

Druzhba Narodov Digital Archive

Influential literary journal highlighting writing from across the Soviet Union

Founded in March 1939 on the initiative of Maxim Gorky, *Druzhba Narodov* (Дружба народов, Friendship of the Peoples) is one of the Soviet Union's most influential "thick" literary journals and a major institution of Russian-language publishing across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The journal began as an almanac designed to bring the literature of the Soviet republics into a shared cultural forum. Its core mission was to introduce readers in the Russian-language center to prose, poetry, and literary commentary produced across the USSR's many languages—Uzbek, Georgian, Armenian, and many others—through publication in Russian translation.

After a wartime hiatus (June 1941–October 1943), the publication resumed, eventually establishing a bimonthly schedule in 1949 and transitioning to a monthly journal in 1955. During the Soviet era, *Druzhba Narodov* operated under the auspices of the Union of Soviet Writers and became one of the principal platforms for the state doctrine of "friendship among nations." The journal helped consolidate a tradition of literary translation as a high-status intellectual craft, with leading Russian poets and writers serving as translators and adapters—including Boris Pasternak, Nikolai Zabolotsky, Pavel Antokolsky, Semyon Lipkin, Arseny Tarkovsky, and others.

Across decades, the journal published a wide range of major Soviet and post-Soviet authors and critics, including Viktor Astafiev, Vasyl Bykov, Rasul Gamzatov, Fazil Iskander, Bulat Okudzhava, Anatoly Rybakov, Alexander Tvardovsky, Vasily Shukshin, Lev Gumilev, Kornelii Chukovsky, Svetlana Alexievich, and many others. Its pages document shifting literary and political climates from the late Stalin period through Khrushchev's Thaw, the era of late Soviet stagnation, the rupture of perestroika, and the cultural realignments of the post-1991 period. Following the dissolution of the USSR, *Druzhba Narodov* moved from being an official organ of the Union of Writers to an independent, privately published journal.

The Druzhba Narodov Digital Archive supports advanced research and teaching by providing a fully digitized, searchable corpus that can be used to trace authors, themes, genres, regions, and translation practices over time. It is particularly valuable for scholarship on Soviet cultural policy, center-periphery relations, literary translation and mediation, nationalism and multinationalism, and the evolving relationship between literature and public discourse.



Key Stats

- **Archive:** 1939-2025
- **Language:** Russian
- **City:** Moscow

About the Archive

The Druzhba Narodov Digital Archive provides comprehensive online access to a major institution of Russian-language publishing for nearly nine decades. The fully digitized archive offers scholars an unparalleled record of interethnic literary exchange from the Stalin era to the post-Soviet present.

- **Country:** Russia
- **Frequency:** Monthly
- **Format:** PDF, article-based
- **Producer:** East View Information Services
- **Platform:** East View Universal Database

The archive offers scholars the most comprehensive collection available for this title, with an additional year's worth of content added on an annual basis. Featuring full page-level digitization, complete original graphics, and a user-friendly bilingual interface in Russian and English, the searchable database enables efficient exploration of key literary content.

More about the Soviet “Thick Journals”

The famed Soviet *tolstye zhurnaly*, or “thick journals,” were significant platforms for literary and intellectual discourse. These journals served multiple roles:

They acted as **repositories of high culture**, preserving the intellectual and literary achievements of the era. Given the limited avenues for independent publishing, these journals were the primary platforms where established and emerging writers could reach an audience.

State-Controlled Outlets. While they were crucial platforms for intellectual and artistic expression, it's important to remember that these journals were often used to propagate official ideologies, and the works published in them usually underwent rigorous censorship.

Academic Importance. For academics studying the Soviet period, *tolstye zhurnaly* offer a valuable glimpse into the state-sanctioned intellectual climate of the time. They provide context for how literature and intellectual thought evolved under different political and social conditions.

Catalysts for Change. During more liberal periods, such as the Khrushchev Thaw and the perestroika years, *tolstye zhurnaly* could act as catalysts for change, pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable to discuss and publish.

Tolstye zhurnaly such as *Druzhba Narodov* played a complex and multifaceted role in Soviet intellectual and literary life. They were not merely publications but institutions that shaped and were shaped by the cultural, intellectual, and political currents of their time.

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