphaned by the war or vague circumstances—they were raised by their relatives not to ask “indiscreet questions.”¹

Those brought up in the 1930s and 1940s participated in all the patriotic rituals of the Stalin era. Their schoolteachers stuffed them with stories about brave pioneers and fearless Komsomol partisans. They too were expected to be upright, honest, stoic, self-sacrificing members of the collective of Soviet citizens. To a large extent, children internalized these expectations. Future student radical Boris Vail' remembered agonizing as a boy about the cakes and butter that his father brought home from work. Though these foodstuffs were an enjoyable and important part of the family's food budget, Vail was tortured by the knowledge that they were in effect stolen. When he finally asked his father, "How can you take those pastries from the factory without paying?" His father answered roughly: "What are you, stupid? I take those for you! Don't even think about telling anyone."² It was hard for young idealists to know what to think about the injustices—like privileges for the Party elite, wage inequalities, and discrimination against Jews—prevalent in Soviet life.

Like young people everywhere, however, those who came of age in 1956 had their own concerns. They competed at sports, swapped books, and spent their summers outdoors. In Kursk, Vail' and his friends "spent hours kicking around a dirty glass jar (we called this 'hockey')." They fished in the local stream and hunted for unexploded German grenades.³ Muscovites Elena and Natal'ia Liapunova spent summers at rustic dachas rented by their father and his circle of mathematician friends. The children of these families would pass the summers together hiking, playing croquet, studying nature, and acting out Jules Verne adventure stories.⁴

During the rest of the year, school was the center of activities, usually organized by the Pioneers or Komsomol. "Because we lived in overcrowded communal apartments, school for us was like a second home," recalled a woman who entered MGU in 1956.⁵ Indeed, housing conditions pushed many urban children to find occupation outside the home. For some, this

meant spending long afternoons hanging out in the courtyards of their apartment buildings. For more studious children, there existed a range of “circles” [*kruzhki*] where leisure time could be spent learning about botany, drama, or poetry.⁶

As they grew older, children born in the 1930s absorbed more of the news of the day. For the youth of 1956, Stalin’s death in March of 1953 represented their most vivid political memory. Then a high school student in Moscow, biologist Gennadii Simkin, later wrote:

I remember the tears in teachers’ eyes and the deathly, terrible silence in classrooms and corridors... Then, like in a dream—the endless crowds and lines in the streets around the House of Unions and our friends leaping and clambering over fences and along roofs and ducking under [police] horses’ bellies to get up to the building... A man with a bloodied face and head; under the pressure of the crowd he had broken the plate glass window of a shop with his head... And tears, the tears of hundreds and thousands of people struck mute in the half-dark hall alongside the coffin that rested on a high pedestal, in a sea of flowers.⁷

For the young poet Yevgenii Yevtushenko, who saw people suffocated in the crush on Gorky Street, the police’s refusal to move the barriers that were keeping people from escaping the crowd became a symbol for him of the negative side of the Stalinist system, which rewarded obedience and punished initiative.⁸ The dominant emotions of the day, however, were grief and anxiety about what the future would be like without the great leader.

As young adults, the generation that came of age in 1956 learned from Khrushchev about the purges and other Stalinist misdeeds. The “Secret Speech,” according to a then-literature student at MGU, produced “such shock, disappointment, and pain... Internally something collapsed, was broken, and so began the first reevaluation of values...”⁹ As I describe elsewhere, young people had many questions about the purges and about potential reform of the Party and these questions multiplied after the Hungarian uprising.¹⁰ But they were also preoccupied with more egotistical worries: how to prove themselves, how to be fashionable, where to find love and success. For most young people, high politics remained just that, a distant

phenomenon. But the Party's educational and economic policies directly affected their ambitions and opportunities and during the thaw young people, with varying degrees of success, tried to follow their academic dreams and to take charge of their own lives.

Aspirations and Realities for 1950s Soviet Youth

In 1956, young, ambitious, urban Russians had two primary options: to pursue higher education with white collar jobs to follow, or to answer the Party's call for enthusiasts to take on the heroic tasks of "building socialism." One road led to university classrooms, the other to the frigid north, or the stark steppes of Kazakhstan. This study examines the lives of university students, especially insofar as they reflect the values of their day.

In the spring of 1956, students at the country's best institutions were following their ambitions and testing their ideals, even at the cost of conflict with authorities. They were learning for themselves what could be done when their standards clashed with their immediate political and economic conditions.

In January 1956, Soviet newspapers boasted of the number of students pursuing a higher education. The Ministry of Higher Education cited enrollments of 1,865,000 full time students in various types of colleges and universities with another 727,000 persons registered in evening or correspondence divisions. They were taught by some 100,000 professors and lecturers. Foreigners too were coming to the USSR to study.¹¹ Ambitious students aspired to attend big urban universities or institutes connected with attractive professions, such as the Gorky Literary Institute or the All-Union State Institute for Cinematography.

Since Soviet education was in essence free, it seemed a feasible dream for intelligent youngsters from all backgrounds. Students did not pay tuition, but had to maintain excellent

grades to receive a meager stipend. Many schools lacked sufficient dormitory rooms to house out-of-town students.¹² The expense of city housing, along with the higher academic standards of central universities, meant that the majority of students stayed in their home regions and received technical training at engineering or medical institutes, pedagogical, or agricultural colleges.

Admissions to prestigious institutes were very competitive and largely based on merit as measured through a combination of written and oral exams. In the 1950s, preference went to high school graduates who had earned gold or silver medals. Work records or Party service could also help influence admissions committees. Mikhail Gorbachev, for instance, won admission to MGU in 1950 partly because he earned the Order of the Red Banner of Labor for participating in a record-setting harvesting team in his native Stavropol'.¹³

Urban youth generally had an advantage in university admissions. They benefited from better educated teachers and greater exposure to high culture. Gorbachev's parents, by contrast, had to arrange for him to live in a nearby town to finish high school—his village school went only as far as seventh grade.¹⁴ Inequalities in the educational system and class differences meant that by 1955 the student base consisted primarily of those from a white collar background—only 24% were workers or came from blue collar families; even fewer—13%—could claim to be from collective farm backgrounds.¹⁵

Urban parents expected that any reasonably smart youth ought to go study, if not in the university, then at a technical college. They saw higher education as paving the way to a satisfying, presumably white-collar job and a decent wage. Young people entertained their own often more romantic educational aspirations. One young man from Murmansk, Valerii Ronkin, later recalled that his parents tried to talk him out of applying to prestigious Leningrad institutes.

“Go for the agricultural school, study beekeeping, and you’ll be smelling flowers for your whole life,” his father advised. But the son imagined himself working in a laboratory on important tasks. Like many of his generation, Ronkin embraced the regime’s depiction of science as a noble and patriotic profession. Hence, he set himself the goal of getting in to the Leningrad Institute of Technology, where there were eight candidates for each place and one had to score high on exams in composition, literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and German.¹⁶

The primary purpose of the university was to provide specialized education. Students applied to specific programs or departments within their respective institutes often at the start of their five year programs. Their academic—and often social—lives would be organized around those divisions. For instance, the film institute admitted students separately to sections for directors, cinematographers, screenwriters, and actors. At MGU’s popular Philological (Language and Literature) Department [*“filfak”* for short] first-year students were immediately assigned to groups based on their interests in Russian or foreign languages, literature, and linguistics. The *biofak* or “department of biology and soil science,” similarly contained numerous specializations—including geobotany, Darwinism, invertebrate zoology, ichthyology, and entomology.

No academic field remained above politics. Regardless of discipline, every student had to pass courses in Marxism-Leninism and history of the Communist Party. But politics reached far beyond the mechanical study of Marxism to circumscribe speech and research. Hence, in the Literary Institute’s critical seminars, high praise was rare except when “the work fell into the category of ‘extremely sound ideologically.’”¹⁷ In the humanities as well as in the social sciences, choice of thesis topic had to take into account ideological strictures. Literature students in 1956, for instance, were still discouraged from researching Dostoevsky, who was considered

too reactionary.¹⁸ In the field of biology, matters were potentially even more fraught. Consider the situation in the MGU *biofak* in the spring semester of 1956.

“...Committed acts incompatible with the title of Komsomol and deserving of strict public condemnation”: such was the accusation leveled against 18-year-old Natalia Liapunova, a straight-A student and Komsomol activist.¹⁹ On the evening of Saturday, February 25, 1956—the very day that, unbeknownst to the assembled scientists and students, Khrushchev had delivered his “Secret Speech” to the closed session of the XX Party Congress--Natalia and her 19-year-old sister Elena, both second-year biology students at MGU, stood before an assembly of their classmates to answer for their allegedly subversive behavior. Their crime consisted of having organized supplementary studies outside the walls of the university and outside the formal curriculum of the biology department. In the words of a classmate who led the attack,

“Our Party and Government demonstrate great care about youth. We received a wonderful building [the Lenin Hills campus had just opened in 1953], we have every opportunity... And here these ‘sectantists’ [*otschepentsy*] decided to revive the vile ideology of the West within the walls of this ‘great cathedral of science’ ...”²⁰

To comprehend the roots of the conflict at MGU, one must recall the status of genetics in the USSR after the notorious 1948 VASKhNIL (All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences of the Soviet Union) meeting. This VASKhNIL assembly had marked a turning point in a long battle in Soviet science about how to understand the principles of heredity and the role of genes. In the early part of the twentieth century, a sharp division had emerged between those who accepted Mendel’s mathematically based laws of inheritance and those who believed Lamarck’s notion of acquired traits, characteristics acquired during the parents’ lifetimes which allegedly could be passed to their progeny.

In the West, experimental work on fruit flies meant that by 1918 “the last serious doubts about the universality of Mendelism and the chromosome theory were extinguished.”²¹ In post-revolutionary Russia, pupils of biologist Nikolai Kol’tsov and the great plant expert Nikolai Vavilov engaged in world class research into genetics. However, proponents of the Lamarckian idea that mutation occurred through changes during the life cycle, rather than at the cellular level, found favor with some powerful Soviet leaders.

At the July 1948 VASKhNIL session, the agronomist Trofim Lysenko, with Stalin’s personal backing, put a halt to the public dispute over genetics by revealing that the Central Committee of the CPSU had endorsed his position, which was based on a total repudiation of “bourgeois Weismannist-Morganist-Mendelist genetics.”²² The dramatic and tragic story of Lysenko’s rise to arbiter of scientific practices has been told in great detail elsewhere.²³ Suffice it to say, that although Lysenko proved to be a failure as a scientist, he succeeded in controlling numerous high posts in the administration of Soviet science. After July 1948, he forced major practitioners of classical genetics out of their teaching posts and research laboratories. Their places went to his adherents.

The study of fruit flies—the main tool of Western “formalist” geneticists—was discontinued, and carefully collected and bred populations of laboratory flies were destroyed. Biology teaching at all levels highlighted the contributions of Michurin and his self-proclaimed heir, Lysenko. Genetics was omitted from the high school curriculum and largely vanished from the universities as well. Those biologists who retained their positions had to alter their teaching and research to avoid further repressions. The MGU *biofak* disbanded its student scientific association and even stopped teaching mathematics to its students lest they fall under the influence of Mendel’s statistical models of heredity.²⁴

Despite his rout of geneticists, Lysenko faced steady if muted opposition from scientists in related disciplines. In the 1950s, they sought out rare possibilities to criticize Lysenko's absurd theories of heredity in the scientific press. After Stalin's passing, Lysenko's opponents were spurred on by the new atmosphere for scholarly debate as expressed in an article in *Kommunist* in 1954, which singled out VASKhNIL as a place where "“monopolization of science leads to a situation in which administrative fiat replaces creative discussion of problems, the independent-minded are silenced, and scientific life is stifled.””²⁵

By 1956, followers of genetics had begun to reassert themselves at the margins of the academic establishment. In 1955 the Moscow Naturalists' Society dared to start a section for genetics where classical themes could be discussed and where "“a remarkable spirit reigned... there was none of the dogmatism, toadying, and fear that characterized Lysenkoist meetings.””²⁶ Behind the scenes, Leningrad biologists composed a letter to the Central Committee detailing the harms done to the Soviet Union's agriculture, scientific community, and world reputation by Lysenko. Scientists had complained about Lysenko to Party authorities before, but the "“Letter of Three Hundred”" carried the signatures of scholars from many fields, including leading nuclear physicists Igor Tamm, Pyotr Kapitsa, and Andrei Sakharov.²⁷

Khrushchev responded unfavorably to the collective letters from Lysenko's opponents. He did not withdraw the Party's endorsement of the VASKhNIL resolution. Nor did he order the restoration of genetics as a field of study and teaching. In fact, on October 27, 1955, the members of the Presidium turned out in force to hear Lysenko deliver the key note address at a gala marking the hundredth anniversary of Michurin's birth. And, just days before the Liapunov sisters' disciplinary hearing, Lysenko addressed the delegates of the XXth Party Congress, lecturing them on his new "“discoveries”" regarding the effects of lower doses of fertilizer in

increasing grain harvest.²⁸

In this atmosphere of semi-open struggle, Lysenkoists at MGU initiated disciplinary action against the Liapunov sisters for allegedly promoting bourgeois “Weismannist-Morganist” theories via a secret organization. In fact, the sisters, with the assistance of their father, an eminent mathematician, had organized a study group aimed at overcoming the absence of formal instruction in genetics. The Liapunov sisters had pursued careers in biology despite recognizing Lysenko as a fraud. When asked in 2008 whether their parents had warned Elena and her sister against entering discipline so tangled in ideological dictates, Elena said no. They had firmly believed that Lysenkoist nonsense was a temporary phenomenon.

Similarly, a woman who entered the *biofak* in 1951 together with her best friend, the daughter of MGU biology professor Ia. Ia. Roginskii, recalled that when her parents anxiously consulted with him about the wisdom of this step, he reassured them that, “when the girls graduate there won’t be a trace of Lysenkoism [left].” Well-informed intellectuals knew Lysenko’s theories could not hold up under proper testing and believed it was not in the Party’s long-term interest to promote unscientific methods. Still, in 1955 found Roginskii signing the “Letter of Three Hundred”—his prediction had not come true. Indeed, Lysenko’s star would wax and wane throughout the Khrushchev era; he only definitively lost his major posts and public reputation in 1965.²⁹

The Liapunovs’ father, Aleksei Andreevich (1911-1973), was well-placed to assess the state of Soviet science. A descendant of an old Russian intelligentsia family, Aleksei Liapunov had a doctoral degree in mathematics and deep interests in geology and physics. His acquaintance with genetics dated to the early 1930s when he had assisted students of Kol’tsov with mathematical analyses of their data. In 1956, he was teaching math at MGU and had begun

to play a major role in developing cybernetics.

Liapunov was a great promoter of collective study and had founded numerous study circles—both for children and adults. He had first helped his daughters organize a home science club when they were fifth and fourth graders. When, as tenth graders, Elena and Natal'ia announced their intent to apply to the biology department at MGU the following year, their father decided to introduce them and their like-minded friends to classical genetics. As Natal'ia later recalled, “It soon became evident that he could not even explain Mendel’s laws to us because we didn’t know the principles of statistics. That’s when the Liapunov home seminars were born.”³⁰

With their typical initiative and enthusiasm, Natal'ia and Elena quickly expanded both the size and scope of their study circle. It began in 1954 with some of the original members of the children’s science group plus new friends from the Moscow Naturalists’ Society *kruzhok* that Elena attended. Once Elena and Natalia started at MGU in the fall of 1954, they invited new acquaintances, who in turn brought their friends. At the Liapunov’s home circle’s largest—and last—meeting in December 1955, some sixty persons, both students and older scientists, crowded in to hear a special speaker. A year earlier, Aleksei Liapunov had hit upon the idea of inviting formerly prominent geneticists to come and give talks to the *kruzhok*. Speakers had included the outstanding geneticists B. L. Astaurov, V. V. Sakharov, V. P. Efroimson, N. P. Dubinin, M. M. Zavodovskii, and A. R. Zhebrak.

December’s speaker, who attracted dozens of listeners, was Nikolai Timofeev-Resovskii. A student of Kol'tsov, Timofeev-Resovskii had worked for many years in Berlin and had landed in prison after the Soviets occupied Germany. Drafted to work for the Soviet atomic project as a prisoner-scientist in a secret laboratory in the Urals, he had only recently been released. When

he visited Moscow in December 1955, many of his old acquaintances were surprised to hear that he was still alive! He was not only among the living, but in fine form as he lectured on “the biophysical analysis of the molecular size of the gene.” The listeners sat at his feet as he paced in front of a small blackboard in the Liapunovs’ apartment. The crowd spilled out into the foyer and even though many did not really understand his report, they listened with awe to the unrepentant geneticist.

Word of the lecture by Timofeev-Resovskii soon leaked out at the department and became the catalyst for the case against the Liapunov sisters. Ideological vigilance waxed and waned in the various departments of the university. Sometimes unwise remarks or articles in the student-run wall newspapers (homemade broadsheets pasted up in the hallways of the department in question) attracted official attention and reprimand. In the previous year, the vigilance within the biology department had been lax if anything. At the traditional bonfire celebration marking the end of summer fieldwork for first-year biology students in the summer of 1955, Elena and several other members of the *kruzhok* had sung satiric verses ridiculing Lysenko and other Stalin-era charlatans.

Here an exercise of poor judgment could have had serious repercussions given the presence of teachers, who would have had to have answered for their students’ behavior, as well as many conservative students. Fortunately, the students dispersed immediately afterwards for their summer vacations and the incident seemed to have been forgotten—until the Liapunovs became objects of scrutiny in January-February 1956. Then their mocking verses appeared in a sinister light.³¹

While consorting with politically tainted figures such as Timofeev-Resovskii carried with it certain risks, it was not illegal. It might not have had any open repercussions if it had been a

personal visit or chance meeting. What upset campus authorities first and foremost was that a formal lesson had taken place within the context of an informal organization. In a society where all social organizations had to have the imprimatur of an official institution—whether a school nature club or a university intramural volleyball team—here was a group that had formed without any blessing and which had existed over a year without the knowledge of the dean’s office. Hence, the department leadership referred to the *kruzhok* as an “underground” [*podpol’naia*] organization and accused the sisters of having “recruited” [*verbovali*] participants.

The Liapunov sisters were shocked by the characterization of their domestic circle as a subversive secret organization. Their father, a professor, Party member and war veteran, had always been involved in multiple study groups, several of which he had founded and some of which met at their home. Moreover, under his leadership their *kruzhok* had been exploring mathematical and scientific topics—not conspiring! As Elena recalled, the charges particularly hurt because she and Natalia were used to being praised for their academic interests and diligence. Natal’ia in particular had become accustomed to respect for her role in the Komsomol. She had been named organizer [*komsorg*] for their class freshman year because of her experience as an activist in high school. Up to this point the sisters had led sheltered, “rosy” lives as children of doting, intellectual parents. They were not used to being treated unjustly.³²

But if the Liapunovs could repudiate the characterization of the group as an “underground organization,” they could not honestly deny they had studied and promoted knowledge of classical genetics in knowing contradiction of the Party’s official line. When the department higher-ups began to question the Liapunovs about the *kruzhok*, their father and his friends urged the girls to be diplomatic, even conformist, so as not to spoil their futures. Perhaps they could get off lightly by emphasizing the mathematical part of their activities. Study of

statistics may have been deemed irrelevant for biology students, but was not taboo. Natal'ia did her best to stick to this line. But when asked outright if she disagreed with the VASKhNIL resolution of 1948, Elena lost her temper and answered coolly that she did—a statement that shocked even liberal members of her class.

The meeting turned into a debate about the merits of studying genetics. Elena's future husband, recent *biofak* graduate, Nikolai Vorontsov, delivered a pithy and eloquent explanation of the nature of modern genetics. And when a mathematics student, a stranger to the sisters, made a speech defending them, he went even further saying, "Who doesn't make mistakes? Even the Central Committee makes mistakes." This heretical charge so upset the presiding deans and professors that they shut down the meeting, cleared the hall, and readmitted only those who could show by their Komsomol cards that they were second-year biology students. The girls' good friend, a *kruzhok* participant and Komsomol organizer for the second-year course said to them privately at the end of the day, "Can you believe that you said that you did not agree with the decision of the VASKhNIL session, even though it's supported by the Central Committee? That means you don't agree with the decision of the Central Committee." Elena heard amazement, but not condemnation in his voice. One simply did not frame one's beliefs in opposition to official doctrine. And yet, one ought not to be dishonest. She could not bear at the moment to pay more false obeisance to Lysenkoism.³³

Whereas Natal'ia and Elena had been taught by their father to judge theories on their scientific merit and hence to reject Lysenkoism, many students entered MGU without the tools to question what they had been taught in school. Indeed, one student later recalled that she had taken Lysenko's critique of genetics as a real scientific discussion and it had in fact heightened her interest in biology!³⁴ The students of 1956 had been raised on a steady diet of "Michurinist

biology.” They knew how to graft fruit trees, but had never looked at fruit flies under a microscope. A woman who graduated from MGU with a specialty in “genetics and selection” recalled that she first heard the basic concepts of classical genetics at MGU from Lysenko adherent Noi Feigenson only because he believed that, “to critique, one must know the very bases of Mendelism-Morganism.” Other professors taught them some aspects of genetics in practical courses in the field or laboratory; they might say aloud what could not be written in textbooks or declaimed from the podium.³⁵ The battle against Lysenko was not very visible to the average undergraduate.

Ironically, one of their critics best captured Elena and Natal’ia’s beliefs about what it meant to be a true student. Their Marxism-Leninism teacher noted with shock and disapproval, “They did not trust us, Soviet teachers, that we would teach them everything that is necessary, but wanted to find out something for themselves.”³⁶ The sisters did indeed want to gain knowledge independently, through critical study.

Unlike many of their classmates who were drawn to study biology because of Michurinist-Lysenkoist promises that nature could be transformed and the supply of food greatly increased by science, Natal’ia and Elena had grown up in the company of scholars who valued pure science. They embodied the world view of pre-revolutionary Russian scientists who thought that the pursuit of knowledge mattered for its own sake, regardless of whether it had immediate practical application. The notion of research as a calling in its own right contradicted the Party’s framing of science as a form of public service. The Liapunov sisters’ whole approach to science, in other words, set them on a collision course with proponents of “Marxist Michurinism.”

By limiting their heretical studies of genetics to the private sphere, the Liapunovs consciously or unconsciously chose a non-confrontational strategy for pursuing their scientific goals. They did not force their views on their classmates, though they shared them with those whom they found sympathetic. They did not petition for a change in the curriculum—as some graduate students had done that same spring.³⁷ Nor did they harass their teachers with politically sensitive questions.

If anything, the Liapunovs prized their reputations as good students. That academic year Natalia had been chosen to sit on the board of the newly-revived student scientific organization, and she took pride in coming up with topics for meetings that were both relevant and fun. Their good deportment in the university, however, did not compensate for their outside pursuits. In truth, Natal'ia's public role as a Komsomol leader only exacerbated things for the sisters. Clearly, she had said one thing at home and another in meetings, and no one liked hypocrisy.³⁸ Moreover, by Party standards there were no acceptable means to fight Lysenkoism. Even the graduate students' petition to change the curriculum was dismissed: "A letter—this is a form of hidden battle," the head of the Biology Department, Leonid Voronin, announced at a Party meeting. "Repressions, of course, shouldn't follow for this," he added, "but it is necessary to renounce such a form of criticism."³⁹

The final charge in the case against the Liapunovs—that they had caused a "highly damaging... split in the collective of the course" —is comprehensible only in the Soviet setting. The Soviet educational system emphasized student collectives. Newly admitted freshmen were expected to form tight groups, to monitor each others' studies, to help weak students, and to carry out social work. The authorities assumed that the selective nature of the "secret society" had created a faction of sorts.

But the split could be understood differently. If students were not already tacitly divided between those who were aware of the dubious bases of Lysenkoism and those who naively accepted official judgments of “bourgeois genetics,” the hearing itself drove a wedge between supporters and detractors of the sisters. Even for those who did not quite grasp what exactly the study group had done or who Timofeev-Resovskii was could not remain neutral. At the end of the meeting they had to vote on the prepared resolution to expel Natal’ia and Elena from the Komsomol, an action that would have meant the sisters being forced to leave the university as well.⁴⁰

To the dismay of the hard-line Lysenkoists among the faculty, the Komsomol organizer for the second-year students, a good friend of the sisters, maneuvered so as to have a strict but more moderate punishment suggested alongside the harsh resolution prepared ahead of time. The more moderate sanctions—strict reprimands and expulsion of Natal’ia from the Komsomol bureau—prevailed in the student vote.⁴¹ To a certain extent, loyalty to the student collective often interfered in disciplinary cases like this one. But thirty people spoke out publicly in defense of the Liapunovs—a sign of a more fundamental unwillingness to ban the pursuit of knowledge, even when that knowledge might be inconvenient or disturbing.

Urban and Provincial Student Attitudes

The “split” in the biology department also reflected a larger university-wide distinction between urbanites and provincial students. Student collectives were meant to be free of class distinctions. Yet, as Marina Remneva, later dean of the MGU Philology department described, “...in our [academic] group, we did not achieve friendship. It sort of split into two parts. In one were our local stars, all knowing, self-confident, haughty Moscow A students... In the other,

were quiet, frightened girls who had come from the provinces.”⁴²

The Muscovites included so-called “professors’ sons,” children from intelligentsia backgrounds often with prior connections to the university. Besides their confidence, in some cases they brought special knowledge. In the *biofak*, it meant being aware of the largely hidden battle against Lysenko and knowing to dodge those subfields where Lysenkoism dominated. In the humanities, it meant being familiar with out-of-favor writers, such as Pasternak and Tsvetaeva.

Provincial students tended to be awed by the capital’s fine buildings and intimidated by their learned professors. The distinction between provincial and urban students was only enhanced by their different living conditions. With out-of-town students crowded together into the dormitories and Muscovites living with their parents, two different social groups emerged. Those who lived in the dorms ate, studied, and explored the capital together, whereas the Muscovites spent fewer hours at the university and retained their old social networks.

Out-of-town students may have felt awed by MGU’s grand campus and erudite professors, but they were hardly permanently cowed. Nor were they excluded from the value system that glorified the traits of honesty, equality, and justice. A second incident from MGU in the spring of 1956 demonstrates a different sort of clash between idealism and Party strictures. In this case, students frustrated with hollow promises from the Komsomol, trade union, and Party representatives took an unorthodox step to draw attention to persistent faults in the university’s food services. Their actions would be interpreted as a sign of selfish ingratitude.

“In our cafeteria, they steal a lot and feed us badly and expensively,” read a homemade sign placed by the door of the dining hall at the Stromynka dormitory complex early one morning in May 1956. “Appeals on this subject to higher instances have produced no results,”

its anonymous authors wrote. “We suggest a last resort: a boycott.”⁴³ To the immense consternation of university and municipal Party officials, students successfully organized a three day action. Students from the Philology, History, and Law Departments organized pickets and on the first morning of the boycott the dining room was empty, with the exception of the notoriously aloof Chinese exchange students. Word of the boycott spread like lightning around the campus garnering sympathy and a certain degree of awe.

Many concrete reasons lay behind the students’ anger with their dining facilities. As university authorities had long been aware, the campus cafeterias and buffets frequently ran out of food, offered few of the items listed on their menus, featured slow service and poor sanitation (one even lacked hot water—its workers merely rinsed the dishes and silverware in cold water before putting them back out). Cafeteria workers stole food and sometimes resold it. In the buffets, scales had been set to cheat customers. In short, many of the common flaws of the planned economy could be seen in the microcosm of student services. Despite repeated complaints to Komsomol and Party bureaus and to the university administration, despite negative articles in the university newspaper, and bad reports by inspection commissions, the dining halls continued to be poorly managed. The final straw for students in 1956 seems to have been a scandal over sausages—either the selling of spoiled meat or the absence for sale of sausages that had been received by the cafeteria.⁴⁴

On the evening of May 23rd, the internal radio station at the Stromynka dorm broadcast a complaint about food services and disparaging response from the head of the dining hall. Frustrated students gathered in the dorms to discuss how to press the issue. When word reached the University administration that the word “boycott” had been bandied around, they dispatched the Secretary of the MGU Party Committee and the President of the university’s Trade Union to

calm the students.

According to eyewitnesses, the two men actually inflamed the gathering by denigrating the students and defending the cafeteria boss. They refused the students' suggestion that the dining room be closed until state inspectors could be summoned and criticized the notion of a boycott, but could not suggest any new alternatives to past complaints. At that point, the young people shouted that they would decide for themselves whether they wanted to eat in the dining hall or not. The dispute was no longer about sausages, but about the right to be taken seriously.⁴⁵ That night students prepared the leaflet calling for the boycott and made a poster that read: "If you don't want/To dine like cattle/Declare a boycott!" [Esli ne khochesh'/Pitat'sia kak skot/Ob"iavlai boikot!]⁴⁶ The next morning, the protest began.

Some five thousand Soviet and foreign students dwelled at Stromynka 32. They lived 8 to 14 to a room with a restroom and kitchen on each floor. Bathing had to be done at a separate bathhouse that served female students one day and males the next.⁴⁷ Students slept on metal beds and each got a footlocker for storing personal belongings. Lights went out at 11 p.m. and those who wanted to study late had to do so in the buildings' corridors. Inspections occurred almost daily to check for tidiness.⁴⁸ Some roommates formed "communes" to share the shopping for and preparation of breakfast and dinner, but the majority relied on the cafeteria. Small stipends and poor fare in the dining halls meant that many male students felt permanently hungry. One recalled how he and his roommates often spent the last days of the month "conserving energy," that is lying in bed, because they had spent the last of their stipends and were fasting by necessity. Others hoped for invitations to dinner from classmates who lived at home.⁴⁹ Students later insisted—when accused of being spoiled and demanding—that they did not expect fancy food, just decent meals at a fair price.

The Stromynka students succeeded beyond their wildest beliefs in terms of attracting attention. Indeed, they outraged university and local authorities alike. To the apparent chagrin of all involved, word of it even leaked out (no doubt via exchange students) to the BBC. At an extraordinary session on May 29th, the University Party Committee fearfully resolved: “To condemn the attempt at organization of a boycott as a manifestation of petty bourgeois dissipation, anarchism, and political immaturity on behalf of a certain portion of the students residing in the Stromynka dormitory.”⁵⁰ Once again, the form of the action even more than the content upset authorities. Strikes were historically the tool of oppressed workers in capitalist countries—what role could they serve when deployed by the privileged beneficiaries of a socialist education?

Participants in the strike rejected the ideological characterization of their actions. A transcript of a Party meeting in the Philology Department reveals students defending themselves. They resisted the call by Party bosses to identify “ringleaders” and “provocateurs” and insisted that their boycott was spontaneous and lacked formal leaders. One young woman, who was tagged as a “ringleader”, both rejected that description, saying the head of the dormitory management only remembered her because she had been brave enough to accuse him of covering up for thieves, and countered the image of the students as pawns in a political game. “Where,” she asked, “did he get evidence to say that I was a ‘weapon in the hands of provocateurs’?” She even took the offensive, castigating a Party representative who had accused her of “selling out your motherland for a piece of bread.”⁵¹ Even in the face of potential expulsion, the students defended the content of their actions and, indirectly, the form. After all, they had not made political demands during the boycott, and they had tried legal methods of complaint unsuccessfully in the past.⁵²

At the Party meeting in the Philology department, a few adults defended the students as naive and immature rather than politically hostile. Activism needed to be welcomed, but directed in a constructive fashion, one opined. Their complaints about the conditions in the dormitories and dining halls ought to have been taken seriously from the start. One attendee even attributed the root problem to the authorities' arrogance. Having begun to battle against the cult of personality, he suggested, they now needed to deal with "another cult, the cult of the Party."⁵³ Revival of Leninist norms implied more humility on the part of the leadership and perhaps more room for frank exchanges of opinion.

More prevalent, however, were harsh responses. Party members described the students' behavior as "indecent" and "disgraceful." At a meeting in the Biology Department, one member angrily exclaimed: "The students are spoiled. They've never experienced any hardships in life, not like what we lived through and the hard conditions under which we studied in previous times."⁵⁴

The boycott served as a lightning rod for expression of generational differences. Students were accustomed to thinking of themselves as full-fledged citizens with the right to be heard. They did not expect to be untouched by shortages and inefficiencies, but as idealists, many expected the administration to sincerely empathize with their problems and to hasten to address the worst of them. They did not, it seems, imagine that their actions would be interpreted as anti-Soviet or subversive.

The older generation, by contrast, expected more realism both in expectations of what the system could deliver and in terms of the unspoken rules for public criticism. More significantly, the older generation was suspicious of the youth of the 1950s as overly pampered, having grown up with rather than having to fight for the achievements of socialism. It did not enter their minds

that the students' battle with Party-State bureaucracy could be part of a struggle for socialism. Yet what made many members of the generation of 1956 reformers was precisely a mix of idealism and entitlement. The post-war youth were grateful for the state's investment in them, but not so indebted as to feel unable to criticize their benefactor's shortcomings.⁵⁵

Conclusion

The clashes at MGU also reveal that, despite some liberalization regarding speech in the immediate post-Stalin era, the Party was not prepared to accept autonomous actors in Soviet society. There was no acceptable "private" space for pursuit of scholarship. Though scientists might try to carve out little niches for the free exchange of ideas, these activities would always be potentially interpreted by the regime as subversive.⁵⁶ The "thaw" affected the extent of the consequences for pursuing autonomous activity, but it did not open the door to free association or any forms of public protest. University authorities did not call on outside organs to break students' conspiracy of silence regarding leadership of the boycott. Nor did it revise the biology department Komsomol branch's decision to censure but not expel the Liapunovs.⁵⁷ It would take several more years for genetics to regain a foothold in the MGU *biofak*, and then it would be facilitated by changes at the top of the profession. The students of 1956 were learning the hard way that collective action, even in the mildest form or regarding the most innocuous subjects, had no place in the Soviet system.

¹ Anatoly Gladilin, *The Making and Unmaking of a Soviet Writer: My Story of the "Young Prose" of the Sixties and After*, trans. David Lapeza (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1979), p. 23.

² Boris Vail', *Osobo opasnyi* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange, 1980), p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ Recollections of Natalia Liapunova in Ekaterina Pavlova, “Delo sestr Liapunovykh,” *Znanie-sila*, no. 8 (1998) available at http://www.znanie-sial/ru/online/issue_177.html, last accessed 7/15/2008.

⁵ Margarita Monakhova in *Mozaika sudeb: Biofakovtsev MGU 1930-1960 godov postupleniia*, vol. 2, 1951-1960-e gody (Moscow: Tovarishestvo nauchnykh izdaniĭ KMK, 2007), p. 511.

⁶ Natal’ia Liapunova enthusiastically served as a Komsomol leader in her school, even being chosen as a member of the district-level committee during her senior year. Elena, by contrast, loved science to the exclusion of other topics. She participated in multiple scientific circles for schoolchildren—under the auspices of MGU and the Moscow Naturalists’ Society (MOOP). Author’s interview with Elena Liapunova, Moscow, June 8, 2008.

⁷ Gennadiĭ Simkin in *Mozaika sudeb*, vol. 2, p. 411.

⁸ Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography*, trans. Andrew R. McAndrew (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1963), pp. 85-87.

⁹ Nadezhda Paneva, “Fil’fak v moei sud’be” in *Vremia, ostavsheesia s nami: Vospominaniia vypusnikov filologicheskii fakul’tet v 1953-1958 gg.* (Moscow: MAKS press, 2004), p. 344.

¹⁰ Kathleen E. Smith, “A New Generation of Political Prisoners: ‘Anti-Soviet’ Students, 1956-1957,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, vol. 32, nos. 2-3 (2005), pp. 191-208. This article deals with “free thinking” and harsh measures in the wake of the invasion of Hungary (fall of 1956–spring 1957).

¹¹ “Navstrechu XX s’ezdu KPSS: 1.865 tysiach studentov,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 14, 1956, p. 1.

¹² Boris Vail’, a first year student at Leningrad’s Library Institute in 1956, described the typical budget for a student with a 200-ruble stipend: 10 or 12 went for expenses at the dormitory; a few more to Komsomol and trade union dues. Dinner in the cafeteria cost 5-6 rubles—so one could in principle eat only once a day. Vail’ survived with an extra 100 rubles a month from his parents, a “typical allowance” at the time. *Osobo opasnyi*, pp. 105-106.

¹³ Gorbachev’s future wife, Raisa Titarenko, also came from the provinces, but she entered MGU’s philosophy department without exams because she had earned a gold medal—meaning all 5’s on her high school exams; Gorbachev had a silver medal, having received a 4 out of 5 in German. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 28-33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁵ Starting in 1955 and continuing through the end of the decade, officials tinkered with the admissions system to try to increase the percentage of blue collar and rural students—changes that reflected basic ideological principles and appealed to Khrushchev’s populist streak. After universities became sites of too much free expression in 1956, authorities began to require that applicants present character references. Tromly argues convincingly that Party higher ups believed that recruitment of veterans, workers, and peasants would add a dose of political maturity to campuses and reward students who embodied a mentality of gratitude. Benjamin K. Tromly, “Re-imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia: Student Politics and University Life, 1948-1964 (PhD diss., Harvard, 2007), p. 337-341.

¹⁶ Valerii Ronkin, *Na smenu dekabriam prikhodiat ianvari...Vospominaniia byvshego brigadmil’tsa i podpol’shchika, a pozhe—politzakliuchennogo i dissidenta* (Moscow: Obshchestvo “Memorial”—Zven’ia, 2003), pp. 64-66.

¹⁷ Gladilin, *Making and Unmaking*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁸ Galina Ponomareva who graduated from the MGU *fil’fak* in 1958 remembers the high anxiety her “apolitical” approach to Dostoevsky’s “The Demons” caused her senior thesis advisor. He insured himself by announcing she had written her paper “autonomously” and choosing the professor who headed up the department’s party cell to be her opponent. “Kak ia zashchishchala diplom” in *Vremia, ostavsheesia s nami*, pp. 107-109.

¹⁹ In deadening prose, the draft resolution condemning Natal'ia read in part, "She fostered and was co-founder of an organization at home, behind the back of the Party and Komsomol organizations and the dean's office, a *kruzhok* that alongside the study of statistics engaged in formal genetics with the invitation of lecturers with an alien to us Weismannist-Morganist viewpoint on genetics, and she demonstrated harmful activity in popularizing these teachings by way of recruiting new members into the *kruzhok*. As secretary of the Komsomol bureau of the course she did not take any measures toward condemning the participants in the choir at the bonfire in Chashnikovo that performed vulgar couplets, spitting on the achievements of Michurinist science and on renowned Soviet scholars, and popularizing alien to us Morganist viewpoints." Cited in Pavlova, "Delo sestr."

²⁰ This citation comes from an autobiographical essay prepared by Elena Liapunov for inclusion in the *Mozaika Sudeb* collection of reminiscences of graduates of MGU's biology department. For unstated reasons, the compiler of the volume excluded her essay. Interview with E. Liapunova.

²¹ On the victory of chromosomal explanations, see James Schwartz, *In Pursuit of the Gene: From Darwin to DNA* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); quotation, p. 221.

²² The epithet "Weismannist-Morganist-Mendelist" referred to German biologist August Weismann, American geneticist Thomas Hunt Morgan and the Austrian monk and experimentalist Gregor Mendel.

²³ For a concise history of Lysenkoism, see Loren R. Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union: A Short History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. pp. 123-133. The most complete account of Lysenko's career remains Valerii Soifer, *Vlast' i nauka: Istoriia razgroma genetiki v SSSR* (Tenafly, NJ: Ermitazh, 1989). On the epistemology of Soviet biology, see Slava Gerovich, *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 16-17, 32.

²⁴ Nikolai Vorontsov, *Nauka. Uchenye. Obshchestvo: Izbrannye trudy*, ed. E. A. Liapunova (Moscow: Nauka, 2006), p. 64. Raissa Berg offers a rich account of the travails she and her fellow geneticists experienced before and after 1948 in *Acquired Traits: Memoirs of a Geneticist from the Soviet Union*, trans. David Lowe (New York: Viking, 1988).

²⁵ Cited by Soifer, *Vlast' i nauka*, p. 235.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁷ Initially sent in early October 1955 with signatures of some 94 scholars, primarily from Leningrad, the letter circulated in scholarly circles in Moscow in December and picked up additional signatures, including those of several MGU biology professors and mathematics professor Aleksei Liapunov. It would be published in the USSR only in 1989. I. F. Zhimulev and L. G. Dubinina, "Novoe o 'pis'me trekhsot'-massovom proteste sovetskikh uchenykh protiv lysenkovshchiny v 1955," *Vestnik VOGiS*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2005), pp. 13-33. Nikolai Vorontsov recalled proudly how as a graduate student in the MGU biology department, he collected thirty of the signatures. Pavlova, "Delo sestr."

²⁸ Soifer, *Vlast' i nauka*, p. 240; *Stenograma XX S'*ezd, pp. 349-353.

²⁹ Interview with Elena Liapunova; Natal'ia Granberg, *Mozaika sudeb*, vol. 2, p. 67. On the Party elite's vacillation over *nauchnost'* vs *partiinnost'* in the late Stalin years, see Ethan Pollock, "From *Partiinost'* to *Nauchnost'* and not Quite Back Again: Revisiting the Lessons of the Lysenko Affair," *Slavic Review*, vol. 68, no. 1 (Spring 2009), pp. 95-115. On Lysenko's last battles, see Soifer, *Vlast' i nauka*, pp. 646-663.

³⁰ Cited in "Delo sestr."

³¹ Pavlova, "Delo sestr"

³² Interview with E. Liapunova.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Nina Samoilova in *Mozaika sudeb*, vol. 2, p. 159.

³⁵ Irina Polumordinova in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 143-144.

³⁶ “Delo sestr.”

³⁷ At least two letters circulated in the biology department in 1955-1956. The first was the “Letter of Three Hundred”; the second seems to have been a complementary initiative by graduate students to petition for a course in genetics at MGU. The graduate students had gathered some 54 signatures before pressure caused about 1/3 to recant. The affair of the letter was hushed up after the Liapunov hearing—too many scandals reflected badly on the department. Olga G. Gerasimova, “Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia zhizn’ studenchestva MGU v 1950-e—seredine 1960-kh gg.” (Diss., Moscow State University, 2008), pp. 67-68.

³⁸ Natal’ia was less confrontational than Elena. She recalls being shocked at the performance of anti-Lysenko songs in Chashnikovo. Pavlova, “Delo sestr.” On audience reactions, see *ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

³⁹ Central Archive of Social-Political History of Moscow (TsAOPIM), fond 478, op. 5, d. 74, l. 2.

⁴⁰ Elena married Nikolai Vorontsov that summer and resumed her studies in Leningrad where he was a graduate student. Natal’ia chose to specialize in the biochemistry of plants where she could study the DNA molecule and indirectly, genetics. Her interest in genetics, however, generated too much flack in that department and so she changed to zoology of invertebrates. Pavlova, “Delo sestr.”

⁴¹ Elena recalls that a list of the main *kemzhok* participants was presented to the rector Petrovskii with the suggestion that they be expelled, but when he saw from their transcripts that these were among the department’s best students, he refused to give his approval. There were still some repercussions—including Kiselev being blocked from immediate entrance to graduate studies three years later. Interview with E. Liapunova.

⁴² Marina Remneva, “My byli romantikami i liubili chitat” in *Vremia ostavsheesia s nami*, p. 10.

⁴³ Valentin Nedzvetskii, “Chto iarche pamiat’ sokhranila” in *ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Olga Gerasimova has pulled together eyewitness and archival evidence on the course and conduct of the boycott. On the background of the complaints, see “Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia zhizn’,” pp. 92-96.

⁴⁵ Speeches by students at the June 7, 1956 meeting of the Primary Party Organization of the Philology Department. TsAOPIM, d. 478, op. 3, d. 233, ll. 69-70.

⁴⁶ Anatolii Filatov, “Byt’ studentom i ostavat’sia im” in *Vremia ostavsheesia s nami*, p. 138.

⁴⁷ Iraida Usok, “Stranitsy proshlogo listaia...” in *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴⁸ Tat’ina Lebedeva, “Kak molody my byli...” and Galina Sakharova, “MGU—kak mnogo v etom slove dlia serdtsa moego slilos’, kak mnogo v nem otozvalos’,” in *ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

⁴⁹ El’za Karpova, “Nastavnikam—Nizkii poklon”; Galina Postnova and Alla Iavkoleva, “Nash dom—Stromynka”; Viktor Bulokhov, “Chto ostavit’ posle sebia?”; Liudmila Abakumova et al, “Boria Abakumov i my” in *ibid.*, pp. 101, 221, 328-329, 369.

⁵⁰ Cited by Evgenii Taranov, ““Raskachaem Leninskie gory!” Svobodnaia mysl’,” vol. 10 (1993), p. 100.

⁵¹ Speech by Lia Kovaleva at the June 7, 1956 meeting of the Primary Party Organization of the Philology Department. TsAOPIM, f. 478, op. 3, d. 233, l. 70.

⁵² Gerasimova found no solid evidence as to immediate repercussions for participation in the boycott. “Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia zhizn’,” pp. 102-106. Nedzvetskii reported years later that no one informed on the initiators of the strike during the subsequent investigation. “Chto iarche pamiat’,” p. 181.

⁵³ TsAOPIM, f. 478, op. 3, d. 233, ll. 70-72.

⁵⁴ Speech by Makarov, a member of the Party Bureau, at the May 29, 1956 meeting of the Party bureau of the primary party organizations of the Department of Biology and Soil Sciences. TsAOPIM, f. 478, op. 5, d. 74, l. 50.

⁵⁵ Similar discontent arose during *raspredelenie*, when a surplus of graduates meant that many were assigned to teach in village schools. In this context, Benjamin Tromly analyzes the clash between the Party elite’s expectation that students would feel indebted and willing to make sacrifices for the state and students’ expectations that their newly acquired skills would land them fitting job placements., “Reimagining the Soviet Intelligentsia,” pp. 313-332.

⁵⁶ The argument for the existence of islands of a sort of scientific civil society as existing throughout the worst years of Stalinism has been meticulously made by Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

⁵⁷ The shocking news about the “Secret Speech” pushed the Liapunov affair onto the back burner, but left lingering hard feelings among the students. The sisters’ defenders would petition to reopen the case in the fall of 1956, but events in Hungary would preclude renewed discussion of such an ideologically sensitive topic.