



CHRONOLOGY OF THE DEBATE

Part One: 1971 - 1989

SR = *Shostakovich Reconsidered*

TNS = *The New Shostakovich*

1971 **Solomon Volkov's** book *Young Composers of Leningrad* is published in Leningrad, with a preface by Shostakovich. All references to the past are cut from this preface by the Soviet censor. Shostakovich resolves to dictate his memoirs to Volkov (SR, p. 79). Volkov: "We had first met when I was sixteen years old. He had read -- later I learned that he carefully read every article about his music -- my review, one of my very first ones, of his Eighth Quartet." (SR, p. 316.)

February. Soviet Jews demonstrate outside the Supreme Soviet, thereby winning the right to emigrate to Israel. In practice, this right is often withheld, endlessly postponed, implemented only after the bribery of Soviet officials, etc. Those whose requests to emigrate are turned down become known as *refuseniks*.

September 17th. Shostakovich suffers his second heart attack.

1971-4 **Solomon Volkov** allegedly interviews Shostakovich in "dozens of meetings" in Moscow (at the composer's apartment in Nezhdanova Street, upstairs from the offices of *Sovetskaya muzyka* where Volkov worked) and at the retreat of Repino near Leningrad. That such meetings took place is confirmed by **Galina Drubachevskaya** and **Yury Korev** of *Sovetskaya muzyka* (SR, pp. 136-8), **Flora Litvinova** (SR, pp. 251-2), **Karen Khachaturian** (SR, p. 66, n. 71), and **Maxim Shostakovich** (SR, p. 114).

1972 January. KGB crackdown on dissident intellectuals in Moscow and the Ukraine, aimed at stopping circulation of *A Chronicle of Current Events* (unofficial human rights journal founded in 1968) and its sister publication the *Ukrainian Herald* (founded in 1970).

April. Soviet authorities refuse visa for Swedish official to present Nobel Prize to Solzhenitsyn.

May. Anti-Soviet riots in Lithuania break out after the self-immolation of protesting young worker Romas Kalenta in Kaunas.

August 24th. Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize acceptance speech published in the West.

November 20th. Andrei Sakharov and **Mstislav Rostropovich** form a committee to protest against the Soviet crackdown on dissidents and to appeal for an end to the death penalty and the release of political prisoners in the USSR.

1973 March 26th. KGB questions Sakharov.

August. Trial of leading dissidents Petr Yakir and Viktor Krasin. Under KGB pressure, they plead guilty and publicly "repent".

September. Solzhenitsyn's "Letter to the Soviet Leadership".

September. Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Abandoned* [tr. Max Hayward].

October 6th. Shostakovich's elder sister Mariya dies.

December 28th. Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* is published in Paris (in Russian).

1974 February 14th. Solzhenitsyn is expelled from the USSR following the publication in Paris of *The Gulag Archipelago*.

April 14th. Sakharov calls on the Soviet government to renounce Marxism.

July 26th. Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya leave the USSR.

August. First volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* in English [tr. Thomas P. Whitney].

October 24th. Death of David Oistrakh.

December 10th. Solzhenitsyn collects his 1970 Nobel Prize.

1975 **Andrei Olkhovsky's** *Music under the Soviets: the agony of an art* (1955) is reprinted.

August 1st. Signing of the Helsinki Accords on

human rights.

August 9th. Death of Shostakovich. He is buried five days later in Moscow's Novodevichy Cemetery. Obituaries in both the Soviet Union and the West refer to him as a loyal Soviet composer and a believing Communist.

August. Second volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* in English [tr. Thomas P. Whitney].

October. Andrei Sakharov is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1976 Helsinki Watch Groups (to monitor the implementation of the Helsinki Accords) are formed in Moscow, the Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, and Armenia.

February. *A Chronicle of Current Events* reports that the KGB have interviewed **Irina Shostakovich** "concerning D. D. Shostakovich's memoirs, which he had dictated during the last four years of his life (when he was already gravely ill) to the musicologist S. Volkov. She was told that information concerning the memoirs had appeared in the West... On the advice of the KGB, [she] asked Volkov to let her read the memoirs before publication. Volkov replied that he had no copies, but would gladly comply with her request abroad."

February. Members of the Helsinki Group, led by Yuri Orlov, are arrested.

March. **Solomon Volkov** is allowed to emigrate.

July 16th. **Richard Taruskin** writes a letter of recommendation on Solomon Volkov's behalf to Columbia University: "I can confidently state that he is unquestionably the most impressive and accomplished among the Soviet emigré musicians and musicologists whom I have had occasion to meet in the last few years."

December. **Kyrill Kondrashin**, on a visit to Paris, is interviewed by Pierre Vidal about Shostakovich. [Tr. Tatjana Marovic and Ian MacDonald, as "The most extraordinary person I ever met", in Ho and Feofanov, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (1998).] Kondrashin: "[Shostakovich] was a unique personality -- the moral conscience of music in Russia."

1977 **Alexander Werth's** *Musical Uproar in Moscow*

(1949) -- containing transcripts of Zhdanov's conference on music of January 1948 -- is reprinted.

August-September. World Psychiatric Congress in Honolulu condemns the Soviet abuse of psychiatry against dissidents.

1978 Spring. Third volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* in English [tr. H. T. Willetts].

May. Trial of members of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group. Yuri Orlov jailed for seven years.

July. Trial of Anatoly Shcharansky for "treason". (As a member of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group, he coordinated the activities of *refuseniks*.) He is sentenced to ten years in the Gulag plus three years in prison. Fellow human rights campaigner Alexander Ginzburg is given seven years hard labour. Robert Toth of the *Los Angeles Times* is expelled from the USSR for having links with Soviet dissidents.

November 22. **Irina Shostakovich** makes a statement to the Soviet copyright agency VAAP: "Everyone whom this [*Testimony*] concerned knew about it. The journal *Sovetskaya muzyka* knew about it as well."

December 14th. Soviet attempts to dissuade Harper & Row from publishing *Testimony* having failed, a memorandum of the Department of Culture suggests that "the 'memoirs' of D. D. Shostakovich" should be attacked "through Soviet and foreign organs of mass media... as an anti-Soviet forgery, discrediting the name of the great composer".

1979 April. Brezhnev receives the Lenin Prize for literature.

October. Publication of [Testimony](#) in English (tr. Antonina Bouis). "An extremely powerful, grim, gripping book and one that will set the record straight." -- **Harold C. Schonberg**, *New York Times Review of Books*. "No single account portrays so nakedly, so brutally, the crushing hand of Stalin on Russia's cultural and creative life." -- **Harrison Salisbury**. "These memoirs have afforded me an insight into Shostakovich's thoughts which would otherwise have been quite impossible." -- **André Previn**. "Book of the Year." -- *The Times*.

November. [The Soviet anti-Testimony campaign](#), coordinated by KGB colonel **Vassily Sitnikov** (see

SR, pp. 50-51), begins. At the Sixth Congress of Soviet Composers, **Tikhon Khrennikov** denounces *Testimony* as "a vile falsification". Deputy Minister of Culture **Vasily Kukharsky** calls *Testimony* "a vile attempt to rouse distrust in cultural relations [between the USSR and the West]". *Literaturnaya gazeta* attacks Volkov as a "bed-bug" and publishes a "letter" -- signed by **Veniamin Basner, Kara Karayev, Yury Levitin, Karen Khachaturian, Boris Tishchenko, and Moisey Weinberg** -- which condemns *Testimony* as a "pitiful forgery". **Boris Chaikovsky, Rodion Shchedrin, Georgiy Sviridov, and Galina Ustvolskaya** refuse to sign. (For Tishchenko's role in the *Testimony* affair, see SR, pp. 67-72.) **Maxim Shostakovich** criticises the content of *Testimony* in a radio broadcast.

December 15th. "There is nothing which makes me doubt at all the authenticity of [*Testimony*]." -- **Mark Lubotsky** (*Vrij Nederland*).

1980 January. Protesting against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, are internally exiled to Gorky.

March. **Peter Schaeffer** (*Books & Arts*) attacks Solomon Volkov: "Who is this Volkov? Is one to take at face value the vilification not only of some of the leading lights of Soviet culture, but also the malice and bitterness with which Shostakovich purportedly speaks of Stanislavsky, Rolland, Shaw, and Feuchtwanger? Is all his life and work, the Symphony on the Siege of Leningrad, on the Year 1906 [sic], on the Year 1917, to be taken as an existential lie?"

John Warrack (*Opera*) reviews *Testimony*: "I wish [the memoirs] were not true; but I am afraid they are.' Thus a very distinguished Soviet musician, privately; and other Soviet musicians and acquaintances have confided more or less the same thing."

September 9th. "[The Interior Shostakovich](#)", a statement by **Kyrill Kondrashin**, is read during a symposium at Bucknell University, New York. [Tr. Antonina Bouis in Ho and Feofanov, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (1998).] Kondrashin reveals his "programmatic" interpretations of Shostakovich's symphonies. Also: "The Interior Shostakovich", a statement by **Rostislav Dubinsky**, likewise read at the same symposium: "When I read *Testimony*, I saw Shostakovich himself. I saw him behind every sentence, heard the characteristic manner of his

nervous, jagged conversation, always carrying a subtext." (For the complete text, see *DSCH Journal* 8 [1997].)

September 21st. **Harold C. Schonberg** (*The New York Times*) reviews Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky's *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich*: "A contemptible book... a reflection of current Soviet hagiography... a portrait of Shostakovich as a Soviet Boy Scout [that] is in complete disagreement with everything we know about the man."

October. **Laurel Fay's** essay "Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose Testimony?" (*The Russian Review*). Fay challenges the authenticity of *Testimony* on many factual grounds and accuses Solomon Volkov of plagiarizing passages from articles "by" Shostakovich published in Soviet periodicals and books during the composer's life. These passages, signed by Shostakovich, occur at the beginnings of chapters in *Testimony*, suggesting premeditated fraudulent intent on Volkov's part. (He does not respond to Fay's charges.)

1981 April. **Maxim Shostakovich** defects to the West. Reflecting on his criticisms of *Testimony* whilst in the USSR, he explains: "We were afraid that the book might have serious consequences for our family." **Solomon Volkov**: "They faced a moral dilemma, because they could not imitate Shostakovich: go along with the authorities outwardly, but be a hidden dissident. *Testimony* denied them a moral fig leaf." (*SR*, p. 60, fn. 51.)

June. **Maxim Shostakovich** is interviewed by Boris Schwarz: "If [*Testimony*] accomplished one good thing, it is that it revealed for the first time the tragedy of the mask of loyalty that my father had to wear all his life."

August 23rd. **Maxim Shostakovich** (*The New York Times*): "The attitude of Shostakovich toward the regime [depicted in *Testimony*] is correct... My father hated the [Soviet] tyranny. If this book changed in any way the attitude of the public toward Shostakovich as a court musician of the Soviet government, it's very good. If it proved that Shostakovich wasn't a servant of the Communist party, then thank God."

September. Eugenia Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind* [tr. Ian Boland]. -- The sequel to Ginzburg's autobiography *Into the Whirlwind*,

which, in 1967, could only be published by finishing with a false statement of the author's communist orthodoxy and faith in "Leninist truth". Concluding Ginzburg's account of her life in the Gulag, *Within the Whirlwind* makes explicit her complete alienation from the Soviet system.

December. The "re-Stalinization" of Poland. General Jaruzelski decrees martial law. Solidarity is repressed. Mass arrests follow.

1982 June. The English expert on Russian and Soviet music **Gerald Abraham** (*The Times Literary Supplement*) pronounces *Testimony* "genuine" based on Kyrill Kondrashin's endorsement and information from a "reliable source" in the Soviet Union.

Christopher Norris (ed.), *Shostakovich: The Man and His Music* is published in London by the leftwing imprint Lawrence & Wishart. Norris calls *Testimony* "too good to be true from an anti-Soviet viewpoint".

September. The last of the Helsinki Watch Groups is disbanded.

November 10th. Brezhnev dies. Andropov succeeds him as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

1983 **Boris Schwarz** (*Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981*): "The overall impression [made by *Testimony*] is very persuasive."

Claude Samuel interviews **Rostropovich** and **Vishnevskaya** in Paris. (Tr. Thomas Glasow, as *Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya: Russia, Music, and Liberty*, 1995.) Vishnevskaya: "When you live in Russia, what can you do? How can Soviet artists be accused of not supporting Poland? [The Solidarity movement.] If they make one move, they'll be arrested, just like that... Over there you were always afraid 'friends' would betray you sooner or later. In a system where the government pushes people to act underhandedly, to build a career on dirty tricks, and to obtain personal benefits by being an informant, how can you help fearing that a friend might betray you for material gain?" Rostropovich: "Imagine yourself in the company of someone whom you consider your friend. And, in the friendliest of manners, he says to you, 'You know, life is atrocious in this country! What corruption!' And you start thinking, 'He might

be an undercover agent --' In Russia, this has become a sickness. So, whenever you speak sincerely to a friend, even a very close friend, you instantly feel you are being shut out. For example, let's take Shostakovich or Prokofiev. Obviously they could not be accused or even suspected of being agents. Yet, sometimes, if someone else had said the same sorts of things to me as Shostakovich or Prokofiev said, well, I would have been afraid and stopped the conversation. Because that type of provocation is rampant at home. They send us people who are violently critical of the regime to make us respond in the same way... When Solzhenitsyn first came to stay with us, there was no thought of our becoming political. It was simply a humanitarian act. When they wanted to force us to drive him out, that's when the bomb exploded." Vishnevskaya: "We entered into open opposition against the regime, against the lie. You know how that turned out! We found ourselves back here, which is to say we were chased out!"

1984 January 29th-30th. "**Rudolf Barshai** remembers Shostakovich", BBC Radio 3. Barshai describes *Testimony* as "true -- the authentic voice of Shostakovich, but not the whole story".

February 9th. Andropov dies. Chernenko succeeds him.

Boris Schwarz, "Shostakovich, Soviet Citizen and Anti-Stalinist" (in *Music and Civilization: essays in honor of Paul Henry Lang*).

Malcolm H. Brown (ed.), *Russian and Soviet Music: essays for Boris Schwarz*. Includes **Joachim Braun**, "Shostakovich's Song Cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*: aspects of style and meaning". Braun calls *FJFP* "a masterpiece of the composer's 'secret language' of dissent".

Galina Vishnevskaya's Galina: A Russian Story: "How the authorities hastened to cover up the traces of the gradual murder of that great man! But they deluded themselves if they thought that by presenting Shostakovich in their package, by palming a Party card off on him, they had made him the very image of a loyal communist... If music can be called anti-communist, I think Shostakovich's music should be called by that name."

1985 March 10th. Chernenko dies. Gorbachev succeeds him.

Solomon Volkov's *Balanchine's Tchaikovsky* published in New York.

Joachim Braun, "The Double Meaning of Jewish Elements in Dimitri Shostakovich's Music" (*Musical Quarterly*). "The use of Jewish elements in Shostakovich's music reaches far beyond their specific Jewishness. The intrinsic meaning of these elements is of a socio-symbolic nature and may be interpreted as concealed dissidence. It is in fact a hidden language of resistance."

1985-6 **Sofiya Khentova**, *Shostakovich: zhizhn' i tvorchestvo [Shostakovich: life and works]*, published in Moscow (2 vols).

1986 Summer. Gorbachev institutes policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The literary censor, Glavlit, is ordered to relax its rules.

September. **Maxim Shostakovich**, interviewed by Michael Berkeley on BBC-2, endorses *Testimony*: "It's true. It's accurate... The basis of the book is correct."

December 16th. Gorbachev releases Sakharov from internal exile in Gorky.

1987 Tengiz Abuladze's anti-Stalinist film satire *Repentance* (1984) is allowed to be screened. It causes a national sensation.

Mikhail Chulaki, "Today I will tell you about Shostakovich", *Zvezda* [tr. excerpts in Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994)]. Chulaki relates the grotesque circumstances of the early Soviet performances of the Fifth Symphony -- an account which conflicts with the chronological sequence given by Richard Taruskin's in his essay on the Fifth Symphony in David Fanning's *Shostakovich Studies* (1995). (Taruskin does not cite Chulaki.)

August. Formation of the All-Union Federation of Socialist Clubs (FSOK) in opposition to Stalinist-Brezhnevite "socialism".

November 7th. Peter Maniura's documentary "The Public and Private Voice of Dmitri Shostakovich" is broadcast as the first programme in BBC-2's season *Shostakovich: A Career*. A largely revisionist account, the film includes contributions by Irina Shostakovich, Maxim Shostakovich, Galina

Shostakovich, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Leonid Trauberg, Galina Vishnevskaya, Yevgeny Nesterenko, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Rudolf Barshai, Solomon Volkov, Yuri Lyubimov, Karen Khachaturian, and Tikhon Khrennikov.

November 15th. Tony Palmer's film of *Testimony*, with Ben Kingsley as Shostakovich and Terence Rigby as Stalin, is premiered at the London Film Festival. (The soundtrack music is performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Barshai.)

1988 January. **Maxim Shostakovich** interviewed by Volkov ("On 'Late' Shostakovich"): "It was one of the tricks of Soviet critics of the time to write that Shostakovich was getting sick and therefore began writing tragic music. Father wasn't conveying his personal health but the health of an era, of the times."

May. Foundation of the Democratic Union (the first opposition party in the USSR since the liquidation of the SRs in 1918).

June. Foundation of Sajudis, the Lithuanian nationalist movement.

August. Riot police break up a demonstration by the Democratic Union (organised to commemorate the Soviet repression of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia in 1968).

November. The Estonian Supreme Soviet declares juridical independence.

John Amis's BBC Radio 3 documentary "Shostakovich: Music in the Shadow of Stalin". Contributors include: Solomon Volkov, Maxim Shostakovich, Galina Vishnevskaya, Mstislav Rostropovich, Lyuba Edlina, Rostislav Dubinsky, Peter Pears, and Edward Downes.

1989 David Fanning, *The Breath of the Symphonist: Shostakovich's Tenth*.

January 12th-17th. Five performances of Shostakovich's anti-Stalinist satire *Rayok* under Rostropovich at the Kennedy Centre, Washington, and at Carnegie Hall. *Rayok*, alluded to in *Testimony*, did not hitherto officially exist. Its authenticity is confirmed by **Irina Shostakovich**, **Maxim Shostakovich**, **Mstislav Rostropovich**, and **Boris Tishchenko** (who later orchestrates the

work).

January 20th. Discussing *Rayok* with Irina Shostakovich in *Sovetskaya kultura*, **Andrei Alexandrov** writes: "Considering the musico-political satire that is nowadays being discovered in Shostakovich and the incredible courage, intelligence, and will-power of the man and the artist, one is ashamed of the scribblers who try to defame his integrity, accusing him of cowardice and opportunism. May this composition serve as a lesson to them."

March 2nd. **Richard Taruskin**, "The Opera and the Dictator: the peculiar martyrdom of Dmitri Shostakovich" (*New Republic*). Taruskin recalls Solomon Volkov's arrival in the USA in 1976 and the letter of recommendation he wrote on Volkov's behalf. "Thus I became an early accomplice in what was, I later realized, a shameful exploitation." He describes media and academic reaction to *Testimony's* depiction of Shostakovich as a "hidden dissident" (Solomon Volkov, 1981 [April]): "Everyone wanted to believe it. Therefore, according to ecstatic reviewers, it was all true. The reception of *Testimony* was the greatest critical scandal I have ever witnessed. For, as any proper scholar could plainly see, the book was a fraud." Summarising Laurel Fay's essay "Shostakovich versus Volkov: whose Testimony?", Taruskin attacks Tony Palmer's film *Testimony* as "appalling... maudlin sanctimony", contrasting what he regards as Palmer's platitudinous idealisation of Shostakovich with his (Taruskin's) interpretation of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* as a political attempt to conform with Stalin's demonisation of the peasants during collectivization. Taruskin sees the opera as the product of "a hideous moral inversion", charging Shostakovich with "dehumanization": "The opera remains a profoundly inhumane work of art. Its chilling treatment of the victims amounts to a justification of genocide." Describing the work's fall from grace in January 1936, Taruskin writes: "Thus was Dmitri Shostakovich, perhaps Soviet Russia's most loyal musical son, and certainly her most talented one, made a sacrificial lamb, precisely for his pre-eminence among Soviet artists of his generation... The fate of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* opened Shostakovich's eyes to the nature of the regime under which he was condemned to live. It could be argued that the work's martyrdom humanized its creator... A great deal of evidence suggests that in his later years Shostakovich became desperately obsessed with his historical image, and

with the theme of self-justification. For he did have a history of collaboration to live down."

Summer. Formation of the Congress of People's Deputies and inauguration of the reformed Supreme Soviet. To oppose the conservative/communist rump, Congress radicals (led by Yeltsin, Sakharov, Yuri Afanasiev, and Gavril Popov) launch the reformist Inter-Regional group.

August. A million people join hands in a human chain across Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in commemorative protest against the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939. The Polish communists are defeated in free elections and replaced by the anti-communist government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

September. Foundation of Rukh, the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Hungary opens its border with Austria.

September 25th. A more "complete" version of *Rayok* is premiered in Moscow. The additional section consists of an epilogue ("an ode to tireless vigilance") composed by Shostakovich in the late 1960s.

Second edition of Seppo Heikinheimo's Finnish translation of *Testimony* includes a statement by **Maxim Shostakovich**: "Everything that the book says about the persecution of my father and politics in general is certainly true."

October 1st-2nd. **Stephen Johnson** ("The Roots of *Testimony*", BBC Radio 3), investigates doubts about the authenticity of *Testimony*: "Until we find out for certain, we will have to take *Testimony* with a good deal more than a pinch of salt."

October. **Rostislav Dubinsky**, *Stormy Applause: making music in a worker's state*. The tone of Dubinsky's caustic account of the Soviet music scene and his dissident portrayal of Shostakovich closely correspond with *Testimony*.

October. **Rostropovich's** recording of *Rayok* is released on Erato. Its libretto's excremental imagery reflects arguably the most vituperative satire since Swift. **André Lischké**: "For Shostakovich to have reached this point of repulsion in his irony, Zhdanov and his allies, and his successors, must really have inflicted some incurable wounds." **Michael Oliver** (*Gramophone*) reviews the disc: "*Rayok* is the most explicit testimony we have to Shostakovich's contempt for the Soviet powers-that-be."

October-December. Erich Honecker overthrown in the GDR. The Baltic states declare independence. The Czechoslovakian communist regime is peacefully replaced by Václav Havel's democratic government. The communist regimes in Bulgaria and Romania collapse.

December. **Vladimir Ashkenazy** (*Gramophone*): "Shostakovich honours everywhere he can the Soviet individuals who stand up against the omnipresent powers. That, basically, is the theme and the context of his work. In the end it really doesn't matter what society and what injustices we are talking about -- music like his communicates a message so powerful, so important and so direct that people everywhere understand it."

[Go to Chronology Part 2.](#) [Back to Shostakovichiana.](#) [Back to Contents.](#)
