

# A CRITIQUE OF THE POEM FOR ADULTS

by

Adam Wazyk

Translator's Note:

Adam Wazyk was born in 1905. His first volume of lyrics "Sema-phores" appeared in 1924. Since then he has published several volumes of poetry, some stories, a novel, and two plays."

During the war he broadcast to Poland from Moscow; later he joined the Polish Army formed in the USSR. After the war he served as a member of the Arts Council of the Polish Ministry of Culture, and in 1953 he was awarded the Polish State Prize for Literature.

In October, 1955 he published in "Nowa Kultura" (then the official journal of the Polish Union of Writers) his "Poem for Adults," a poetic protest against the degradation of socialist ideals and an indictment of the bureaucratic disregard for human values. (Extracts from this poem have been published in the "Manchester Guardian" 29-10-1955). The poem, at first, aroused bitter controversies—but soon all public references to it were suppressed—at least until the 20th Congress of the CPSU. After that the poem, in the words of a Polish critic, "played an important part in the Polish national revival."

The "Critique of the Poem for Adults" was written during November /December, 1955 but was published only after the Polish 'October revolution' in "Nowa Kultura" of 4-11-1956,

**A** YOUNG WOMAN,  
an old communist,  
holds up her hands and cries:  
strip from me the tattered rags of dogma,  
give me an ordinary dress.

She woke up all in wounds  
like a stigmatist,  
the blood of those murdered  
in the dungeons of bureaucracy  
drips in droplets from her brow.

Our wounds no balm can heal.  
I offer you an ordinary dress  
and hold out an ordinary catharsis,

Unhappy woman —  
she hold up her hands and cries:  
slander!

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Snake charmers  
assembled in the Great Tent,  
possessors of passes to special stores,  
where pants are sold  
embroidered with the dogma of infallibility,  
thinkers  
hatching your theses  
(which the throng of executors will never understand),  
dispensers of 70 thousand different forms  
for our everyday life —  
and for festivals  
an abundance of sweets:  
inquisitors,  
sermonizers,  
flagellants,  
spartans,  
put on your best array!  
The Kingdom of God on earth  
will come  
in two weeks from today.  
Then the last banquet will be held:  
leviathan in mustard.  
Start from the tail,  
the fish smells from the head.  
Next a wonderful dish:  
socialist realism with mushrooms  
grilled  
on the highest spit of the superstructure.  
And mighty toasts will arise:  
"We fight for the purity of the rubbish heap"  
Free discussion will flow  
along the dykes of silence  
and then will be served  
a triple melba of stone.

Straight from work  
runs  
a girl in trousers:  
—Give me sausage,  
I'm rapaciously hungry.  
I work during the day,  
and make a little more at night.  
I'm sixteen already.  
Once I accosted a poet.  
I asked him the time.  
The poet took out his watch.  
Oh, fools!  
And one like him wrote a poem for grown-ups?.  
He hasn't even grown up to my navel.  
I went out into the streets,  
I went out into the streets,  
and carried with me my brief biography:  
I'm sixteen already —  
The canvas of the Great Tent lifts,  
a zealous mannikin  
proclaims the resolution:  
—The girl is a cheat .  
This is no ordinary appetite,  
devils rumble in her bowels,  
the Lucifer of right deviation,  
the Beelzebub of middle-class illusion,  
the Belial of intellectual confusion.  
The girl is possessed.  
She refuses melba of stone.'  
Exorcize the devil!

They lived by the light of dawn  
and sowed the gloomy dark of night.  
They lived by an idea  
and parted company with men.  
They lived by a vision  
and deceit is now their daily bread

From mediaeval eyes,  
from mediaeval ears,  
from mediaeval minds,  
from mediaeval means  
the party will rid the revolution  
and at last will emerge  
as the party of Lenin.

November-December, 1955.

Translated by Alfred Dressier.