The Russian Revolution And The Annihilation Of The Individual; Case In Point - Pasternak's Pasha Antipov

Franklin L. Kamp
St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1959/iss1/5

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1959/iss1/5 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
The Russian Revolution And The Annihilation Of The Individual; Case In Point - Pasternak's Pasha Antipov

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Throughout the works of literature, there constantly appear certain characters who, although merely products of an author's imaginative pen, make such a profound impression at first meeting that they live on further within the mind of the reader. They are those who are deliberately molded in such a way as to emphasize either main, or lesser, themes of a work solely by their own motivations and actions, as if divorced from all other activity. In this way, the theme itself, personified in the character, becomes an unforgettable rondo, playing itself again and again in our memory."

Cover Page Footnote
Appeared in the issue: Volume 4, Spring, 1959.
Throughout the works of literature, there constantly appear certain charac-
ters who, although merely products of
an author's imaginative pen, make
such a profound impression at first
meeting that they live on further with-
in the mind of the reader. They are
those who are deliberately molded in
such a way as to emphasize either
main, or lesser, themes of a work solely
by their own motivations and actions,
as if divorced from all other activity.
In this way, the theme itself, personi-
fied in the character, becomes an un-
forgettable rondo, playing itself again
and again in our memory.

One such figure is Pavel Pavlovich
Antipov, alias Commissar Strelnikov,
the creation of Boris Pasternak, in
Doctor Zhivago. Here was a man who,
although born of poverty in the tumultu-
ous environment that was later to ex-
plode into the Russian revolution, ap-
peared eminently successful in his life.
Employed as a teacher in a provincial
university, Antipov's future, with his
loving and devoted wife and child,
looked to be hopefully bright. Yet he
was not happy; indeed he was restless
and unsettled, even uncomfortable.

Leaving his family and position, Anti-
 pov joined the Russian army, was
eventually taken prisoner and disap-
ppeared from sight.

Years later, when he returns, all
traces of the shy, mischievous youth or
the aspiring scholar or the successful
husband have vanished. It is 1917 and
Pasha Antipov is no more. Out of his
grave steps Strelnikov, the hated ruth-
less leader of the Revolutionary army.
Reputedly known as, "The Wild
Beast" or "The Executioner," Strelni-
kov paves his way with bloodshed and
suffering until finally, when the Party
decrees that his usefulness is at an end,
he is pursued into the UralS where, in
front of a desolate cabin, he dies with
a bullet in his head, by his own hand.

Why?

Pasternak, through the voice of
Strelnikov or Antipov, gives reasons
for this change in a man's life, but
they are important only insofar as they
contribute to a clearer comprehension
of the central theme—the madness of
the Revolution as it affected the indi-
vidual. For not only was the old order
overthrown, not only were existing so-
cial institutions scattered to the winds,
but truly every walk of life was obliterated, the world was thrown upside down, and man as man was lost in its confusion, as Pasha Antipov was. The new regime was welcomed and acclaimed but when it too was found failing, there could be no turning back, no further upheaval. Fear and violence engendered a giant that had destroyed society and was now beginning to feed upon the individual — upon his conscience, upon his soul.

JAMES BOND:

INTERMEZZO

Majestic movements, tumultuous tomes, counterpoint
Of solid ideas have now the air their ponderous,
Oaken, creaking, hinge-sounds quit;
For this is the voice of reality—
The ordered creaking of the cosmos—
The crescendo and diminuendo of the market place of all.
Of the iron-forger, of the human personality strangled by its ties
Selling its soul to buy another length
And of the mind, the latter where the soul-bought sweet soaks the scalp
And not the buttondown.

Ascending to the gap
The silver tongued flute
Now bends the air
And punctuates the tunnelled vowels
Of the English horn.
Together, in a coursing diminuendo
They create in a spiral, downward
Down,
Down,
Down,
Down,
Down into the river of Tuonela,
Sheathed in nothing but a vision,
An idea,
But more a liquid,
And are alone.