

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

"vertisol" soil that was once left fallow. And in Peru, a new "upland" variety of rice has raised crop yields by 40 percent during each of the past two years. Avery sees even more promising agricultural technologies on the horizon. Genetic engineers are now perfecting viral insecticides, new varieties of ammonia-producing bacteria (to fertilize soil), and vaccines against the hoof-and-mouth disease in livestock.

The sad exception to this otherwise rosy picture is famine-ridden sub-Saharan Africa. Avery blames bad planning by government leaders (and Western advisers) who rushed to industrialize backward societies. They failed to educate their farmers in new agricultural techniques. To appease city-dwellers, they fixed food prices at bargain-basement levels. The result: African farmers lacked the means and the incentives to get the most out of their fields. Among others, Tanzania and Ethiopia made matters worse by "collectivizing" family farms. Yet Avery believes that many African regimes have learned from their mistakes. He expects that their farm output will begin to rise soon.

Ironically, such successes spell trouble for the United States, a major grain and soybean exporter. The cost of federal crop subsidies to highly productive U.S. farmers has soared to \$15 billion a year. Under the present system, such payments may rise even more, as U.S. crop surpluses mount at the same time that overseas competitors of America's farmers put more food on tables throughout the world.

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*Soviet Art
After the Thaw*

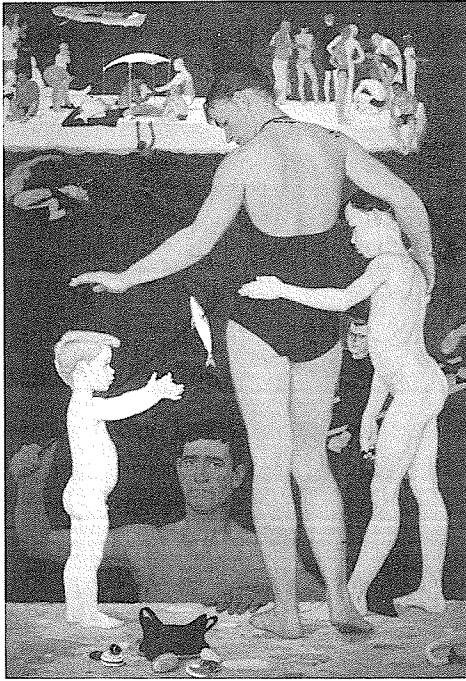
"Report from Moscow: Soviet Art Today" by Jamey Gambrell, in *Art in America* (Nov. 1985), Brant Art Publications, 980 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Imagine, says Gambrell, a contributing editor of *Art in America*, that the U.S. government controlled all art exhibits, art magazines, and art projects in America. The result would be pretty dull art.

For Soviet artists, such control has been a reality since the days of Josef Stalin (1924-53). His state-mandated "socialist realism" (the credo that art should applaud Soviet political aims) left room only for a "varnished reality"; painters such as Dmitrii Nalbandian filled museums with austere portraits of the Great Leaders (e.g., Lenin and Stalin) and scenes of industrious citizens at work. After Stalin's death, the "cult of personality" became a political liability. Tributes to the Great Leaders fell by the wayside. A cultural "thaw" under Nikita Khrushchev (1953-64) allowed men such as Petr Ossovskii, Alexander Savitskii, and Yurii Korolev, among others, to paint with "ferocious seriousness." Patriotic battle scenes, sharp-edged and dour, counterbalanced images of nameless peasants in daily life.

Despite its didactic approach, recent Soviet art has exhibited a greater diversity in style and subject matter than Western art critics anticipated.

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Family at the Ocean (1964). Although Dmitrii Zbilinskii studied painting along Stalinist lines during the 1950s, he soon rejected the severe style. Recently, when asked about Soviet art of the 1940s and '50s, he replied that it was "a very bad time for art."

In Moscow, "The Exhibition of 23" (1981) assembled the works of the best Soviet artists of the 1970s: Alexander Sitnov displayed chimerical Chagall-like animals, while Vadim Dementiev romanticized Moscow's streets; Natalia Nesterova portrayed lovers and squat folk strolling through parks; Olga Bulgakova showed the 19th-century author Nikolai Gogol in a surreal setting. Thematically, many Soviet artists moved away from "politically correct" subjects, toward domestic scenes. Patriotism was reserved for images of pre-revolutionary Mother Russia.

Today's Soviet art has found little favor among the Moscow intelligentsia. The latest fad is "hyperrealism," a style derived from the crisp objectivity of contemporary American "photorealists." The elite critics complain that the artists of the 1980s lack imagination, that they do no more than paint "just what they see."

Given Moscow's ever-changing aesthetic climate, what endures in Soviet art? Cambrell's answer: the works of painters such as Ilya Glazunov, whose images of medieval Russia, filled with religious and nationalist motifs, are despised by many Soviet artists but adored by the public. In 1978, his one-man show packed Moscow's largest exhibition hall, drawing over two million viewers and earning Glazunov the coveted accolade of "People's Artist."

Ignoring the reservations of the Kremlin, Glazunov has even painted portraits of Western rock idols (The Beatles) and movie stars (Gina Lollobrigida). Thus, in Cambrell's opinion, Glazunov may owe his popular success in part to "a bit of dissidence."