

**LIBERAL RUSSIAN LITERATURE**

**AN ABSTRACT OF**

**A THESIS**

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The purpose of this thesis is to trace the liberal trend in all periods of Russian literature.

The average American reader, unfamiliar with the works of Russian authors, may rightly suppose that no outcry against social evils has ever been voiced. It is with this idea in mind, that I have attempted to show the deep concern Russian authors in all centuries have displayed toward injustice to their fellow-man.

For more than three hundred years literature has been used as a weapon in the fight against Russian tyranny. This method of arousing the populace to existing conditions occasionally brought imprisonment, banishment or even death to the outspoken humanitarian writer. Regardless of the punishment, the voices of these authors could not be stifled by czar or dictator.

The use of the term liberal or liberalism as applied to Russian literature is to be interpreted as humanism or love of fellow-man. This type of literature has been traced from the early 17th century to the present with examples of specific authors and their works as proof of this constant trend among Russian intellectuals.

I would also like to clarify that an author who is considered a liberal does not represent a revolutionary who wishes to overthrow the present or past regimes. On the contrary, he is usually a loyal citizen, but one who sees that a government makes mistakes which should be rectified or corrected as they become apparent once they have been pointed out.

The early writers decried the imposition of serfdom on the peasant. Though centuries passed before this condition was eradicated, the change nevertheless took place. Today, the authors are asking for greater freedom in their personal lives and in the lives of all citizens. Writers wish to be free from dictated Party themes. Painters wish to express art as their inner emotions dictate. And the average citizen wishes for freedom in his personal life completely disassociated with Party dictates.

This is the liberal pattern I have attempted to trace in this thesis. This freedom that is so freely given to us in America is being dearly bought in the USSR.