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*POSTER FOR THE FILM* KOMSOMOL *by A. VAN der VEER*

**Michael Zoshchenko**

# Love

*Excerpts from* The Azure Book

When Death creeps up silently behind our bed-heads and, with a sinister "Aha!" begins to deprive us of the life that even until now, seems precious and sweet, there is one feeling we regret most of all to lose.

2

Of all the marvellous feelings and phenomena with which nature has generously endowed us, love, I think, will be the hardest for us to leave behind.

In poetic language, when the departing soul must say farewell to this world, it will struggle and groan and beg and pray to be left behind, and create the most humiliating scene complaining that its eyes have not yet beheld all they might have beheld and that they long to see something more.

It is all nonsense, of course. The soul has really seen its share of everything. These are only excuses that show the depth and extent of our feelings and longings rather than anything else.

3

There are, of course, other very remarkable and praise-worthy feelings which we are bound to regret bitterly at parting. For example, we will undoubtedly be sorry to think that we shall nevermore hear the music of bands and symphony orchestras, nevermore sail the sea in a steamer, nevermore gather fragrant lilies-of-the-valley in springtime. It will be sad to give up work we loved and never again spend a long holiday lying on the sea-shore.

For all these are very pleasant things, things we shall be sorry to part with. We may even weep over them. But over love we shall shed the bitterest tears of all. And when at last we have bidden farewell to this sentiment, the whole will, I imagine, lose its brightness, and seem empty and cold and dull.

As a poet has said: "Love beautifies life, love is Nature's enchantment," and, "An inward conviction exists that every substitute for love is contemptible and insignificant."

Now you see, Musset, the French poet, has said that all other feelings are contemptible by comparison with this. He is not right, of course. He is inclined to exaggerate.

4

Furthermore, it must be remembered that these lines were written by a Frenchman, that is, by a person who was extremely sensual, and probably a lady's man, as one might say, who was liable to blurt out God knows what from sheer excess of feeling.

The French of Paris, so we have been told, go out of an evening to saunter about the boulevards. At a time like this they have eyes for nothing but pretty girls. These they fondly designate *tous les poules*. So you guess what connoisseurs they are of feminine grace and beauty!

We cannot, therefore, sympathize with the astonishing ardor of those poetic lines as warmly as might be expected of us.

These are only excuses that showthedepth and extent of our feelings and

*5*

Now let us glance at the Russian poet, who, far from lagging behind the fiery Gaul, even outstrips him. Not only on the subject of love itself, but also on the state of being in love, we find astonishing lines like these:

*Oh blessed state, thou art more stern than Fate;*
*Stronger than ancient laws our fathers made,*
*Sweeter than martial bugle-call.*

Which goes to prove that our renowned poet regarded this feeling as one of the highest on earth, something far above either the extremely severe criminal code of war-time, or the parent's will or fate.

*6*

We find lines no less forcible than these, written by another Russian poet. It must be explained the poet's home, in which he had spent the happiest days of his childhood, had just burned down. It is curious to observe how the poet consoled himself after the conflagration.

This is how he tells the tale. He describes it all in verse:

*It seemed all the joys of my childhood*
*Were destroyed in that ruined home;*
*And I longed, as I leaned o'er the river*
*To die like the old house—alone.*
*Then a face in a boat glided by me,*
*With a radiance that mirrored the moon.*
*And if she so desire it*
*And if the moon will allow*
*I'll build me a home far fairer*
*In the unexplored depths of her heart.*

In other words—to make a free translation of lofty poetry into democratic prose, one can more or less gather that the poet, crazy with grief, wanted to throw himself into the water. At the critical moment, however, he caught sight of a pretty young woman sailing by in a boat. He fell in love with her quite unexpectedly—at first sight, as we say, and this love turned his thoughts away from his frightful sufferings and even temporarily took his mind off his anxiety about finding a new apartment. It would appear from this verse that the poet was actually thinking of taking up his abode with the lady. Or perhaps, he is thinking of building some kind of a little extension, or even a lean-to attached to her house, if, as he vaguely intimates, she would care for it, and if the moon and, incidentally, the House Management Office will permit. The moon has obviously been dragged in for poetic effect, for it cannot be of much use here. As far as the House Management Office is concerned it is very likely it will not permit any such thing, even if the lady in the boat should so desire, for the couple are not legally united and in general, there might easily be some underhand work going on in a case like this.

I do not know for certain, of course, because very possibly our rough soldier's mind, stunned by the heavy artillery of two wars, may not be capable of grasping the delicate inter-weaving of poetic lines and sentiments. We venture, however, to make an approximate guess, since we have a little personal knowledge of life, and understand the needs of people whose lives do not always lead along the flower strewn paths of poetry.

This poet speaks of love as a lofty feeling which, if a certain degree of irresponsibility is allowed for, may take the place of essential things like apartments. This last assertion, however, we shall leave entirely to the conscience of the poet.

*7*

It is an opinion not confined to three fiery poets alone.

All the rest twanged their lyres, too, even the most tuneless of lyres, and sang words of love even more astonishing and shameless than these.

There is a little thing of Apukhtin's that goes like this:

*The heart when it loves, is born anew*
*Tara-ra-ra rum—tum—tum,*
*All that is sacred and best in the soul*
*Tara-ra-ra tum—tum.*

This, I may tell you, was not written by a mere callow youth of eighteen, but by a respectable looking fellow of forty-eight or so, impossibly stout and very unhappy in his private life. In spite of all this, you can see that he regards everything else as dead and lifeless until love awakes in his heart.

*8*

Then there are some mad lines like:

*What is love? O love! O love!*
*When the sun turns to blood,*
*When the blood turns to flame . . .*

And then—let's see—how the devil does it go?—Oh, yes:

*When that heavenly shade is regained once more*
*Death is the master, but death's master is love.*

I should say that even French poetry falls a little short of this, and that it has not the headlong passion of the above lines. They were written by a Russian poetess, by the way, who lived at the beginning of this century and was, it is said, rather good-looking. At all events, she had the poetic temperament to a remarkable degree. You can see that she must have been positively quivering with it when she composed these lines, but that is more of a biographical fact than an example of poetry . . . . She must have been very moody, and played the fool very often. She lounged about in bed all day, very likely, without washing her face. Reading her own verses aloud all the time. And her poor idiot of a husband had to sit and listen and make remarks: "Oh, darling, that's wonderful! There's real genius in that!" And she would say: "Is that so?"

Idiots! And then they both went and died, she of tuberculosis and he—of something infectious, very likely.

*9*

At this point many sceptics, scholars and pedants, whose hearts have frozen hard during their lonely wanderings through the Arctic regions of science, will shrug their shoulders on reading these verses and say: this is the im-

moderate opinion of extremists who possess hearts much too fiery, souls much too careless and a thoroughly depraved outlook on life.

They will be surprised to find that this feeling should call out opinions and verses and words that they did not even know and would never have imagined it possible to pronounce on such a subject.

Perhaps it is surprising, really, that it should be so and that we should have such poetry. Not long ago a work in prose fell into my hands. Its author was the famous singer, Fedor Ivanovich Chaliapin.

In this book he admits with perfect frankness and sincerity that all he ever did in his life, was done for the sake of love and women.

*10*

So those are the kind of opinions poetically inclined people are apt to have about love.

As for the sober and reasonable folk, as for the philosophers and various other thinkers, whose minds have shed a great deal of light on the most mysterious and complex phenomena of life—as for these people, I say, they have said every little on the subject. Occasionally, of course, they have accorded it some consideration, laughed at it and even, from time to time, uttered a world-wise aphorism or two about it.

Among the more depressing of these utterances we shall quote you, if you like, those of Schopenhauer, one of the gloomiest philosophers the world has ever known.

This gloomy philosopher—whose wife probably deceived him at every end and turn—said the following on the subject of love:

"Love is the blind will to live. It lures man on with phantoms of individual happiness and makes him an instrument of his own ends."

Of his more foolish utterances we shall take the following:

"Love is, as it were, a symphony of heavenly sounds."

And of the more poetical:

"Never strike a woman, even with a flower."

Of the more sober, having a tendency to idealism:

"Love derives from advantages which he who loves values the more, the less he himself possesses of them."

The philosopher Plato, who is not unknown to most of us, even suggested the following theorem:

"The essence of love lies in the union of the greatest opposites."[1]

Among the more correct estimates we should like to quote our great poet and philosopher, Pushkin, who said first love was like a seed falling in soil prepared for it in springtime.

*11*

The foregoing, of course, deals with the philosophy and mechanics of love.

As regards precise researches in that field, we know very little. Perhaps it

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[1] Curiously enough, Plato changed his views later. In his "Ideal State" he lays down the following rules: "Between twenty and forty years of age a woman should bear children for the state. Between thirty and fifty-five years a man should create children for the state. The strongest should cohabit with the strongest, the weakest with the weakest. The children of the first should be reared, the children of the second—thrown away." If this odd law had been put in force, the world would never have known either Napoleon, whose father was twenty-two years of age and his mother eighteen, nor Pushkin, whose father was twenty-six.

is just as well. Perhaps it is better not to know anything at all. For perception seems to spoil and darken almost everything it touches.

How truly Dostoyevski has observed: "Too much perception and even the power of perception itself, is a disease." Another writer called his play *Woe from the Mind,* and we fancy this title was not of some psychological cause or, which is more probable, out of some exact formula in the unexplored fields of electricity, we do not know and are by no means anxious to find out.

Therefore, acknowledging that we know very little about love, but confessing at the same time that we find something rather important and even grand in this tender sentiment, it is with a curious tremor and many flutterings of the heart that we pick up the ponderous volumes of history.

We hasten to discover the praiseworthy part the feeling played in the life of nations. We want to scan the records of imperishable deeds done for love, of the splendid behavior of individual citizens. We know what we want to see, anyhow. Therefore, in order to pamper and soften our souls, we settle ourselves comfortably in an armchair and, smoking a fragrant cigar, we begin to turn with a sure hand, the yellowing pages of history.

And this is what we see.

*12*

First of all we come across some sort of, devil taken them, trifling love affairs and nonsensical everyday business—proposals, marriages—contracted by business-like, calculating persons.

Here we have a duke . . . what is he doing? Ah, yes, marrying the king's daughter in the hope of succeeding to the throne.

And here's a nobleman who, wishing to add a number of towns to his demesne, proposes to an epileptic princess . . .

The Russian grand-dukes . . . What's this? During the time of the Tartar yoke these noblemen "were continually trying"—so the historian writes—"to wed the daughters of the Khan so as to win his favor . . ."

Here is, just imagine it, Hilperich I, the King of the Franks, marrying the daughter of the King of Spain, as history says, "in order to deal a mortal blow at his enemy, Prince Siegbert."

Love affairs like these, based on strictly commercial reasons, historians record without enthusiasm, in a listless, official tone one might use about things of little moment. The historians do not even add exclamations of their own such as for example, "Oh, oh!" or "There's a prince for you!" or "Fie! what a dirty trick!" or even: "Well, so that's another blackguard for you!"

No, no these unbiased historians never utter a single exclamation. And no wonder, indeed, for if they once began the supply of exclamations would not hold out, since the course of history shows us oceans of such things.

*13*

We shall not dwell on the details of these commercial undertakings. We want to touch on more interesting questions. Although we cannot deny that there are some really astonishing cases worthy of the attention of the reader of today.

Here, for example, is a funny thing. The picturesqueness of the subject attracted us, and it is very typical of life in old Russia at the time of Johann the Terrible.

A certain German duke, Holstein by name, visited Russia about that time. We are not told what he had been doing at home in Germany, but the his-

torians found out that he came to Russia to marry, for political reasons, the daughter of Johann the Terrible's cousin.

So he arrived. Looking as if he had just stepped out of a band-box, I suppose. In some sort of silk pants. With bows here and there and ribbons all over. And a sword at his side. He was a great, gawky, long-legged fellow, very likely. With a screwed-up face and red moustaches. He was almost certain to have been a drunkard, a rowdy, and a Paul Pry.

He arrived in Russia one day, and, since all the arrangements had been made by letter, the wedding day was fixed at once.

Well, you can imagine the fuss and flurry there was; Mamma running hither, thither and yon; hens having their throats cut every minute; the bride being conducted to the bath house; the bridegroom sitting with Papa, swilling down vodka, and telling tales as tall as a house, all about: "way back in Germany, we do this and that . . . . We dukes, you know," and so on . . .

Then a rather sad thing happened. The bride died, quite unexpectedly. The poor thing caught a dreadful cold as she was coming back from the bath house and died three days later.

The bridegroom, overwhelmed with grief, as might be expected, wanted to go back to Germany. Just as he was taking leave of the sorrowing relatives, one of them said to him:

"Look here, Comrade Duke, don't be in such a hurry to go. We've got another girl handy, luckily for you. It's true, she's a bit older than the other and not so pretty, but still, she might do very nicely. Particularly since you've come so far—all the way from Germany—it would be a pity to go back empty handed, so to speak."

"Of course she'll do! Why didn't you mention it before? Why should't she do? What are you talking about! Fetch her here, let's have a look at her."

The long and short of it was that, in spite of everybody being in mourning, the wedding was fixed for a very early date.

*14*

Perhaps, though, things like this only happened among tsars and dukes?

Perhaps it was only in the splendid palaces of kings that one met with such cold, calculating behavior and so many loveless marriages, the result of—well, I don't know what—various kinds of diplomacy, I suppose a chronic shortage of money or unsuitable living conditions.

Perhaps it was quite the other way about with ordinary mortals: love ran its normal course and cheered the hearts of all around.

Unfortunately, the answer is in the negative.

There were certain kinds of ordinary mortals who apparently did not concern themselves with love. Feudal lords, as is well known, paired off their faithful slaves as they thought fit. Not so long ago we happened to read that Russian landowners married off their peasants, who were serfs, in the following way: they would pick them according to their height—the tall mujiks with the tall girls, the short mujiks with the short girls. Then they would write down their names in that order and send the list to the priest with orders to marry the couples.

Love played no part in this. As for people like officials, profiteers, shop keepers, and so on, it seems clear that these knew very little about love, either. Their marriages were purely business propositions, and not one would stir without a marriage settlement.

If one studies the life on a slightly higher plane—that of, say, the counts,

barons, and merchants—one finds that even these gentlemen, in spite of their idle existence, had very little notion of love.

Here is a charming story showing us how things were done sometimes.

*15*

In 1720, during the reign of Louis XV, there lived in France a certain speculator who had acquired a huge fortune by dark and devious ways. He attained the height of his ambitions. He had all he wanted. But he dreamed of something more: of uniting his family with the oldest and most aristocratic name in France. It was just a whim of his. And since his wealth was practically limitless, he decided to marry his daughter to an impoverished marquis who bore the famous name of d'Eou.

The girl was only three years old at the time. The marquis was thirty, and, in spite of his poverty-stricken state and the enormous dowry offered, he had no intention of waiting twelve years before getting married.

Flashing his gold rimmed lorgnette about and flinging out his hands in an elegant gesture of dismay, he said to the speculator in a husky voice very likely:

"Look here, old chap, I'd be delighted, I'm sure, to marry into your family, and the sum you offer is real handsome and would suit me very nicely, but the bride's much too young, don't you think? Let's wait till she grows up a bit, then we'll see; maybe I'll marry her."

But the ambitious father wanted to become related to the marquis at once. He hoped by this means to become acceptable to the aristocracy. So he concluded an agreement with the marquis, by which he was to pay the latter a huge monthly salary until the bride came of age; in return the marquis promised to marry her. The betrothal took place at once.

And so for nine years the marquis received his salary punctually every month and devoted his life to the pursuit of pleasure. But when the tenth year came round, his young bride fell ill of diphtheria and died.

You can imagine the bitter tears shed by her father! In the first place, he was inconsolable for the loss of his child, and in the second place, about the money he had thrown away. There was not, of course, the faintest chance of getting a penny back from the marquis.

The latter rubbed his hands, very likely, and said to the sorrowing parent: "About the money—you—er—understand, of course, how it is. As for the little girl, well, its just my luck . . ."

*16*

But that is nothing! There were much more surprising things to be seen in that field.

It is curious, for instance, to read how men—very handsome chaps, too, some of them—valiant knights and barons, cavaliers, merchants, landowners and tsars, used to marry without ever seeing their brides. This, by the way, happened very often. This seems to us, to modern readers, a little surprising.

All they troubled to find out before marrying was the bride's financial position, what property she would have and where her father worked or reigned, as the case might be; nothing more. Perhaps some cautious suitor might inquire what his partner for life looked like, approximately—whether she was a hunchback or anything.

The way they gave their consent and married the girls blindly was, you

might say, like buying a pig in a poke. They only saw their brides at the last moment.

It is difficult to imagine that happening in our day. There would be such an outcry, such excited shrieks, refusals, denials, confusion, face-smashing and devil knows what. But in those days they seemed to get along alright without all that.

Of course, unpleasant and sometimes very ugly things did happen. Records of two of the biggest scandals in the world have been handed down to us.

One of them, even when played on the stage, strikes us as being a most horrible picture of court life.

Philip II of Spain, an elderly man of about sixty, made up his mind one day to marry off his son and heir, the renowned Don Carlos. He resolved to marry him to the French princess, Isabella, this being an expedient and extremely profitable marriage from a political point of view. He himself had never seen this princess. He knew, of course, that she was young and that she was trying hard to get married, but he had no idea of what she looked like. As soon as he set eyes on her after the betrothal ceremony he fell in love with her and eventually married her himself, to the great disgust and chagrin of his son, who was by no means indifferent to his lovely bride. It was after this, as everyone knows, that the terrible drama between father and son was enacted.

*17*

The second affair happened in Persia. The Shah of Persia, a fellow named Cambyses III, son of the famous Cyrus, made an offer of marriage to the daughter of one of the Pharaohs, Amasis II. This was in the year 529 previous to our era. Cambyses made his offer without having seen the bride. At that time traveling was a difficult and complicated business, and a journey to Egypt took several months.

Rumor said that the Egyptian princess was unusually beautiful.

The powerful Persian Shah, whose father had conquered most of the known world, made an offer of marriage to the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Now Pharaoh, who loved his only daughter dearly, did not feel inclined to let her go to a strange country. At the same time he was afraid to offend the conqueror of the world by a refusal. So he chose the most beautiful of his slaves and sent her to Persia in place of his daughter. He gave her detailed instructions on how to behave and passed her off as his daughter.

History tells us that Cambyses married her and loved her exceedingly, but on learning accidentally how he had been fooled, he ruthlessly destroyed her and, wounded in his best feelings, started a war with Egypt.

This was, perhaps, one of the most powerful love dramas in history and shows us how occasionally, love is born and how it ends.

We can form a lively picture of this dramatic episode at the tragic moment when the fraud was discovered.

*18*

Let us suppose the couple sitting embracing each other on the couch.

On a little table before them are Oriental sweetmeats such as Rakhat-Lakoum and drinks, and carpets lying about everywhere. And a fat Persian with a fan in his hand chasing the flies off the sweetmeats.

The Persian Shah, Cambyses, tossed off a glass of something like cherry brandy, and gazed at his charming spouse with admiration, murmuring

various soothing words like: "Ah, my sweet little Egyptian girl! . . . Now, tell me, what sort of a time did you have back there in old Egypt, eh? . . . Your daddy probably spoilt you a lot, didn't he? But how could he help spoiling such a darling. I fell in love with you at first sight, my dear princess, as soon as I saw the royal way you walked—" and so on.

Hereupon she either became too sure of her feminine charms, or—well, we don't know what went on in her heart—at any rate, she gave a silvery laugh and said that here was a nice to-do: Pharaoh's daughter was enjoying herself at home in Egypt, while he, the Persian Shah, Cambyses, had fallen in love with a girl who was a mere slave. That was what love did to the hearts of men.

One cannot picture the ensuing scene without a shudder of horror.

With a savage roar the Shah, we suppose, leapt from the couch in his drawers. A slipper fell off his bare feet. He went white to the lips. His hands trembled. His knees shook.

"What!" he shouted in Persian. "Say it again! Here, gentlemen ministers! Seize her! Arrest this impertinent hussy!"

Then the ministers rushed in, thinking: Oh dear, what can the matter be! What's up, your majesty? Now don't take on so! Look, you've dropped your slipper, sir, you mustn't lose your royal dignity, you know.

But, of course, it isn't so easy to calm someone who has been grossly insulted.

That evening, after the unfortunate Egyptian girl's head had been cut off. Cambyses held a long consultation with his ministers. He tramped up and down the room excitedly, waving his arms about.

"Well, what do you think of that Pharaoh chap now? That's a blackguard for you!"

The ministers sighed respectfully, shook their heads sorrowfully and exchanged knowing glances.

"What am I to do, gentlemen, now that I've been so grossly insulted? Should I start a war against the swine, eh?"

"Why not, Your Majesty?"

"But he's such a hell of a way off, the dirty dog. Egypt . . . . that's in Africa, isn't it? Why, it'll take nearly a year to get there on camels . . ."

"Oh, never mind, Your Majesty . . . the troops will get there alright on foot . . ."

"After all my kindness to her, caressing her and all that sort of thing," Cambyses broke out again irritably. "I received her like a real Egyptian princess, loved her passionately and, lo and behold, she turns out to be nothing of the kind . . . What do you think of that, gentlemen? What, am I a dog or something too low for his daughter to come near? Palming off this riff-raff on me! . . . Eh?"

Then the Minister for Foreign Affairs, nearly splitting his sides with inward laughter, said:

"The worst of it is, Your Majesty, that it'll make a scandal and get about everywhere."

"That's just it! That's what I'm saying—the scandal it'll be! What on earth am I to do now?"

"And the worst of it is, Your Majesty, it's bound to go down in history. Can't you hear it ringing down the ages—Persia, don't you know, and the proud Cambyses and all that . . . had a slave girl palmed off on him . . ."

"Ah, what are you upsetting me for, you swine! Don't I know it? . . . Collect

the troops at once! All hands on deck! Start the campaign immediately . . . We'll wipe this Egypt from the face of the earth!"

The long and short of it was, Cambyses advanced with his troops on Egypt and conquered it in no time. By then, however, the sad old Pharaoh, Amasis was dead, and his nephew and successor, Psammetichus, seeing no very inviting prospects before him, committed suicide. As for Pharaoh's unfortunate daughter; we could find no trace of her.

An acquaintance of mine who is a professor of history in one of the universities, told me that Cambyses placed the girl in the harem of one of his ministers. But we cannot vouch for the truth of this. It is quite possible, of course. At all events, love vanished like smoke. Which just serves to show how much it was worth.

*19*

Well, now what about it? It looks as though this love business was not quite so nice as it sounds. Where, then, is the wonderful love of which bards and poets sang? Where is the passion praised in such divine verse?

Can it be that the half-educated poets, rhymesters and lovers of grace and beauty have been guilty of gross exaggeration? Somehow we do not experience quite the right emotions when we read the annals of the past.

We find something of course, but so little. We would like to see a priceless pearl gleaming from every page, instead of hitting on some doubtful affair once in a century or so.

However, we have managed to scrape up a few love stories after plodding through the whole of history from the Ethiopians and Chaldeans right up to our own time.

And here are our gleanings.

*20*

Here, for example, is an instance of a great love, as a result of which a girl drove her chariot over her own father.

It happened like this.

Servius Tullius, the King of Rome, had a daughter. And this daughter was married to a man with a dubious reputation. In spite of this, the woman was extraordinarily fond of him.

Now this man took it into his head that he would like to overthrow his wife's noble father, Servius Tullius. Servius was getting old and was carrying on some very unprofitable wars with the Etruscans. Still, it was a pity to rob him of his throne just because of that. And it was really a dirty trick to kill him.

This over-energetic son-in-law, after consulting his wife, made up his mind to kill her father. This she agreed to out of pure affection for the bloodthirsty scoundrel she had married.

Well, and one day the son-in-law hired an assassin to stab the noble old fellow in public. Tullius dropped dead without a sound. And all the people shouted: "Who is going to be our next king, gentlemen?"

Instead of sobbing and flinging herself down on her father's corpse, as you might expect, the daughter of the murdered man jumped into a chariot and drove over the body to hail with joyful shouts the new ruler, her husband.

Now this, you must admit is a powerful scene, in spite of its being rather disgusting. The love of the king's daughter certainly seems to have had some

point in it. After all, it would have to be a very strong passion that would drive one to run over one's father at such a moment.

There she stood in the chariot, whipping up the horses, her hair streaming loose in the wind, her face distorted with various emotions. "Hurrah!" she shouted to the new king, and galloped on over everything that crossed her path.

As some one in the crowd shouted:

"Look at that shameless hussy, she's even driving over her own father!"

Still, that was love. And probably to a certain extent, the desire to be a queen. It is difficult to say.

Next, we have a case of a still stronger love experienced by a not unknown historical personage in the evening of her life.

*21*

The Russian Empress, Catherine II, fell madly in love with a brave and handsome young man named Plato Zubov. She was fifty-eight at the time, and he was twenty-one. There is no doubt but that he was a very fine-looking lad. His brother, Valerian, was even better looking. There are two portraits of the boys in the Russian Art Museum and, certainly, the brother is uncommonly handsome.

The old woman did not see the brother till later, however, after she had fallen up to her ears in love with Plato. When she set eyes on Valerian, she began to ah! and oh! and said: "I could have liked that young fellow, too, but since I've fallen in love with Plato already, I expect I'll go on loving him."

Plato, noticing the powerful impression Valerian had made on the old woman, arranged for his brother to be sent off to the war. In the war the handsome lad had his leg torn off by a cannon ball.

Then the old woman became more attached to Plato than ever and showered all manner of favors upon him.

It might be interesting to find out how this romance of theirs arose. The handsome young lad must have been very shy at first and terribly embarrassed when the elderly lady exercised pressure. Naturally, anyone would be embarrassed: imagine, the sacred person of the Empress of All the Russias and a coarse business like this, devil take it!

"Now, come on, put your arms round me properly, you silly little fool," said the Empress.

"I dare not, honestly I dare not, Your Majesty," muttered the unfortunate favorite. "I hope," he went on, "I know my place and have a proper respect for the dignity of an empress."

"Oh, forget all about it! Call me Katerina Vassilievna, for goodness' sake," (or whatever her second name was).

Then the boy, with a nervous unnatural laugh, touched the Empress' aging shoulders reverentially. He got used to it in time, of course, and received a much bigger return for his love than he deserved.

At any rate, by the time he had reached twenty-four years of age the handsome boy had been made general-in-chief, viceroy of South Russia and the Chief of Ordnance. The elderly lady, who grew fonder and fonder of him every year, did not know what to do to please him.

She permitted him to see all the secret dispatches and reports from abroad. No minister or general could see Catherine without seeing him. The young man, attired in a Bukhara silk dressing gown, received the ministers and

courtiers reclining on a couch. Old generals stood before him at attention, trembling respectfully.

The Empress, who loved him madly, entrusted all the most important affairs of the state to him. She was literally blinded by love.

The boy, by the way, had the very vaguest notions about life and politics. His plan for the development of South Russia, for instance, is well known.

In this truly astonishing plan the capitals of first importance are proudly shown to be: St. Petersburg, Berlin, Astrakhan, Moscow and Constantinople; while Cracow, Taganrog and Danzig are marked as of secondary importance. The following sentence occurs in this plan:

"The sovereign of such a vast empire must be like the sun, which warms with its beneficent gaze all who can come within reach of his rays."

From this scheme alone one can judge how little the old lady cared about affairs of state and of what slight importance she regarded world politics in comparison with the last love of her life.

*22*

Here is another instance of a great love, when a man even forgot his revolutionary duty. We are alluding to the husband of the famous Madame Tallien.

Once, during the French Revolution, Robespierre sent the chief secretary of the Revolutionary Council to Bordeaux to arrest the aristocrats who had taken refuge there.

In the prison the secretary made the acquaintance of a young prisoner named Therese Fontenay. He fell in love with her and let her out of prison. On learning that Tallien had released a prisoner, Robespierre ordered her to be re-arrested. Then Tallien joined forces with the supporters of Danton and fought Robespierre so earnestly that in a short time the latter was overthrown. One of the motives of this struggle was undoubtedly Tallien's love for Therese Fontenay.

Tallien married her, but she soon left him and married some nobleman or other.

*23*

From time to time things happened which, though apparently small and insignificant were, to put it poetically, like rays of sunlight creeping through a dense thicket.

There were, for instance, the wives of the Decembrists, brilliant society women who left everything and voluntarily went into exile in Siberia, to look after their husbands . . .

Radishchev was a sick man when he was deported to Siberia. Not long before this his wife had died. But his wife's sister followed him into exile.

Ivashov, a dashing young officer in the Guards, the son of a rich landowner, fell in love with the governess, Camille, who was employed in his house. His parents refused to give their consent to the marriage. A year later, when Ivashov was sentenced to twenty years in Siberia, for taking part in the December Rising of 1825, the young governess followed him into exile . . .

When Robert Browning's wife, whom he passionately loved, died, he was inconsolable. He laid in her coffin all that he valued most in the world, a book of his latest sonnets.

True, he got the sonnets back afterwards, when he had fallen in love the second time, but still . . . .

The town of Weinsberg was once beseiged by the enemy. The conquerors permitted the women to leave the town before destroying it, and also to take out whatever they prized most.

Several women contrived to carry out their valiant husbands in their arms.

Of course, this sounds like a fairy tale. History is fond of telling touching stories from time to time to maintain, so to speak, the moral balance.

One of these runs as follows:

Before setting out for the wars, a certain knight entrusted his wife to his friend's care. The friend fell in love with her, and the wife with him. But, of course, the vows they had taken could not be broken on any account.

In order to test and preserve their honor, they lay down to sleep in the same bed, placing a sword between them.

It is quite possible, of course, that they did put the sword between them and sleep in the same bed, we are not going to deny historical facts, but the rest we find extremely doubtful.

And with this sentimental nonsense we conclude our historical tales.

Here is history's own comment on love.

*24*

On the whole, history says comparatively little about it, except to admit that such a feeling appears to exist and that history has occasionally come into contact with it, and that it has even been responsible for historical events, crimes and other unusual things.

But as for its being the glorious thing the poets sing of, history hardly ever shows it to us from this point of view. On the contrary, the feeling has been pretty well settled by commercial souls, and presented no danger to the peacful progress of history.

No, this feeling never turned anyone from the path they were steadily and painstakingly treading. The historians have a perfect right to recount in a monotonous voice how many rubles a suitor received for this or that feeling, and what happened.

This was the way of things in by-gone days. Perhaps it is different now.

Unfortunately, we have never been abroad and so cannot gratify your quite justifiable curiosity about it. We are of the opinion, however, that it is highly improbable for any big changes to have taken place over there.

It is not unlikely that some marquis with an aristocratic name may be betrothed to a little tot three years old, whose father pays the prospective bridegroom a monthly salary.

And it is quite probable that some aging woman may forget everything else in the world and keep a gigolo of the Zubov type upon whom to shower her favors.

One may suppose that in general everything goes on as it did.

As for our own country, the Social Revolution has wrought great changes here.

*25*

Much of the sad business connected with love has already been done away with here. The main thing is that calculation has ceased to play a part, and money relations are much simpler and less important. And in general, the

whole thing is much better arranged, more comprehensible and less troublesome.

There is still, of course, some rubbish left. One comes across it at rare intervals, but never to the same extent as formerly. As a result we have great hopes that very soon everything will be splendid. For we have a tender heart and a sentimental desire to see life looking brighter.

We repeat, however, that some very queer and comical happenings have occurred here in that line. Indeed, it would be astonishing if they had not.

Let us see what sort of things they are and with the iron broom of satire sweep away whatever rubbish has collected.

Now let us pass on to love stories from the life of today.

## *LOVE STORIES*

### *I*

### *The Tale of An Old Fool*

There is a very well known picture, which you have probably seen, called *The Unequal Match*. It is a picture of the life of another day, and shows us a couple getting married.

The bridegroom is an elderly gent of, perhaps, seventy-and-a-bit. You know the kind I mean, a dilapidated looking fellow, very much the worse for wear, and unlikely to arouse the slightest interest in anyone.

Beside him stands the bride. Imagine a young girl in a white wedding dress; a fledgeling just out of the nest, a young thing not more than nineteen at the very most.

She looks terrified. The candle shakes in her hand. Her voice trembles when the priest with the big belly asks her if she is pleased, the little fool, at getting a good match like this.

It is not all in the picture, of course, the shaking hand and the priest's oration. How could it be? The artist has not even made his priest tally with that respect for the church which was prevalent at the time. But you can imagine all this when you look at the picture.

Strange thoughts occur to you as you look at this picture. It is quite true that an old dotard like this could marry a lovely young girl as easy as anything before the Revolution, simply because he was "Your Excellency," or a senator getting a pension of upwards of two hundred rubles in gold, as well as owning land and keeping his own carriage. The girl would be from some poor family, very likely, and her mother would urge her to "take the chance when she got it."

All this is over and done with. Gone for good—thanks to the Revolution.

Nowadays, in this country, a young girl marries a young man when she gets the chance. An older woman resolves to live with someone near her own age. And the old turn their attention to something more spiritual and either play at draughts or go for walks by the river-side.

Of course, it sometimes happens even here that a young woman marries an elderly man. But then he is generally an important physiologist or botanist, or has invented something startling, or is at any rate a chartered accountant with a big job and well able to provide for two.

Marriages like these do not call out any feelings of disgust in us. This may be a real, sincere love for a truly gifted person, a great orator, say, or someone possessed of vast erudition and a beautiful voice.

But scenes like that in the picture described above are never observed here

nowadays. And if anything of the sort does happen, it only arouses universal merriment and astonishment.

This is what happened a little while ago in Leningrad.

An old fellow, just an ordinary employee, quite unexpectedly married a young girl. She was only about twenty, a very interesting and handsome girl from Penza; he was perhaps sixty. A bald, moth-eaten chap with a weather-beaten face lined and worn by the storms of domestic life. His eyes were reddish and meaningless. Taking him all round, he was a very ordinary individual, such as you might see a score of in the tram any day.

He had bad sight, too; suffered from Daltonism. He could not distinguish colors: green looked blue to him and blue seemed white.

In spite of his defects, however, he suddenly married a charming young girl, to the profound astonishment of everyone.

He explained to the people around him that a new era set in and nowadays even old men seemed young and fairly attractive to women.

"You'd better do less of this agitation-and-propaganda business," people told him, "and instead of that, see what she wants from you. Seems a bit funny she should pick you for a husband, doesn't it?"

"I've no material wealth, so to speak, beyond my appearance and nice nature. My salary's very small. My whole wardrobe consists of torn pocket handkerchiefs. And as far as apartments are concerned—the most valuable thing nowadays—well, I'm living at present with my old wife in a little room that I intend to divide. Then I'll live on my nine metres of dwelling space looking out over the rubbish heap and be as happy as a fool with the person who has been sent by fate to comfort me in my old age."

"Ah, to hell with you! There's no convincing you at all."

Then the division of the room took place. They had it whitewashed, and a splendid new life, hand-in-hand with a blooming young girl, began in that tiny room of nine square metres.

Soon his young wife exchanged the tiny room for a big one. A man who found his big room too expensive for him was glad to move into his legal nine square metres.

The girl and her old fool of a husband transferred themselves and their belongings to a room of fourteen square metres.

They lived there a short time and then she had another spell of changing and this time she got one of twenty square metres, and moved into it with her husband.

As soon as they had got pretty well settled in there, she quarrelled with him and put an advertisement in the paper: "Would exchange splendid room 20 sq. m. for two small in different districts."

Well, of course, in next to no time they found a couple who were dreaming of living together and ready to exchange their two rooms for one large one.

To cut a long story short, after two months of holy wedlock, our old fool who had grasped very little of what was going on, found himself completely alone in a tiny room somewhere outside the town.

The young woman went to live on Vassilievki Island, in a small but very nice room.

Being the possessor of a room, she soon got married to a young engineer, and now she is extremely happy and satisfied.

The old fool wanted to summons the young person for fraud and even consulted an ex-lawyer about it. But the latter, who was one of those pre-revolutionary lawyers, just laughed at him and said that it would be extremely dif-

ficult to prove fraud in this case, and besides, it was quite possible that the young woman had been greatly attracted by him at first and only been disenchanted on getting to know him better.

So with these sweet dreams the old fool settled down. And now his weary aging bones are rattled up and down in the train as he travels to work from his home on the outskirts, and back again. So, though he was an old bird, he was caught with chaff, contrary to the proverb. He had his moment of silliness, and built castles in the air and dreamed dreams, and now he has to suffer for it.

You can see by this that unpleasant things sometimes occur in love even in this country. Here follows another little story about commercial love. And after that we shall pass on to more deserving cases.

*II*

*A Marriage of Convenience or Marry in Haste and Repent at Leisure*

We are told that formerly a marriage without a dowry did not exist.

Every decent, serious-minded suitor held a pistol, figuratively speaking, at the heads of the parents of his prospective bride, as much as to say: tell me how much money and what else the girl is to have, else I'll refuse to marry her.

The terrified parents would name the sum and tell him the rest of the things the bride was to have.

Nowadays we have forgotten even the word "dowry." Indeed, we can hardly imagine what a dowry is like.

Of course even in these strict times one occasionally comes across people who try to get something extra through marriage: furniture or a room or at any rate, some clothes, part worn but still seviceable, to make over for themselves.

It is not so easy now, however. A prospective bridegroom cannot always realize his foolish dreams.

Take a trifle like this, for instance: a girl may be wearing a very good brooch, but it does not mean a thing. The man marries her and it turns out that his bride doesn't possess a brooch at all; the brooch in question was borrowed from a friend who has been married about six times already, and anyway the thing was made of brass.

Or, for instance, there may be a very decent coat hanging on a hook in the room. And later on you find out it belonged to one of the tenants, who hung it there for the time being.

Yes, those who marry nowadays know that their brides won't bring them much.

There are many, of course, who look at their future wife's position in business rather than at her property. But that is not always to be relied upon, either.

This is what happened once.

A young man was introduced to a young girl who was beautiful, pleasant and interesting.

It was not so much her appearance that astonished and attracted him as the fact that she was an accountant. This made him think.

Accountancy is quite an uncommon profession; it demands great powers of concentration; therefore we have very few accountants and they are very decently paid.

Now this young man took an extremely sober view of life and all its manifestations. He did not understand anything about love and was only intent on one thing: how to secure a better living and better nourishment for himself.

Here an extraordinary opportunity presented itself in the form of a woman accountant. Here was a splendid way of improving his circumstances. So he got to know her better. He took her to the cinema a couple of times and told her he loved her, and then said "Would you care to come to the Registry Office with me one of these days?" And she said, "Why, yes, of course. Delighted, I'm sure."

So they got married. He was terribly fond of her and she of him.

Then one day she came home from work and said to him:

"Look here. Petya, it's like this: I've left my job. I must say frankly I've been dreaming of it a long time. I've always hoped that as soon as I got married, I needn't go knocking about offices any more." This upset her husband frightfully. He gasped and bawled and begged her to go back.

"What do you think of that for a trick?" he said to himself. "Why, I only married her because of her job!"

"Yes, I've had enough of it," said his wife. "I'm not going to work any more. I've no intention of losing my youth and beauty, which I regard as pretty high qualifications, in a stuffy office."

"But look here," said her husband, "this is downright petty-bourgeois behavior on your part. The thing that attracted me most about you was independence. Well, I must say this news has simply knocked me over!"

But no matter what he said, she refused to budge, and she has never gone back to work since.

He is in a terrible state and is thinking of divorcing her, but he won't be able to do that so easily because they live in one room.

At all events, it would appear that he counted wrong that time and is paying for it now.

This is an isolated case, naturally. Without generalizing and accusing our respected citizens of an undue share of avarice, we may pass on to the more typical instances of contemporary love.

Here is an interesting story which serves to show the extremes to which love and jealousy can drive a woman who is neither very young nor very old.

## *III*

### *The Story of a Letter and an Illiterate Woman*

This is the tale of a couple who lived in Leningrad. The husband held a very responsible position. You could not call him old, and he was strong and intelligent, energetic on the whole, very devoted to the cause of socialism and so on.

Now although he was a plain, ordinary fellow from the country, who had never been to a university or anything, during his years in the city he had acquired a certain amount of experience and knew something about nearly everything and could make a speech anywhere. He could even argue with professors on various subjects including physiology and electricity.

His wife, Pelageya, could neither read nor write, and although she had come from the village together with him, she had never learned anything. She was quite illiterate and could not even sign her own name.

This state of things worried her husband terribly; but though he worried over it, he could not think of any way to get out of it. Particularly as he him-

self was always frightfully busy and had no time to spare on his wife's education.

"Listen, Pelageyushka," he said to her, "you ought to learn to read or at least to sign your own name. Our country," said he, "is raising itself bit by bit out of the depths of ignorance and savagery it's lived in for centuries. We're wiping out dullness and illiteracy everywhere, and here's the wife of the director of a big mechanized bakery and you can neither read nor write nor understand a single written word. And what I go through on this account is more than I can stand!"

Pelageya, of course, simply waved all this away and said:

"Ah, what are you fussing yourself about, Ivan Nikolayevich! What do I want with learning? The time's gone by for all that kind of thing; my years are wearing away and my youth with them, and my hands won't bend to hold a pencil now. Why should I start making letters at my time of life? Let the little Pioneers do it and I'll live the rest of my life as I am."

And Pelageya's husband would give a mournful sigh and say:

"Oh, Pelageya Maximovna, you're a sad case!"

Then one day Ivan Nikolayevich brought home a spelling book,

"Here you are, Polya," he said, "this is the very latest *Self-Taught Alphabet and First Reader,* drawn up according to the very latest scientific method. I'm going to show you myself how to learn," said he, "and all I ask is that you don't contradict me."

Pelageya gave a quiet little laugh, turned the *Reader* over and over in her hand and put it away in the cupboard, thinking to herself, let it lie there, maybe it'll come in handy for my children's children .

One day Pelagea sat down to work. Ivan Nikolayevich's jacket needed mending, the sleeves of it were worn.

Pelageya sat down at the table and picked up her needle. Then, as she thrust her hand under the jacket, something rustled.

"Maybe it's money?" thought Pelageya. She looked and found a letter. It was a clean, neat envelop with thin, fine writing on it. And the paper smelt of scent or eau-de-Cologne.

Pelageya's heart gave a great thump. "Surely Ivan Nikolayevich hasn't begun to deceive me and carry on with someone, has he? Surely he isn't writing and getting love letters from respectable ladies and swells and laughing at me behind my back, poor ignorant fool that I am."

Pelageya examined the envelop and pulled out the letter and unfolded it, but could not read it because she was illiterate. And for the first time in her life Pelageya regretted not being able to read.

"Although it's not my letter, but someone else's still I ought to know what it's about," she thought. "Maybe it's something that'll change the whole course of my life, and it would be better for me to go to back to the village and do a mujik's work again."

She was simply boiling with vexation and her sense of injury. And her heart was ready to burst with mortification.

"It looks as though I was a great deal too fond of Ivan Nikolayevich," she thought, "if a letter upsets me so much. Here I sit tormenting myself with jealousy. Isn't it vexing, now, that I can't read that letter. I'd have found out at once what the matter was."

She burst out crying. Then she began to remember all sorts of little details about Ivan Nikolayevich. Yes, of course, he seemed to have altered a bit lately. He had begun to think of his moustache and comb it regularly. And he was always washing his hands. And wearing his new cap.

Pelageya sat there thinking these thoughts, looking at the letter and crying as if her heart would break. She couldn't read the letter herself and she was ashamed to show it to anyone, of course.

She had her cry out, hid the letter in the cupboard, finished mending the jacket and sat down to wait for Ivan Nikolayevich.

When he came in, Pelageya behaved as if nothing had happened. She talked to him calmly and easily and even hinted that she wouldn't mind learning to read and she was sick to death of being such an ignorant woman.

Ivan Nikolayevich was delighted to learn this.

"That's grand!" he said. "I'll teach you myself."

"Come on, then, teach me!" said Pelageya, with her eye on Ivan Nikolayevich's neatly clipped moustaches. And again her heart contracted and she felt as if everything was turning over and over in her bosom with vexation and mortification.

For two months steadily Pelageya took a daily lesson. Patiently she spelt out the words, formed the letters and learned whole sentences by heart. And every day she took the fateful letter out of the drawer and tried to decipher its mysterious message.

This was by no means easy, however. It was only in the third month that Pelageya mastered the art of reading.

One morning, when Ivan Nikolayevich had gone out to work, Pelageya drew the letter out of the cupboard and set to work to read it.

The fine writing gave her a lot of trouble before she could make anything out, but the faint scent of the note paper inspired her to persist. The letter was addressed to Ivan Nikolayevich. This is what Pelageya read:

*Dear Comrade Kutchkin:*

Here is the book I promised you. I should think your wife will be able to master the wisdom in it easily enough in two or three months. Promise, there's a good chap, to make her learn. Explain to her how disgusting it is to be an ignorant woman these days.

We are doing all in our power to wipe out illiteracy all over the Republic by the time the next anniversary comes round, but we seem somehow to forget those that are nearest to us.

Promise to do this, Ivan Nikolayevich.

With Communist greetings,

*Maria Blokhina*

Pelageya read the letter over twice and then, feeling vaguely hurt in a different way, burst out crying.

Then she thought of Ivan Nikolayevich and of how everything between them was alright, after all, and she quietened down and put away the reading book and the unlucky letter in the cupboard again.

Thus in a short time, spurred on by love and jealousy, our Pelageya learnt to read and write and became literate.

This was, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary incidents in the history of the liquidation of illiteracy in the Soviet Union.

But here is a story of a more interesting love than that one.

## *IV*

### *A Trifling Incident from Our Own Life*

As I was going down the street one day I noticed all of a sudden that the women were not looking at me.

Formerly, you know, when one went down the street like a regular spark, as the saying is, they would stare at one, send airy glances after one, try to look sympathetic, and indulge in all sorts of smiles and smirks.

And now, lo and behold!—I see nothing of the kind.

That's a great pity, I think to myself. After all woman does play a certain part in the personal life.

A bourgeois economist, or was it a chemist?—once expressed the original opinion that not only our personal life, but everything we do, is done for women. So apparently all our struggles, glory, wealth, honors, exchanging of flats, buying of coats, and so on is done solely for women.

Of course, he must have been exaggerating a bit, the dog, probably lying for the amusement of the bourgeoisie, but as regards the personal life, I fully agree with him. That is to say, I agree that a woman plays a certain part in the personal life.

When one went to the cinema, for instance, and it was a rotten picture, still one could squeeze the girl's hand and say all sorts of silly things and it did brighten up modern art and the squalor of one's personal life a little.

So you can imagine my sensations when one day I noticed that women were not looking at me.

What the devil's this? I thought to myself. Why don't the women look at me? What do they want?

I came home and rushed to the looking-glass. In it I saw a dilapidated kind of face, with a dull, fishy eye looking out of it, and no color in the cheeks.

"Aha, I see it all now!" I said to myself. "I've got to increase the daily quantity of nutriment. I've got to send the good red blood coursing through this pallid cheek."

So I lost no time in buying in all sorts of groceries.

I bought meat and sausage and cocoa and God knows what.

I fell on it and guzzled night and day. In a very short time I had restored the incredibly fresh, unwearied look of youth to my face.

I sauntered down the street once more and observed that the ladies still paid no attention.

"Aha," I said to myself then, "maybe I've got into the habit of walking sloppily. Perhaps I ought to do gymnastics and swing on rings, and do high jumps. Perhaps my muscles are not big enough; women admire big muscles in a man, as a rule."

Then I bought a trapeze, and rings and dumb bells and a special kind of Indian clubs.

There I went twisting and turning for all I was worth on these rings and apparatus. I twirled the Indian clubs of a morning. I cut the neighbor's firewood for them for nothing.

At last I joined a sports-circle. I rowed boats, paddled canoes, and went bathing till well into November. I nearly got drowned once. I was silly enough to dive in a deep spot, failed to touch bottom and started blowing bubbles, because I could not swim well.

Six months I wasted on this self business, often risking my life. I broke my head twice, falling from the trapeze. But I bore it all like a man. One

fine day I went out, as brown as a berry and as strong and nimble as a two-year-old, into the street, hoping to see the long-forgotten feminine smile of approval.

And once more I was disappointed. Then I started sleeping with my window open. Fresh air penetrated my lungs. The color began to come and go in my cheeks. My face turned pink and then red. It even assumed a sort of purplish tint, for some reason or other.

One evening, with my purple face and all, I go to the theatre. There I hang round the feminine part of the audience as if I had a shingle loose. The men keep complaining of me and making rude remarks and it even goes as far as thumps in the chest and being roughly elbowed out of the way.

As a result I get two or three miserable smiles that don't suit me at all.

There in the theatre I go up to the big mirror and admire my strong, athletic figure and the chest that measures seventy-five centimetres if I strain it a little. I bend my arms, admire my biceps, draw myself up very straight and stand with my legs firmly apart.

I am surprised at the pleasantness and coquetry of women who in my opinion, don't know what to do with themselves for fat.

Suddenly, as I stand admiring myself in the glass, I notice that I'm rather badly dressed. In fact, I must say frankly I'm very badly, even frightfully dressed. My trousers are too short and bag horribly at the knees; a shudder of repulsion runs through me as I look at them.

When I cast my eye over my extremities, which defy all powers of description, I turn to stone.

"Ah, now I understand," I say to myself. "That's what's responsible for the ruin of my personal life; I'm badly dressed!"

So, completely crushed, I totter home with my legs wobbling and bending under me, swearing that I will made radical alterations in my wardrobe straight away.

I build up a new wardrobe in next to no time; the very last word in jackets, made out of a couple of purple portieres, and "Oxford" pants made out of a couple of pair of those baggy riding-breeches (you know the kind I mean). I walk about in this rig-out feeling like a balloon and thoroughly annoyed at the dictates of style. Then in the market I buy myself a coat with the broadest shoulders that have ever been seen on this planet.

One day, it happened to be a holiday, I sally forth in this array to Tverskoi Boulevard. I stalk about like a circus camel, sauntering here, there and everywhere, hitching up shoulders and doing fancy steps.

I see the women glancing at me out of the corner of their eyes with something between surprise and horror. The men look at me too, but not out of the corners of their eyes. Some of their remarks reach my ears, they are the rude exclamations of ignorant people who don't understand my position in the least.

"What a sight!" I hear. "Just look at the way that blackguard's got himself up! He ought to be downright ashamed of himself. He's got about three kilometres of stuff round him."

I hear jeers like this on every side and some people even burst out laughing. I pass along the boulevard as if I was running the gauntlet, but a vague hope keeps me up.

As I get near the Pushkin monument, I notice all of a sudden that a very

decently dressed woman is gazing at me fondly but with a certain amount of slyness.

I smile in response and walk round the monument three times, strutting a little. After that I sit down on a little bench opposite.

The decently dressed lady, who still bears traces of former beauty, looks at me attentively. Her eyes take in my admirable figure and my face, which is a mirror of my character. I straighten myself, bend my head, and ponder on the well ordered philosophic system thought out by the bourgeois economist regarding the value of women.

I wink at Pushkin as much as to say: "It's beginning, Alexander Sergeyevich." Then I turn towards the lady and see that she is watching every movement of mine without even blinking.

I begin to feel frightened of that unblinking eye. My success with the creature gives me no pleasure. I want to go away. I want to pass round that monument quick and get on a tram and clear out. Somewhere, anywhere, to the outskirts of the town where there are no unblinking eyes.

But all of a sudden the decent lady comes up to me and says:

"Excuse me, young fellow . . . I find it very awkward," says she, "to mention it, but you see my husband had a coat just like yours stolen from him. I wonder if you'd be kind enough to show me the lining."

"Of course," I think to myself, "she couldn't very well come up to me without some excuse."

So I throw open my coat, straining my chest to the utmost. After one glance at the lining, the lady lets out a piercing shriek. Why, of course, it's her husband's coat! It's his stolen coat this blackguard—that's me—is wearing, as cool as you like!

Her screams nearly split my eardrums. I wish the earth would open this very minute and swallow me and my coat and my Oxford bags.

We go to the local militia officer, where they take down our statements. I am asked questions which I answer them as truthfully as I can. When I am asked my age, I tell them; the figure startles me and sends a shudder through me.

"Ah, so that's why women don't look at me any more!" I say to myself. "It's simply that I've grown old. And there was I blaming my wardrobe for the deficiencies in my personal life."

I hand over the stolen coat bought in the market, and go out into the street like that, in my jacket and trousers, thoroughly downcast.

"Oh, well, I'll get along somehow!" I say to myself. "Work will fill my life. I'm going to work very hard from now on, and try to be of use. Woman isn't the only thing in life."

And I begin to make fun of the bourgeois scientist's words.

"It's all rot!" I say to myself. "The invention of idle minds. Typical Western nonsense!"

I burst out laughing. Then, spitting defiantly right and left, I march on and turn my head away whenever a woman passes me.

Well, comrades, that little incident occurred about two years ago. And though you might think that in those two years I should have aged still more, I met someone this summer who took a great fancy to me.

The funny part of it was that this summer I dressed particularly badly, on purpose. I went about in devil knows what sort of old trousers and a pair of torn sports' shoes. I hadn't even a handkerchief and a watch on me. Yet in spite of it all, a lovely young thing got pretty keen on me.

So I'm happy and satisfied once more and intend to marry the lady. And she, too, is dreaming of the day when we shall be living together, happy and carefree, in a room of our own.

It appears, then, that neither years nor clothes matter. Everything depends on the spiritual qualities or else—Well, I'm sure I don't know.

At any rate, clothes are not essential where men are concerned. With women it is different, of course.

Here is another short philosophical story taken from life so to speak.

## *V*

### *An Amusing Adventure*

A fairly young and very interesting lady, a member of a petty bourgeois family and the wife of a respectable employee, fell in love with an actor.

He acted both in drama and comedy. And she fell madly in love with him.

Whether it was that she had seen him on the stage and been charmed by his splendid acting, or that, on the contrary, she had not seen his acting, but had simply been charmed by his artistic appearance, is not clear, but at all events, she was pretty keen on him. At one time, in fact, she was in two minds whether she should leavé her husband and go to live with the actor or simply amuse herself with the actor without disturbing her family life in any way.

Later on, when she saw that the actor did not seem to have anything, neither a good ration book nor anything special, she resolved not to leave her husband. Particularly since the actor himself, being over-burdened as it was with a numerous family, did not exhibit a burning desire to marry her.

Still, as they were, after all, very much in love with each other, they continued to meet occasionally.

He used to telephone to her and she would look in at rehearsals to see how vigorously he played his part. And this made her grow fonder and fonder of him and she would dream and scheme how to meet him oftener.

Since they had nowhere to meet, however, they used to see each other just like Romeo and Juliet, in the street or the cinema, or else run into a cafe to exchange a few tender words.

These short interviews could not satisfy them, of course, and they were always groaning and moaning that their lives were so awkwardly arranged they hadn't a place where they could go and talk about their passion.

She could not go and see him because he was a family man.

As for going to see her, which she invited him to do very often when her husband was at work, after two visits he refused point-blank.

A nervous, excitable man, gifted with an unhealthily vivid and artistic imagination, he was simply terrified of being found with her. At any moment, he thought, her husband might come in, and then there would be sure to be one of those serious conversations that end up with shooting and all that.

Naturally, with these ideas whirling about in his head, the actor could not behave in a normal way on these visits to her. He was usually half-dead with fright, in fact. So she stopped inviting him, seeing that the fellow would go almost crazy and look as if he were not long for this world.

One day she said to him:

"You know what? If you want to see me, come to my friend's house tomorrow."

"That's good idea," said the actor. "Otherwise—well, you know, people in my profession have very delicate nerves and I never feel at ease in your home."

She had a bosom friend named Sonetchka, a very nice person. Educated, too. One of these ballet dancers, in fact.

The husband of our heroine fully approved of this acquaintance of hers and said he wouldn't wish his wife a better friend.

So they begged the ballet dancer to do them a favor, and after some hesitation she agreed to let her best friend meet her beloved and carry on negotiations, so to speak, in her room.

The next weekly day off, our actor dressed himself up in his best and started out to keep his appointment.

We must tell you that on the way a trifling incident occurred, a conflict with the man standing next him in the tram. The usual thing, you know, a light, sharp fusillade of shouting and so on. As a result, our actor who was always rather unrestrained, got more heated than he should. When, after the abuse was over, his neighbor got off the tram, our actor took the opportunity of spitting at him, and was highly delighted that the tram went on quickly and the insulted man could not catch him.

This incident did not affect the actor's mood. He met his friend and off they went together to Sonetchka's flat. Sonetchka occupied a small but cosy room of which she had given them the key.

They went into the room and sat down on the couch to talk about their future. All of a sudden there came a knock at the door. The lady made a sign to the actor not to reply, but it wasn't really necessary for he was struck dumb.

Then a voice behind the door said, evidently to one of the neighbors:

"Could you tell me if she'll be back soon?"

Our heroine turned as white as a sheet and told the actor in a whisper that it was her husband's voice. He must have seen them together in the street, she supposed, and followed them.

When the actor heard this, he simply shook all over as if he had been stricken with palsy, and stretched out on the couch, holding his breath and watching his beloved with an agonized expression in his eyes.

"Then I'll just leave her a note," came the voice behind the door. "Tell her I called, won't you?"

Our heroine's husband (for it actually was her husband) scribbled a note, pushed it under the door and went away.

Our astonished heroine grabbed the note at once and started to read it. Whereupon she burst into loud sobs, and flung herself down on the couch, wailing. The actor came round a little at the sound of the lady's voice, and read, not without astonishment, the note, which ran:

*"Darling Little Sonetchka,*

I just happened to finish work a bit sooner today and dashed round to see you, but alas!—you weren't in. I'll call at three. A big kiss from

*Your Nikolai."*

Then through her sobs and tears, our heroine asked:

"What do you suppose this means? What do you think of it?"

"Well, it strikes me very forcibly that your husband is carrying on with your friend. All he came for just now was to rest awhile from his family life. Now your conscience should be quite clear, give me your hand."

Just as he was raising her hand to his cracked lips, there came a terrific blow at the door, and the alarmed voice of our heroine's friend demanded:

"Open the door, quick! It's only me! Has anyone been here while I was out?"

As soon as she heard this, our heroine burst out sobbing again and, in tears, opened the door to her friend. She held out the note. Sonetchka read the note and, though clearly a little embarrassed, said:

"Well, there's nothing surprising about it, is there? As you know all about it anyhow, there's no good hiding anything. And I must ask you both to go out at once, because I'm having a visitor."

"What do you mean by 'a visitor?' " demanded our heroine. "It's clear enough from the note that my husband's coming to see you just now. It's a nice to-do, I'm sure, if I have to go out at a time like this. Just imagine! I'd like to see the face of that scoundrel when he crosses the threshold of this sink of iniquity."

Here the actor, whose mood had been completely ruined by all these alarms and upsetting incidents, tried to go while the going was good, but our heroine was now in very bad humor and obstinately refused to let him.

"My husband will be here in a minute," she said, "and then we'll slash this tangled skein in bits once and for all."

On hearing these words, which had a threatening sound, the actor quickly found his cap and began to say good-bye with much more energy. In the meantime, however, the bosom friends had got into an argument about him and whether he should go or not.

At first both the friends decided that he should stay as circumstantial evidence when the husband came. Our heroine wanted to show up her friend, so that the husband could see what kind she was, letting them have her room for such purposes, and the friend wanted to show the husband what kind of a wife he had.

Then they both changed their minds. The friend suddenly decided that she would not care to show herself in a bad light and the wife decided that she would not like to lose her husband's respect. So they came to an agreement and told the actor to clear out at once.

Just as the latter, well pleased at the turn things had taken, was saying good-bye, another knock came at the door, and the voice of the husband called out:

"Sonya love, here I am! Open the door!"

A certain amount of panic and confusion ensued, as you can imagine.

The actor's heart shot down to his boots at once, and in his despair he was about to throw himself down on the couch and pretend to be sick or dying, when it occurred to him that in this position he was most likely to arouse suspicion and be attacked.

So he got excited and started to plunge about the room, tripping over things and kicking up a most frightfull row.

The husband outside did not know what to make of the delay and began to thunder on the door, thinking perhaps there was something unusual going on in the room.

Then the ballet dancer said to the actor:

"See that door? It opens into my nieghbor's room. Here, I'll open it for you, and you pop through into the corridor and get down those stairs like greased lightning, see? Good luck!"

She hastily lifted the latch of the door, urging him to clear out quick, for the husband, hearing the noise in the room, was tearing the other door off its hinges in his eagerness to get in. Our actor darted into the adjoining room and was just making a dash for the corridor, when he noticed that the door leading into it was locked from the outside, with a padlock, apparently.

The actor wanted to rush back to tell the two women what a critical position he was in with the door locked and his escape cut off. But it was too late.

The husband had been already admitted to the other room, and there was a conversation going on at which the actor's presence would have been highly undesirable. The actor, being a very unbalanced sort of person, felt suddenly enfeebled by the number of things that had happened in such quick succession. Weak and dizzy, he dropped down on the bed, imagining that here, at least, he would be in comparative security.

He lay on the bed thinking despairingly of this and that and of the foolishness of love episodes in particular. His thoughts were broken in upon by a noise of someone rattling the padlock in the corridor. Whoever it might be, he was fumbling at the door and would be in the room in a moment.

The door opened eventually and on the threshold appeared a man carrying one of those flat baskets of cakes from the Torgsin.

Seeing a man lying on his bed, the new-comer's mouth fell open in surprise and, without in the least understanding the situation, he moved to shut the door after himself.

The actor was just beginning to apologize and mutter excuses, when he saw to his horror that the owner of the room was no other than the man he had quarrelled with and spat upon in the tram that very morning.

Giving up all hope of ever getting out of the place alive, our actor lay down again like a helpless child on the bed. It must be just a dream, he thought, it would soon pass and he would wake to a splendid life without any out-of-the-way unpleasantless or quarrels.

The newcomer, whose astonishment had got the better of his indignation for the moment, said in a complaining voice:

"What does this mean, sir? I'm expecting a lady to see me, she'll be here any moment now, and what will she see? Some mug or other lying about in my room. How the devil did he get in? The room was locked."

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure! I'm going out this very minute. I only lay down to rest a second. . . I'd no idea it was your bed, you know. My head was going round and round with all I've suffered—so many things happening one on top of the other, you see?—"

Hereupon the owner of the room, whose indignation had now got the better of his astonishment, began to shout:

"I call it a downright shame! Imagine, he's actually got his feet upon my bed. Maybe, for all he knows, I don't even allow old acquaintances to put their feet up on my bed! This is a nice thing, isn't it? The low blackguard!"

He rushed at the actor, seized him by the shoulders and literally shook

him off the bed. Then, all of a sudden he noticed that it was the hero of this morning's tram incident.

A brief pause ensued. The owner of the room, quite unable to grasp the situation, said:

"Aha, so I've got you this time, old fish-eye!" and was just about to take him by the throat, when a gentle tap came at the door.

"Well, you can thank your lucky stars," said the man, "that the person I'm waiting for has arrived, else I'd have made mince-meat out of you."

Then, taking the actor by the scruff of the neck, he dragged him towards the door, preparatory to flinging him into the corridor like an old rag; this procedure, by the way, would have been a great relief to the actor at that moment.

Suddenly the door opened, and a rather nice-looking lady appeared on the threshold. It was the visitor expected by the owner of the room, and she had come just in time to save the life of our notorious actor.

At the sight of the lady, however, the actor recoiled and even swayed dizzily. The lady in question was his wife.

There is no doubt that it was really a very striking coincidence.

And now our actor, who had been obliged to keep silence for the last couple of hours, relieved his feelings by roaring and kicking up a frightful row, and demanding an immediate explanation of this mysterious visit.

His wife burst out crying and sobbing and said that the man worked in the same place as she did and that she simply dropped round now and again to drink a cup of tea and eat a mouthful of cake.

Her embarrassed co-worker remarked that since they were quits now, they might as well make up the quarrel and have tea together. . . This suggestion was greeted by the actor with a frightful outburst of savage abuse, and his wife had hysterics on the spot. Her co-worker suddenly remembering the morning's scene, set on the actor again. And all the neighbors ran in to see what the matter was.

Among those present were, naturally enough, our heroine, her husband, and the bosom friend.

On learning what had happened the five assembled in the room to decide on a plan of action. Said the ballet dancer to her bosom friend:

"It's perfectly simple! I'll marry Nikolai, the actor will marry you, and the couple who work together should be a good match for each other. I think this would be the best way out."

Then the co-worker of the actor's wife protested indignantly.

"How do you like that for nerve! She's got a whole lot of kids, so far as I know. I'm to marry her, am I? See any green in my eye?"

"I must request you, sir, not to insult my wife," said the actor. "Particularly since I haven't the slightest intention of handing her over to any passer-by."

The actor's wife said:

"I shouldn't dream of coming here to live with him. Just look at his room! How could the four of us live here with the children?"

"Don't worry," retorted her co-worker, "I haven't the slightest intention of letting you and your children within a mile of this room. To have a blackguard like that for a husband, and to have designs on my room as well. I see one of you has settled down on my bed already."

Then Sonetchka, the ballet dancer, said in a soothing tone:

"Well, never mind, let's do it this way, friends: I'll marry Nikolai, the

actor and his wife will go on living together the same as before and we'll marry off this fool of a neighbor of mine to Nikolai's wife."

"Will you really?" said that gentleman. "Isn't that just too simple, and lovely? I'll just run out to the Registry Office with her this minute, shall I? Aren't you a bit too smart, though? Why, I've never set eyes on the mouldy creature before! She may be a professional pick-pocket for all I know."

"You are requested not to insult the ladies, sir," said the actor, "but I must say I think this would be the best way out."

"No, thanks," said our heroine. "I can assure you I haven't the slightest intention of leaving my happy home. After all, it's three rooms and a bath and I've no desire to go knocking about communal flats again."

"Pity all these matches have to be broken up because of three scoundrels —else it would have turned out nicely," said Sonetchka. "I'd marry Nikolai, this woman would marry that fellow and that couple could stay as they are."

Then the women started to abuse each other in a very coarse, vulgar way, counting up this and that. After which the men decided, with a pang of regret, that everything must go on as it had always gone, and upon this the party broke up.

But things are going on by no means as they always did. Soon after the row Sonetchka married her neighbor, and from time to time the actor visits her, because from the very beginning she was attracted by his gentle, helpless ways.

Our heroine, who was terribly disappointed in the actor's character when it turned out to be so ordinary, has since then fallen in love with a physiologist. As for Nikolai, he does not seem to be having any flirtations at present and he is up to his eyes in work. He sometimes finds time to see Sonetchka, however, and they go for excursions out of town on his day off.

These are the sort of things that happen in love.

With this we shall conclude our love stories in order to pass on to our next section—"Guile."

The close proximity of this section permits us, we think, to insert still another story in which both love and guile play their parts.

This is what happened.

*VI*

The last story which we shall call

*Love and Guile*

A young man named Sergei Khrenov, who worked as a clerk, began to court a young girl, a factory hand. Or perhaps it would have been better to say she courted him. It is so long ago now that it is difficult to be quite exact. All we know is that they were noticed together pretty often in the streets of Saratov.

At first they began to simply walk out together, then to link arms when they were out and then to make all sorts of loving remarks to each other. And so one thing led to another. One day the smart young clerk said to his young lady:

"Look here, Citizeness Anna Lytkina, "here we've been walking out together and keeping company and all the rest of it for some time and you

never know what'll come of it or what's before us. So would you be so kind," said he, "as to give me a receipt to the effect that if you should happen to have a child you won't make any claims on me, nor demand money for the support of your children. As for me, I'll feel easier in my mind when I'm in possession of a document, and I'll be nicer to you than ever. At present," said he, "when every little trifle is provided for by the criminal code, I feel somehow tied down. And I'm much more likely to get fed up with loving you now than if I hadn't to worry about every little thing I do and about paying for the support of whatever offspring I may happen to have accidentally."

Well, whether it was that she was terribly in love with him, or that this fanatic had completely turned her head with his nonsense, I don't know. At any rate, she did not argue with him much but just took and signed a paper to the effect that she had no claims whatever on him and she would not demand any money from him.

She signed the paper, as I said, not, of course, without uttering a few very pointed and bitter remarks:

"Seems sort of a bit funny on your part,, doesn't it? I've never had to give any receipts like this to anyone before. And I must say," said she, "that I feel awfully offended and a bit put out at your fondness for me taking such a queer turn all of a sudden. But, of course, if you insist, I don't mind signing your paper."

"Well, then, if you're sure you don't mind, do sign it, please," said the clerk quickly. "I've been watching the way things have been going on in this country for twelve years now, and I know what I've got to be afraid of."

To cut a long story short, she signed the paper. And he, being no fool, had the signature witnessed in the office of the House Management, and then put away the precious document next to his heart.

In about eighteen months' time they were both standing in the People's Court confessing the warm affection they had once had for each other.

There she stood with her white stockinette shawl over her head, rocking the baby.

"Yes," she said, "it's quite true I was silly enough to sign a document, but now I've got a baby it's a bit different. The father should pay his share. Particularly since I'm out of work," and so on.

And he, that is to say, the young ex-lover, stood there as nice as pie, sniggering in his moustache as much as to say:

"What's all the talk about, eh? What's up, I wonder? I can't seem to get the idea of it. Although it should be clear enough, you'd think; here if you please, is a document into the bargain."

With that, he solemnly threw open his jacket, fumbled about in it awhile and at last, pulled out the fateful document. Laughing quietly to himself he laid it on the table before the judge.

The judge examined it, looked at the signature and the stamp, gave a chuckle and said:

"Well, the document seems to be quite in order."

"Yes, said the clerk, "I'm very glad to say, if you'll excuse me, it's in perfect order. There's not the slightest doubt but it is. Perfect order's been observed and nothing's been disturbed."

"Yes, there's no doubt," the judge agreed, "but that the document's in perfect order, but there's just one point you've overlooked: the Soviet law is on the side of the child and protects its interests. In a case like this, the

child, according to the law, must not be held answerable or suffer in any way should the father accidentally turn out to be a pretty sly son of a bitch. So in view of the above mentioned article, your document has no value except perhaps as a souvenir. So," said he, "you can have it back and hide it away as quick as you can in your breast. It'll be a reminder to you of your past love."

To cut a long story short, the father of the child has been paying for its support six months now.

And this is perfectly fair.

With this, comrades, we shall conclude our series of love stories.

There are only six instead of ten. Well, that'll have to do. Our life isn't so crammed with love that we can go on discussing tender motives for ever. We shall not discuss the subject further.

Now you must read the short epilogue, which is mostly idle chatter. It gives a sort of finish like a bow of ribbon, to all we have said about love.

*Epilogue*

Here, dear and respected comrades, we must chose our chapters on "Love."

And what, after reading through conscientiously, do we see? What do we gather from these incidents of our own day and amusing stories from the life of the past.

We see that love, surprisingly enough, is practically always connected with a great deal of trouble. There is always either some fraud or quarrel or mess or else the husband of your lady friend is a perfect fool or you happen to hit on a wife who is a case of "heaven help the sailors on a night like this," as the saying is, or there's a nasty grasping spirit shown, and there never seems to be enough money.

The principal conclusion one comes to is that we have really rotten characters. Our natures, apparently, are not yet properly adjusted to wonderful things like love, weddings, meetings with charming creatures and so on. Yes, that's it, our natures are bad and this destroys all our chances to a cloudless existence.

It makes us a little envious of the future generation of young people who will be leading a carefree existence say, in fifty years' time and have had the benefit of a complete and proper education. They'll be able to stand up for themselves, we'd like to bet. They won't waste their time shouting and quarreling.

We can imagine the beautiful girls they'll be acquainted with!

Even the meanest little fellow who has nothing particular about him, even he, no doubt, will be able to enjoy like anyone else, the splendid life worthy of a man of that time.

It is not that we are complaining; we are perfectly satisfied with our affairs of the heart, but nevertheless, we cannot help noticing a few little things that need improvement. For example, that our girl friend is very carelessly dressed, and wears a hat that frightens the horses. That she is always asking to be taken to a restaurant. That yesterday when I was linking arms with her in the street the high heel of her shoe, just imagine it, broke right off. And the worst of it was, she couldn't walk; one leg was shorter than the other; she could only limp along. As for taking off her slippers and walking in her stocking feet, this I wouldn't allow. I felt rather awkward and ashamed

going about with a lady in this state. And not a cab in sight. And I hadn't enough money to hire people to carry her home and I hadn't enough health and strength to carry her myself. And there was the lady friend crying on my arm. Oh, the things that happen to people sometimes!

Of course these are all trifles in comparison with eternity, but still, one longs for the comfort that is just round the corner. In joyful trepidation we await the cloudless days of the future.

*Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley*

# Chinese Prisoners' song

(Free translation from the Chinese of a song sung by political prisoners in China's dungeons)

*Dark in this jail, life unbearable holds us*
*Penniless, hungry, cold.*
*Bound by our numbers, we dare not complain*
*To them who take away the sun and heaven*
*And give instead*
*Four rotting bowls of rice, dry cabbage stalks,*
*Vermin, and sleepless nights*
*Tortured by taunting dreams of parents, wives*
*and comrades.*

*Why should we not unite, heart and hand,*
*To fight against the tyrant?*
*United we can fight,*
*United burst the prison walls,*
*United reach to freedom.*

*The world can never know the cruel tortures*
*That we suffer from our deadly foes, police*
*To walls bind us, triple hang us,*
*With electric rack and chains and shackles*
*Try to make us bow!*
*Icy water up our nostrils!*
*Lash of leather, sting of bamboo*
*In this hell where all humanity is dead.*

*Let them beat us, let them beat us*
*For refusing to do their will!*
*Pain! Let there be pain!*
*Our spirit is firm and true.*
*And we know the time will come*
*When we'll avenge each searing scar,*
*When killers will be killed.*

*United we can fight!*
*United burst the prison walls!*
*United reach to freedom!*

# Two Soviet Short Stories

## AWAKENING

All the people of our class: brokers, shopkeepers, and employees in banks and shipping-offices, had their children taught music. Our parents, who saw no bright prospects before them devised a lottery, which they built up on the bones of little folk. This madness attacked Odessa much more violently than other towns. And sure enough, for years our town supplied the concert platforms of the world with infant prodigies. It was from Odessa that Mischa Elman, Zymbalist and Gabrilovich came, and Yasha Heifetz began with us, too.

As soon as a boy had reached four or five years of age, his mother took the puny little creature to Mr. Zagurski. Zagurski kept a factory of infant prodigies, a factory of Jewish dwarfs in lace collars and patent-leather slippers. He discovered them in the slums of the Moldavanka quarter, in the evil smelling yards of the Old Bazaar. Zagurski set them of the right track and then delivered them over to Professor Auer in St. Petersburg. A mighty harmony dwelt in the souls of these miserable mites with blue, swollen heads. They became famous musicians. One day my father decided to join in the race. Although somewhat over the infant prodigy age—I was almost fourteen—I was so small and puny that I could easily pass as an eight year old child. All our hopes hung on this.

I was taken to Zagurski. Out of respect for my grandfather he agreed to teach me for a ruble a lesson, an extremely low rate. My grandfather, Levy Idzhok, was at once the laughing stock and the pride of the town. He walked about in a top hat, with his feet bound in linen strips instead of socks, and dispersed people's doubts upon the most obscure points. He was applied to for information on Gobelin tapestries, on the reasons for the Jacobins' betrayal of Robespierre, on the production of artificial silk, and the exact method of making a Caesarean section. My grandfather could answer all these questions. Out of respect for his learning and madness Zagurski charged us no more than a ruble a lesson. And the trouble he took with me he took solely from fear of my grandfather, for it was clearly a waste of time. Sounds like iron filings crept out of my violin, sounds that cut me to the very heart. but my father would not give up. At home the talk was all of Mishcha Elman, who had been exempted from military service by the Tsar himself. Zymbalist, according to my father's information, had been presented to the King of England, and had played in Buckingham Palace; Gabrilovich's parents had bought two houses in St. Petersburg. These infant prodigies had brought their parents wealth. My father would have borne poverty patiently, but glory was a necessity to him.

"It could not be," whispered the people who dined at his expense, "it could not be that the grandson of such a man. . ."

I had something quite different in mind. While I played my exercises I placed some work of Turgenyev's or Dumas' on the music-stand before me and devoured page after page as I sawed away at the violin. In the day time I spun yarns to the neighbors' children, and spent the night committing them to paper.

Story-telling was an hereditary passion in our family. My grandfather, who became a little crazy in his old age, had been writing a story entitled *The Headless John* all his life. I took after him.

Three times a week I had to trail off, weighed down with my violin and music, to Zagurski's. Against the wall, awaiting their turn, sat a row of Jewesses in a state of almost hysterical animation. The violins they clutched on their weak knees were much larger than those who were to perform on them in Buckingham Palace.

The door of the holy of holies would open and freckled children with large heads on thin necks like stalks of flowers and an epileptic flush on their cheeks would emerge. The door closed again after swallowing up the next dwarf. On the other side of the wall the teacher with the carrotty curls, the bow-tie, and the thin legs, chanted and conducted till he was ready to burst. The manager of this monstrous lottery, he populated the Moldavanka quarter and the black alleys of the Old Bazaar with the spectres of *pizzicato* and *cantilena*. Later this polish was to be heightened to an infernal brilliance by old Professor Auer.

I had nothing in common with this sect. Though I was a dwarf like them, I hearkened to a different inspiration in the voice of my ancestors.

The first stage was hard for me. One day I left the house loaded with my violin in its case, my music, and twelve rubles, the fee for the month's lessons. I went along Nejin Street, and should have turned into Dvorianskaya Street to get to Zagurski's, but instead, I went up Tirasspol Street, and found myself in the port. The hours appointed for my lesson flew by at the docks. That was the beginning of my liberation. Zagurski's waiting-room never saw me again. More important business occupied my mind now. Together with a playmate of mine named Nemanov, I visited an old sailor, Mr. Trottyburn, on the steamship *Kensington*. Nemanov was a year younger than I, but from the age of eight he had been engaged in the most complicated trading operations in the world. He had a genius for trade and fulfilled all that he promised. Now he is a New York millionaire, a director of the General Motors Company, a firm no less powerful than Ford's. Nemanov took me about with him everywhere simply because I obeyed him implicitly. He bought the tobacco pipes smuggled in by Mr. Trottyburn. These pipes were made by the old sailor's brother in Lincoln.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Trottyburn to us, "mark my words, children should be made by hand. . . To smoke a factory-made pipe is like sticking a syringe in your mouth. . . Have you ever heard of Benvenuto Cellini? There was a real craftsman. My brother in Lincoln could tell you all about him. My brother doesn't believe in poking his nose into anyone's business. But he's a rooted conviction that children and pipes ought to be made by one's own hands and not by strangers. We can't but agree with him, gentleman. . ."

Nemanov used to resell Trottyburn's pipes to bank-directors, foreign consuls and wealthy Greeks. He made a profit of a hundred per cent on them.

The pipes of the Lincoln craftsman breathed poetry. There was a thought in each of them, a drop of eternity. A yellow eye shone in every mouthpiece, every case was lined with satin. I tried to imagine how Matthew Trottyburn, the last pipe-craftsman, the man who had withstood the march of things, lived away over in Old England.

"We cannot but agree with him, gentlemen, that children should be made by hand. . ."

The heavy breakers at the jetty divided me more and more from a home

that smelt of onions and of Jewish fate. From the docks I migrated to the breakwater. There was a little sandy patch inhabited by the boys from Primorskaya Street. There they could play from morning till night without putting on their trousers; they dived under the rafts, stole coconuts for their dinner, and waited till the string of barges laden with mater-melons would arrive from Kherson and Kamenka and the melons could be split on the capstans.

To be able to swim became the dream of my life. I shrank from admitting to these bronzed lads that although I had been born in Odessa, I had never set eyes on the sea until I was ten and at the age of fourteen was unable to swim.

How late I learnt the most essential things! In my early years I sat nailed to the Talmud, living the life of a sage, and I was almost grown-up when I began to climb trees.

Swimming proved beyond my powers. The phobia of my ancestors, Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money-changers, drew me inexorably down to the bottom of the sea. The water would not support me. Soused with salt water, I returned to the shore, to my violin and music. I was attached to these witnesses of my crimes and dragged them everywhere with me. The struggle of the rabbis and the sea continued until the sea-god of those parts, one Ephim Nikitich Smolich, a proof-reader on the *Odessa News,* took pity on me. In that athletic bosom dwelt a great compassion for the small Jewish boy. He was the leader of a mob of rickety weaklings. Nikitich had gathered them from the bug-ridden tenements in the Moldavanka quarter, had led them to the sea, rolled them in the sand, drilled them, dived with them, taught them to sing songs, and, roasting alongside them in the direct rays of the sun, told them stories of fishermen and animals. To grown-ups Nikitich explained that he was a lover of philosophy and nature. Nikitich's tales made the Jewish children cry with laughter; they squealed and cuddled up to him like puppies. The sun bespattered them with freckles that melted into one another, freckles the color of a lizard.

The old man silently watched my single-handed fight with the breakers out of the corner of his eye. Seeing that there was no hope of my ever learning to swim, he included me in the circle of those to whom he had opened his heart. His whole heart was laid open to us and it was a merry heart, that knew neither pride nor greed nor worry. With copper-colored shoulders, the head of an aging gladiator, the bronzed legs—a little bowed, he lay in our midst behind the breakwater—the sovereign of those melon-strewn, kerosene tainted waters. I came to love this man as only a boy constantly suffering from hysteria and headaches can love an athlete. I would not leave him alone; I was always trying to do something for him. "Don't fuss about so much," he said to me. "Strengthen your nerves first. Then swimming will come naturally to you. . . . What do you mean by saying the water won't hold you up. . . . Why shouldn't it hold you up?"

When he saw how hard I tried, Nikitich singled me out of all his pupils and asked me to come and see him in his clean, spacious attic with it straw matting. There he showed me his dogs, hedgehog, tortoise and pigeons. By way of exchange for all these riches I brought him the tragedy I had written the day before.

"I knew it. I knew you wrote," said Nikitich. "You've got that sort of a glance. You never look anywhere. . . ."

He read my manuscript, gave a twitch of his shoulders, passed his hand over his stiff grey curls, and walked the length of the attic.

"One must come to the conclusion," he said very softly, pausing after every word, "that you have the divine spark in you. . ."

We went out into the street. The man stood still, thumped his stick on the pavement and fixed his eyes on me.

"What is it you lack? . . . Youth is no hindrance, it'll pass with the years. . . . It's the feeling for nature that you haven't got."

He pointed with his stick to a low tree with a reddish trunk.

"What tree is that?"

I did not know.

"What grows on this bush?"

I did not know that either. We were passing through the square in Alexander Avenue. The old man pointed out all the trees with his stick, caught me by the shoulder whenever a bird flew by, and made me listen to the different bird-notes.

"What bird is singing now?"

I could give no reply. The names of trees and birds, the division of them into species, where they were flying, where the sun rises, when the dew falls the heaviest, all these things were hidden from me.

"And yet you dare to write? . . . . A man who doesn't live in nature like a stone or an animal lives in it, will never write two lines worth anything. . . . Your landscapes are like descriptions of stage scenery. Devil take me, but what were your parents thinking about for fourteen years?"

What were they thinking about? . . . About unpaid I.O.U.'s and the mansions bought by Mischa Elman. . . I did not tell Nikitich this. I held my tongue.

At dinner-time, at home, I would not touch the food. It would not go down my throat.

"The feeling for nature," I thought. "My God, why did it never enter my head before? . . . Where can I find someone to interpret the different bird-notes for me and the names of trees? Let me see, what do I know about them? I might possibly recognize a lilac bush and then only when it's in blossom. Lilac and acacia. Deribassovskaya and Greek Streets are lined with acacias. . . ."

At dinner-time father told us a new story about Yascha Heifetz. He had met Mendelsohn, Yascha's uncle. The boy, it seemed, was being paid eight hundred rubles for every appearance. How much does that work out at fifteen concerts a month?

I worked it out. It came to twelve thousand rubles a month. As I multiplied and carried four in my head, my glance wandered to the window. Across the cement yard my music teacher, Mr. Zagurski, was marching, leaning on his stick. He came on with the breeze gently swelling his Inverness cape, his auburn ringlets escaping from under the brim of his soft hat. He was none too soon. Over three months had gone by since my violin first rested on the sand behind the breakwater. . . .

Zagurski was approaching the front door. I rushed for the back door, but it had been boarded up for fear of thieves only the day before. Then I locked myself in the lavatory. In half-an-hour's time the whole family had assembled outside my door. The women were crying. Aunt Bobka rubbed her greasy shoulders against the door wailing and sobbing. My father was

silent. Then he spoke, more quietly and distinctly than I had ever heard him speak before:

"I'm an officer, am I?" said my father. "I have an estate. I hunt. The peasants pay me rent, don't they? I have sent my son to a military school. I do not need to worry about my son any more."

He ceased speaking. The women snuffled. Then the door of the lavatory was shaken by a terrific blow. My father threw himself upon it bodily. He ran back a few paces and rushes at it again.

"I'm an officer!" he shrieked. "I hunt, do I? I'll kill him. . . . It's the end. . ."

The latch sprang off the door, but there still remained the bolt, which hung by one nail. The women rolled on the floor, trying to catch my father by the legs; he tore himself free; he was in a frenzy. An old woman came tottering out at last to the noisy scene. It was my father's mother.

"My child," she said to him in Yiddish, "our sorrow is great. It knows no bounds. There has been all but bloodshed in our house. I do not want to see blood in my house. . ."

My father groaned. I heard his footsteps receding. The bolt was still hanging by the last nail.

I sat in my fortress till night-fall. When everyone had gone to bed, Aunt Bobka led me away to my grandmother's. We had a long way to go. The moonlight lay numb on unknown bushes, on nameless trees. . . . An invisible bird gave a whistle and faded into silence, perhaps into slumber. . . . What bird was it? What was it called? Did the dew fall of an evening? . . . Where did the constellation of the Great Bear lie? Where did the sun rise?

We went along Post Office Street. Aunt Bobka held me firmly by the hand so that I could not run away. She was quite right. I was thinking of escape.

## GUY DE MAUPASSANT

In the winter of 1916 I turned up in St. Petersburg quite penniless and with a false passport. Alexei Kazantsev, a teacher of Russian literature, gave me shelter.

He lived in a yellow, frozen, evil-smelling street in the Peski. To eke out his miserable salary he did translations from the Spanish; at that time Blasco Ibanez was just coming into his own.

Kazantsev had never even passed through Spain, but his love for that country filled his whole being. He knew every castle, garden and river in Spain. There were many others like myself, people thrown out of the ordinary rut of life, who had an affection for Kazantsev. We lived on the verge of starvation. Occasionally the yellow press would publish, in very small print, trifling news items written by us.

I spent the mornings hanging about the morgues and police stations.

Kazantsev was the happiest of us all. He was a man with a country—Spain.

In November I was offered a position as a clerk in the Obukhov Steel Works' office; it was by no means a bad position and would have released me from compulsory military service.

I refused to become a clerk.

I was only twenty, but I had already said to myself: better to go to prison or wander homeless than sit at an office desk ten hours a day. There was nothing particularly valorous about my vow, but I have never broken it and never will. The wisdom of my fathers was rooted firmly in my head: we are born to enjoy our labor, our quarrels, and our love; for this and for nothing else.

Kazantsev ruffled the short yellow fluff on his head as he listened to my tirade. The horror in his eyes was mingled with admiration.

Luck came our way at Christmas time. Benderski, a successful lawyer, who owned the "Halycon Press," decided to publish a new edition of Maupassant. Benderski's wife, Raissa, took on the translation. Nothing came of this genteel aspiration.

Kazantsev, who was known to be a translator of foreign tongues, was asked if he knew of anyone capable of assisting Raissa Mikhailovna. He mentioned me.

Next day, attired in someone else's jacket, I set out for Benderski's. They lived at the corner of Nevsky Prospect and Moika, in a house built of Finland granite, adorned with rose-colored columns, embrasures and mock coats-of-arms. Upstart bankers, baptised Jews who made their money as contractors, built many of these showy, pretentious "castles" in St. Petersburg just before the war.

The stairs were covered with crimson carpet. Plush bears stood on their hind legs on every landing. In their open jaws crystal lamps burned.

The Benderskis lived on the third floor. The door was opened to me by a high-breasted housemaid in a cap. She ushered me into a drawing room furnished in ancient Slavonic style. On the walls hung bluish pictures by Roerich of prehistoric stones and monsters. In the corners I saw ancient icons on wooden stands. The housemaid with the high chest moved solemnly about the room. She was well built, near-sighted, haughty. There was petrified wantonness in her wide-open grey eyes. The girl moved slowly. With what savage agility she must move in love, I thought. The brocade portiere over the door swayed suddenly. A raven-haired woman with pink eyes entered the drawing room, bearing a large bust before her. It did not take very long to recognize Raissa Benderski, one of those fascinating types of Jewesses that have come to us from Kiev and Poltava, from the well-fed steppe cities planted with chestnut trees and acacias. The money made by their resourceful husbands is turned by these women into layers of rose-tinted fat on the belly, the back of the neck and the plump shoulders. Their languid, tender smiles are warranted to drive garrison officers crazy.

"Maupassant is the one passion of my life," said Raissa to me.

She left the room, trying to control the swing of her big hips, and returned with the translation of *Miss Harriet*. In her translation there was not a trace of Maupassant, those easy flowing periods with the long breath of passion in them. Raissa Benderski wrote with a wearying correctness, lifeless and disrespectful, just as Jews wrote in Russian, formerly.

I carried the manuscript home to Kazantsev's attic and spent all night hacking avenues in the tangled wood of a translation that was not my own. The work was not so distasteful as it might seem. A phrase is born into the world both good and bad at the same time. The secret is in the turn of it, a barely sensible twist. The lever should lie in one's hand a while and get warm. It should be turned once and once only.

Next morning I took back the corrected manuscript. Raissa had not lied when she spoke of her passion for Maupassant. During the reading she sat motionless, with tightly clasped hands. Those satiny hands sank to the ground, her brow paled, the bit of lace between her crushed breasts trembled and heaved.

"How did you do it?"

Then I talked of style, of the armies of words, of the hosts that bring all manner of arms into play. No iron can enter the human soul with such a numbering effect as a full stop placed just at the right moment. She listened to me with bowed head, her painted lips parted. There was a black gleam in her polished hair, pressed smooth and divided by a parting. The legs with the strong, soft calves over which the stockings seemed to have been poured were planted wide apart on the carpet.

The maid, turning her petrified wanton eyes away, brought in the luncheon tray.

A glassy Petersburg sun lay over the faded, uneven carpet. Twenty-nine volumes of Maupassant stood on a shelf over the table. With melting fingers the sun touched the morocco backs of the books, the beautiful grave of a human heart.

Coffee in little blue cups was served to us and we began to translate *Idyll*. It is the well known story of how the half starved carpenter sucked the breast of the stout nursing mother, to relieve her of the milk with which she was over-burdened. It happened in the train going from Nice to Marseilles, one scorching noon-tide, in the country of roses, the home land of roses, where plantations of flowers sweep down to the sea shores. . . .

I left the Benderskis with a twenty-five ruble advance in my pocket. Our "commune" on the Peski was as drunk that evening as a flock of satiated geese. We ate caviare by the spoonful, following it up with liver sausage. When I was thoroughly tipsy, I began to abuse Tolstoi.

"He took fright, your Count, he was a coward. His religion was all fear. . . . The chill of old age frightened him and so your Count made himself a warm jacket of faith. . . ."

"And what next?" asked Kazantsev, shaking his bird-like head.

We fell asleep alongside our own beds. I dreamed of Katya, the forty year old washerwoman who lived in the room below. We used to get boiling water from her in the mornings. I had never got a really good look at her face, but in my dream we did God only knows what. We fairly tormented each other with kisses. I could not restrain myself from going to her for boiling water next morning.

I saw a faded woman with a shawl bound across her chest, with straggling ashen-gray hair coming out of curl, and damp hands shrunken with constant wetting.

After that I lunched with the Benderskis every morning. A new stove made its apearance in our attic; it was followed by herrings and chocolate. Twice Raissa took me out for drives to the islands. I could not help telling her about my childhood. The tale turned out a doleful one, to my great surprise. Shining frightened eyes looked at me from under her moleskin cap. The brown tinged fur of the eyelashes quivered piteously.

I made the acquaintance of Raissa's husband, a sallow Jew with a naked skull and a flat, powerful body that seemed straining obliquely for flight. There were rumors of his connection with Rasputin. The profits he made out of war supplies gave him the look of one possessed. He had a haggard, wandering gaze, for him the veil was torn aside. Raissa was embarrassed

whenever she had to introduce new people to her husband. On account of my immaturity I noticed this a week later than I ought to have done.

In the New Year Raissa's two sisters came from Kiev to stay with her. Once I happened to call round with the manuscript of *L'aveu* and, not finding Raissa at home, called again in the evening. They were all at dinner. From the dining room came the silvery neighing of women and the rumble of unrestrained, excited male voices. In wealthy houses without traditions people dine noisily. This was a Jewish noise that rolled and tripped and ended up on sing-song notes. Raissa came out to me in a ball dress that left her back quite bare. Her feet stepped awkwardly in their wobbling patent leather shoes.

"I'm drunk, dearie," and she stretched out her hands, loaded with chains of platinum and stars of emeralds.

Her body swayed like that of a snake rearing itself to the ceiling when music plays. She tossed her marcelled head, and with a tinkle of rings sank down all of a sudden into an armchair with ancient Russian carving. Dents made by the carving glowed on her powdered back.

Feminine laughter burst out anew behind the wall. Two sisters with little moustaches came out of the dining room; they were as well grown and full-breasted as Raissa . . . Their busts were carried well forward, the waves of their black hair bobbed up and down as they moved. They were both married to Benderskis of their own. The room filled immediately with disconnected feminine merriment, the merriment of mature women. The husbands wrapped their wives carefully in sealskin coats, and Orenburg shawls, and shod them in black snowshoes. The snowy visor of goats' down shawl left nothing to be seen but the flaming, roughed cheeks, the marble noses and the eyes with their near-sighted, Semitic glitter. After a little more noise, they departed for the theatre, where Chaliapin was singing in *Judith*. Raissa stayed.

"I want to work," lisped Raissa, stretching her bare arms, "we've missed a whole week . . ."

She brought a bottle and two glasses from the dining room. Her bosom hung free under the silk of the sack-like gown; the nipples stuck straight out with the clinging silk covering them.

"It's sacred," said Raissa, pouring out the wine. "Muscatel, vintage '83. My husband will murder me when he finds out."

I had never come into contact with Muscatel of 1883 and drank three glasses one after the other without thinking. They bore me swiftly away into alleys where an orange flame danced and sounds of music could be heard.

"I'm drunk, dearie. . . . What were we going to do today?"

"Today it's *L'aveu*.

"So it's *L'aveu* . . . The sun is the hero of this tale, *le soleil de France*. Molten drops of it pattering on the red-haired Celeste, turned into freckles. The sun polished with its direct rays and wine and apple cider, the countenance of the coachman Polyte. Twice a week Celeste drove into town to sell cream, eggs and fowls. She paid Polyte ten sous for driving her and four sous for the basket. And every time they drove in Polyte would wink at red-haired Celeste and inquire: 'When are we going to have a bit of fun, my beauty?' 'What do you mean, Monsieur Polyte?' Jogging up and down on the box, the coachman would explain: 'To have a bit of fun means—why, to have a bit of fun, devil take me. . . . A lad with a lass, no music necessary . . .'

" 'I do not care for such jokes, M'sieur Polyte, replied Celeste, gathering further away from the lad the skirts that hung over the powerful calves in red stockings.

"But that devil Polyte kept guffawing and spluttering: 'Ah, but one day we shall have our bit of fun, ma belle,' while tears of merriment rolled down a face the color of brick-red blood and wine."

I tossed off another glass of the sacred muscatel. Raissa clinked glasses with me. The maid with the petrified eyes passed through the room and vanished.

*"Ce daible de Polyte. . . .* In the course of two years Celeste had paid him forty-eight francs. That was fifty francs all but two! At the end of the second year, they found themselves alone in the diligence. Polyte, who had drunk his usual cider before starting out, asked, as he was in the habit of doing: 'Well, why should we not have our fun today, Ma'mselle Celeste?' And she replied, casting down her eyes: 'I am at your service, M'sieur Polyte' . . ."

Raissa burst out laughing and flung herself down on the table. *"Ce diable de Polyte . . ."*

"A wornout white hack was harnessed to the diligence. The white hack, with lips pink from age, moved at a foot's pace. The gay sun of France poured down on the ancient coach, screened off from the world by a faded hood. A lad with a lass, they needed no music . . ."

Raissa held out a glass to me. It was the fifth.

*"Mon vieux,* let's drink to Maupassant . . ."

"And why should we not have our fun today, *ma belle. . . .*"

I reached over to Raissa and kissed her on the lips. They quivered through her teeth, recoiling.

She pressed herself against the wall, stretching out her bare arms on it. Spots began to glow on her arms and shoulders. Of all crucified gods, this was the most ravishing.

"Have the goodness to sit down, M'sieur Polyte."

She indicated an oblique blue armchair, done in mock-Slavonic style. Its back was made of carved interlacing bands with painted tails. I groped my way to it, stumbling as I went.

Night placed in the path of my starving youth a bottle of '83 Muscatel and twenty-nine books, twenty-nine petards filled with pity, genius, passion. . . . I jumped up, knocking over the chair and bumping against the shelf. The twenty-nine volumes crashed down on the floor, their pages flew open, they fell on their sides . . . and the jaded white horse of my fate went on at a foot's pace.

"You are a funny fellow!" growled Raissa.

I left the granite house at twelve o'clock, before the sisters and the husband returned from the theatre. I was quite sober and could have walked a plank, but it was more comfortable to stagger, so I swayed from side to side, humming to myself in a tongue I had just invented. Through the tunnels of the streets bounded by a chain of lamps, the steamy fog billowed. A monster roared behind brick walls. The roads cut off the legs of those passing along them.

Kazantsev was asleep when I got home. He slept sitting up, with his meagre legs stretched out in their felt boots. The canary fluff on his head rose. He had fallen asleep by the stove bending over a volume of *Don Quixote,* published in 1624. On the fly-leaf of the book was a dedication to

the Duc de Broglie. I got into bed quietly, so as not to wake Kazantsev, moved the lamp over to my side and began to read a book by Edouard de Menial: *The Life and Work of Guy de Maupassant.*

Kazantsev's lips moved, his head drooped lower.

That night I learned from Edouard de Menial that Maupassant was born in 1850, the child of a Normandy gentleman and Laure Lepoitevin, Flaubert's cousin. He was twenty-five when he was first attacked by inherited syphilis. His productivity and cheerful spirit resisted the inroads of the disease. At first he suffered from headaches and fits of hypochondria. Then the spectre of blindness rose before him. His sight grew weaker. He became suspicious of everyone, unsociable and pettifogging. He struggled furiously, dashed about the Mediterranean in a yacht, fled to Tunis, to Morocco, to Central Africa—and wrote unintermittently. He attained fame, and at forty years of age cut his own throat; he lost a great deal of blood but remained alive. He was then shut up in a mad-house. There he crawled about on all fours and devoured his own excrement. The last line inscribed on his hospital report is *Monsieur de Maupassant va s'animaliser.* He died at forty-two years of age. His mother outlived him.

I read the book to the end and rose from my bed. The fog came close up to the window and shut out the world. My heart contracted with grim foreboding.

*Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley*

**Paul Nizan**

# The First to Die

*From the New French Novel* Sainte Colombe

By five o'clock, the town had reached such a pitch of excitement the like of which it had rarely experienced in all its history. It was quite unlike its usual self. It was intense, alive, with a conglomeration of men and noise. Rumors and news of the riot spread out to the extremities of the town, to the suburbs on the other side of the river, out to the lone houses on the high road. Persons walking, women on their door-steps, men reading, writing, playing cards, women sewing, people sleeping, invalids, lovers, all heard of the demonstration. Only the lovers, the invalids and the children resisted the attraction of these sounds. Apart from them, everyone discovered that their town possessed a heart. From quiet corners, men ran towards this thrilling spectacle which was being enacted between the cathedral and the theatre, and as they ran they said: "If only we get there in time, if only they are still fighting. . ."

There were those who backed the workers, others who backed the police, and then again there were others who were impartial. Everyone was nervous, people ran towards the center of action as they would towards a great fire. There was not one inhabitant, in these towns, who did not expect an explosion, a crime, a conflagration.

They have very little cause for excitement, apart from the night sirens, the ringing of bells announcing some mishap, or the death cries around a murderer or criminal. These towns are only too glad to be able to relax and let themselves go. The people descended like streams rushing towards some celebration.

Every now and then, they stopped, listened and said: "Can you hear?"

Before they arrived at the destination, they were stopped by the police just as the onlookers at a fire are checked by a cordon of police. There was a center of action which the police protected from the ever increasing circle of onlookers. Everyone envied those who had managed to find a place on the cathedral steps. Seeing them, they muttered:

"They've got the front seats. . ."

The police were ordered to charge. The demonstrators retreated towards the boulevards. They saw horsemen of incredible height towering above them. A young man stumbled against the curb and fell down at the feet of a superb and powerful dappled horse. Lying on the ground, slightly raised on one elbow, he shouted incessantly at the soldier who stood over him, "Bloody swine, bloody swine!" The sergeant urged on his horse. The young man uttered a shrill scream and sprang to his feet.

By half past five, the police and the reserves had succeeded in driving the demonstrators back as far as the Theatre Square. Every now and then someone was wounded. One heard screams and curses. Sometimes a cap fell off. The onlookers who could no longer see the fighting since it had moved off to the boulevards, decided to go round by the side streets and take up a position at the end of the Theatre Square.

When the demonstration had flowed back on to the square, a wide distance was re-established between the police and their enemies. The police had had

time to collect reinforcements which arrived like moving trucks by way of the large bridge. Again, everything resembled the preliminaries for a pitched battle. It was rather an agonizing moment.

The workers looked at the enemy who formed a solid black line at the entrance of the boulevard, where earlier there had only been a thin line of police. They were wondering what was the good of such a day: they had chased the fascists and prevented them from filing off; that was victory, but then they had retreated before the police, this defeat probably cancelled the first victory. They were wondering what they should do, whether they should disperse, and go home. But it hurt them to have to admit that the day should end in failure. The anger which here prevented them from crying out also held them back.

They would wait till the very last possible moment for the chance of a second victory. Their first victorious transport had carried them away.

The police corps was powerful; it looked more like machines than a troop of men. Their weapons were visible, their heads protected. They wore thick coats, crossed by leather straps, they wore puttees, one felt that it would be difficult to get at them.

But they were men, therefore they had chests with a frame work of ribs above the hearts, stomachs tender above the liver, intestines, sexual parts like any other man—all those spots which simply call for wounds, seemed armor plated. Then there were the weapons, the muskets. The workers thought of their own bodies, covered only by a shirt, a light jacket; they felt naked, open to attack. They thought of their blood. Facing these arms, they felt sensitive, vulnerable, as though their organs were but sheltered by a mere brittle shell. They would have preferred to fight naked men. They felt they were less clumsy than these over-fed animals.

The demonstrators in the back lines shoved those in front of them; they could not see these policemen who looked so unmoved and as hard as stone. By their heaving the whole crowd was thrust forward. The demonstrators began to pick up stones and to attack the police. The police looked on at this violent stir, but remained stock-still. A brick hit a sergeant full in the face, he fell on his back. So then, it was possible to fell these machines. The crowd rushed forward. Several shots rang out from the police ranks. Three men and one woman fell. The police advanced. The crowd turned tail and fled towards Stock Exchange Street. Some turned back to throw stones. A sergeant knocked down a man wearing a stiff collar who seemed to be an employee. The man fell on his knees, the sergeant waited; the man advanced three steps, tottering, the sergeant followed him and struck at him again. When the man lay prone, hunching up his shoulders and protecting his head with his hands, the sergeant swore at him and struck him several times on the head, till he lay motionless. When the bulk of the demonstration had moved off to Stock Exchange Street, a group of police cut off the last lines of demonstrators.

In the square about thirty persons remained behind, and the police began to chase and to attack them. They were like rats in an arena, prey to terriers. When a demonstrator was overpowered, the police, twisting his arms, dragged him off to the police station. The three officers stood on the pavement in the middle of the square. Every now and then one of them rang up headquarters from a telephone box in a cafe, which had just opened.

When the commanding officer returned, with infinite sang-froid, he put on his gloves, inserting one finger after the other, the thumb last. The commis-

sary of police was less calm: he was a fellow with red cheeks, curly hair and a scanty moustache, he stuttered after a few drinks and he slept with the girls whom the police arrested on Station Avenue.

Whenever he had occasion to telephone from the cafes to headquarters, he took a drink. He returned to the staff by way of the sidewalk, shouting and issuing orders: the police were still pursuing and clubbing the remaining demonstrators. Three workers were kneeling against the iron railing of a drug store, they were crouching in anticipation of an onslaught. The police arrived, encircled them and charged. A woman stumbled on a stone and the police overtook her: they beat her on the stomach and on the breast, they shouted: "What, you carcass, would you come back? You'll sing another time, you prostitute." Her shrill cries reached the ears of the commanding officer. He was an affected personage and he danced with the wife of the chief of police, and he shouted: "Keep that woman quiet." The commissary shrugged his shoulders.

The police continued beating her on the nape of her neck with their fists, so that eventually she was still.

The police knocked down an additional five or six persons and bodies lay strewn in the sun. But still, there were some demonstrators who succeeded in escaping the rubber truncheons and the sticks from which the paint was peeling; these rushed along in the direction of the theatre. From the top of the steps, the interested onlookers watched them running, but the police came up and cleared the steps, and the onlookers, dragging howling children after them, also fled along by the theatre. When there was no one left to attack, the police set off on their rounds. The three officers considered the square, now so clean and orderly, with a beautiful evening sun and a little shadow rising from the side near the theatre. The bodies lying there stretched out, slowly rose one after the other and clumsily moved away, supporting themselves against the walls as they went. Only two persons remained on the square, two extraordinary strange sights for this town, where men are accustomed to walk peacefully upright, not lying down on the square. It was an utterly scandalous affair. As a matter of fact, one of the two was dying and began to choke. The commissary ordered them to be removed and then only the stone of the square remained. The commissary wiped his forehead, he also wiped the leather of his haversack and he fanned himself. Before continuing their work the officers loosened the straps of their caps and began to smoke, like peasants who have reached the end of a field and stop to rest before turning the team. The officers considered their work, so successfully accomplished. But the fighting continued in Stock Exchange Street, simply because the town had no inclination to return to normal life, and because it had taken a liking to this flurry and excitement. The street of the Stock Exchange was one of the narrowest in the town; the houses were five or six stories high and were built round back yards; it was one of those landscapes which made one feel that the town could not be far distant from Italy.

The workers who were retreating were now anxious to justify themselves. They again faced the police. They felt the support of the walls, the support of a district where there could be no treachery. They were in their own dominion again after a sally against the town of their masters. They were defending their own. The police advanced, rifles aiming. A huge navvy, wearing the trousers of his calling, tore the rifle from one of the police and smashed it against the curb. In a hand to hand scuffle, one of the police was shot with a bullet from his own rifle; with blood spurting from his torn ear,

he turned howling to his companions. In the half light, the faces which peeped from behind shutters, opened mouths twisted with hate and hope. Hands were thrust over window rails, bottles were hurled at the police—then old useless articles began to fall, articles impaired by long years of service, old triangles, boards prickling with nails, flat irons forgotten in corners. Articles which had been used daily. Articles connected with the most peaceful of actions, were now used with violence, and were as dangerous as arms. Before disappearing, these household utensils took on new dignity. A chest of drawers whirled round as it emptied its drawers. The further the police advanced, stumbling over this heap of wood, glass and metal, the more windows opened. The demonstrators defended themselves also. Those who fell, cut their hands on a glittering bed of broken glass. Eventually the police stopped. Beneath this heavy shower between the walls and the closed doors they were undecided. Orders were issued back and forth. They began to retreat when they had reached the end of the street, when they had this heap of debris before their eyes. The workers began to sing, everyone took a deep breath, some people discovered a bruise or a cut. After several minutes of hesitation and discussion, the workers turned their backs on the police and disappeared in their town and they were singing.

The day of struggle ended naturally and gave way to night. The town returned to normal life. The streets became deserted: the horse patrols still walked in step with their horses, along the quays, along the boulevards; the cafes lit up and resumed their restless life.

In front of an illuminated shop in the street of the Stock Exchange there was a clot of blood, dried up and dirty: all the street lamps were smashed, the gas hissed. The night pressed with impenetrable heaviness around this blood.

Philippe and Bloye were returning. They were tired. Philippe had been struck on the head with a truncheon. However, they walked briskly, with the step of men who have completed a good day's work, a very good day's work, worthy of men. They were satisfied; they looked at the street which had the pure, smokeless sky of a Sunday evening. Rays of light, crept between the cracks of shutters and blinds. Children were still playing in the streets.

When they pushed open the door, Bertha said: "I was angry... I've been home a good two hours. I wondered where you'd got to... Come and eat, you must be starving."

Philippe kissed his wife. They sat down to eat. But they pushed their plates aside and talked. They looked at each other affectionately because they had just entered a world where men can look at one another without shame.

"But still, if we had weapons," said Philippe.

"You go too fast," said Bloye. "As yet, it is not a question of our weapons. That's a question of which we shall speak later: we shall speak of it with the soldiers. It's a question of showing our strength."

"But the others," said Philippe, "they'll fire."

"For a certain period," said Bloye, "but we must be patient. There will be a time, when all the corpses will be on our side, but one should not answer with death. That's all they are waiting for... I think I did well in preventing you from taking your revolver with you."

"I think so too," said Philippe, "but you must admit, it's very difficult to digest..."

They went over the events of the day, this day which stood apart from all others. This day which smashed all customs and even, perhaps, changed the meaning of their lives. From the confused medley of memories, they detached episodes and details which they had happened to retain and they composed a dialogue rather like a song in celebration of some battle: in these street scuffles there are enough peculiar incidents to extol the value of man. These accounts were stimulated by a certain enthusiasm since their comrades had ceased to be men who were oppressed and humiliated. They had shown their own worth, they had shown courage, they had triumphed, they had not feared either blows or wounds. The political meaning of the demonstrators, they would see to that afterwards. Now, they thought chiefly of their number (there must be about seven thousand of them) their dignity and the end of their loneliness.

The worker's feeling of resistance and opposition which Philippe had not felt of recent years, and which Bloye had never known, were now revived with renewed force and strength. It was like the return of some person: one speaks of a man, one describes him, one imagines him, one thinks of him as of a being who is far away, who is almost imaginary and then suddenly he comes in, says how do you do and sits down at the table, one has to touch him to be sure of his presence. Philippe spoke of the workers' struggles as of a universe which had once existed but the return of which was probably a mere myth. And the violence and authority with which they described the story from the depths of their conscience had just remade their appearance; they were slowly recovering from the shock. By morning everyone was certain that something would happen in the town. Something did happen. It would just be an event quoted in the newspapers, a derisive article added to the structure of history, the plan of which the builders did not know. For them, it was also a tradition about which they could speak to the first person they encountered. It was a description from a book, it was complete and entirely convincing, like a person, like a storm. It ceased to belong to the world of lectures, fiction, hypotheses, hopes.

Philippe sighed:

"What an age since I last fought," he said. "It rejuvenates me. . ."

"We have been waiting for such a day," said Bloye, "without knowing that it would come during our time. We were talking about it yesterday. But we were only imagining. And here we are in the thick of it. . . it's enough to change everything."

After a while, Lhomme rang the door bell and came in.

"Well, what do you think about it?" he asked. "The young patriots will not come and play their petty Hitlers with us."

He sat down, he related what had happened in his part of the riot. They continued to compose a picture of the day's events, so that they should have it complete in all its entirety before them, with its importance and its significance. They were still wondering if they had acted wisely in dispersing after the Stock Exchange scrimmage. . .

"Apparently, there have been mass arrests," said Lhomme.

"What do you expect?" said Philippe. "There were at least five hundred police. I wonder if they wounded many with their shooting. . . it seemed they were shooting rather low."

"And there were hardly more than fifteen or twenty shots, counting both times on the Cathedral Square near the theatre. The first time, they were too far away, they probably only hit the stones. . ."

"I haven't heard any shooting since '18. Let me tell you, it's a strange feeling to hear that noise on Theatre Square."

Bertha went to close the door and bolted it. When they ceased talking, searching in their memories, they could hear footsteps singing on the pavement. At about 11 o'clock, someone stumbled at the entrance. Philippe stood up. A voice called out:

"It's I, Louis. It's as black as pitch in your dirty old place."

Louis entered, ducking his head. Only newcomers knocked their heads against the frame of the low door.

"Hello," he said. "Have you heard the news?"

"What's happened?"

"Paul is dead," said Louis. "He was killed in Theatre Square."

They said nothing. This was an event of far greater weigth than the fighting or the victory. It was an event which was the sanction of all the others. Ten minutes earlier, when considering the conflict, they forgot their enemies, they allowed them to fade in the background, they merely thought of the amusing side of the enemy, they regarded them with a sort of indulgence which made them forget Germany, Spain, Italy. The fact was, for the first time, they felt powerful. But one of their comrades was dead. Again this was a word which had to be understood and to which a meaning must be given, just as they had given a meaning to the struggle. At first they felt furious about it.

"Tell us about it," said Philippe.

"I was with him. We met just at the time when we began retreating after the fascists had fired. He said: 'It wouldn't hurt these buggers to have a few shooting lessons.' Together we went up the boulevard. He had torn his nail on the belt of a policeman. He wasn't big but he was wiry. He fought well. He said: 'Is this going to last long?' He had lost his cap and he said to the fellows, we were with some socialists, 'the retreat would probably end.' That was not long after the police had been shooting. You remember, there was a moment of panic. . ."

"We remember," said Philippe, "we were about ten metres away from you but we did not see you."

"He just sighed, rather heavily, like someone yawning without restraint. I felt him sink gently down on his knees, slowly, as through he were endeavoring to restrain himself. I was pushed on, I couldn't help myself. I was being pushed. I could not stop myself. I could see nothing. At the corner of Stock Exchange Street, when they had cut off the last part of the demonstration, there was time to look around. Turning round, between the police I could see three comrades stretched out on the square. I recognized Paul by the color of his hair, the other two were young boys. Paul was motionless. I said to myself, is he dead or had he fainted? Some sergeants came up and tried to make him get up by kicking him. They leaned over him and lifted him up like a pig by one arm and one leg. They took him off, his other arm dragging along the ground. I said to myself, even if he is not dead, they'll do for him. The fighting had begun again."

Philippe asked:

"How do you know he's dead?"

"From the hospital. . . When everything was over, I got separated from the comrades. I said to myself: perhaps he's at the police station, perhaps he's in the hospital. The town hall was surrounded by a lot of stupid people come for news. There were some kids crying, people slapped them, the wives of

the fellows were awfully nervous. I met a railway man, one of the workers. He said to me: 'A fellow from your lot has been arrested.' 'Who,' I asked, 'and do you know if there are any wounded?' The railway man answered: 'More than thirty, and five of them dangerously wounded.'

"They were all taken to the hospital. So I went there. They chucked me out and said: 'We've got enough to do without you coming and bothering us.' But still a nurse took me aside and asked me: 'Who are you looking for?' I told her: 'So and so.' Wait. She went into a little office and when she came back she said: 'So and so, you are sure?' It was certainly his name, the name he used here. 'So and so entered the hospital at half past six, with a bullet in his intestines, bed No. 28. He died.' I thanked her and I added: 'He was my friend.' She answered: 'What's the good of getting mixed up in a street brawl?' I came back to tell you. . ."

"Well," said Philippe, "you didn't see him. What if there's a mistake? That could happen. . ."

"It's hardly possible," said Bloye. "But we could go back to the hospital. We can ask and make sure."

"If you like," said Louis.

"Let's go," said Philippe. "Stay here. . . Bertha; if anyone comes, you tell them where we are. . ."

They went. Outside the menace of death was still more overpowering. All living beings use houses as refuge against death. If the doors and windows are closed, death remains without. News of death has no reality in closed rooms. Beneath the great expanse of night sky where clouds floated like death's attendants, Paul's death seemed less extraordinary: they felt less sure that it was impossible.

The streets and avenues were deserted and even in corners there were scarcely any shadows. The town slept. There was no one about, since everyone was sleeping. They felt lost in the vast abyss.

The world of humans did not come to their assistance; did not comfort them. They were four beings wandering in the night, searching for traces of one of their companions, who in all probability was dead.

The hospital was situated on a road which led to the open country: at the end the country appeared beneath a canopy of trees where from time to time night birds moaned like children dreaming. The lights were not all extinguished in the hospital: there were enough windows lit up to give the hospital the air of a studio which night and day continues its work of birth, cure and death. Around this great building, so brilliantly white, a faint odor of ether floated, at the same time fresh and suggestive of medicines.

"Can you smell this odor of decease?" said Louis.

"One does not notice it in the day time," said Philippe.

They rang. The door opened. They went in. The hall was paved with red and black tiles. At the end of a long series of glass doors a gas lamp burned near the corridor window. A thin, dry woman was looking at them.

"We have come for information of a patient," said Philippe.

They were not going to ask suddenly whether Paul was dead.

"This is not the time to come," said the woman.

Eventually, she went into an office which looked like a railway switching hut and the partition wall shuddered gently. She came out carrying a book.

"Your friend is dead," she said. "He suffered from perforation of the intestines and torn bladder."

They remained at the door of the little room. They looked at one another.

"You had better go," said the woman. "Staying here all night won't bring him back."

A man was seen at the end of the corridor. It was a doctor, an acquaintance of Bloye. He accompanied them to the mortuary.

"If you feel like seeing him," said the doctor.

They recognized Paul.

"We hadn't known him long," said Philippe. "It would be a week tomorrow since he came."

They had few memories of the recluse, who spoke little, but they saw his childlike furtive smile like a sign of friendship. But their knowledge of men was not that of politeness, convention; they understood this passerby from the moment they had met, because his life had the same object as their lives. Silently he had gone from the secret to death, but on his way he had completely revealed himself. He was a man of their own kind, of their class, with the same struggle and with the same beliefs. Paul was stretched out on the slab which was no less shining than he himself. From the ceiling hung a little shadeless lamp. It shed a miserable, yet heavy light on the body. They looked at him. For the first time they saw his body, which they had never seen, with colors extraordinarily varied and strange. It was a body which had suffered many hardships.

"He is very thin," said Louis.

In some places the skin was yellow, in other parts it was red and wrinkled. Only the neck and the surface which stretches from the shoulder to the chest retained their colors of adolescence. They also saw his face, with the lips lifted over the teeth. He had not died peaceably.

They still looked at him, long enough to retain in their minds the marks of the blows on his body and the great wound which exposed the organs of his body.

"Let us go," said Louis.

They went down the steps of the hospital, they scanned the road, the town, and the night and they set out.

"Did you notice his right hand?" asked Bloye.

"And his hip?" said Philippe.

That was the hand which had dragged along the ground, the hip which had been kicked by the sergeant. They were blind with fury, they were men easily roused by brutality, violence and injustice. They did not think of death as of a relation, but as of someone who had had strong and powerful connections with them apart from ties of blood relations or of fate. Thus they had just met death, a certain kind of death. But they were not overpowered. They felt less alone than on their way to the hospital and because they had identified the face of death.

They had not felt that great power which whispers to men, which falls unexpectedly like a thunder bolt, and one says: that is doom, and like sheep one huddles closer together and one bolts the doors and pulls the covers over one's head—they had witnessed an event which was within the sphere of human matters. Decease, accidents are not human occurrences. Crime, violence, fight, end in death and give man more conscience. One does not talk of fate. One talks of revenge and revenge is a justification of life. The three friends continued on their way and when they thought of Paul, who now was only a corpse, they felt themselves part of a world which admitted of action and determination. They walked briskly, jumping over the stones on the sloping roads and at each step, without speaking, each of them gave his

meaning to the death of their companion. On the way Lhomme left them. When they arrived at Philippe's house, they found Marie Louise, who had come to look for her brother and was talking to Bertha.

"Well?" asked the women.

"Well, there's no doubt," they said and they told all that they had seen at the hospital.

Philippe strode up and down: he had just enough room between the table and the cupboard to walk three steps. Bloye looked at him; he judged the violence of Philippe's feelings by the frown on the latter's face and the contraction of his muscles. Philippe said:

"Not one of our dead shall die unrevenged. Not one."

"The first one to die is of the greatest significance," said Bloye.

In truth, they saw before them a future pregnant with struggles, shots, corpses and blood. For years this explosion in history had seemed a mere myth, a dream: in a universe alive with catastrophes, they had just been shaken into reality, the reality which is described and printed, which one reads of in newspapers. The struggle which they had been carrying on in the background of a town was ending in a genuine panic. They would be living in an epoch where victims would only be dealt with wholesale, there would be no time even to consider the death of an individual.

It would be as in a natural disaster, a cyclone, a flood; in this town, there have been one thousand deaths.

Even the instruments of death would not be left unconsidered, they would no longer deal death to individuals as does the revolver, the rifle, but they will multiply it, spread it like an epidemic, with the help of machine guns, cannons, gas and airplanes. Separate deaths will have no extraordinary significance except for the wife or the son or those who love the dead person. It will be like the time of the Commune, like Asturias. Like the time of civil war in Siberia, in the Ukraine.

"Do you remember what we used to say?" said Philippe. "We must not die before seeing the revolution. He will not see it."

Among them, Paul was the first to die. They had realized the significance of life. Bloye said:

"The most important thing is to know for what one is dying."

"We always said, perhaps we'll be killed, but we didn't believe it," said Louis. "This will make more than one of us stop and consider."

"Shut up," said Philippe. "One must not be afraid to die. It's a matter of dignity. One must only fear dying in a corner like a rat. In that case there is no sense, that's the death of an animal. . . ."

"For years, one does not think of death. One only feels a presentiment. Suddenly it passes like a cloud through the center of life. Suddenly it robs all life. All one's thoughts and life are only anguish. Then one recovers, one sets about living as though one were eternal. One plays a game, made up of shunning death. Now again, death reappears: it is enough to see a run-over cat lying in the shining tar with its face bathed in its own blood, to realize that death is still there. One hears of the death of an acquaintance. The same age as oneself. Younger than oneself. One eats, one goes walking with one's family, with a woman and one begins to beguile death, by the only means within man's power, by talking. One speaks of the death of one's parents, which are almost invariably remarkable deaths. And, when one is really upset, when one feels one is alone in a limitless desert where death plays with

men as the wind plays with a tree, one begins to pun, one makes fun of oneself. And thus, by means of talking, one forgets.

Philippe's kitchen was one of those places where men tried to account for death. They did not try to escape it, to hide from it. They wanted to look at it face to face. Philippe said:

"It's always hard to die. But there are deaths which mean nothing and others which one can understand. One can understand a death where one must be courageous, that's a death which resembles an action. It is difficult to explain what I mean."

"The injustice of his death," said Bloye, "does not diminish its significance for us. We want to create a world where there will be no death for which man alone is responsible. Death as the result of an accident at work because the engines or the machines are out of order, death as a result of unemployment, death as a result of torture... these are the kinds of death which one can eliminate..."

"But one will die anyway," said Bertha. "We'll all end in the grave."

"If we all said that," said Bloye, "we'd get nowhere. I often think of these things.. first, one must destroy all unjust ways of death, and then when it is only a question of death, one must try also to give it a meaning... You understand, to stand face to face with an illness like heart attack, like facing an enemy, like Paul when they began shooting..."

Philippe said:

"In fact, when men no longer fight, there will always be time to fight one's fate—what people call—fate..."

"We haven't reached that stage yet," said Louis. "We have other enemies to conquer."

It was one o'clock in the morning, so Louis, Bloye and Marie Louise went out. Louis went home. Bloye accompanied Marie Louise on the quay, they walked as they had walked the previous Sunday along the plateau which towers above the plain.

"After all," said Marie Louise, "we did have our first victory."

She had forgotten that one of them was dead. She did not linger near tombs. She continued to go forward with life. She did not feel overpowered. She breathed.

"Let us go for a walk," she said. "I don't feel like going to sleep. No one is waiting up for me."

So they walked. They descended into the bed of the river, where banks of shingle stretched. They heard the sound of running water but they could only guess its whereabouts. They could smell it with the smells of trees, of bushes of mint. Above the river, above the world, a sweeping sky extended, pure of all death. They walked a long time. Marie Louise spoke of her life and of what was to be done, of what they would probably accomplish. When they had overcome death, when death had become a part of the struggle, a part of life itself, they saw the first signs of day which Bloye had seen three days earlier when returning with his friends. Marie Louise raised her eyes to the hills, rising above the town, where the factory owners, the police, tradesmen and all the dead were sleeping.

"It will soon be dawn," she said.

*Translated from the French by Joan Rudger*

**Sandor Gergel**

# Wine

*A Short Story of Hungary*

Little Mary is ten years old. Hair and complexion, brown; eyes, blue. A city doctor would say: undernourished. Country folk only say: the thin thing. Little Mary has been head of the family now for two weeks. From five o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night. At five o'clock in the morning father and mother are already on their way to the rich farmer's. For the past two weeks they have been working there and the "home" is managed by little Mary.

Sleeping on two old straw mattresses are Hans, nine, Martin, seven, and Julie, four. The two straw mattresses are really only bags of straw-dust, but towards dawn, when the old folks have gotten up from them, it is lovely and comfortable there. Once in a while little Mary has to go away too. She puts on her rags, sticks her feet into the boots tied around with straps; picks up the lead ewer and goes. The ewer is very heavy and the place far, but by six o'clock she is at the railway station. At six o'clock the Pester passenger train comes. It stops there for ten minutes.

Mary is always on time. Even in winter she comes on time, if she is there at all. For it is not always there is something to bring. Last winter she went twice for two weeks. When the old folks went to work. . . . That means they had work twice during the winter, for two weeks at a time. They get paid not in money or even in lard, flour or meat—that comes only once in a long while—but in wine. Two liters of wine is a day's wages. Nowadays that's what they pay. . . . The two of them earn four liters of wine daily. A good part of it they drink themselves, particularly when there is nothing to eat in the house. But little Mary takes a four-liter ewer of wine every morning to meet the Pester passenger train. Her thin little voice chirps to meet the inrushing train:

"Wine, please. . . Fresh, fine wine, please. . ."

But she is not the only one that waited for the Pester passenger train, chilled to the bone. Big men in boots and with moustaches throw themselves upon the train, enter the cars, run up and down inside them while little Mary has to rely only on the few passengers that come out on the platform for fresh air. She shivers with the cold, her teeth chatter. Occasionally more than necessary when, with her uncanny knowledge of people, she is drawn to someone in particular.

"Uncle, buy some. It is the best wine. . ."

"Auntie, I wash the ewer every morning with soda, it is clean, buy some. . ."

"Only ten hellers a glass. . ."

Sometimes she sells as many as five glasses.

Once, in winter, a man with a great big paunch drank right out of the ewer. He drank almost half the ewer and gave her a whole pengo. Mostly, however, Mary gets only forty or fifty hellers. For this she buys bread in the village, at thirty hellers the kilo.

"Well, little one," the baker said once, "do you take care of the family?"

"Sure. But not for long now."

"Is that so! Till when then?"

But to this Mary did not answer. She only thought of father's curses and the angry whispers of the poor folk: one of these days we'll take these lords by the scruff of the neck!

Only things like this one must not tell the baker or any of the others that have money.

And so she goes every morning and buys bread for the money she gets for wine, smiling confidently.

But the business gets harder and harder. The wine sellers go along with the train now from station to station. They buy themselves tickets, board the train, wake the sleeping ones and offer them drinks. Hardly anyone buys wine at the station. Little Mary stands between the tracks in the rain like a big wet bird. Despair sounds hoarsely in her, "Uncle. . ."

She thinks of the family entrusted to her. Hans, Martin, and Julie will go without bread today again. And, coughing, she lags behind the other wine sellers in her hour long trot. All the others are grown up, only she is small. But Mary is glad of this. So long as she has to carry the wine to the railway station, it is good: if father or mother were to do it, that would mean they were unemployed and could only sell the remains of the wine. And they would also be coming back with full ewers, curse, and stop to take long draughts. Just as the others do.

Today she has not sold a single glassful. There is not a crumb of bread at home. Trouble presses on her brain, the heavy ewer presses on her shoulder, the deep mud pulls at her boots.

She collects the loose bricks lying about, makes a little pile near the door and gets upon it. That's how she reaches the window sill where the key is hidden. She unlocks the door and then scatters the bricks again. The children are up already. She drags them out of their rags. The older ones tend themselves. The little one she has to wash.

They sit down to the table.

Mary puts the ewer down in the center of the table. She puts a tin plate and spoon in front of each of the children. All fold their hands and repeat their morning prayer.

"There is no bread today," Mary says when the prayers are over.

She swallows a laugh as she had put one over again on Martin. That little godless fellow had announced yesterday:

"If there is no bread again tomorrow, I'm not going to say my prayers."

She pours the wine into the plates. The children fall to and drink hungrily. Julie doesn't feel like drinking the wine. Mary takes her on her lap and smiling slyly talks her into drinking her breakfast. After they are through they get up feeling dizzy, stagger and hiccup.

Rain is pouring. Hans and Martin go to school. Barefoot and hatless.

Mary washes the dishes. She herself had not used either plate or spoon. She drank out of the ewer in deep, heavy draughts. Then she also goes out, her sleeping little sister in her arms. She feels somewhat dizzy, staggers a little and has to lean against the door. She looks about the yard.

Standing in the doorway of their neighbor's house is another little Mary, also ten years old. To distinguish between them the neighbors call her Marilyn.

"I have shipped them off to school," says Mary.

"I too. All three," answers Marilyn and sticks her two little fists under her apron, just as the grown-ups do. She is silent a while, then she asks:

"Did they all have their breakfast?"

"All. But there was no bread again today."

"We had no bread either," Marilyn nods. "And I got no wine."

"I have no bread, darling," Mary says, "but I can give you some wine."

So Marilyn comes over to Mary. They go inside. The ewer of wine stands on the table. Marilyn falls upon it and drinks in deep, heavy draughts. After she is through she holds on to the table.

"I always get dizzy" she says in a murmur, "whenever I drink wine."

"I too. And she always goes to sleep from it," Mary points to the child in her arms.

So they stand there, feeling dizzy, their eyes sad with family troubles. They drowse off. Their heads hang down heavily. They lean over against the table. Then they slide down to the floor. The child in Mary's arms rolls out, almost stifled, on the floor beside them. Mary and Marilyn now let themselves go altogether and the little heads, so heavy with family cares, sink in sleep on the straw mattress.

# REPORTAGE

**Ben Field**

## Goodbye, Father Walt

*Notes on an American Cross-Country Tour*

The car twitters through the grey city streets. It poises like a fishfly. The tailor's son, the humped shoemaker, the pale clerk, and all the thousands of workers with their wiped eyes and little vents leaving for the daily job.

With camera, pencils, round map like a pieplate, all set. Shaking off Manhattan, burst open to the dawn, the skyline with its buildings like punchboards. The flag of lightning and the drum of thunder. Up shoves the sun through a poncho of clouds. The Jersey road flows its fast solution with flashing crystals of other cars in the fresh light. Over the mountains, an Appalachian fence, stopping the great browsing ocean winds from the great valley. Again the Burma Shave signs:

*The Cannoneers*
*With hairy ears*
*For wiry whiskers*
*Used tin shears. Use Burma Shave.*

Again churches like backhouses, sentry boxes against the hosts of evil, flaghouses against the belching devil. STOP. WORSHIP GOD. QUARTER OF MILE OFF. Again the roadhouses with their comfort stations for WOMEN. LET NATURE TAKE HER COURSE. The zoo to attract tourists. Canadian bears lurching on hind legs, gulping down bottles of soda and milk. The jobless sneaking in at night for the half-emptied bottles. The earth red as rotting cedar. Wooden figures of farmers pegged into their fields. Hills arched like scared animals with stiff trees. Further and further from the coast and the other old friend sailing to Russia the better to understand our America. Dear old Horseface, there is a Moscow in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Further and further, through Shinbone and McKean County famous for buckwagons and horses, the Ford greying like a rockdrill through a thousand one-horse towns and the troubled land between.

*A Farmer Correspondent Hammers Out a Problem*

The member of the Central Committee and editor of the *Daily Worker* had given us the assignment back on the eighth floor in the city. Like an actor manager seated at his desk, saluting us at our leaving. Now we are no longer free lances pricking in any damned direction over the cities and plains of America.

We are bound with our noses to stumble up the class furrow in a wholesome anonymity. To tighten the slopping guts inside our belts the better to feed the fist around the driven pencil.

Yet the old shyness and timidity tripping up the tongue, the failure which makes one long for the old Walt Whitman days of loafing and invitation to the soul.

How to describe for 30,000 workingmen our findings? Does humor vanish where the class struggle steps in? The Negro unemployed saying, "Never liked to work. Even sitting on my ass was too much of a job for me." This a reflection on the Negro masses? Shall we tear off piece after piece flooding our paper with strong spurts of language, branding capitalists crocodiles, reptiles, sharks, vultures, buzzards, wolves, holding the spreadeagled worker up like an icon?

All along the road women, men, and boys, out of work, thumbing the air for a lift. Yet we riding with full bellies past, the little Ford breaking wind in their faces. There in the ditch the jobless old man, feet naked and swollen as if taken from a boiling pot. How can the spigot nosed, burr-headed reporter jump off, crying: "Hold that expression of agony until we've got you fixed, once and for all, upside down in this coffin-shaped camera?"

*A Michigan Village*

Through Michigan to Lake Huron. Here we settle on an alfalfa farm in a shack overlooking a small eye of water fringed with the soft lashes of evergreens. In the morning getting wood, milk, water, and a few minutes puffing a pipe over *Leaves of Grass* before the day's work begins.

The boss farmer is an old man with knotted hands and a knotted face. Kindly in his way but shrewd, a hard worker pitchforking the devil out of himself and his men.

All day long we load and unload in the huge barn. The dust smokes. The horses heave and kick at the flies. The sun seems to be a thick glass behind which a greater fire is being trained down on you. The double harpoon fork chews off the load in three bites. Again to the field. The driving boss' fork jabs you through the calf. Another stump gets into the loader-drum. Fuss, sweat, cuss patching up the slats. A dark cloud rolls up. The rain drills into the earth. Thunder shakes the world. Keep your fork teeth down low's you can so as not to attract the lightning. The hay's got to be jackassed up by hand even though it is wet and leathery. The fork handles twist in the hands. Lightning flashes. And the boss grunts how during flax cutting in Iowa a cloud rolled up the size of a bull's hide and let loose, killing the farmer in the next field. And so you work on for twenty dollars a month.

At last twilight. Whipping ourselves and the soaked horses back to the farmhouse. The hung harness. The stuffed mangers. Night, and the overwhelming realization for the first time how precious to a worker rest, bread, and his own woman and roof can be.

*Notre Dame*

The cathedral dome swells over the city with its tens of thousands of hungry like a pod of rose seeds long after the flower has shriveled. We wait on the grassy bank which shelves into the lake for young Father Frederick to finish teaching his English class. Many of the unemployed are rooted like snags along the edges of the fields bordering the lake. Their fish lines drawl from their bodies like roothairs into water that nourishes little. And the stupendous fable of the loaves and fishes stinks to high heavens from among crumbs and scales.

Father Frederick greets us heartily. We eat in the cafeteria, one of the best in the country. Men in serious cassocks and nuns with long skirts whispering around their feet and unpressed thighs, chattering beads, lavender, blue, purple, snow-white cloth in the folds of which lie buried the soft bodies like slugs leaving their marks in the Garden of the Lord. One of them drops a fountain pen and a gracious nod as we return the marbled little pen with the name Sister Sophonisba.

Our friend discusses his course in American literature. "They take to Walt Whitman," he says. "There are passages which we, naturally, ignore. I tell them the story of how I visited the market in Baltimore when I was teaching in Georgetown University. There were huge trays of an ugly meat. I found out that was mushrat. So those passages in old Walt."

The cleancut young priest, the ascetic body thin as a pipe, smiles at us. He is very eager to finish his summer session. He wants to get back to the Nebraska farm where he was born, to help with the harvest. Then there are a few stories hanking in his head, just webbing up his brain like tent caterpillars. Have we read his last one, "The Threshing Gang?"

He eats carefully, abstemiously; he has enough to pick from and can make his lean picking a way of life. One of his new stories is autobiographical. He outlines the plot vividly, the boy of eleven going as far as Devil's Lake to catch a horsethief. "We got him. I had to bring him back alone."

We stroll over the campus. Here is the humming bird's nest, the first he's ever seen. Stop, there's a gopher standing still like cactus. And here fine architecture. He points out as the Church's constant concern with the world the "legend biten in stone above this archway. We may be criticized for Knut Rockne, but the Church takes the ways of the earth with mighty pinches of salt." And we study the football player clutching the football, facing a squirrel with a nut.

We sit on a campus bench and discuss the plans for a symposium on the farmer. Father Frederick says slyly, "You don't have to draw any of your punches, Farmer Field. No quarter."

A stone's throw from the bench is a statue of the founder of Notre Dame. The strong priest with a beard like a sword.

The twinkle dies out of Frederick's eyes. And we know for the first time there can be no quarter.

*The Prairies*

The burnt smell and the vast quiet distance and the low sky. The prairie, flat, giving off the odor of a lusty relaxed woman. Small black birds fluttering on sheep's backs to pick off ticks. Wheat bound into spools. Church bells hammering from a lonely tree clump like a blacksmith shoeing the devil so he can kick up better in a Christian world. The evening sky flushes as if the day's heart has just been crushed in it. Then the prairie town with baseball bleachers like cattlesheds, advertising the Negro team, great horseplayers, captained by Porky the pitcher, speedball artist. The sign blazing in store after store—PATRONIZE AMERICAN PRODUCTS. GIVE JOBS TO AMERICAN WORKERS. THEY GOT TO LIVE. But the merchants live first.

The little Ford quivers like a blade over the emery wheel of a road grinding us all. The horizon pulses. Poor farmer moving off somewhere in a prairie schooner. A horn-hipped pony limps behind, tied to the tailpiece. Dust devils whirling. Farmers shoveling water out of caked holes. Farmers on their knees like wethers sucking the hot air, sucking the prairie scabby as a

sick ewe. A few groves and coolies with stunted trees. Telegraph poles marching into the sky resembling crosses, rakes, gallows waiting for the tortured farmer. The local paper full of the grasshopper, the drouth, God: "Thought for Today from 1 John 2:15. Love Not the World, Neither the Things That Are in the World. If Any Man Love the World, the Love of the Father Is Not in Him." Then the quick night swallowing like a bullsnake everything before it.

The manager of the service station, a former farmer, built like a Kansas warhorse jackrabbit. Volunteered to fight in 1917. Will you fight again? He stares at us as if we're plumb crazy. Wanted to go into the banking line, always wanted. Twenty years ago farming wasn't so bad. One season, why he made 1,200 dollars clear profit on flax. Forty acres of it, three dollars a bushel. And now the grasshoppers are biting the end of the pods and the flax seed's dripping out. After the war went into the farm implement business. Two years ago it all went kaput. The oil companies hog all the good corners and lease the rest. Soon as they catch you making a cent, they jack up the rent. Farmers got little money for gas. Cars are greased once a blue moon, and you got to use cannons, not grease guns. What to do about it? He doesn't know. Wiser men than him have cracked their skulls open over such problems.

The third day, and the prairie still unfurls eastward. The dust rises in choking clouds to drizzle back on the grain. Grain elevators Golems let loose in a wilderness. A cemetery, God's acre lost in the burned wheat, with crosses like the handles of farm tools. A Greek church with onion towers. Alongside of it, WE SLEEP TO RISE AGAIN.

Sauk Rapids, and the government flapping back huge deaf ears to farmers crying hoarsely from the harvest for binding twine. Carworks on half time. More than 6,000,000 acres of farm land going to the state because of tax delinquencies. Stacks of straw piled up like loaves and cornhills like skins still yellow with fat. And the city hall in one of the closed-down banks.

With a last spurt into Iowa. Mason City, cement, packing houses, butchering 700 beeves instead of the old 5,000. Greeks and Mexicans are many of the workers. Treated like dogs, and they ought to be, grunts the hardware merchant. And at last groves of fresh trees with farmhouses nestling in them with their combs of smoke. Regiments of tall corn. Herefords, pigs, sheep with their heads caught in the red clover and the green grass. Tipton, the "Cow War" capital, where the little farmboy hitched up his pants and stepped over the line the guardsmen had scratched as the furthest spot the furious farmers might move to. Again the slats from the Iowa corncrib flying into the face of Wall Street. Steaming into Missouri, we hear the Iowa farmers behind us bunched on bridges to dump milk into creeks and streams.

### *Houston Rotary*

Rotary is beseiged today by a bunch of football players from the local college, collars open at their necks, collecting contributions in a bigger and better campaign for a bigger football field. The Rotarians fire their hats into a corner in this hotel in the heart of the city. They act like a lot of boys about to play the game of rolling the ball into the hat. Each one of them slaps his identification on his chest. The first name is large on the button. Beneath the name the man's line—Children's Homes, Fruits and Vegetables, Newspapers, Catholic Churches, Automobile Springs. Children's Homes (this is the super-

intendent of an orphan asylum) and Churches are also commodities and the wearers glorified peddlers.

Dollar meal: Pineapple salad and cheese, crab, ice cream, cake. On our right sits Fruits and Vegetables who talks about Mycenae lemons and Porto Rican pineapples. As he shovels in his food, he swerves to an attack on the trucks. They come into the city to take legitimate business away from the retail and wholesale dealers. There's no statistical reason for it. There is far too much competition. A lot of swine not only with snoots in the dish but also hoofs.

Automobile Springs wipes salad off his jaw. "I'm no Bolshevik, but every man in four in this country is living off the country."

Children's Homes corrects him: "Every man in eleven."

"That's bad enough. I'm no Bolshevik but this government is honeycombed with red tape. The government's got to cut down its expenses. There's got to be a change. The people won't stand for it. Or there'll be a revolution."

Children's Homes: "You fellows know how I stand. There's got to be a change from the bottom up. A slow solid change. Both Democrats and Republicans are the same. Else the people'll get their horns up, and you can't tell then where it'll stop."

Catholic Churches is mum. He is concerned with the body of the crab.

Thanks for the meal is offered by the Protestant clergyman. Around the long table are all the past presidents of Rotary. They have come in celebration of the club's anniversary. The chief funster gets to work. "I'll bet I can make everybody jump up without a tack. Let's sing *America*." We all laugh uproariously and kick our chairs back. A number of out-of-town brothers are introduced by the funster. "Look at the rest of us and let that be a lesson to you." A brother who's been in a hospital for a month is asked to rise. We crane our necks and clap.

Children's Homes bites his Havana. "Now for the talk fest."

The presidents open up. Each reviews his term of office and tries to kick himself in the behind to appear more modest than his neighbor.

Fruits and Vegetables: "That one speaking is a former judge of the Children's Court. Did loads for the club. Just lost his election. Got a heart like an ox."

The presidents point with pride to the rapid growth of the club. They relate how much opposition it first encountered when the charter members decided to admit only one man from each line, and he the best one in town. The rest of the business men tried to boycott the club. They lost out. Rotary has had swell times with different excursions and trips. The one down into the Rio Grande Valley when the Mexican Rotarians came out to meet them with a band and flags. At Corpus Christi when one brother got so happy he jumped out of a window. How they bought up cotton when it was ten cents and sold it at war profits and scooped up wads for Rotary. How they made a jaunt to Niagara Falls and had scrawny watermelons and one of the boys paid 18 dollars for a diamond pin in a box and found inside a dime and pin. How they've helped found other Rotaries in Texas and made theirs a beacon light in the biggest town, in the biggest state, in the biggest country in the world.

The funster calls for the *Star Spangled Banner* before we adjourn. The leaders of Houston rise, and sing like hell. Catholic Churches belches. Transubstantiation of the crab is rapidly going on. Only Automobile Springs has a frown on his face. He is probably thinking of the revolution.

*New Orleans*

The Ford like a fertile bee with the dust of half the country on it bumbling toward New Orleans. Rice, cane, withered fig trees. Over the bridge on which you enter Louisiana, GOODBYE, KINGFISH. Local papers reporting that Cyclone Davis swears 157 men have caused the depression. Why don't the banks lend money? Brahma cows with planks of wood on their heads against the sun. The hot wind spoons out dust. An Acadian with fingers like young pigs keeps a tailor shop, sells oysters and fish, runs a gas station. "I'd ruther vote for a nigger than for Hoover." This in front of the hired Negro filling the car with gas. Ads—WE COULD BUY THE WHOLE WORLD IF WE COULD SELL IT. SELLERS OF FROGS' LEGS. KING BAITMAN OF THE WORLD. On another bridge an old man with a musket and powder horn. His beard flows down to his waist. His daughter shoos the boys away. The old confederate soldier paces the bridge to protect it from the union forces with a most blissful expression bathing his milky face.

Into New Orleans to the courtyard behind a barber shop in the French Quarter. Mark, the literature agent for the *Daily Worker*. We hear how the police have threatened to throw the literature agent into the river. A little boy trots in, grandson of the barber. Up goes his fist. "Red Front," he peeps like a furious cocksparrow.

The headquarters of the Marine Workers Industrial Union in the loft of an old building on Gravier Street. The boys are playing checkers and cracking peanuts. They root up a few cents by selling Party literature. We meet Wickman, Svier, Dutch, Frank, James. One of the boys is on his way to New York. His folks have just sent him a few dollars. He holds up a pair of socks, his first in six months.

Dutch glowers in a corner. Homesteaded in Nebraska, 260 acres. Was drafted. When he got back from France, they took his farm away. Wanted to put a bomb under the bank. The tatooed sun on his bare chest bulges through the hair. So all these years he's been trying to get the rock off his feet.

Two of the longshoremen come up to the loft. They sit on a bench with Wickman crouching before them to encourage them. The more articulate of the two Negroes said, "There you are," whenever Wickman scores a hit. He has a broad nose with big flanges. His shoes are torn, his overalls in tatters. The other is bearded. A good luck coin on a soiled string round his neck. Buttons are missing on his pants.

United Fruit pays 48 cents an hour. Luckenback 58, cut down from 70 and 80. Banana loading paid 35 on conveyors and 45 by hand. It's 30 all round now. Deepwater boats paid 80 and 85 cents. This season all boats are called coastwise and you can't get more than 65. 'Stead of meeting the hook, you got to beat the hook. Truckers carry 1,600 pounds and no longer 500. A man looks as if he fell into the river working. The shift from seven to four is two hours longer and then overtime begins.

You're soaked a church tax of 25 cents. A drug tax in case you're ever sick. The International Longshoreman's Association stevedore is always snapping at your heels. You got to have a badge. You're fingerprinted. If you lose the badge, you got to pay five dollars. If you complain about being gyped on time, you're cussed and told you're blocking the payroll. A policeman tells you to get the hell out. Negroes and white would work together, two for each truck. These days it's Negroes separate, and they pit black gang against white. If you work for more than two days the loader boss takes a dollar and half of what you make for commission. Another racket is the moneylenders

who start crying out like hawks at you, "Who wants money, Who wants money?" They carry a big sack of money. Borrow three and you pay back five. The company hires the moneylenders and makes two bits on every dollar. The men are scared of strike. More than 5,000 been blacklisted already. The men say ILA sold them down the river.

They're having a new racket, the poll tax. All the Negro longshoremen got to pay it else they lose their jobs. Some of the men already pawned their clothes for to pay the poll tax. The boss say this poll tax is to keep the farmboys out of town who're looking for work. It's to protect the homeguard. But they don't allow you to go to polls anyhow. The paper says only about 1,100 out of 200,000 Negroes vote in New Orleans. If you register, they ask you to give them the state constitution by heart. They ask you why Senator Long is called Kingfish. They ask if you're Negro, colored or American. If you say Negro, they say your'e colored. If you say your'e colored, they say you're Negro. If you get sore, they say you're one of those smart niggers and make yourself scarce.

The bearded worker mutters: "They got their hook in us here." He spreads his hand over his stomach. The other cracks his knuckles and stares thoughtfully down at his broken shoes.

From the old loft into the French market. The Saturday night crowds pack stalls and alleys. Over the river the sky is plumcolored with the bloom of the Milky Way across it. Madame Beque's restaurant on the first floor overlooking the market. We pace the iron-grilled balcony for a long while. Then to the quiet table for soup, chops, shrimp, chicken, white bread, fruit, and bottles of water the shape of Indian clubs. Plaster crumbles from the ceiling. Paint on the wooden floor like "nightingale droppings." On the wall pictures of Old-World heavenly vineyards.

Down in the stalls chicken dressers sweat over their orders. They snip, and the released guts fall into their swift hands. Flowers, cheeses, hot coffee, vegetables, shark fins, enamel crabs that stink and bat each other. One of the market women goes off like a howitzer. The young men are also on the lookout for flesh. The tropic weather makes the hunger rise like a great plumed cock in the blood. In a cigar store a little Creole whore with breasts tight as snare drums.

Along the docks Negro longshoremen. The white stevedore cursing the black gang. "For craps sake, Jeesus," as it loads the steamer. Red, the donkeyman, his eyes in the light like broken glass, clutches the levers. Up swing the hooks. Slings are slipped around the machinery. Moss, cotton, sugar are dumped down. Little yellow Negro with belt around him as if he were ruptured. Buck Negro pulling a truck, sweat rag tucked under his belt. The captain loafs against a rail puffing a long cigar. Negroes pawing barrels in the cramped hold. The leader boss crying: "Here, here," swinging his hand so that you expect dice to flash out. A bunch of white boys and girls on a lark run by, and the Negroes still grunting and puffing hot breath. The winches whine. The river no longer flows by as if from a great rich teat. The river moves, holier than a thousand Ganges with the sweat of God, the sweat of these driven men. All through the night they heave-ho to the crack of a dawn not yet theirs.

*Washington*

Full of little Caesars, bad architecture, police with big badges like the kind boys sport around with "Chicken Inspector" on them, statues of French generals in wigs and breeches, statues of American statesmen in long trou-

sers like stovepipes. Nothing here in memory of Dan Shays, Job Shattuck, or M'Farlane who led the betrayed farmers in open revolt after the Revolutionary War. But now here in Washington in a small downtown office, the toolshed, the harness room, the fusee in our new fight to mass the farmers on the road.

In New Orleans Wickman in the headquarters on Gravier Street had spoken about Cropper Coney and how the Creole farmers and the Negro hands and tenants were hiding guns under their cabin floors waiting for Coney to lead them in the fight. And he had shown the letter from Washington.

A young man crouches over a desk in the hot dim office. Bigdomed, holloweyed, gaunt. Left college in his junior year. This is more important Yankee. Father a Brooklyn politician. He talks about Fort Green Park, Myrtle Avenue, and the old memories of Walt Whitman shake like a great horsechestnut with the shadow flung out to meet you. And we give him addresses and report: Coney, Lennox, Lewis, Johnson, etc.

We go down to the White House with Jerry. Between the trees it shines brightly with its new coat of paint. A dozen lackeys pasted against the windows. A guard's belly—"Got to get a letter from your Congressman to get into the Red Room. It ain't so hard. Go see your Senator." Red Room, Green Room, Blue Room. Here the great democracy having its President, the people's man, guarded like a Chinese Emperor.

Then the Navy Building with its cannons like the spiles of barrels. Clerks rushing about with drawn watery faces. And over the bridge to Anacostia Flats under a sky full of hot stars. And Jerry repeats the story of the bonus army, the killing of Hushka, the demand the vets leave the empty buildings because construction must be started on them soon (nothing yet has been done to the buildings) the gas-bomb smashed into the lap of the pregnant wife of one of the vets, police and soldiers with clubs, masks, bayonets, and the flames roaring through the huts and tents here on the mudflats. And now in one of the new government buildings, Army Building, spittoons like bugles in every corner, cost about 20 dollars a piece.

Wherever you step are ashes. Across the river the postoffice from which America's great poet, nurse of the first Civil War's wounded soldiers was kicked unceremoniously from his job because there was smut on his *Leaves of Grass*. Across the river the lighted Capitol on the hill looking like a stale wedding cake, stale and bitter to those whose love has long turned to hate.

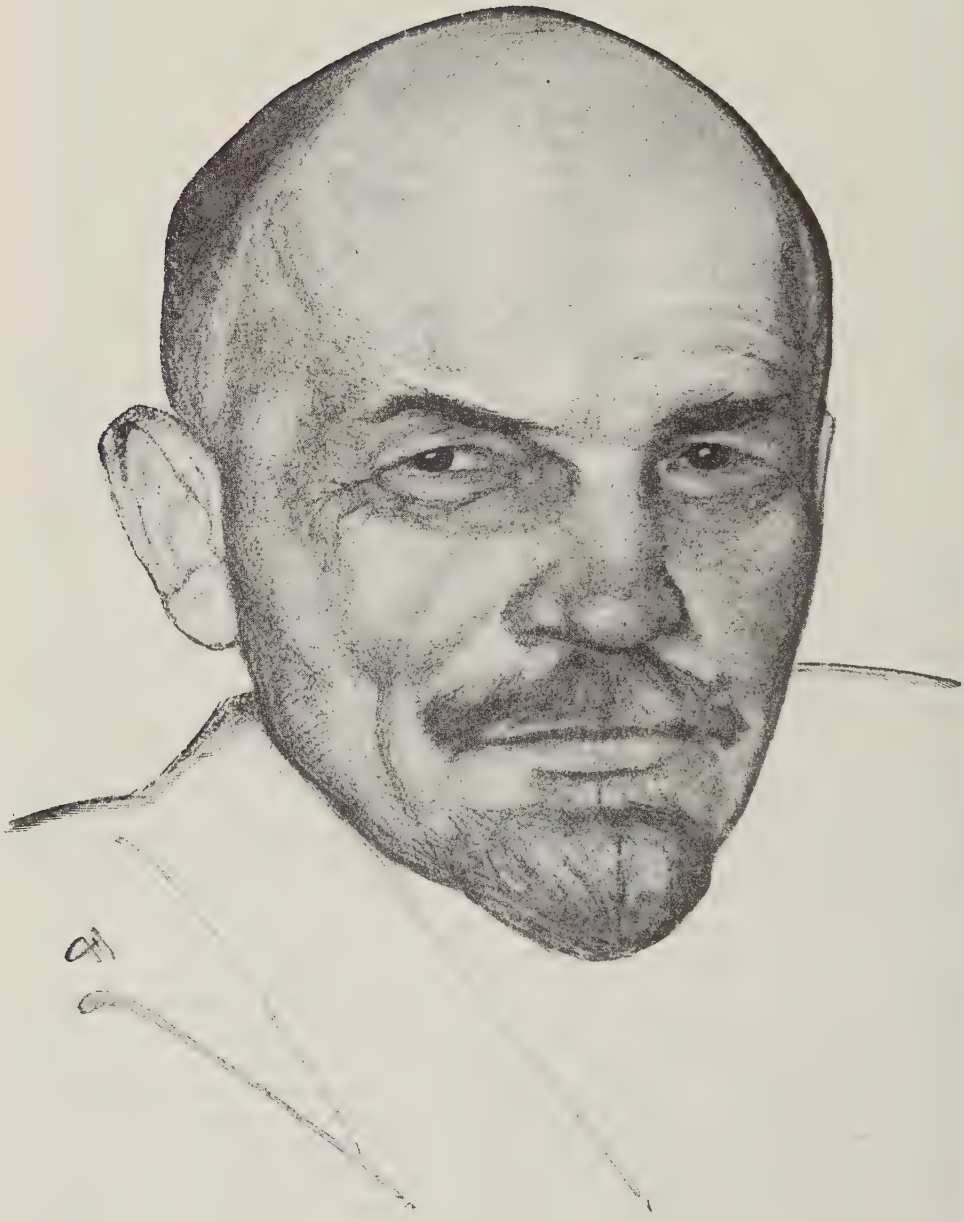
*Brooklyn*

Through Maryland and Delaware. Crossing the river Walt loved, the river low and long with farms on all sides and the smoke rolling across the sky. On the ferry the first mate, arms akimbo, bulging biceps, spitting tobacco juice, a youth our father would have delighted in. New Jersey, Camden, shoepeg corn and the canneries with the workers cramped in hutches, and Campbell's Soup paying 20 dollars a ton for tomatoes, says the barefooted farm girl, and they paid 24 dollars and more. And then Manhattan and the crossbows of the bridges and Myrtle Avenue where Walt walked and the *Daily Eagle*, his newspaper, which refuses jobs to Negro compositors.

Faced with the long season in the city, forking out the cocks and bunches we have cut and carted away with the summer's trip for this book, writing reports of street demonstrations, strikes in the shops, eviction fights, Scottsboro so that the writer's style might fit the worker the way our shoulders do

the gunstock. The army of unemployed helped by the recruiting sergeants in the White House. The varnished looking apples, eat one a day to keep unemployment away. Streets and subways full of jobless bootblacking, peddling chocolates, shoestrings, panhandling. The Hungarian who lost his 20 acre farm near Princeton, now making 75 cents a day from shoeshines. Family men fiddling, singing, doing acrobatic stunts between the stanchions of the hammering cars. One of them only a thin shirt on in the cold, raking his hands over his body as though he has the crabs, trying to fall asleep for the night. A few riders chip in a couple of nickels and pennies. But next day he will have nowhere to sleep, nothing to eat again, strong young man whose last job was for a day in Wallabout Market. The company covering its walls with pictures warning its fares not to patronize peddlers, the "disease-carriers!" the picture of one of the unemployed, wolfish face, dirty cap covering a swollen waterhead, a few bars of chocolate held out like playing cards. The company urging us to patronize the stands where all candies are wrapped and covered. Yet it is the company with its low wages to guards that is the disease spreader. We talk to one of the clerks at these stands, works 12 and 14 hours a day, makes enough to buy bread to say grace over, and if he has to go to the toilet has to "hang one of his eyes on a hook" while he is away. No day off, holiday pay your way, says the guard with the blister face in the train air flaring like a blowtorch around his burned-out eyes. And in the demonstration for relief, unemployment insurance, we meet the war vet. "I got my leg smashed in the Argonne. You bet your boots I was in Washington. They're tying another tincan to our tails. They call the new string Roosevelt. But we're up to all their tricks. They won't get away with them forever." War vet, member of the WESL, left-wing soldiers' organization.

Walt Whitman, you who have spawned the brood of our sturdiest writers (the pimpled Jewish lad writing his first poem to you, "Lion roaring on a crag") splendid fountain of the deep mighty white whale whose tongue was chewed away by the killers of your time, overwhelming body fertilizing us all with sperm into the water and very air we breath. Homeric catalogue and huge mow of men and labor from whose broad depths rise the heady sweetness of your boundless love, the spontaneous embrace and marriage for the future greatness of these states: *Obey Little, Resist Much.* Father of our hunger for this American earth and people, great soul and heart fed and shaken by the factory hand, the motorman, the sailor, the farmer, the soldier, the hunter, the prairie buffalo. Poet whose song of the open road was splattered with the swine's dung of Hills, Harrimans, Astors, Morgans gouging their troughs across our land. Our love is hate. No longer hearty lovers spotting the Lord's handkerchief in a spear of grass or studying the piss-ants crawling from craters of sand. No peepers behind metaphysically-stained windows in which sainted idealist philosophers, thin as pressed flowers, carry their own heads. No Hart Crane, most gifted of your sons, trying Mexico, France, *The Bridge,* all except the working class, casting himself like a stale loaf into the sea. We heap no lilacs or evening stars for Lincoln, awkward, unhappy compromiser and split rail. For us a lawyer too, leading us in the last decisive of all civil wars, mightiest sextant shooting the sun of revolution in the hands of all time. And so Lenin-led, with the farmer, miner, tailor, our masters and comrades, hand in hand into the stream where the monstrous hog bobs, the sharp hoofs torturing us but cutting at the same time his own throat, we hurl ourselves to help crush him down. Goodbye, Father Walt, forever goodbye.



*V. I. LENIN*

*by N. A. ANDREYEV*

**Lloyd Ross**

# May Day With Lenin

## AT THE TOMB

*Once, twice in a century*
*A man arises*
*Once, twice in an historical epoch*
*A man changes the course of history*
*Once, twice amid suffering and struggle*
*A man breaks through misery and despair to light and happiness*
*Once twice in history the millions of commonfolk are thrilled out of their apathy, excited into selfless activity, purified by the glimpse of a splendid promise, glorified by the creation of a new world—*
*Thrilled, excited, purified, aroused, glorified by a great man.*

*Such a man was Lenin.*

*Lenin was a finely-pointed spear piercing the decadent heart of Czarism*
*Lenin was a steel-trap holding together the party of realistic discontent*
*Lenin was a beacon light showing to the workers the way of insurrection and emancipation.*
*Lenin was the dawn that shone on the May morning when the workers danced round their own buildings, museums, theatres and factories.*
*Lenin called and the Russian proletariat answered.*

*We see him roused into fury by the execution of his beloved brother.*
*We see him expelled from the University for his political opinions.*
*We see him studying for fifteen hours a day.*
*We see him writing, talking, organizing, agitating with vigorous, abounding, even menacing vitality.*
*We see him spending day after day on the ice, half drunk with the dry frozen air of those Volga steppes.*
*We see him carrying over to the people's struggle the same passion, directness, simplicity and determination.*
*In prison, in exile, in England, Russia, Switzerland, Germany, he carries to the workers the call for struggle and the hope of freedom.*
*We see him in his wretched garret in the home of a shoemaker in the poorest quarter of Zurich, pondering over the events of the Great War, feeling the great changes that were about to explode forth, attacking unhesitatingly the jingoistic socialists, agitating persistently for peace through socialism.*
*We see him at the top of an armored car in Moscow forcing on the masses the thesis of international Marxism.*
*In defeat again, in exile again, fighting agitating writing again, until the Winter Palace falls, the Red Flag flies over the Kremlin, and the workers begin to rebuild Russia.*

*Great men have risen before*
*Great men have struggled towards a better world*

*Their talents have been wasted mocked suppressed extinguished by the ferocity of human society itself*
*Only Lenin was loved, worshipped and followed by those he would help*
*Only Lenin saw his talents carried along by the march of the people themselves.*
*In the heart of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin burned some self-renewing flame of devotion; at the back of that hard ruthless intellect lurked the most potent of all forces that can possess the human mind—a dream.*

*Lenin had a dream of human freedom.*
*Lenin knew how to make his dream come true.*
*We can share that dream with Lenin.*

## CHORUS FOR ILLEGAL DAYS

*Working in our factories we heard the call of May Day*
*Standing by our machines we received a leaflet*
*The leaflet was written by Lenin*
*It was written in prison*
*It was smuggled out of prison to us*
*Calling upon us in the name of international Labor*
*To honor May Day*
*To strike for May Day*
*To clasp hands with the workers in France, Germany, England, Australia, America*
*To be at one with the proletarians of every race clime and language*
*To go on to the streets on May Day*
*To form a procession of agitation encircling the world*
*To sing and rejoice together like children round some mighty May-pole that bound the world with red streamers*
*To cheer and call like an orchestra of different voices playing the same tune of international solidarity.*
*To march in unison in the streets of London and Tokio, in Paris and New York so that the beat-beat of our feet will be like a tom-tom calling on the masses to action.*

*Calling for action*
*Calling for the removal of slums and poverty, unemployment and war*
*Calling for the building of new cities with libraries and theatres and parks and gardens—for the workers.*
*Calling for ceaseless struggle*
*For endless nights of sacrifice*
*For days and nights of fighting against oppression and weariness*
*For talking and striking and fighting—for the workers*
*All must be for the workers*
*For the workers blue skies and happiness*
*For the workers leisure and music*
*For the workers books and health*
*For the workers—everything.*

*We read the leaflet*
*We heard the call*
*We left our jobs*
*We go to the woods—to protest*

*To the woods in spring*
*Spring pulsating, warming, beating Spring*
*Spring the symbol of youth, of the new life, of revival, of reconstruction, of hopes and successes*
*To the woods in Spring to honor May Day*
*To prepare and organise so that Spring will come to all the world, May Day will be spring, and spring will set forth the new growth of a world in which all men shall be free from hunger, free from tyranny, free from want, free from all social ills.*

*TO THE WOODS TO SPRING TO MAY DAY TO SOCIALISM.*

## TO A SOVIET RUSSIA

*We are on our way to Russia,*
*No longer is Lenin in Prison,*
*No longer is May Day illegal*
*No longer are workers threatened with death and imprisonment if they dare to spread the dreams of Lenin—*
*For the dreams of Lenin have come true,*
*For the workers freed from the prisons have conquered.*

*1905;*
*1914;*
*1917;*

*Land marks in working class history—*
*Finger posts to a new world—*
*Emblazoned figures of struggle and achievement!*

*1905. . . . 1914. . . . 1917!*

*Figures flashing a meaning to the workers of all lands—*
*Figures dancing before the terrified eyes of the world's exploiters.*
*Figures leading the united workers to Moscow.*

*We are on our way to Moscow.*
*We are on our way to celebrate May Day.*
*From all the corners of the earth we come—*
*From America, home of Debs, of Sacco and Vanzetti, of Mother Jones and Bill Haywood, of Tom Mooney and John Reed—*
*From Australia—home of Billy Lane—*
*From England—home of Tom Mann, Karl Marx, Keir Hardie and Saklatvala.*

*From near and far we go to May Day, to Moscow, to another beginning—to the shoots of fraternity, to the dawn of tomorrow.*

*From all lands we come—from all times—*
*We march across the world; we march across the centuries*
*From East and West; from yesteryear and today men of all days and all ages go to Moscow, to Spring—to May Day.*

*In Moscow there is Spring;*
*In Moscow is socialism;*
*In Moscow is May Day.*

*Day of a new life,*
*City of a new day,*
*Day of Spring,—*
*City of Beginnings.*

*From all the ends of the earth we go to Moscow;*
*To recover our hopes;*
*To deepen our inspiration;*
*To rejoice at the success of the workers;*
*To warm our hands by the fire of achievement.*
*In Moscow we shall see the workers in the Kremlin.*
*In Socialism we shall see Dnieprostroi, Stalingrad, Gigant.*
*In Spring we shall see Turksib sprawling over rich lands.—*
*In Moscow we shall see Lenin's Tomb.*

*To Moscow then;*
*To Spring then;*
*To May Day—day of fraternity, day of beginnings . . . .day of success.*

Sidney, Australia

# LETTERS and DOCUMENTS

## Lenin on Plekhanov

*Excerpts From His Writings*

. . . On my arrival at Geneva Arsenyev warned me that it is necessary to be very careful with G. V. (Plekhanov), who is very much excited by the split and is suspicious. My talk with him confirmed that he is really suspicious, distrustful and "*rechthaberisch*" to *ne plus ultra*. I tried to be cautious, avoiding "sore" points, but this continuous state of watchfulness could not but affect the mood unfavorably. From time to time there arose small points of "friction" in the form of sharp rejoiners on the part of G. V. to every remark that tended to slighly calm, to cool, the passions aroused (by the split). There was also some "friction" on questions of tactics of the periodical: G. V. always evinced absolute intolerance, a lack of both ability and desire to enter into the arguments of others and, in addition, insincerity, actually insincerity. Our statement that we are obliged to be as lenient as possible to Struve because we are not altogether blameless for his evolution: we ourselves, G. V. included, did not rebel when it was necessary to rebel (1895, 1897). G. V. refused to acknowledge even the least blame, trying to get away with evidently inept arguments which *evaded* but did not clear up the question. For a friendly talk between the two future editors, this . . . diplomacy made a very unpleasant impression; why fool oneself by saying that in 1895 he, G. V. supposedly "received orders" (??) "not to shoot" (at Struve) and he is used to obeying orders (just like him!)? Why fool oneself with the assertion that in 1897 (when Struve wrote in the *Novoye Slovo* about his intention of refuting one of the basic principles of Marxism) he, G. V., did not come out in opposition because he absolutely fails to see (and never will see) how collaborators in one periodical can polemize? This insincerity was exceedingly irritating and all the more so as G. V. tried to present things as if we do not want a relentless war against Struve, as if we wish to "conciliate everything" and so on. There was a hot argument about polemics in the periodical generally; G. V. was opposed to this and would not listen to our arguments. He evinced a hatred to the "allies" which bordered on the indecent (suspicious of being spies, accusations of horse-trading, of knavery, declarations that he would "shoot" such "traitors" unhesitatingly, and so forth). The merest hint that he too went to extremes (for instance my hint at the publishing of private letters and the incautiousness of such a procedure) served to provoke G. V. tremendously and he was noticeably irritated. Dissatisfaction evidently grew both in him and in us. . .

. . . Finally P. B. arrived and the congress convened. On the question of our attitude to the Jewish union (the "Bund") G. V. evinced phenomenal intolerance, declaring it plainly not a social-democratic organization . . . saying it is our aim to throw this "Bund" out of the Party . . . No objections we raised against such indecent expressions helped in the least. G. V. remained adamant . . . No resolution was adopted on this question.

. . . This already showed clearly that there were no normal relations

between him and us. Further—not to speak of the less important questions at the congress—the question comes out of our attitude to Bodo and M. I. Tugan-Baranovski. We are for a *conditional* invitation (we were driven to this by G. V.'s sharpness: we wanted to show by this that we wished for another attitude. G. V.'s incredible sharpness somehow instinctively drives one to protest, to defend his opponents. Vera Ivanovna very subtly remarked that G. V. always polemizes so that the reader's sympathies are called out for his opponent). G. V. declares very coldly and drily that he completely disagrees and keeps demonstratively silent during all our long conversations with P. B. and V. I. who are not averse to agreeing with us. The entire morning passes in a somehow heavily charged atmosphere; things were unquestionably shaping themselves as if G. V. were to propose an ultimatum to choose between himself and "these knaves." Seeing this Arsenyev and I decided to yield and at the very beginning of the evening session declared that "upon insistence of G. V. " we withdraw our motion. This declaration was met with silence (as if it were self-evident that we could not but yield!) This "atmosphere of ultimatums" rather irritated us (as Arsenyev later formulated it) — G. V.'s desire to rule completely was quite apparent. When he had previously talked privately about Bobo (G. V., Arsenyev, V. I. and I, during a walk in the woods, in the evening), G. V., after a hot dispute, put his hand on my shoulder and declared: "I put no conditions, gentlemen; at the congress we shall talk it over and decide it all together." I was very much touched by this then. But at the congress the exact opposite happened: at the congress G. V. avoided friendly discussion, was angrily silent and with this silence clearly "put conditions." To me this was a harsh show of insincerity (although I did not at once formulate my impressions so clearly), but Arsenyev said plainly: "This concession I shall never forgive him!" Saturday came. I no longer remember exactly what was said that day, but in the evening as we were walking together a new conflict flared up. G. V. said that an order for a philosophical article should be placed with a certain person (who had never yet written anything but in whom G. V. liked to see a talent for philosophy. I don't know the person, but it is well known the individual in question is a blind admirer of G. V.), and G. V. said: "I shall advise him to begin the article with a remark against Kautsky — a fine bird, has become a 'critic,' publishes philosophical articles of 'critics' in the *Neue Zeit* and wouldn't let 'Marxians' (read Plekhanov) speak out there fully." On hearing of the plan for such a sharp attack on Kautsky (who had already been invited to collaborate on the magazine), Arsenyev was disturbed and began to remonstrate warmly against it as inappropriate. G. V. got sulky and bitter. I joined in with Arsenyev. P. B. and V. I. were silent. In half an hour G. V. left (we were walking him to the steamer) and just before he left he sat silent and dark as a cloud.

. . . My infatuation for Plekhanov also evaporated and I felt disappointed and unbelievably bitter about it. Never, never in my life had I felt such sincere respect and esteem, veneration; before no one did I try to be so "humble" and never have I experienced such a rude "kick." And in fact it developed that we did get such a kick . . .

. . . Well, when a man with whom one desires to conduct some work, getting into most intimate relations with him, when such a man resorts to chess tactics with respect to his comrades, — there is no question any more that this man is no good, just no good, that personal motives are strong in him, that he is full of petty vanity and conceit, that he

is — insincere. This discovery — it was a real discovery to us! — struck us like a thunderbolt because we had both been in love with Plekhanov and, as always with a loved person, we forgave him everything, shut our eyes to his failings, assured ourselves that there were no such failings, that these are trifles, and only people who do not value principles sufficiently pay attention to such trifles. And here we were compelled to see for ourselves how these "trifling" failings can estrange the most devoted friends, and no arguments about theoretical correctness can make one forget his repellent qualities. Our resentment was very great: an ideal was shattered and we stepped on it as on a broken idol; there was no end of keen reproaches . . . I talk about the necessity to permit polemics, of the necessity of voting among us — Plekhanov grants the latter but qualifies: on particular questions voting, of course, but on fundamental ones — impossible. I protest that it will not always be easy to distinguish between particular and basic questions, that it will be necessary to take a vote of the editors on this very distinction. Plekhanov is stubborn, says that this is already a matter of conscience, that the distinction between particular and fundamental questions is clear, there is nothing to vote on. And on this question — shall it be left to a vote of the editorial staff as to whether a question is a fundamental one or not — we reached an impasse, could not move ahead. Plekhanov showed all his cleverness, all the brilliance of examples, comparisons, jests and quotations that made one smile involuntarily, but the question itself was slurred without saying simply: no. I was convinced that he could not yield on this point, could not relinquish his "individualism" and his "ultimatums," because such questions he would never submit to a vote, but invariably put an ultimatum about them.

*Lenin. Collected Works. Vol. 4, pp. 19—30, essay "How Did the 'Spark' Almost Go Out?"*

. . . The book *Essays in Marxian Philosophy* has greatly sharpened the differences of opinion that have long existed among bolsheviks. I do not consider myself sufficiently competent on these questions to hasten into print. But I have always followed very carefully our party discussions on philosophical questions beginning with Plekhanov's struggle gainst Mikhailovski and his group, at the end of the '80s and up to 1895, and then his struggle against the Kantins in 1898 and later (here I not only followed the struggle but took part in it to some extent as one of the editors of *Zaria,* beginning with 1900), finally his struggle against the empirio critics.

I have followed Bogdanov's work in philosophy beginning with his book on energetics *Historical Views on Nature* which I studied while in Siberia. To Bogdanov that was only a point of transition to other philosophical views. I made his personal acquaintance in 1904 and we immediately exchanged presents— I gave him my *Steps* and he gave me one of his philosophical works. I wrote to him immediately afterwards (in the spring or early summer of 1904) from Geneva to Paris that with his writings he shakes my belief in the correctness of his views and convinces me more thoroughly of the correctness of Plekhanov's views.

We had many talks about Bogdanov with Plekhanov when we were working together. Plekhanov explained to me where Bogdanov was mistaken but he did not consider Bogdanov's deviation very great. I remember very well talking with Plekhanov, as editor of *Zaria* to a delegate from the editors of *Essays in Realistic World Philosophy* in Geneva and agreeing

to collaborate -- I on the agrarian question, Plekhanov on philosophy *in opposition to Mach.* Plekhanov made it a condition of his collaboration to write against Mach, and the editors of the *Essays* fully accepted the condition. Plekhanov then regarded Bogdanov an ally in the struggle against revisionism, but an ally that errs inasmuch as he follows Ostwald and then Mach.

During the fever of revolution there was not much opportunity to occupy oneself with philosophy. In the early part of 1906, while in prison, Bogdanov wrote still another book, — I think the third part of *Empirionism.* In summer of 1906 he made me a present of a copy and I sat down to study it attentively. After having read it I was exceedingly wrath: it became clearer to me than ever that he is going in an archly incorrect, un-Marxian way. I wrote him then a "love note"—a letter on philosophy covering three copy books. I pointed out to him that, as regards philosophy, I am, of course, a rank and file Marxian, but it is his own clear, popular, excellently written works that have finally convinced me he is essentially wrong and Plekhanov right. I have shown these copy books to some friends (Lunacharski among them) and have been thinking of publishing them under the title *Notes on Philosophy by a Rank and File Marxian,* but haven't done it so far. I regret now I did not publish them at once. I have written and asked they be hunted up for me in Petersburg and forwarded to me.

Now the *Essays in Marxian Philosophy* have come out. I have read all except the one by Suvarov (am reading it) and my indignation grew with every article. But this is not Marxism! And what a bog our empirio-critics, empirio-monists and empirio-symbolists are getting into. To assure the reader that "belief" in the reality of the external world is "mysticism" (Bazarov), — confuse materialism and Kantian philosophy in the most atrocious manner (Bazarov and Bogdanov), — preach a variety of agnosticism (empirio-criticism) and idealism (empirio-monism), — to teach workers "religious atheism" and "adoration" of the higher human potentialities (Lunacharski), — declare Engels' teachings on dialectics mysticism (Berman),—to fish out of some stinking sources of French "positivist"-agnostics or metaphysicians, devil take them, a "symbolic theory of cognition" (Yushkevich), -- no, this is too much. Of course, we are rank and file Marxians and not widely read in philosophy, — but why abuse us like that and offer us such stuff as Marxian philosophy. I should more readily submit to being drawn and quartered than collaborate in an organ or collegium preaching such stuff.

I have again been attracted to my *Notes on Philosophy by a Rank and File Marxian* and I have begun writing them while to A. A., I, of course, communicated my impressions in the course of reading the *Essays,* directly and crudely.

*Lenin. Collected Works, Vol. 28, pp. 527-29. Letter to Gorki, February 25, 1908.*

*Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan*

# ARTICLES and CRITICISM

**M. Nechkina**

## Shakespeare in Karl Marx's "Capital"

Shakespeare does not appear very often in *Capital* but the relative rareness of the occasions on which he does appear emphasizes their significance.

Marx counted Shakespeare among his strongest literary attachments. He had a thorough knowledge of him and had several times read his works completely: Shakespeare was equally loved in Marx's family. "The children are always reading Shakespeare," Marx wrote to Engels in a letter of April 10, 1856. Shakespeare's characters had made such a thorough impression on him that they came easily to his mind and it came natural for him to use them as illustrations. Marx's daughters used to give their acquaintances nicknames using the names of Shakespeare's heroes. Marx himself did the same, using chiefly the names of the comic type of hero. Marx's use of the character of Falstaff is extremely interesting. It is safe to say that the analysis of this character in Marxist literary research cannot but lose a great deal if the corresponding places in Marx's works are overlooked. Falstaff for Marx was a kind of "personified capital" of the epoch of the dawn of capitalism, which gave birth to the bourgeois of the epoch of primitive accumulation. An unpardonable liar, a narrow pleasure seeker, thinking only of his own material interests, a dissolute rake openly showing his contempt for all the religious mummery of feudalism, a highwayman and yet at the same time an arrant coward, a swindler and merry wine-bibber, ready to sell all his knightly virtues for a pound note—Falstaff is a clearcut type of the epoch of primitive accumulation. The fragments of feudal ideas are merely the building material for his new bourgeois morality. Saving his own skin by wile in the middle of the battle, (Falstaff, one will remember, threw his sword on the ground at the first advance of the enemy and pretended to be dead, he argues that to save one's own life is the first knightly virtue. Plundering, seizing, stealing, borrowing without repaying while swearing to the contrary, calling upon the Virgin Mary and all the mediaeval saints are amongst Falstaff's favorite tricks. Shakespeare, regretfully watching the downfall of the feudal world, showed his rejection of the coming bourgeois world in the comic character of Falstaff.[1]

In his letters Marx makes a comparison between Falstaff and Herr Vogt,

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[1] The editors consider this statement quite incorrect. Shakespeare was an artist not of the feudal aristocracy but of the aristocracy that was becoming capitalist. He tried to take all that was best in the bourgeoisie for his class (the characters of Portia and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice).* In a number of plays he critised feudalism very severely *(Romeo and Juliet, King Lear and others).*

His *Merry Wives of Windsor* makes fun of Falstaff, shutting him up in a basket with a lot of dirty linen. he is thrown into a foul reach of the Thames. Falstaff is struck in the mouth when he dresses up as a fat godmother. Falstaff is as fat as a tub, his belly prevents him from seeing his own knees. Finally in *Henry V* he dies ignominiously in Mistress Quickly's arms. But in spite of this the historic future is with Falstaff. The Falstaffs of industrial capital have only become slightly thinner, have put what they have plundered into circulation, have learnt better how to calculate and squeeze out surplus value.

Napoleon III's agent, whom he shows up and ridicules in a famous pamphlet. Falstaff also appears in *Capital,* but about that later. Falstaff figures not only in Marx's correspondence and in *Capital* but also in other works. In his article "Moralising Critique and Critical Morality" directed against the philistine Karl Heinsen, Marx ridicules the latter's assertion that monarchies are the chief cause of misfortune and poverty. Making fun of Heinsen's arguments, he remarks that the slavery of the Southern States of the American Republic, which flourishes without any monarchic forms, might agree with Falstaff in wishing that such arguments were as cheap as blackberries. We frequently come across other Shakespearian imagery. In his *Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx speaks of his "hero" in the following words: "An old and crafty roué he regards the historical life of the nations as a comedy in the most ordinary sense of the term, looks upon their most important activities, their actions of State, as a masquerade in which the fine costumes, the high sounding words, and the dignified postures are nothing but a mask for trifling. Thus it was in the Strassburg affair (1836) when a tame Swiss vulture impersonated the Napoleonic eagle. When he raided Boulogne (1840) he had some London footmen decked out in French uniforms; they represented the army. In his Society of December the Tenth, he got together about ten thousand loafers and tatterdemalions to play the people, as Snug the joiner played the Lion." The same lion, on another occasion is referred to by Marx in a similar illustration. In his *Critique of Philosophy* criticising Hegel's conception of governmental authority Marx likens the different aspects of the Hegelian conception to the lion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when it cries out:

> Then know that I one Snug the joiner am
> A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam
> For, if I should as lion come in strife
> Into this place, 't were pity on my life.

and he points out that you either have here the lion of contrast or the Snug of misrepresentation.

In the same article Marx invites Heineen to look closer at the type of Ajax in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and quotes the long dialogue between Achilles and Thersites. Marx alluded to this dialogue in 1864 when he was so disgusted with Garibaldi for fraternizing with Palmerston at the very moment when the congress of revolutionaries in Brussels was putting its hopes on him as leader of the revolution and quoted the words of Thersites at the end of the dialogue: "I had rather be a tick in a sheep than such a valiant ignorance." *(Troilus and Cressida,* Act III, Scene III)

Marx made an interesting remark about Shakespeare as a historian. In 1861 Marx "as a holiday" read through in the Greek original *The Civil Wars in Rome* by the ancient historian Appian, and in a letter to Engels dated February 27, expressed the view that Appian tries to dig down to the material basis of the civil wars. This historian awarded the laurel to Pompey as a military strategist, and Marx agreeing with this view, says in his letter that he thought Shakespeare must have had some idea in his mind of what Pompey was actually like when he wrote his comedy *Love's Labour Lost.*

We may add here that Engels also was a great admirer and student of Shakespeare. In one of his early works, for instance, in an article entitled "Landschaften," published in 1840 in the *Telegraph für Deutschland,* he wrote the following lines: "What marvelous poesy is hidden in the provinces of Britain. It often seems as though one were living in the golden age

of Merry England, and that you have only to look round and you will see Shakespeare with a gun over his shoulder, hiding in the bushes while out for other people's game, or you are surprised that on that green meadow there is not being enacted in flesh and blood one of his divine comedies. For wherever the scene of his plays is laid, in Italy, in France, in Navarre—it is really all the time Merry England that we see before us, the homeland of his delightful common people, his philosophizing school teachers, his charming and strange women. In every instance one realises that the action could only take place under English skies, for instance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* one feels the influence of the South and its climate in the characters of the play as strongly as one does in *Romeo and Juliet.*"

And in a letter written on September 26, 1847 Engels advises Marx to read an article by O'Connor, which he says reminds one of Shakespeare.

It is a very great thing to be able to make use of the artistic imagery of world literature in a scientific work. If we follow in what way and on what occasions Shakespeare appears in *Capital,* we shall see the significance of the explanatory Shakespearian allusions in the surrounding economic context.

The first Shakespearian character that appears in *Capital* is a comic one, Widow Quickly, Falstaff's friend, appears in the first chapter dealing with value. Mistress Quickly, as everyone knows, the landlady of a tavern and very fond of drinking, is an exceedingly merry widow. Mistress Quickly is a frequently recurring figure in Shakespeare's works; she appears in both parts of *Henry IV,* in *Henry V* (1st part) and in the *Merry Wives of Windsor.* She is everywhere game for a fight, she is a gossip, a shameless hussy and ready chatterbox with a keen sense of the value of money, ready to do anything she is asked to do, for a price.

Mistress Quickly appears in the first chapter of *Capital* which deals with the analysis of commodities. Marx speaks of the substance of value and leads the reader to his famous conclusion about not a single atom of the natural substance of a commodity entering into the substance of its value. Leading up to this extremely important and difficult conclusion, Marx amuses the reader with the remark "the reality of the value of commodities differs in this respect from Dame Quickly, that we don't know 'where to have it.' The value of commodities is the very opposite to the coarse materiality of their substance, not an atom of matter enters into its composition." This could hardly have been said of Mistress Quickly, about whom one could say that she was "to be had" in London, in Eastcheap at the Boars' Head Tavern, and moreover that she was to be found in extremely close association with Falstaff to whom she cries, after one of their regular drinking bouts:

"Well, fare thee well; I have known thee these twenty nine years come peascod time; but an honester and truer hearted man, well fare thee well."

In the first chapter of *Capital,* the chapter on commodities, the analysis of the commodity form is brought to an end with a very important question, that of the interrelation of the material properties of a commodity, the use value and the exchange value. At the moment where the explanation is given Shakespeare again makes his appearance."

"So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange value either in a pearl or a diamond. The economical discoverers of this chemical element, who by-the-bye lay special claim to critical acumen, find however that the use-value of objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects. What confirms them in this view, is the peculiar circumstances that the use value

of objects is realised without exchange, by means of a direct relation between the objects and man, while on the other hand, their value is realised only by exchange, that is by means of a social process. Who fails here to call to mind good friend Dogberry, who informs neighbour Seacoal that 'To be a well favoured man is the gift of fortune but reading and writing comes by nature.' "

The conversation between the watchmen in *Much Ado About Nothing,* it may be here remarked is one of Shakespeare's most successful comic scenes. It has an important place in the composition of the play. Just before it a tense and tragic scene has come to an end: Don Juan comes into Leonato's room and tells Claudius about his sweetheart Hero's unfaithfulness. This false news underlies the intrigue of the comedy. Claudius is in despair, Don Juan undertakes to prove to him the truth of the terrible news. After this the third scene of the third act gives comic relief: The goodnatured Dogberry is giving the night watchmen instructions, advising them not to have anything to do with thieves, and therefore not hold up or detain suspicious characters without first obtaining the latters' permission, in other words giving them to understand by his explanations, that there is nothing really for watchmen to do at all.

It is in the same dialogue between the watchmen that Dogberry's saying quoted by Marx about good looks and the ability to read and write occurs.

After twice resorting to Shakespeare for an explanation of the theory of value, Marx also has recourse to him in the second chapter, the one on Exchange. And here Shakespeare is called upon for the explanation of a very important proposition concerning a factor in the historical development of the importance of money.

"With the expansion of commodity circulation there is an increase in the power of money, that absolute social form of wealth, always ready at beck and call. Everything becomes saleable and buyable. Circulation becomes the great social retort, into which everything is drawn, to come out again as a gold crystal."

This idea is illustrated by a passage from Shakespeare's famous tragedy *Timon of Athens,* one of his essentially philosophical works. The tragedy deals with the power of gold over men. Both Coleridge and Schiller were very keen on it and thought it ought to be adapted for the German stage. In Act IV Scene III Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Timon of Athens the famous monologue about the power of gold. The dramatic situation is as follows: Abandoned and ridiculed by his friends who had had benefits heaped upon them while he had been wealthy, but who hand him over to ridicule now that his wealth has been exhausted, Timon shakes the dust of Athens from his feet and seeks refuge in a cave in the forest near the sea. In order to stay his hunger he seeks roots for food and begins digging the ground. Suddenly he comes upon a treasure, whereupon he speaks the following monologue. The passages omitted by Marx are put in brackets:—

(What is here?)
Gold? yellow, glittering, precious gold? (No gods
I am no idle votarist. Roots, you clear heaven.)
Thus much of this will make black white: foul—fair;
Wrong—right; base—noble; old—young; coward—valiant.
Ha, you gods. Why this? What this, you gods? Why this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides;
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads
This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accurs'd
Make the hoar leprosy adored; place thieves
And give them title, knee, and approbation,
With senators of the bench; this is it

That makes the wappened widow wed again;
(She whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
To the April day again.) Come, damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind....

The origin of surplus value is shown, the predatory nature of wages under capitalism disclosed,—and in the chapter about the working day, in dealing with the exploitation of children, Marx again has recourse to Shakespeare. The proletariat protested against the "Law" of the exploiters, whereby eight to thirteen year old children worked to breaking point on an equal footing with adult workers. But "capital" answered

My deeds upon my head! I crave the law
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

These were the words of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock had the right to cut from Antonio's breast a pound of flesh in the event of the latter being unable to pay his debt. The words quoted by Marx were spoken by Shylock in answer to the reminder given by Portia, the judge, that the usurer, as a human being, should show mercy.

*Portia:* ... I have spoke thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea,
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.
*Shylock:* My deeds upon my head! I crave the law
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

Continuing in a tense court scene, when the judges have been convinced that nothing will move Shylock, Portia, dressed as a judge, pronounces sentence:

*Portia:* Why then thus it is:—
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.
*Shylock:* O noble judge: O excellent young man!
*Portia:* For the intent and purpose of the law
Hath full relation to the penalty,
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.
*Shylock:* 'Tis very true. O wise and upright judge!
How much more elder art thou than thy looks!
*Portia:* Therefore lay bare your bosom.
*Shylock* Ay his breast;
So says the bond: doth it not, noble judge?
Nearest his heart: those are the very words.

Marx in continuing his account of the exploitation of children, recalls the words of Shylock. He writes:

"the lynx eye of capital discovered that the law of 1844 did not allow five hours' work before midday without a pause of at least 30 minutes for refreshment, but prescribed nothing of the kind for work after mid-day. Therefore, it claimed and obtained the enjoyment not only of making children of eight drudge without intermission from 2 to 8:30 p.m. but also of making them hunger during that time;

*Aye his heart*
*So says the bond.*

This Shylock-clinging to the letter of the law of 1844, so far as it regulated children's labour, was but to lead up to an open revolt against the same law as far as it regulated the labour of 'young persons and women.'"

Goethe, another poet beloved by Marx, is also quoted a number of times in *Capital*. He appears in the first chapter (On Commodities). Incidentally the fact is interesting that while Marx borrows vivid imagery from Shakespeare, from Goethe in most cases he takes philosophical generalisations which have been compressed into verse by the poet. Marx criticises the petty

bourgeois attempt to remove the inconveniences resulting from this character of commodities not being directly exchangeable and then goes on to say: "Proudhon's socialism is a working out of this Philistine Utopia, a form of socialism, which, as I have elsewhere shown, does not possess even the merit of originality. Long before his time the task was attempted with much better success by Gray, Bray and others. But for all that wisdom of this kind flourishes even now in certain circles under the name of 'science.' Never has any school played more tricks with the word science than that of Proudhon, for

*Wo die Begriffe fehlen*
*Da stellt zur rechten Zeit ein Wort sich ein*[1]

These words of Faust's do certainly very aptly apply to the Proudhon school. Faust also figures in the part about the process of exchange, with his exclamation *Im Anfang war der Tat."* (*In the beginning was the deed.*)

In the chapter on so-called primitive accumulation Marx says, criticising Thiers' atacks on socialism:

"But as soon as the question of property crops up, it becomes a sacred duty to proclaim the intellectual food of the infant as the one thing fit for all ages and for all states of development."

And here he appeals further to Goethe where the latter ridicules the same attitude in the following dialogue:—

*Teacher:* Think child where do all these riches come from. Out of itself nothing can come.
*Child:* Yes I got everything from father.
*Teacher:* But where did father get them from?
*Child:* From grandfather.
*Teacher:* No that can't be. Otherwise where did grandfather get them from.
*Child:* He just took them.

The same quotation occurs in Engels "German Socialism in Poetry and Prose."

Tracing the conversion of surplus value into capital, Marx says:

"While the capitalist of the classical type brands individual consumption as a sin against his function, and as 'abstinence' from accumulating, the modernized capitalist is capable of looking upon accumulation as 'abstinence' from pleasure."

Here again he quotes Goethe:—

*Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast*
*The one is ever parting from the other.*

substituting the word "his" for "the" of the original.

One could give a very great many instances of Marx's use of world literature in *Capital.* Marx quotes Cervantes' *Don Quixote,* Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Molière, his beloved Heine and ancient writers, all of whom Marx knew in the original; Sophocles, Homer, Aeschylus and Horace. He also makes use of the art of the people in the form of sayings and legends and in particular the legend of the pied piper.

Sophocles, like Shakespeare, is called upon by Marx not only as a literary helpmeet but also as a witness of his age. His words not only illustrate but also are evidence in support of the proposition which is being demonstrated:

"But money itself is a commodity, an external object, capable of becoming the private property of any individual. This social power becomes the private power of private persons. The ancients therefore denounced money as subversive of the economical and moral order of things."

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[1] *When concepts flag,*
*In nick of time come words to fill the gap.*

In support of this he quotes Antigone:—

"Money is an evil for mortal men. For money cities are doomed to fall. For money the exile leaves his father's roof. Money it is that corrupts innocent hearts, turns them to evil ways, deceitful wiles and all dishonesty."

In the chapter on the general law of capitalist accumulation, a chapter which is fraught with bitter class indignation, the mighty figure of Prometheus is borrowed from Aeschylus. The worker is bound to Capital just as Prometheus is bound to the rock by Vulcan:—

"The law, finally, that always equilibrates the relative surplus-population, or industrial reserve army, to the extent and energy of accumulation, this law rivets the labourer to Capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan did Prometheus to the rock. It establishes an accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time, accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital."

The ancient Homer and his poetical imagery appear on the pages of the chapter about the working day. The victims of capitalist exploitation rise up before Marx like live people. They walk out of the pages of the papers he has just been reading, the stories he has just heard, the grim every day realities of capitalist Europe of the sixties. Their images stand before Marx with hallucinatory clearness when he writes this chapter; they pass before his sight, they hold blue books under their arms, the books in which are expressed the laws of capitalism which are leading them to their death.

The Cyclops Iron Foundries—this by association brings to mind the famous monsters of the *Odyssey* and Marx makes a play upon the words, saying that to forbid the working of children during the night time was beyond the powers of Messrs. Cyclops.

One last example. On the pages of *Capital* interlaced with complicated theoretical conclusions, more familiar figures appear; the bony Rossinant, carrying his tall emaciated knight with the fat round Sancho Panza beside them. *Don Quixote* is introduced by Marx in explaining an important point in his theory of scientific socialism, the question of the historicity of social economic formations, the question of the complex ideological superstructures inherent in any given formation and bound up with definite social relationships. In this connection he remarks that Don Quixote had to pay dear for his error in thinking that knight errancy was equally compatible with all economic forms of society.

*Translated from the Russian by N. Goold-Verschoyle*

**Walt Carmon**

# JACOB BURCK: American Political Cartoonist

A few years ago heated disputes often took place at the general meetings of the New York John Reed Club. Problems of the theory and the function of revolutionary art were bitterly fought about. Among those who were clearest in these disputes, who fought most stubbornly, was Jacob Burck. He always spoke briefly and to the point. And he had a vitriolic tongue which got a lot of respect from his opponents.

Burck was only 25 years old then. He was just beginning to mature as an artist. In his controversies on the floor of the John Reed Club neither his age, nor the fact that he stood before older men, established painters and political cartoonists of note, made any difference to him. He doggedly stuck to his guns. He read considerably into the theory and history of art. He had his viewpoint. Neither age nor reputations were going to stop him.

Burk's cartoons were then attracting considerable attention. Fred Ellis, with twenty years of political cartooning experience behind him, was helping out the young, aggressive Burck. Then Ellis left the *Daily Worker* where he was staff cartoonist, to come to the Soviet Union. Jacob Burck stepped into his shoes. He was a worthy successor. From that point on his stature as an artist grew daily. He also did cartoons for the *New Masses*, book jackets for publishers; and his paintings, hung in foremost galleries, drew high praise from leading critics in the bourgeois press.

In three short years Burck has risen to the position of not only the best political cartoonist in the American revolutionary movement, but among the very best in all of the American press.

2

Perhaps no revolutionary newspaper in any country has been as fortunate in its artistic talent as the *Daily Worker*, organ of the American Communist Party. First came Robert Minor, greatest political cartoonist, now a leader of the American communist movement, who has not drawn for the last ten years. He was followed by Fred Ellis, worker-artist, now on the staff of *Trud* in Moscow. Jacob Burck was his successor. (Already grooming Russel Limbach for his position.)

This follows in the great tradition of American revolutionary political cartooning. A tradition which does justice to the master Daumier. This tradition began in 1910 with the birth of the "old" *Masses*. It continued through the *Liberator, The Workers Monthly*—and now the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*. Splendid craftsmen they were. Men like Art Young, Boardman Robinson, Maurice Becker, Robert Minor, William Gropper, Fred Ellis—and Jacob Burck. They drew for our press, their drawings and paintings appeared in leading bourgeois newspapers and magazines; their paintings hung in leading galleries. In fact they still do.

Here is one instance of their effect on the American working class: I was fortunate enough to be assigned to edit *Red Cartoons*, the yearly collection of revolutionary drawings which was issued for five years. When we decided to publish *Red Cartoons of 1926* the first of the series, we had in mind, of course, to preserve some of the best of this great tradition of American revolutionary art.

We wanted it also to be a means of promoting our Party organ, the *Daily Worker*. We knew that these cartoons were prized highly in strikes, etc. That they were hung in workers' homes and clubs. But we wondered how far this appreciation would be shown for a full book of cartoons, covering all phases of the class struggle and drawn by 14 of our artists. The results went beyond our fondest expectations. They went in sixes in fact. Offering *Red Cartoons of 1926* with every yearly subscription for the *Daily Worker*, for six dollars a year (a very high price), we secured 6,000 yearly subscriptions *in six weeks*. Here was evidence of how close to the heart of the American worker were the cartoons of our artists.

We got more proof. Besides the copies given out as premiums with subscriptions, over 25,000 other copies were sold at the relatively high price of one dollar. Jacob Burck made his first appearance between book covers in this yearly collection.

Now Jacob Burck appears in a large book of his own work. A beautifully edited, printed and bound volume of 248 pages called *Hunger and Revolt* which is a tribute to the progress of the American revolutionary movement. Henri Barbusse has written an introduction for it and there are short notes on separate sections of the book by John Strachey, Michael Gold, Langston Hughes, Earl R. Browder (general secretary of the American Communist Party) and others. It is a splendid opportunity to judge the work of Jacob Burck. Here is the chosen fruit of five years work. The cartoons are divided into special subjects: unemployment, Socialist Party, politics and

politicians, the farmer, the Negro, fascism, war, the Soviet Union, etc.—all the subjects that are the concern of the revolutionary artist and close to the heart of the working class.

Henri Barbusse said: "... Here is projected a kaleidoscopic film... there unrolls before your eyes a great and tumultuous spectacle taken from nature."

Earl R. Browder wrote: "This collection of Burck's cartoons is an historical document. In these cartoons is combined all the force of Communist theoretical analysis with that of the strongest tradition of American cartooning. It is an essential part of the history of our times."

This alone does not, of course, cover all the virtues of the work of Jacob Burck. These drawings are often in a satirical vein, dipped in acid. Burck gets "earthy," he often borders on the very edge of indecency. His drawings sometimes speak in the language of the street. But they are always powerful, they strike home and they strike hard. They reach the worker with their message as sure as revolution.

For example: mother earth is notoriously bountiful. American capitalists during the crisis have destroyed cotton, slaughtered cattle. They want to restrict the production of wheat. Burck shows us a huge, full-breasted, pregnant woman standing in a field of wheat. A horrified capitalist stands before her. And Burck's caption is "What... Again!"

Since military training is aimed to make automatons of American youth, for Burck the problem is very simple (though a bit revolting). He shows us a military officer scooping out the brains of a student into a garbage can. The caption is "... What d'ya need them for!"

Burck's book *Hunger and Revolt* does not include other memorable cartoons which show his deep satirical sense. To show the servile role of the English "socialists," especially Ramsay McDonald, Burck drew a cartoon of the king of England entering his bedchamber, where the queen is already seen retired. McDonald assists the king there. Under the king's arm is a book of "Pink Fairy Tales" and under the bed one can see very personal utensils. When this was printed in the *New Masses* many workers wrote in to us, chuckling between lines. The political lesson was as clear as daylight. Because, as Earl Browder wrote, "here is combined all the force of Communist theoretical analysis with that of the strongest tradition of American cartooning."

Among the American cartoonists not all of them are reasoning, logical artists. Some are exceptionally able, but essentially instinctive. Not Burck. Not the medium built, strong figure that rose up in the meetings of the New York John Reed Club and tongue-lashed those who differed with him. Burck reads, studies, consciously directs his work along lines dictated by Marxian principles. He writes seldom, but he writes well. For the March, 1935 issue of the *American Mercury,* a leading bourgeois magazine, he wrote the article "For Proletarian Art." It is satirical, mature—like his cartoons. There he tells how the early confusions of the John Reed Club artists were clarified. ("Whether nudes and bananas are revolutionary themes.") "To achieve this," he writes, "the John Reed Club artists felt that a deeper understanding of Marxism was necessary... Previously, emotional impulses were sufficient for revolutionary artistic existence. Now, many John Reed artists are enrolled in the New York Workers School and similar institutions elsewhere. The Club itself has to meet this demand for political education with special lectures given by outstanding leaders of the labor movement."

Jacob Burck is the thinking, conscious artist.

*3*

Jacob Burck was born in 1907 in Cleveland, Ohio, a mid-west American city. He came of proletarian parents and in his youth he worked at various occupations: as a messenger boy, in a fruit store, etc. A scholarship enabled him to further his art studies in New York.

He began his professional activities as a portrait painter. After a year of this work he revolted at this catering to the vanities of a parasitic class. He decided to give up "art" and turned to sign painting as a more wholesome means of earning a living. In 1926 he entered the revolutionary movement. In 1927 he began to draw cartoons for the *Daily Worker* and other revolutionary publications. Two years later he became the staff artist of the *Daily Worker;* and for a while, art editor of the *New Masses.*

In the past year Jacob Burck has received increasing attention as a mural painter. He has done a series of five panels on the Soviet Union which have been highly praised by the critics.

Now, only 28 years of age, Burck feels that he needs a deeper understanding of socialism, to continue his artistic growth. He is coming soon to the Soviet Union for his "post-graduate course." He will become staff artist of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda.*

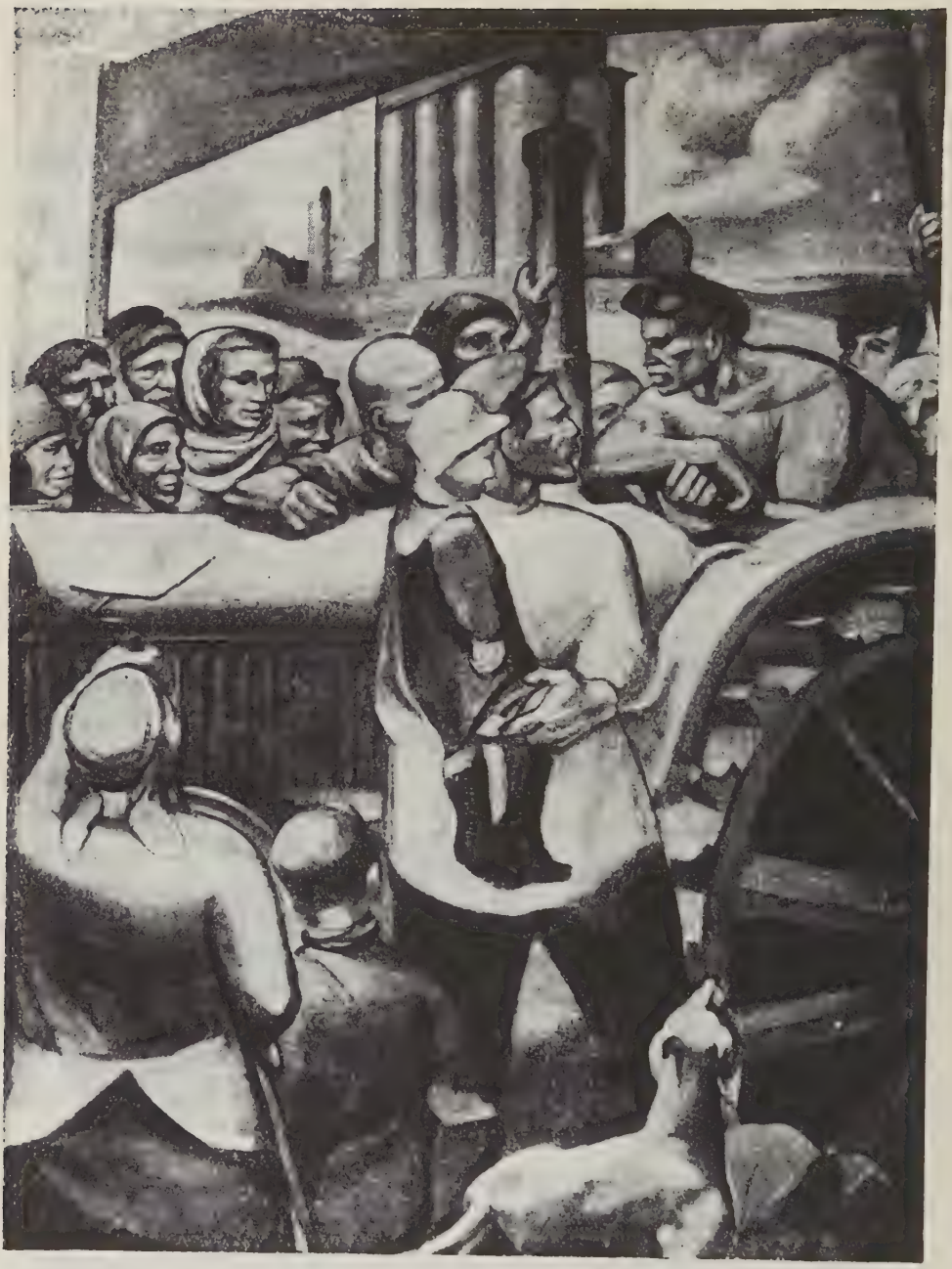
Both in the field of political cartooning, and as a painter, Jacob Burck looms up as an outstanding American artist, He will continue to grow that is certain. He is ambitious and he is intelligent. He is a conscious revolutionary. As evidence of the great talent that lies within the working class, we proudly present: Jacob Burck, American revolutionary artist.

# FIVE AMERICAN MURALS

## On the Soviet Union — by JACOB BURCK

*Jacob Burck, American revolutionary cartoonist and painter before his mural "Completion of the (Turksib) Railroad"*

*Education*



*The Collective*

*Collective Nursery*

*Industrial Planning (Lower right, with roll of blue-prints, portrait of Col. Hugh Cooper, American engineer)*

**S. Ludkiewicz**

# Polish Radical and Revolutionary Literature

In contrast to a grey and squalid bourgeois literature, both in content and artistic merit, a new literature of the radicalized wing of the Polish intelligentsia is developing, challenging the lying slogans of bourgeois patriotism and chimerical interclass solidarity.

In fact, Polish literature has never been so political, so permeated with social problems as at present. One novel after another, books of short stories, tales devoted to the social problems of Polish life are appearing. These books do not concern themselves only, like those of Bandrowski or Mostowicz, with settling accounts with their political opponents; they are not ordinary pamphlets and tracts. They are really fine literature seeking an answer to the questions of a "new order of life" which are agitating the Polish intelligentsia; they are answers to the facts of the sharpened class struggle, the ceaseless strikes of workmen, the actual uprisings not only among the Ukrainian and White Russian but also Polish peasantry (Central Galicia), which these writers are witnessing.

This process going on among the Polish intelligentsia is finding its expression also in the statements and declarations of most prominent Polish professors like Radlinski, Czarocki, Ettinger, and others, and was vividly evident on the political scene when the senator, Professor Boguszewski, left the government bloc.

During recent months we also have the appearance of *Emancipation of Man*, that philosophical work of Professor Leon Spasowski, in which the author attempts, not always successfully as yet, to free himself from the burden of idealistic philosophy and declares himself an adherent of revolutionary Marxism, of the banner of Lenin and Stalin, whom he often mentions in his book.

This process of radicalization of the intelligentsia finds its expression in the latest novels of Adolf Rudnicki, Helen Boguszewska, Jan Wiktor, J. Savejski, Wieczyslaw Wongaut; in the position taken by Szeplinski, Czuknowski, Grate; in numerous essays which have risen to complete rights of literary "citizenship" in Poland.

In the recent past the revolutionary prose of Leon Kruczkowski, Henry Drzewacki, Wanda Wasilewska and Antonia Sokolic, made its first appearance and at once achieved a prominent position in Polish literature as a whole.

But let us first take those numerous Polish writers whose faith in the super-class character of the present regime in Poland has been profoundly shaken but is not yet completely abandoned; those who expose the bourgeois system and its culture, but rather try to patch it up than destroy it; those in the field of art, showing us portions of real life who are even ready to talk about the corruption of the system, but still have some faith in "all-human" Humanism, in the Messianic nature of the "mission" of the Polish government of the Towianski type.

Jan Wiktor, "unblemished by anything revolutionary," published his new two-volume novel *Birches on the Seine* in which he described with great truthfulness and artistic audacity the conditions of Polish workers in France where the author himself had spent some time.

Wiktor's novel presents a horrible picture of the new Polish economic emigration due to unemployment, an emigration greatly encouraged by the Polish government and numbering over a million in France alone. Most horrible working conditions are shown to accompany an uncommon death rate.

"Man can stand a great deal: men are not cattle," the author declares.

The workers rebel, class consciousness matures in them, but in the uneven struggle, lacking defense from any source, not knowing the language, these Polish workers sink lower and lower, swell the ranks of street bums and lumpen proletarians while many perish. The hero of the novel, Endrey, prishes as he kills a policeman in a sort of frenzy over the tragedy he has lived through.

Wiktor's novel is still replete with contradictions.

Through the character of Yusi, the girl Endrey loved, who went to France to look for him, who herself had lived through the tragedy of being raped by masters and having to prostitute herself to feed her child, who finally meets Endrey for an instant before he perishes,—through Yusi the author asks the question, would it not have been better to remain in Poland, perhaps to die of hunger, but in "one's own country?"

The first chapters of his novel are devoted to Poland and it was these chapters that undoubtedly were the reason why the official critics ignored the novel.

Endrey Polanec went about Poland still wearing his soldier's uniform. "The red-

dened soldier's coat, shabby trousers, worn-out leggings. . ." Only Endrey himself could tell how many trenches, attacks and battles this uniform of his had seen.

After being discharged from the army "Endrey . . . driven from place to place, looked for work." And that's the way he tells about it. "I'd find out here, I'd find out there. Not bread, but work has to be begged like alms."

And Endrey never did find work in Poland. Strong and healthy he appeals to patriotic sentiments: "For five years I defended my country, I spilled so much blood, put up my own breast for all and now, am I to die of hunger?" And he hears the answer of those who hand out work: "What do I care if you went to war? You shouldn't have gone."

Telling about his adventures before the recruiting office where his previous comrades are crowding, also unemployed, Endrey ends, with unanimous approval:

"He wanted to shut the window. I tore it open and went at him again: That's the way you talk now. . . . When a new war will come I'll know against whom to raise my gun."

This grim threat is often being repeated now in Polish radical bourgeois-literature and it is not because it has been overheard in communist circles, but among plain workers, not fully class conscious yet, but guided by class instinct.

*"When a New War Comes. . . ."*

Similar warnings are now being made by the best poets of contemporary Poland —by Julian Tuwim, in his famous poem "To Plain Soldiers" and by the revolutionary poet, Wladislaw Broniewski, in his poem "Light Athletics"—poems censored either wholly or in part by the Polish censorship.

But perhaps the most justified warning from a "purely military point of view" is the one sounded in the novel of the young writer, Adolf Rudnicki, entitled *Soldiers.* His first book *Rats,* published in 1932, is sombre and full of hopeless pessimism. Rudnicki presented a very talented picture of the harmfulness of Polish gossips—"rats," but declined to draw any general conclusions.

This makes *Soldiers* more striking, it being the first novel of barrack life in Poland that draws back the curtain from the life of the Polish army, "worshipped" up to now as the "national pride."

Writing his novel in the autobiographical manner of a Polish recruit, Rudnicki begins by declaring that most of the recruits hit the snag of the beastly treatment of the sergeants. Continuous fault finding, plain mockery, inhuman cruelty, abuse of official prerogatives—all this makes the sergeants of Rudnicki's novel outright sadists. Physical "exercises" beyond their strength alternate with subtle "psychological" torture at the barracks. The sergeant has complete power over life and death. Rudnicki declares frankly that they endeavor to turn the soldier into a silent and submissive slave because this is thought the best and only system of "training" military cadres. But the soldiers are not altogether so submissive, although finding this sort of treatment beyond their strength they often seek a way out in suicide; others end up as moral or physical cripples. There is the system of spying and private inspections in an attempt to frighten the soldiers away from revolutionary agitation that penetrates into their midst. But a three hour search gives rise in the soldier to such thoughts as:

"Tomorrow is the first of May. We are forgetting for what purpose they keep us here."

Glimpses of class consciousness are seen most frequently in soldiers from Polish Ukraine who, as Rudnicki admits, have already gone through the torture chambers of the Polish gendarmerie and have been influenced by Soviet Ukraine on their borders. "Normal" brutality towards them is reinforced by national persecution and Rudnicki says plainly, there is nothing to wonder at "that they do not consider Poland their homeland for which it is necessary to fight and die." And among the Polish soldiers the author presents a conversation like this:

"Someone asked: 'You'll go to war?'

" 'Of course. I'll go. I'd like to fight the Germans. . . Won't you go?'

"Silence.

" 'Eh, brother? If you run—they'll catch you. They'll drive you back with bayonets. And if you don't go—they'll put you up against the wall.' "

The novel *Soldiers* is a horrible picture of life in the Polish soldiers' barracks.

"Military service is a merciless machine and woe to him who gets into it," the author declares.

Rudnicki sees very well the whole wretchedness of the system ruling in the Polish army.

"The old soldiers *just naturally* considered us objects on which it is possible to vent their wrongs. At first I could not understand it, but after I had lived under those conditions I understand the *naturalness* of the thing.

"The soldier is oppressed by his officer for a long time. In his brain commanding is necessarily bound up with the ability to oppress."

Rudnicki's novel is courageously written, truthful and artistically convincing. It is a grim indictment of the Polish army system.

*A Stronger Attack*

But regardless of all this, *Soldiers* was not subjected to such repression and boycott as the recently published story *Day of a Recruit*, also by a young writer in the *Wiadomosci Literackie*. This young writer, Zbignew Unilowski, is more closely connected with ruling circles than Rudnicki.

Unilowski's story, also written in the autobiographical style, describes a day, the only day of a Polish recruit at army barracks. Only it gives us such a picture of this casern that the entire bourgeois press reproaches the *Wiadomosci Literackie* bitterly for publishing this story and the author is accused almost of "bolshevism."

And in essence, this is only a single day variation out of Rudnicki's book, a variation far from generalizing as Rudnicki's novel does.

But bourgeois public opinion in Poland and Polish army circles saw a great difference in the significance of the characters brought out by Rudnicki and Unilowski.

This difference in attitude is based on the difference with which the two authors show the officers of the Polish army.

In Rudnicki's book the Polish officers don't know anything about the sadistic lust of their sergeants, they simply pay too little attention to the soldiers and are satisfied with external appearance of everything being in order. Unilowski paints a different picture. Captain Gulka is as big a drunkard as his sergeants, if not more so. And he is the most subtle sadist. The sergeants imitate him, just as he imitates another member of the officer's corp—the doctor who considers all the sick simulators and mocks them. The discipline of the captain himself is terrible. Corporal Shramko does not even want to hear the officer's orders from a soldier and an artillery noncom countermands orders of the colonel.

While in the Polish army the sergeants commit crimes, the rumor about which has already penetrated into various Polish circles, Rudnicki is still willing to invent fables about the humane officer. Unilowski, however, says: "The fish stinks from the head."

True, Unilowski has overstepped the confines of permissible social demagogy and divulges too much: about dissatisfaction about conditions among rank and file officers; how they are waiting impatiently for war.

That is why the Polish bourgeois press is hurling thunder and lightning at the "revolutionary propaganda" of Unilowski and Rudnicki who are tearing down the bulwarks of the Polish regime, its army, and is trying by all means to turn these talented writers from their present road.

It is hard to stop in detail here on all the new and growing Polish literature dealing realistically with individual phases of Polish life. The fine literature dealing with the problem of unemployment alone has risen to a large number of volumes.

Nevertheless the artistic truth of this literature does not as yet attain complete artistic generalization. The reasons for this are to be sought in the uncommonly poor social life of the Polish intelligentsia, in the insufficient endeavor to break with their own past, the fear of the future. This situation is complicated by the circumstance that up to very recently Polish revolutionary literature occupied a very modest place and could be neither an educational nor a leading literature.

This does not refer to poetry in which, due to the talents of Wladislaw Broniewski and Stalislaw Stande, Polish revolutionary poetry attained a high artistic level, makes a powerful appeal to the masses and finds a warm response among the Polish intelligentsia.

Revolutionary Polish prose, up to very recently, was practically non-existent. What did exist was limited to a few essays, some short stories and one or two novels which were not of a very high literary merit.

That is why the rise of revolutionary prose under present conditions of Polish life and its assuming at once such a respected place in Polish literature is impressive. Polish fascism, is compelled to grasp at every new talent in Polish literature, is ready to capture this talent for itself, or at least neutralize these fresh tempestuous powers.

Leon Kruczkowski broke into Polish literature with his novel *Kordian and Ham*, dedicated to the Polish uprising of 1830-31.

This novel is a challenge to the romantic legend of the Polish uprising of 1830, supposedly an uprising of the entire Polish people, when under the guidance of the Polish gentry the peasantry also rose to fight consciously against Tsarism.

Kruczkowski showed the real Polish village of that time, the class conflict between the feudal landlords and the peasantry.

Kordian in Slowacki's drama under the same title is the intellectual participant of the conspiracy against Tsar Nicholas I—"the conscience of the Polish people," an invented figure to inspire the Polish nationalists. Kruczkowski's Kordian, a miserable private who is bent upon getting for himself and his colleagues an officer's

braid and demanding that the "masses" support this struggle.

Notwithstanding Kruczkowski's mistaken estimate of the moving forces of the Polish uprising the novel's strength is primarily in its revolutionary trend and its revolutionary actuality.

Uncovering the past of Poland, smothered by the romanticists, the high artistic qualities of the novel, the excellent use of language, the revolutionary passion of the author, have made this novel the banner novel of modern Polish literature. This is a good reason for the fascist camp and the Trotskyites to flirt with the author.

*Other Revolutionary Novels*

Kruczkowski's novel was followed by other new Polish revolutionary novels. These appeared in 1934: *Kasniacy* by H. Drzewacki; *Face of Day* by Wanda Wasilewska; and *Ceasarian Operation* by Antonia Sokolic, on the Polish uprising of 1863.

The characters of *Kasniacy* live in one house on a suburban street near Warsaw, are mostly unemployed who cannot pay for the rent of their apartments. The campaign to lower the rent and the method adopted by the owners of throwing the non-paying families on the street, unites the working class tenants who belong to different political parties. But the campaign is lost nevertheless, the court rules the owner has the right to throw non-payers out on the street. The dispossessed begin to build barracks for themselves. This is the novel in brief.

Drzewacki knows the life of the workers very well, down to minutest details. He knows the bitter life of the unemployed, the nightmare of their existence.

Drzewacki was not completely successful. His mistake is that he has put too great a social and political load on the tenants of the house on Kwasna street. This unsuccessful idea led to unsuccessful results in the final chords struck by the novel.

The revolutionary critic Drzewacki—we have known him as such—has laid too great a burden on the excellent and fresh artist Drzewacki.

Regardless of the fact that the picture of the terrible life of the workers is given truthfully and with great talent, regardless of the fact that class solidarity achieves really artistic generalization the novel did not fully come up to expectations. The author did not realize that his idea to present a picture of the present class struggle, with all its attributes, within the bleak confines of the house on Kwasna street, could only be done by such artistic means which would have opened up the walls of the house on Kwasna street.

*Face of Day*, a first novel by the young woman writer, Wanda Wasilewska, dealing with the veterans of the Polish Socialist Party, has a different significance.

Published only a few months ago in Warsaw with a great number of blank spaces and pages cut out by the censorship, Wasilewska's novel is one of the great events in Polish literature.

*Face of Day* is a movie film of the life of workers in Poland. Continually changing characters, skillfully organized by the artist, expose with great power the social oppression of the Polish workers.

Wasilewska's characters are truthful and full of the juice of life. She hates passionately the present "legal order" and exposes the class rule of the Polish bourgeoisie with great penetration and loathing. A great multitude of social phenomena are cursorily, in single flashes, but fully, truthfully and artistically exposed by the writer. Her strength lies in her frugality of artistic depiction.

Unemployment has no more space in the novel than other "phenomena." She touches upon "democratic rights" very aptly. A great number of separate little streamlets of injustice, oppression, class hatred, finally break out and take on the nature of an all-cleansing mighty stream—this is the triumphant social revolution which unfolds in the last pages of the novel.

Wasilewska summons to revolt; revolution must and will come she says, but she is silent on the art of revolution.

This under-estimation of the organizational phase of the revolution is clearly expressed in the hero of the book, Anatol, a conscious revolutionist, but more a symbol of revolutionary trend than of the "first among the equal."

Wasilewska's method is to go from analysis to synthesis, from details to the general. In developing along these lines Wasilewska will have to look close to see who within the working class hampers unity in the struggle for revolution and its art. Because the "triumph of revolution never comes by itself. It has to be prepared and won. And to prepare for it and win it—that can be done only by a strong proletarian revolutionary Party."

Wasilewska's novel is full of passion. The wealth and richness of flashing images, a language like rapier thrusts, place this book in the first rank of Polish literature.

*Moscow, USSR*

**Karl Schmuckle**

# Twelve Numbers of a Magazine

*German Writers in Exile*

Twelve months, twelve numbers. In September 1933, at Prague, this magazine, organ of emigrant German literature was founded as a gathering center for writers driven out of Germany, for those whose books had been burned. It is worth while to review justly, and carefully estimate the harvest that has thus been gathered. Perhaps also say a word or two about future tasks: hopes and expectations.

The twelfth number lies before us—a special number devoted to Soviet literature, containing a very interesting cross-section of the All-Russian Congress of Soviet Writers. In this number the editors say: "A year ago we wrote: writing of quality today can only be anti-fascist. This statement no longer requires any proof."

"Talk to man is action, and very effective action at that," Hegel said. It is to be found in the first article of the magazine (Wieland Herzfelde: "Let Us Speak German") as an introductory epigram. The action of this magazine will ever be effective. It has set itself as its principal aim to unite all German writers who are against fascism. It has taken for its slogan: The German working class which is putting up a heroic struggle against fascism and has made underground Germany the only true Germany, must know that the best writers are their allies, their friends.

It never was nor is it easy now to realize such a union. The points of view of the individual writers are very different. One can imagine the spiritual state of the best and most serious representatives of German letters on the day after Hitler's ascension: the mood was one of depression and doubt, loss of faith in the future of German culture. What was the meaning of these events, what was the essence of Hitler-fascism, what were the causes of this "sinking into the abyss?" Many considered the establishment of the national-socialist dictatorship an atavism, literally a sliding back to the "spirit of the Middle Ages." Others spoke of a "dictatorship of the middle class turned savage." There was talk of a sort of mental plague, of a madness, an anomally, contradicting all the laws of historical development. Who among these writers—not to speak of the well known revolutionists—had ever believed such a thing possible?

The editors of the *Neue Deutsche Blätter,* consisting of Wieland Herzfelde, Oscar Maria Graf, Anna Seghers and one anonymous (a revolutionary writer active illegally in Berlin), declared that they do not consider fascism an accidental phenomenon, but the organic product of mortally sick capitalism and that any attempt to re-establish bourgeois democracy means the renunciation of a real, radical struggle against fascism as no power but that of the proletariat can achieve victory over want and tyranny. But anyone who wants to join in the struggle, even if he does not share these convictions, is free to write in the magazine. The thing is to promote the process of achieving mental clarity, of searching for a way of emancipation by collaboration and comradely discussion.

The first number announced still another thesis: truthfulness of presentation and even the formal quality of literature depend upon depth of insight into events and their causes.—This was a statement or rather a suggestion that the magazine considers realism as the fundamental principle of genuine literature. No beauty without truth. But the truth must be militant. Under the banner of this realism all those writers who are searching for the truth in all its aspects and are foes of the fascist lie should form an alliance. Thus, the call upon the best esthetic traditions of bourgeois realism is united with the appeal for a love of freedom and hatred of the fascist destroyer of culture and all progressive endeavors.

That was the program.

Heinrich Mann has recently expressed the conviction that anti-fascist literature, the literature of German emigration (to which belong many of those who have stayed on in Germany) is tending to become better than the average level of German literature. He also expressed the straightforward hope that this literature will prove the "spiritual forerunner" of a future better Germany.

Our friends are putting up a good fight. We believe that the *Neue Deutsche Blätter* will do much to make Heinrich Mann's words come true.

Every single number of this magazine thus far, like so many mirrors, sometimes perhaps less clearly, sometimes with lapses

or "blind spots," reflects this program. The most important fact was and is an alliance with those bourgeois writers who are ready to struggle against fascism, to cooperate in this right and just cause. This idea was the *new* thing the magazine brought. The idea had never before been brought out so clearly.

Thus a literary magazine appeared in which Jacob Wasserman could write alongside Johannes R. Becher, Lion Feuchtwanger alongside F. C. Weiskopf, Arnold Zweig alongside Willi Bredel, Balder Olden alongside Adam Scharrer, Hermann Kertern alongside Erich Weinert: these names will illustrate the great diversity and variety of viewpoints, literary trends, origins and methods represented.

These names are well known—famous names of German writers who heretofore would have nothing to do with the labor movement, lived, thought and worked on the old basis. They perhaps believed they would always be able to stay far from the din of the class struggle. They were perhaps concerned in achieving new copies of "eternal beauty," new "landscapes of the spirit" and "secrets of the soul"—even though they take the "raw material" for their works from the life of contemporary bourgeois civilization. They perhaps dreamed of a better future, but did so vaguely and uncertainly, mostly without determination. The establishment of the Hitler dictatorship struck them with the shock of unexpected brutality.

Events since January 30 have taught the best of these German men-of-letters to see the world with other, keener, wiser eyes. These events had the effect of lending a militant note to their humanism. They put new, gigantic, burning, human problems before their philosophies: now *you tell us!* Under the shock many of their "problems" fell away as useless finery. The best of them came out openly, ready to fight. They began to comprehend that everything they held most sacred, their love of truth, had need of all their spiritual and artistic energy. They not only heard about all that the German worker was compelled to suffer, they also found out about the bravery with which the Communist proletariat of Germany organized their struggle against fascist tyranny.

Thus serious, spiritual changes took place in these emigrant writers driven from their country. Many of their new books directly or indirectly give evidence of this. The *Neue Deutsche Blätter* contained many documents on those complicated, occasionally very peculiar, processes of coming closer to the working class.

Jacob Wassermann shortly before his death announced his readiness to collaborate in this magazine. All his life he was engrossed in showing bourgeois life and the old psychological problems of the individual and did not resist sufficiently the mystical tendencies of bourgeois decline. The first and second numbers of this anti-fascist magazine, published in advance a chapter of his last novel, *Joseph Kerkhoven's Third Life.* It is a chapter from the "Dying Tribune"—the historical model of which, by the way, is a famous figure of Germany, the journalist and stormy bourgeois carper —Maximilian Harden. Wassermann wanted to write an epilogue to this novel and take a position on the current struggle. Death interfered. He would have shown fascism as a sort of "madness" without understanding its real class nature. . .

Balder Olden's emigration is perhaps the most remarkable and most instructive case. He voluntarily left Hitler Germany and wrote an article in the third number of the magazine: "Nothing Might Have Happened to Me." He did not wish to falsify the truth at the orders of the Nazi. He did not wish his grave to sometime be a "dungheap under cypresses." Balder Olden then wrote his anti-fascist *Novel of a Nazi.* (Excerpts from this novel appear in this issue of *International Literature*—Editors). In the meantime he demonstrated in the Soviet Union the great change that had occurred in this "poet of the human heart." Take his speech in Tiflis before the Georgian writers. Something extraordinary had really happened to him.

Lion Feuchtwanger, who has declared himself in his novel *The Oppermanns,* and even before the Hitler overturn, in the great chronicle of post war Bavaria, *Success,* an open and passionate opponent of fascism and reaction, gave for the anti-war number of the magazine a scene from his "dramatic novel" written back in 1918-1919. A short scene; conversation in a military barrack among soldiers and an intellectual, among men who hated war and "wait . . . wait . . . wait . . ." without knowing how to bring the war to an end. Feuchtwanger reported on how it proved impossible to produce this play in Germany, how all attempts to produce it were frustrated now by the counter-revolutionary Kapp putsch, now by the police of the democratic republic. And Feuchtwanger describes this work himself as follows: It gives a correct photographic reproduction of opinions and feelings "which were current among German intellectuals towards the end of the war and the first few months of the German republic: opinions far from reality, idealistic opinions, that unfortunately were of decisive influence on the German revolution and were a great deal to blame for its failure."

The intellectual and the struggling working class!

Arnold Zweig, author of the anti-war novel *Sergeant Grischa* and the entirely different *Stories About Claudia* also tackles this problem. In the sketch "Education Before Verdun," a chapter from a new book he is writing, he describes a night in one of the barracks immediately behind the front where the soldiers of the world war, packed together like sheep, try to conquer their deadly weariness by sleep. An intellectual, a writer. A workingman. A faint light, screened against detection from an aeroplane. Cellulose, cooties, stench. Thoughts . . . The machinery of the war, the truth about the war. The name of Liebknecht. The printer Pahl surrounds the young intellectual with his ideas: how good it would be to make this man thoroughly conscious of the meaning and purpose of this war. "A man like this could be of inestimable service to the working class . . ."

This thought was in fact the theme of the anti-war number: the writer can be of inestimable service to the working class, to mankind as a whole, if he should devote his art, his mind, his passion, to the fight against a new war. . . . In this sense, many others, besides Feuchtwanger and Arnold Zweig, expressed themselves: Am. M. Frey, Paul Nizan, Ernest Ottwalt, Fritz Erpenbeck, F. C. Weiskopf, the Austrian agriculturist and writer, Stefan Hochrainer, Willi Bredel, Walter Kolbenhoff—revolutionary and left bourgeois writers in common. In one article Ernest Ottwalt wrote: "Today more than ever before we, writers, are faced with the task of cooperating fearlessly in the unveiling of the great secrecy in which—according to Lenin—the birth of war is clothed." But it is not enough to just simply be opposed to war: the writer more than anyone must show the highest degree of insight into social relations. With regard to fascism as with war Ottwalt asks: "Is it chance that, with few exceptions, attempts so far to show German reality were artistically feeble and unconvincing? The story of the writer and his literary abilities were maladjusted to his insight. . . ."

In this number Agnes Smedley tells of the struggle of Soviet China's Red Army against the whites, of an episode in that great and longlasting war, of the slave against his capitalist enslavers.

In this number there are also reports on literary war propaganda in Japan and the literary "propagandists of readiness for war" in Hitler Germany. In this, as in every number, the separate department: "Voices from Germany" and since the February events in Austria, "Voices from Germany and Austria." Here the authors cannot mention their names, they work illegally—propagandists of the revolutionary cause, our brave comrades from the "front trenches." Their short stories, poems, critical articles are a collective literary diary of the underground struggle of the workers against the reign of the fascist executioner. Out of these, perhaps, will come those who will show the realities of the Third Empire in great and stirring works of art. (Heinrich Mann has recently spoken of those who, perhaps, today already in Germany are writing behind closed doors, like theives in the night, the great anti-fascist masterpiece of the future.)

Of our friends from among the revolutionary literary movement of Germany and Austria there is hardly one who does not contribute to the *Neue Deutsche Blätter:* Becher, Bert Brecht, O. M. Graf, Egon Erwin Kisch, Plivier, Anna Seghers, Weinert, Scharrer, Ottwalt, Bredel, Schonstedt, Bodo Uhse, Bruno V .Salomon, Stefan Heym, Kurt Kersten and many others.

Many of them came to literature directly from the work-bench: their path was not an easy one. But when we compare their books, stories, poetry with their first beginnings, even with their later work before the Hitler dictatorship, we can see how much they have learned, that they have made serious artistic progress, that they already know much better how to interweave subject matter, intellectual content and artistic form.

Some came originally from bourgeois and radical petty-bourgeois literature. Many were once close to the social democrats. Many—like Ernst Ottwalt, Bodo, Uhse, Bruno V. Salomon (who published an open letter to his brother, the fascist writer—Ernst von Salomon)—were even once in fascist ranks as "revolutionary nationalists."

Of these two elements—worker-authors and left bourgeois writers—German revolutionary literature arose as a fruitful union of comrades who cooperate, among whom serious, sometimes passionate discussion rages on the great intellectual, political and literary questions these years of struggle presented. Emigration that has scattered them over many countries has also joined them closer than ever. The process of coming to intellectual clarity which began with them after the Hitler overturn was very fruitful. The *Neue Deutsche Blätter* positively helped this new development. It is a fact—although an amazing fact—that we have never had a revolutionary literary magazine in Germany of such a nature and of so high a literary level. (The *Neue Deutsche Blätter* has nothing in common with the old *Linkskurve* whose role we do not disparage.) It must be admitted that this means something new, something much better. The *Neue Deutsche Blätter,* an organ of the anti-fas-

cist struggle, has high standards. The magazine is not only a center for artistic esthetic analysis: and this is very well. It works for a broad intellectual alliance of all enemies of fascism. The old tight scales that have "grown" about our movement in the past have not yet been completely removed. We believe that the editors of the *Neue Deutsche Blätter* will not formulate their program today exactly the same way as they did a year ago. New tasks have also been added: the recruiting for an alliance of the best among those who have stayed "behind" in Germany, those who considered it possible or necessary to mask or even, deluded, to outwardly or even ideologically "adapt" themselves to the powers and relations in the Third Empire.

This year was one rich in horrible dramatic events in Middle Europe. The magazine discussed them. The seventh number was devoted to the armed struggle of the Austrian workers. It contained the well known report by Ilya Ehrenburg. It published contributions of Oscar Maria Graf, Ernst Fischer and rank-and-file Schutzbund men. In Number Ten Anna Segher's *The Last Trip of Koloman Wallisch* appeared.

This requires a few additional words.

Anna Seghers, author of *Revolt of the Fishermen,* who had been awarded the Kleist prize once, and then joined the ranks of the revolution, has described the destruction of a revolutionary in fascist Germany in her last novel *Head Price.* The book had a fatalistically tragic tone; the canvas on which the picture was drawn was totally black; an artistically interesting, but in spirit a thoroughly defeatist novel. Anna Seghers has overcome this defeatist weakness; in *The Last Trip of Kolloman Wallisch* she again shows the death of a hero, but here the revolutionary heroism of the victim is shown in the strong light which bears evidence of the unshakable consciousness of the inevitability of final triumph.

It is the same fiery light in which F. C. Weiskopf shows heroic and tragic episodes of the struggle of the workers against the ruling powers in Germany and Austria. For this he made use of the new form of the very short, very simple and folk-like story. These stories by Weiskopf published under the title of *The Stronger* first appeared in various numbers of the *Neue Deutsche Blätter.*

But these are only references to the contents of the first year's numbers. A few remarks are in order on the critical and theoretical activity of the magazine.

In the first number, during the phase of the "hottest" conflict with liberal and social democrat ideas on fascism and the anti-fascist struggle, we criticized the magazine a great deal. (Essentially justly, in many respects, perhaps, too severely, too onesidedly.) But it must be admitted the magazine is not especially weak in theory. Some of its theoretical shortcomings are due to the weakness of the entire revolutionary literary movement in Germany, particularly in criticism and essays. It is here that sectarian tendencies were most evident (this brought about a "revolt" once of the "producers" against the critics), and these tendencies have not as yet been overcome. In this case, and particularly in this case, it is a question of more culture, more historical training, more "live" philosophy! In the *Neue Deutsche Blätter* one could also find articles in which the quintessence of critical judgement about anti-fascist works amounted to the two words: dialectic materialism! (And nothing more.) This limited, narrow "sociological" criticism tended to reduce the entire complex of intellectual and esthetic problems to a few basic theses of the Marxist Leninist philosophy "generally."

The *Neue Deutsche Blätter* has made several earnest attempts to find a new language for constructive criticism in the spirit of the anti-fascist alliance. It is necessary to express our philosophical, political and esthetic problems more richly, with greater power of conviction.

The *Neue Deutsche Blätter* goes to many sections of the world: Rumania, Jugoslavia, Scandinavia, Japan, Palestine, the U.S.A., Argentine. . .and many a copy finds its way even into—Germany.

Our friends will improve this magazine. More firmly they will continue their work of uniting all genuinely anti-fascist writers and the working class.

# LITERARY PORTRAITS

**Alfred Kurella**

## HENRI BARBUSSE: Literary Warrior

To Henri Barbusse, champion of our great and noble cause, who in the name of mankind and for all foes and enemies of fascism, proclaimed the slogan: *The freedom of Thaelman must be won like a battle.*

The tall man crawled out of the car, a giant extricating himself from a dwarf's hut. As he stood there almost doubled up, just as when he sat at the steering wheel, he was a good head taller than the tallest amongst us. Robin, a little dog, could not contain his joy. Again and again he jumped up at the man.

And now we are in the house. The empiric decorations on the little door and minute windows at the front are repeated again in the low rooms. Partitioned walls, grey, tarnished gilt, sepia brown, grotesque figures on the ceiling. Easy chairs. Glass cases. Countless pictures on the walls. Old English embroidery, sketches for decorations by Bakst. Oriental wood-cuts, old views of towns. Fashion caricatures from the directory. The walls simply carpeted with pictures. Beneath these, there are shelves of books all around the walls. French novels and lyric poetry from the year '80 till the present day. Suddenly, among these books, a couple of volumes of Lenin, Russian, and several volumes of the great Soviet encyclopedia can be seen. The general atmosphere is too complete to allow of any disturbing influences. The well preserved country house of the esthete of the *fin de siecle,* the landed gentry's home-culture of the year '90.

What an extraordinary contrast.

Our host brought us here in the most modern Peugeot. He understands and loves this machine. He understands aeroplanes too, and loves them passionately. A short time ago as we passed by the Le Bourget aerodrome he began to discourse on his favorite theme, the new perspective of the world and life which is opened up by aeroplanes. Technique, which makes new wonderful times possible for men. Elevations which permit him to see dislocated objects as a whole. A couple of months earlier we had gone by air to Copenhagen. What enthusiasm he had shown over the blue-green wonder of the sea, the toy-like towns in the Schelde delta, the great Rotterdam harbor; the wonder of the Somme battle fields, where from the fresh green grass of fields and meadow the old trenches and shell craters stood out in bright, clear-cut streaks as though the earth refused to forget those terrible days.

And this fantastic amateur of the most up-to-date technique lives in a deserted little village, thirty kilometres away from the capital, in this doll's house in the midst of all those gadgets.

As he sits there before me: delicate frame, with angular shoulders over a hollow chest; dreamy, remote, his eyes, above the thin mouth from which hangs a cigarette with accumulated ash (it will soon drop) are gazing far into the distance; hands delicately shaped, not too slender (now with quick movements he is brushing this ash which always falls from the lapel of his coat and from his jacket). Considering all this, this is what one would call a "spiritual" man.

And yet in his time, this same man frightened honest French readers, and at the beginning of the century had a rising generation listening attentively to his words because of his glowing hymns of the body, because of his calm, beautiful pictures of burning sensuality, because of the new words which he discovered for the most intimate experiences of love. And this not only in the first impulse of youth.

"I do not know where I shall find a publisher in France for my new novel which I am now writing. At the very beginning it commences with a scene .. officially the publishing houses have become prudish," he tells us.

### *The Man of Action*

He has returned from a long journey. Eight weeks of America are behind him. Forty mass meetings in the large towns

of the Eastern States. Eight, ten, fifteen thousand people at each meeting. He spoke of war and fascism. This man, physically so delicate, is a man of the masses. From meeting to meeting he dragged his fragile body, from hall to hall his sonorous, vibrating voice rising ever and anon in excitement, resounded from that part of his lungs which still remain in his far too narrow chest, and swelled above the heads of the listeners. And besides this, there were talks with numberless visitors, signatures, committees, a preface for a book, invitations.

And this was but the conclusion of a series of visits. Five capitals have seen him last year. Copenhagen, Madrid, Moscow, London and Geneva: organizing, lecturing, discussing, leading conferences. He left Paris and boarded the ship which was to take him to America on the second day of the International Youth Congress to which over two thousand youth from the leading countries had arrived in answer to his summons, to confer together on the question of the struggle against war and fascism.

And yet this man of action really lives only in the written word. Only when he is sitting at his desk, pen in hand, a sheet of paper before him, which he covers with his minute, smooth, geometrical writing, only then is he really himself. The written word is his element. Three times, ten times he alters a sentence, polishes it down, rearranges commas and periods, jealously watches over the corrections. He lives in literature, a writer...

But there are weeks, months even, when he hardly writes a single line. He is so taken up with action. He organizes, collects, speaks, persuades, leads endless meetings, writes appeals... does all this, which he would so gladly leave to others. The manuscript of the new novel lies there in its first stages, untouched during the last two years.

This life has made a world citizen of him. He lives publicly. A rare thing, beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union. His name heads hundreds of enterprises. He founds, leads, constructs. And yet he detests all "organizational pedantry".

Like this house, with the delicate Japanese wood-cuts and the new Peugeot, the formal and orderly housekeeper, the little dog Robin, the empire furniture, the new cinema apparatus all under the same roof, Henri Barbussé, master of the house, the poet and champion against war and fascism surrounds himself with a thousand contradictions.

His work grew in contradictions.

*The Writer*

When his first verse appeared, the literary world of France pricked its ears. Suddenly here was a new hope in French literature. In a short time his name had spread beyond the frontiers. On a book shelf there stands a little volume, *Oscar Wilde*. The great English poet of decadence had dedicated it to the young Barbusse. The initiated know that at this time his interest was directed in entirely different channels: at the big Lafitte publishing house and later at Hachette, the largest book and newspaper enterprise of the country, the young Barbusse started the magazine *Je sais tout*. He managed this magazine, which being the first of its kind in France, was read by a wide public to whom it presented the latest achievements of science and technique in popular form.

His poetical debut was followed by two novels. They depict the melancholy atmosphere of the cultivated petty bourgeoisie at the beginning of the new century. But at the same time a new note was struck. The tone of *l'art pour l'art* was abandoned. Barbusse now appeared in the light of a problem poet. In *Petition* the problem of the relations of the individual to society is broached, which later was to be developed and made concrete and repeated in appeals to the intellectuals, not to be content to be mere onlookers but to become participators in the struggle for a new order of society. *Inferno*, one of the most important books by the young Barbusse and far too little known to the public, shows the extraordinary depth of the poet, the moralist and the scientist. Love is the predominent theme of this book.

Concerning the main plot (if one can speak of "plot" here) there are digressions into the domains of history and science, a calm medical theory (dealing with the relationship between tuberculosis and cancer) is put forward and a sinister picture of the facts of love after death is drawn, in which the spirit of the *danses macabres* is connected with the prosaic realism of natural scientific materialism.

The decadent poet of the new century groped forward towards new horizons belonging to a new generation.

The war interrupted.

It visited this house too. While the poet was at the front in the trenches, soldiers were billeted within these walls. It was at the time when the Germans were not far away from Paris. The soldiers treated this dainty little house with consideration. At that time it looked almost the same as it does now — because be-

fore the war a shell like that protecting a beetle had grown around the poet. Not a book, not a picture disappeared, nor was anything disarranged. And in clumsy letters on the blotter of his desk was written *MERCI*. Just as though the soldiers had had a presentiment that here lived the man who one year later was to write *Song of Heroes,* that formidable epic of war, and *Under Fire*.

*Under Fire* — war remoulded life, it remoulded man. The praised and protected inner world of the finer nuances fell to pieces. A mighty fermenting world broke into the life of the poet. As yet he did not understand but he plunged into the seething sea.

The task which he accomplished with this book is greater than he suspects. The word was heard and penetrated the mind where war had already laid foundations for great changes. The book enjoyed great popularity. It was that extra incentive to hundreds and thousands in their final sentencing of war; and to the international mind which the times had already set thinking, it was rain to the growing seed. With *Under Fire* Barbusse became a public figure whose further development no longer lay in his own hands, but had become the representative of the marching masses.

From now on, the poet of *Pleureuses* belonged to the masses, whose language he had adopted and which he had, incidentaly, raised to a righer standard. He felt the change more than he realized. But he was anxious to go still further. He was feeling his way. He founded the "International of War Victims." There were others who had to have their eyes opened, the intellectuals. Those, who like himself, had the inheritance of the human mind at their disposal, and who had experienced how this inheritance had passed into the hands of a ruling group (as yet he did not admit a ruling class) and was ruined and turned into the ghastly barbarism of war. He organized them, tried to gather them together. *Clarte* was the result. A movement with a magazine as center.

### *The Search for Truth*

But a new change was impending. War had not ended. It continued in the form of class war. The poet heard the screams of the tortured in the Balkans.

The book *Hangman* which exposed the outrages of the White butchers of the Balkans, brought hundreds of intellectuals of Europe into the ranks of those fighting against the fascism of Zankoff and his kind. It won the poet the hearts of hundreds of thousands of oppressed in the south-eastern powder magazine of Europe. But it also brought Barbusse himself a step further.

And Barbusse studied afresh. He buried himself in history. In a powerful vision he saw the future course of mankind. Eternal struggle! *Chains* was the result. The book has been begun by many but owing to its size and heavy style has been finished by few. A chain of pictures from primitive times until the present day. Wilfully strung together. Again we have the harassed, troubled petty bourgeois who groped his way through the past; seemingly a brother to the man in *Inferno,* who from the little window of his hotel witnessed the life of love in an adjacent room; and brother to the man who in *Clarte* searched for the meaning of war and peace.

Then there was a new experience. Soviet Russia. Socialism became tangible. A new order of things was rising. A country, a continent was undergoing tranformation. But more important than all else: man was being remoulded.

The tranformation of Barbusse was not yet complete. Old thoughts awoke. Has not the impulse of the masses towards socialism, this genuine socialism which in the Soviet Union removes mountains and spurs men on to superhuman efforts, — eternal roots? For centuries humanity has followed this one idea, was betrayed and enslaved in the name of this same idea.

And again Barbusse buried himself in historical documents. Who was Jesus? If the legendary figure of the "Saviour" is still alive for millions today ,and there are millions in the ranks of those fighting for socialism, could not the legend be reversed? Was not Jesus the symbol of the first class struggle? History seemed to confirm this. And Barbusse wrote his new book followed by a play.

But the new book found few readers. The beautiful poetical language had no audience. The last work, his play, did not even find a publisher.

And the comrades on the communist front shrugged their shoulders. British criticism poured in. Was it the wrong way? Barbusse was silent.

Meanwhile the class enemy was active. "Barbusse has ruined himself in the eyes of the comunists," people whispered. To Barbusse they said: "You see how you are treated! No free thought is tolerated in Moscow..." At the same time hands stretched out to get control of *Monde* the magazine which Barbusse founded as a continuation of *Clarte* in 1928. But one could use this paper as a weapon *against* socialism. And intrigues behind the scenes began.

A new circumstance favored the machinations of the intriguers. The breezes of "literary discussion" blew. Sectarians were at work. Men of letters scented a good prey. Urgent articles were hurriedly written. While Barbusse kept silent.

The enemies triumphed. Now, they thought, it would be possible to tear the poet away from Moscow. The clique which had taken possessioin of *Monde* turned to double dealing with the shares in *Monde* to assure control. *Monde* became the scene of action for Trotskyites and renegades.

And Barbusse still was silent.

Again he buried himself in history. This time his interests centered around a person: Zola. The great writer who was also the active politician, who was one of the champions of the "Right of Progress" in the Dreyfus affair. In 1931 this splendid picture of France at the end of the old and the beginning of the new century was completed. It is the last book which Barbusse has written.

And again the outside world forced its way into the study of the writer.

### *In the Heat of the Class Struggle*

The Far East was in war. Japan had conquered Manchuria. Chapai went up in flames. In Grand Chaco and the Amazon districts cannons roared. Europe was bristling with arms.

War, a new war was imminent.

Then the author of *Under Fire* left his writing table and with Romain Rolland, the old comrade-in-arms, he went to the world congress against war which met in August 1932. But it was also a lesson for Barbusse himself. The social-democrat leaders who never tired of shouting "Never again war," refused to side with the great front. They attacked the initiators of the movement with the lowest of libels.

Probably nothing made Barbusse realize facts concerning Frederick Adler and his gang as a little event which occurred at this time, when he and Rolland were still soliciting the cooperation of the chief of the Second International. When Frederick Adler could find no more arguments, he "proved" Barbusse's "dependence on Moscow" by affirming that Barbusse had a Russian Checkist as secretary! Annette Vidal, the faithful girl who for years had been his assistant, the little black haired daughter of an honest citizen of Cannes. Annette, who even now sits near us, answers letters, arranges papers, classifies bills—A Russian Checkist!

The congress was over. But the hard work now had really begun. The "world committee for the struggle against imperialist war" was to be organized. Conferences and congresses followed. Delegations were sent off. National committees formed in all countries.

And Barbusse is everywhere.

The writing table is neglected. A large manuscript lies in the first stages. But only a very few pages have been added in these last two years.

It is a work on the destinies of ten couples. One day, one hour, but ten scenes of action from all over the world. Life, struggle, have, up to the present, creative expression. Barbusse lives this book, tirelessly seizing reality in ten, in a hundred places among people of every class and kind.

On the desk, the unfinished manuscript lies peacefully side by side with an answer to a letter from the Saigon Anti-War Committee.

Barbusse was caught in the new tide, inexorable and without possibility of retreat. Working incessantly, he follows the new course as combatant. Yet, deep within him, in every fibre, the old world pulses with the best it possessed of greatness and beauty, and also with much that it had produced in the period of decadence (because it was during this period that the thinker and poet matured).

Here is a man on the threshold, on the threshold of two worlds.

He now stands before me at the entrance of the little house.

Inside in the dim room rests the memory of our long talk. Stories of America; plans for a new book, biography of Stalin, the great leader, whom he deeply respects;[1] reports on the condition of the movement, worries concerning the fate of Thaelmann; problems relating to fascism in France.

Millions listen to the words of this man, with whom thousands cooperate continuously. Hundreds come into direct contact with him.

This man has crossed the threshold of two worlds.

He advances, he marches, his face turned towards the sun.

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[1] *Since this article was written, Barbusse has completed his biography.* Stalin *by Henri Barbusse, is announced among the spring publications of The Macmillan Company of New York. It will appear simultaneously in other countries.*

**Alfred Durus**

# John Heartfield

## *About a Noted German Revolutionary Artist*

In 1841, the following "criticism" appeared in the *Leipziger Anzeiger* on the subject of Dauguerrotype, that early stage in photography:

"The desire to retain fleeting pictures as they pass is blasphemy, since man is made after the image of God, and God's likeness should not be recorded by any man-made machine."

In 1934, the German and Austrian Embassies in Prague, united in wailing against Heartfield's photomontage which was on show as part of an international exhibition of caricatures organized by the "Anes," association of artists.

On one side in Germany, Heartfield was reproached with disparagement of Hitler, and on the other, in Austria, with insulting the representatives of the Austrian emblem. It infuriated the representatives of these two countries to see how the artist portrayed, with such aptitude, the executioner's axe of Germany and the hangman's noose of Austria.

1841-1934—blasphemy, executioner's axe and hangman's noose: similar anti-cultural expressions of reaction.

John Heartfield, a splendid artist, is at the same time a fighter of significance, struggling, presevering, straining every nerve against reaction, fascism and war. Today, among German emigrants, his work is of prime importance for the struggle against fascism.

His first photomontage work was born of a militant hatred of imperialist war. During the World War, the German military censorship suppressed every semblance of freedom of opinion. But Heartfield outwitted the censorship, by sending letters made up of newspaper clippings, photographs and drawings, arranged, of course, so as to be absolutely meaningless to the censorship officials.

He has retained the original political aggressiveness of his early letter-montage. He has since developed to a higher level both artistically and politically.

### *An Artist to The Masses*

Heartfield is one of the most popular revolutionary artists of Germany. His greatest merit lies in his capacity of impressing the masses. He is always endeavoring to raise the political effect of his work by the use of bold, unusual, surprising and striking elements in artistic forms.

What German worker does not know this one or that photomontage by Heartfield—the "Cabbagetop," the elegant gentleman with the stand-up collar and tiger head, the war hyena with the order "Pour le Profit," or the arrest of Karl Marx by the former Berlin chief of police Dorgiebel? All these pictures have appeared in *AIZ,* illustrated weekly of the German proletariat.

Heartfield won great merit also as a pioneer of his own kind of book-jackets for the "Malik" publishing house, as a designer of very effective revolutionary pamphlet covers, as scenic artist, etc.

With the simplest methods, he was able to produce tremendous effects. This "simplicity" was always an artistic richness, it was never meager in idea or artistic quality.

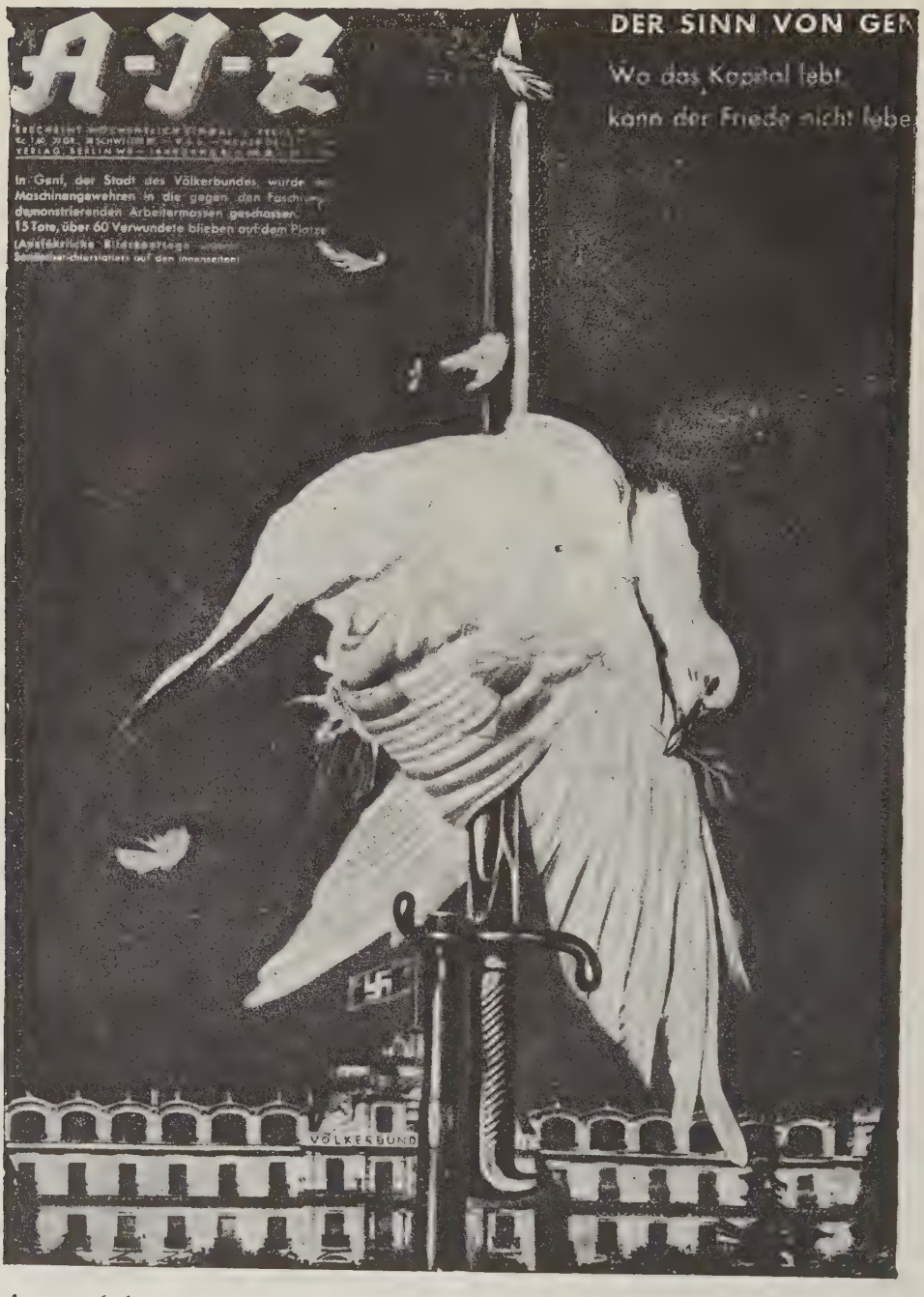
Could there be a more appropriate emblem of fascism than his well-known swastika, a "simple" mounting made of executioners' axes, of "blood and iron?"

Or the gifted revelation of social-fascist pacifism as shown in "Dalliance of a Pacifist Angel." The "winged" social-democrat Breitscheid, fixes a cannon with a dog muzzie and says: "Now go on, shoot."

Heartfield's satirical photomontage is always born of authentic political incidents and these are shown with truthful reality. There are few satirical artists today whose work can vie with the political aptness, the abundancy of theme, and the deep content of Heartfield's photomontage. In his art, he continues the creative inheritance of such great satirical artists as Hogarth, Goya and Daumier.

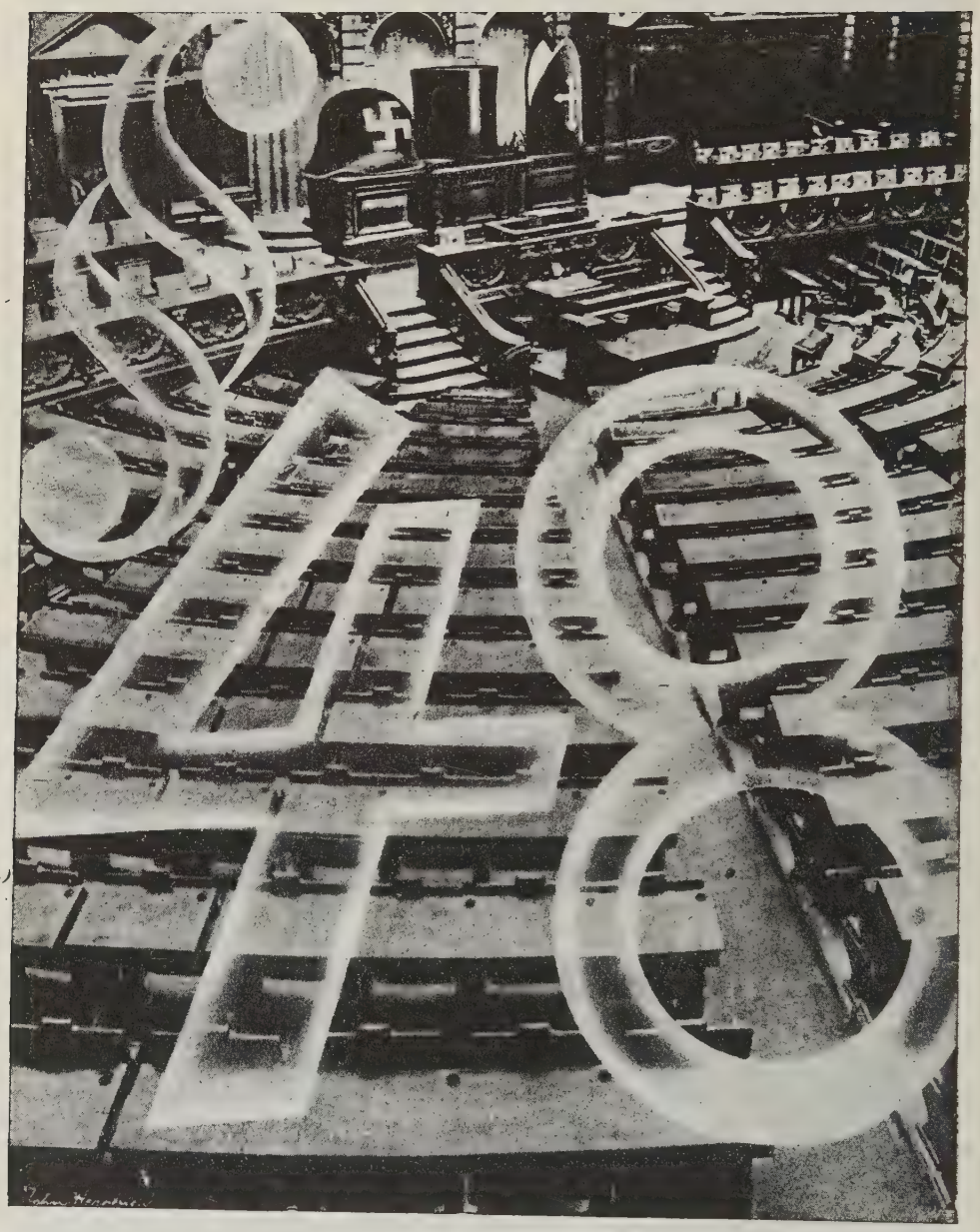
What is most exceptional in Heartfield's work is that he has raised photography to a particularly high artistic level.

# PHOTOMONTAGE BY JOHN HEARTFIELD




*A cover design for the German revolutionary pictorial weekly A. I. Z.*


*Unity of Black and White*



*The German Parliament meets*

*"We will build a new life!" — on the 15th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution*

**Ilya Selvinski**

# On Soviet Poetry

## *A Soviet Poet Writes on the Function of Lyric Verse*

Each stage of the revolution perceptibly alters the psychology of the Soviet Country. During the first Five-Year Plan the hero of our socialist country had to be drawn in charcoal, but now he must be done in color.

The people of the second Five-Year Plan are before all else people of a profound poetic timbre, and this accounts for the revival of the poetic in literature.

There was a time when the foremost poets of our country rejected lyricism, regarding it as a superfluous element in the iron arsenal of revolution. Lyric poetry was replaced on the one hand by propaganda verse which brought fables, slogans, satires, oratory and songs for the masses into the foreground; and on the other by epic poetry and drama showing man in action.

Yessenin's attempts to keeep the lyric alive in Soviet literature resulted in its falling still more into disrepute for he regarded his lyricism as an expression of the centrifugal rather than centripetal forces of his nature and it was just these forces that he cultivated.

This was at that period after October when the proletariat was confirming its hegemony in the field of politics and economics. The revolution has now started confirming its priority in the field of culture. The first Five-Year Plan was a period of industry and engineering, the second Five-Year Plan is a period of science and art as well.

That, however, is only incidental. The main point is that just as militant communism made it its aim to press different individualities into a powerful collective of champions of the revolution, the task of the second Five-Year Plan is to deepen and emotionally enrich the personality of the worker for socialism in a collective which has already been brought into being.

Thus socialist lyricism has the mission of contributing to the vital tone of the Soviet man and of making him clean sounding like a noble instrument.

Some poets are inclined to conclude from this that modern lyric poetry has nothing else to do but sing the delights of living in the Soviet land. It is time that lyricism colored by optimism is most characteristic of the poetry of the victorious proletariat. But optimism should not be at all costs, it should not be artificial.

### *In the Age of Bronze*

Socialism in its initial stage has not destroyed in us all that was associated with pre-revolutionary life. This is true not only of those whose characters were formed in the main before the revolution, but also of those who grew up after October, and do not remember the old regime. Philosophies do not slavishly follow the chronological order of events and the Party is well aware of this when it calls upon us to eradicate the remnants of capitalism in our psychology.

Consequently those poets are wrong who when they have split up their feelings into new and old and delivered the former in rhythmic form, make out that they have no others.

This, though at first sight it might appear the very acme of revolutionary tactics results, in actual fact, in imperfect art. The poet is living as it were only half of his real self.

On the other hand the genuine organic lyric of our time knows both joy and sorrow, great experiences and petty vexations.

We are all to a greater or lesser extent infected with the past, and we must bring out this past side by side with the present. Expressed in poetry and subjugated it will soon fade out and become less and less capable of recividism. The fear of bringing any unhealthy feeling to the surface, the fear of bringing them under the socialist dissecting knife is itself an unhealthy feeling.

Mayakovski came to grief because in his own words he "trod on the throat of his own muse." We do not want to follow his example. We are men and women of bronze. The tenacious pewter of all that is weak and yielding and compromising in us is alloyed with the bright copper of the new socialist sensibility.

It is in this that the modern peculiarity of people of the revolution lies, and the task of poetry is to express as fully as possible without suppressing anything of the feel-

**FREE THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS!** *Fresco by MURRAY HANTMAN*

*One of a group of frescoes that were destroyed by Captain Wm. F. Hynes and his notorious "Red Squad" in the attack on Communists in Los Angeles, California*

ings of such persons in their approach along the path of contradiction towards socialism.

One should not imagine, however, that the renascence of lyricism in our days is anything radically new in Soviet poetry. At varying degrees of intensity the poetic has pulsated in the characters and imagery of all great revolutionary literature and drama. The measure of this pulse-beat has been the acts of the hero. His inner life was not sufficiently laid bare. it came to light only in lyrical degressions and dramatic monologues.

Poetry was thus like a subterranean river only occasionally appearing at the surface.

As time has gone on the feelings of Soviet men and women have become so complex and so enriched that they can no longer be confined to a single section of literature but demand independent admittance into the whole realm of art.

This fact is in itself of historical significance.

# LETTERS FROM WRITERS

## NORWAY

*The Case of Axel Sandemose*

A cardinal problem is now occupying the attention of the Norwegian Writers Association: Is the Association to safeguard the interests of literature and writers, or turn into an auxiliary organ of the Ministry of Finance to collect tax delinquencies.

The question of the nature of the Writers Association, who have as their slogan "preserve the sacred legacies of Ibsen, Bjornson and Kielland," arose in connection with the case of Axel Sandemose—a case very characteristic of modern customs among the bourgeois brotherhood of writers in Norway. Axel Sandemose was awarded a government stipend of 3,000 croners, but the management, Johann Boyer, protested against the decision of the literary council and has refused to sanction the award. Just think of it—Axel Sandemose, who has been living in Norway since his birth, has never thought of changing his Danish citizenship inherited from his father to Norwegian and, what is the main thing, has not paid his taxes for the past year.

"Paragraph one of our constitution," argued Johann Bojer, "says that the aim of our Association is the development of Norwegian literature and protect the interests of Norwegian writers. Can one be a Norwegian writer without being a citizen of Norway? No. 'It is not enough to live in our country and write in the Norse tongue." Bojer has entrenched himself even more firmly behind his reading of the first paragraph after the lawyer of the management ruled that "from a legal point of view the high calling of a Norwegian writer can only be claimed by one who is a citizen of Norway and . . . pays government taxes."

The leadership of the Norwegian Association of Writers have long become a pillar of reaction. In 1927 the chairman of the Association, Arnulf Ewerlanz, was compelled to retire because the reactionary circles of writers could not forgive him his trip to the USSR on the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The chairman elected to succeed him was the candidly fascist Ronald Fanzen. The present chairman of the Association, Johann Bojer, has managed to write an almost "revolutionary" novel *Northern Mountains* and the reactionary balderdash *Fane,* to become chairman of the Franco-Norwegian Society of Cultural Relations and demand "the safeguarding of Norwegian literature from being swamped by German and Jewish immigrants," to organize a joint stock company for the movie presentation of his works, and to be a profitable chairman of a society for collecting funds for the building of a "new theatre." From all this one can understand why Bojer is so concerned about "safeguarding Norwegian literature" when the council awards a literary stipend to a writer who doesn't pay his taxes in time and is, besides, the owner of a Danish passport.

*Trouble Ahead!*

Bojer has expelled A. Sandemose from the Norwegian Association for being a "Dane," pointing out to the literary council that it has no reason to spend the Norwegian tax payer's money on a Dane, the more so, since he has his stories printed in the Sunday supplements of the *Arbeiterbladet.*

A profound intellectual crisis is undermining the Scandinavian writers. Only during the past year, we had a bitter polemic in Swedish literary circles, on the question of such a demonstrative action of the Swedish Academy as the award of the Nobel prize for 1933 to the white guard I. Bunin.

A general meeting of writers called by the management, in connection with the action of the "group of 17," expressed "general confidence" in the management of the Association by a vote of 23 to 21. This "victory" was achieved by the management (seven in all) itself voting in its own favor and by promising some of the writers intercession so they will receive government subsidies. On the question of Sandemose, however, even with the seven votes of the management, the meeting by a vote of 27 against 19 carried a motion to censure the management.

The management of the Association has remained "in power." It has the formal confidence of a "majority" of the Association. The "group of 17" is too amorphous, too varied in its constituent elements, to make the logical organizational inferences from the scandalous "Case of A. Sandemose."

Official Norwegian literature, represented as it is by the reactionary leadership of the Writers Association, fully deserves the disdainful attitude to it so aptly expressed in *Hunger* and other works of Knut Hamsun.

*M. MULLENRODE*

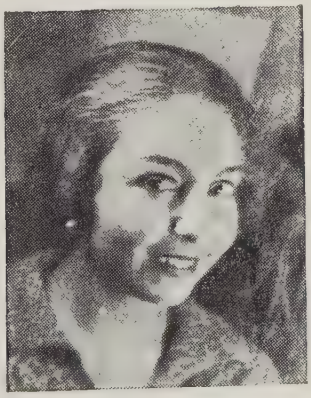
## SPAIN

*Spain Sings Revolutionary Songs*

The first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in Moscow had come to a close. For two weeks the most prominent figures in Soviet literature appeared on the tribune before us. We heard M. Gorki, B. Pasternak, Alexei Tolstoi, I. Ehrenburg, Vsevolod Ivanov and many others. We also heard the voices, not yet of full strength, of Soviet literary youth.

The Daghestan folk-poet, Suleiman Stalski, sang for us his remarkable song dedicated to the Congress. The very old man, dressed in a grey Circassian coat, came up to the tribune with majestic solemnity. He emphasized his song with brief, inspired gesture. And in the song itself we heard the names of Lenin, Stalin, Gorki. . . Suleiman Stalski sang of the great October Revolution which transformed the narrow mountain trails of his homeland into broad highways; and the untouched virgin soil into blossoming meadows and gardens.

Poetry played an important role at the Congress. No wonder B. Pasternak, in his short speech, pointed out that genuine Soviet poetry was represented at the Congress not only by the poets but also by all those stirring delegations which passed down the hall to march music asking the writers for new books depicting the awakening of city and village in the colossal process of Socialist construction and showing the life of its new heroes. Genuine poetry knocked at the doors of the hall with great power, calling the future poet to life—the poet of the perfect, classless society—kolkhoz farmers bringing sheaves of wheat to M. Gorki, aviators with models of aeroplanes, seamen with tiny cutters in their arms, the unconquerable heroes of the Red Army, small but fully conscious and disciplined Pioneers of this radiant country—all spoke of the new poetic life whose hot blood beats in the veins of the great Soviet people.



*Maria Teresa Leon, Spanish writer*

*And in Spain*

In Spain, the leading role in developing its still young revolutionary literature belongs to poetry. Spain is the classical country of folk-song. Mountain chains divide it into several regions, each one of which has its own songs. A misty breath of dreaminess surrounds the songs of Galicia, stern pathos breathes in the popular verse of Castille, a rainbow of spiritual color glorifies the refrains of Andalusia, so varied in the poetic and musical gamut. . . But no matter where and about what the Spaniard may sing, his song always sounds full of age-old grief, age-old suffering. It is Spanish folk songs that, due to a number of historical causes, were destined to retain the traditions of the Spanish people in their purest form. In this respect, the great modern Spanish poet, Juan Ramon Jimenez, is entirely right when, in the concluding lines of his *Second Poetry Anthology* he says: "there is no national art in Spain, only national tradition in art."

Just now Spain is living through a period of sharp class battles. Since April 1931, when the monarchy was overthrown and was replaced by a bourgeois landowner republic calling itself, for no known reason, "Republic of Workers," Spain does not come out of a situation of ceaseless strikes, peasant occupations of landlord-lands and bloody repressions. Only two years ago the bourgeois landlord government burned peasants alive in the Andalusian village of Casas-Viejas, bringing to life again the horrors of the Inquisition. Not very long ago we witnessed the grand 24-hour strike of Spanish workers, for the first time realizing in practice the slogan of a "United Front," raised by the Spanish Communist Party—a strike which embraced the entire country. In this tense class struggle, poetry and song played a great creative role. The Spanish workers make their songs up in a new way now, putting into them the enthusiasm of class battles, and we, revolutionary writers of Spain, listen to their voices attentively. We reflect this in our work. What does the song of the Spanish worker, and in all justice, the song of the Spanish revolution, speak about? It is full of stormy indignation, in it one can hear the protest against oppression of the bourgeois landlord government, against the growth of the fascist movement in the country, against the danger of a new war. And we talk about the same things. It is in the union of the revolutionary poets of the Spanish intelligentsia with the revolutionary song of our people that, to

my mind, lies the correct solution of the question of the future of our poetry, presented to us by life.

*Worker and Intellectual*

The poetic powers of our people are extraordinarily great. The magazine *Octubre,* founded by us, contains numerous incontrovertible proofs of this in the form of letters and poems addressed to the editors. Among the things sent in there are not a few items bearing witness to the appearance of new, fresh talent of the people. Material is sent in from all corners of Spain and is evidence of the fact that the poetic process is equally strong in all regions.

Some of the young poets are extremely promising. For instance, one fourteen year old Renato Ibanez of Alicante, of a working class family (his brothers are stone masons.) He writes with much of the skill of a mature poet. Or the worker poet Rodrigo Fonesca of Barcelona; and many others. But the poetry of these young poets speaks not only of their own gifts, but of their endeavors to master the technique of poetry.

If we look attentively at Spanish revolutionary poetry today we can see two themes which occupy the center of attention: the struggle against fascism and the struggle against the danger of a new war. Everything that is written on these two themes spreads with extraordinary rapidity. One instance: "Hymn in Defense of Thaelmann" written by me in March of this year and set to music by the revolutionary composer, Villatoro, has been twice prohibited by the bourgeois-landlord government, and in spite of that it is being sung by practically all toiling Spain. We know of instances when peasants of Castille and Andalusia, fishermen of Malaga, at the end of their day's toil have gathered about readers to hear our revolutionary poems against fascism and war and have answered us by making up their own songs.

But there is one more thing that stirs the heart of both Spanish poet and reader, the Soviet Union. These three themes are the essence of revolutionary Spanish poetry, today.

Having returned from the Congress I took along with me the conviction that Spanish revolutionary poetry is now on the right road. It draws its strength from the people. We also have our Suleiman Stalskis who are the carriers of the perfected technique of the ancient Spanish romances and the riches of our revolutionary folklore. And we, poets of the Spanish revolutionary intelligentsia, bring them the experience of our poetic researches. In this union there is the assurance of our victory—of the triumph of our revolutionary poetry over the shabby artistic forms of the perishing capitalist world.

*RAFAEL ALBERTI*

*Madrid, Spain*

# CHRONICLE

## USSR

*More and More Books*

Soviet presses are humming in the great campaign to supply Soviet workers with about 35 million copies of books planned for 1935.

Russian editions of modern world literature are scheduled including works of Pearl Buck, Dos Passos, Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Michael Gold, Ernest Hemingway, Aldington, Britton and Wells. Among the translations from German and French are books by Andre Gide, Romain Rolland, Malraux, Seghers, and Feuchtwanger. The publication of these works accounts for 13 per cent of the titles to be issued by Goslitizdat (State Literary Publishing House).

Soviet classics will be issued in increasing numbers. An edition of 300,000 copies of the works of Pushkin will be printed.

Foreign classics also form a large part of the printing program.

To meet the great demand for modern poetry, fiction and drama, Soviet Writer Publishing House and Goslitizdat include in their plans new editions of the popular Soviet writers Sholokhov, Alexei Tolstoi, Serafimovich, Babel, Gladkov, Panfyorov and many others. The long list of works of poets shows that although poetry may be lagging in comparison with prose, it can, nevertheless, boast considerable development. It is sufficient to say that in 1935 the bookstores will be able to meet all demands for Mayakovski, Bezymenski, Demyan Bedny, Inber, Pasternak and others.

The great demand for fiction is equaled by the thirst for knowledge in every field. To meet this demand for scientific, economic and political literature is the difficult task of Sotsekgiz (Sociology and Economics Publishing House )and GTTI (State Technical and Theoretical Publishing House). The scope of the work of Sotsekgiz may be seen from the fact that last year it published 123 titles totaling about two million copies.

*Literature of the National Minorities*

In the literary history of the peoples of the RSFSR, the establishment of Soviet rule will always stand out as a milestone. For some of these peoples, like the Kirghiz, it was indeed their first literary milestone, for prior to the Revolution they had no written language of their own. For others, like the Kazaks and the Bashkirians, the setting up of soviets with the subsequent onslaught on illiteracy gave the first vital impulse to a literature of the people.

The most flourishing is undoubtedly Jewish literature, which has a number of considerable poets like Pfeffer, Markisch and Kvitko. Although Jewish prose is on a somewhat lower level, it has a first class novelist in David Bergelson.

Prior to 1917, the output of Kazak writers was scanty in the extreme, while during the first years after the Revolution conditions were too unsettled and illiteracy was still too widespread for any serious attention to be paid to literature.

In 1921, 10 books of poetry and fiction were published but in 1934 there were 197.

*A Blood Test: "I knew he didn't have Aryan blood!" — A cartoon by Liss, Soviet artist*

*Scene from the successful Soviet play* Aristocrats, *based on the novel on the Baltic-White Sea Canal by Pogodin, which appeared in* International Literature *last year. The production was given at the Realistic Theater, in Moscow, Okhlopkov directing*

*Classics and Poetry*

A noteworthy feature of Kazak letters—as of all national minority literatures— is the wide interest which is being evinced in translations. Works by Shakespeare, de Maupassant, Pushkin, Gogol and Tolstoi have been issued by the Kazak literary publishing house. Of contemporary Russian authors, Gorki, Sholokhov and Fadeyev are warm favorites. Editions, both of translated works and books by native authors, often run into tens of thousands.

Among the Kalmyks, Chechens and Kirghiz, peoples whose literatures emerged after the October Revolution, it is only natural to find the place of honor belonging to the poets, rather than the prose writers. For the expression of the simpler of the new emotions, like sheer joy in national emancipation, the rhythms and word painting of their oral folklore in verse seem to be quite adequate.

*Anglo-Russian Literary Connections*

Over 150 unpublished letters of Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Walter Scott, Lord Byron and other famous British authors have been discovered in Leningrad by Professor I. Alexeyev of the Institute of Sciences. This will greatly contribute to the interest of the second volume of his *Essays on the History of Anglo-Russian Literary Relations* on which he is now working.

The first volume of this work, which will be released this year by the publishing house of the academy, covers the period from the 11th century to Peter the Great and contains a number of interesting deductions based on the study of a wealth of Russian and Anglo-Saxon material.

Alexeyev believes that relations between Russia and England began not in the 16th century when Richard Chancellor "discovered" Muscovy and reached the court of Ivan the Terrible, as was formerly believed, but 500 or 600 years earlier.

*Those Who Built Stalingrad*

An interesting volume issued in English by the Co-operative Publishing Society for Foreign Workers in the USSR is the book *Those Who Built Stalingrad.*

The volume has a forward by Maxim Gorki who writes that "Without overpraising, I say of this book with assurance: One of the most interesting and novel books which have appeared in our literature for the last fifteen years." These stories are told by the workers themselves. Gorki found

particularly interesting the story of "The Siberian Tregubenkov, a blacksmith like his father, the American Louie Gross, the Mordvin tribeswoman Mémé Kéréme, the manager of the plant, Vassili Ivanov, the son of a brassfounder and grandson of a feudal serf," and others, including "the jovial American Rollo Ward."

Each story is preceded by a portrait study by that excellent Soviet artist N. Avvokumov, with illustrations done by the American artist Fred Ellis.

*New Trend in Films*

One of the outstanding trends in Soviet film art today is the swift development of the genre picture—comedy, musical comedy, kino-buffonade and now the adventure film packed with excitement, imagination and vitality.

The first Soviet adventure film based on a natural background is now being completed. It is the *Golden Lake* with a scenario by the well-known Soviet novelist Perigudov, directed by Sneiderov who has made travel pictures from Moscow to Peiping, in Canton, Shanghai, the Pamirs, Tyan Shan, Arabia and Japan, and, received the Order of the Red Banner for his work as producer on the famous "Sibiryakov" passage through the Northern Sea Route to the Orient.

Gold seeking—the backbone of a thousand American thrillers—is the theme. It is the story of a struggle between a Soviet prospecting group and a gang of kulak outlaws.

The film took four months to make.

## CHINA

James Henle, president of the Vanguard Press of New York, publishing the books of Agnes Smedley, has issued to the American press a detailed statement by the well known author in which she points to the danger to her life since her return to Shanghai. Agnes Smedley's statement reads:

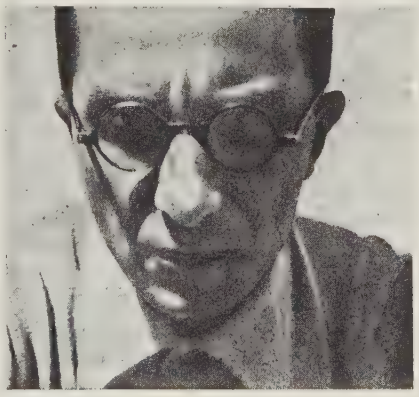
"A few days ago I was warned by Chinese friends with close Kuomintang connections that there is much discussion going on in Kuomintang circles about getting rid of me. The question of shooting me was discussed by a small group of men, among them a Chinese official newspaper and magazine editor. I would pay no attention to such discussions were it not that so many Chinese have been murdered at official instigation and orders.

"Close upon the heels of the warning there began a press campaign against me here in Shanghai; and undoubtedly it has extended to other cities, though I have not had time to receive the papers from other than Shanghai. The first press story against me appeared in the official Japanese daily of Shanghai, the Shanghai *Nichi Nichi*. The official Chinese press and news agencies copied this report, or perhaps were given it in person by the *Nichi Nichi;* and, since the Japanese and Chinese officials work hand in hand, they spread the campaign. The paper that took it up first was the *Central Chinese Daily News* of Shanghai, the official mouthpiece of Wang Ching-wei, political head of the Nanking Government; hand in hand with it the *Morning Post*, Chiang Kai-shek's personal propaganda organ—the organ of the 'Blue Shirts,' or fascists of Shanghai—printed the story."

The accusations made against Agnes Smedley were to the effect that she was active in Shanghai during the invasion by the Japanese; that she was a spy; that she was a member of the Anti-Imperialist League; that she was in India after the world war; that she met Lenin and Trotsky; and many other false statements. The American writer says:

"Of all these reports, but two statements are correct: one is that I recently returned to Shanghai and was in the Shanghai Sanitarium until a few days ago; the second is that I am a friend of Mrs. Sun Yat-sen—I have that honor.

"Of course, the reason for the press campaign against me and for the discussions about the possibility of shooting me is the publication of my two latest books in America—*Chinese Destinies* and *China's Red Army Marches*. Both books expose the situation in China. In a way it is a compliment that my books are taken so seriously that the Kuomintang fascists consider I am a danger to them. They are particularly furious because my books appeared abroad, chiefly in America, where they try to pose as a modern nationalist government instead



*Paul Nizan, French novelist, author of* Antoine Bloye *and other books, whose work appears in this issue of* International Literature

*A scene from the Soviet movie* Love and Hate

of what they are—the dirty running dogs of the foreign imperialist powers, and the butchers of the Chinese people."

## USA

*American Writers in Action*

Preceding the American Writers Congress of May 1, discussions on their problems were held at various meetings and in the press. The critic Granville Hicks, author of *The Great Tradition*; Edwin Seaver, author of the new novel *Between the Hammer and the Anvil;* the poet Horace Gregory, author of *Chelsea Rooming House* and other volumes of verse and prose; and many others took part in this discussion.

Michael Gold, author of *Jews Without Money* raised the question of both virtues and shortcomings in the progress of American writers. In regard to an attitude still prevailing in the American revolutionary movement he wrote:

"But many of our advanced workers still have a passive attitude toward our own writing. For years, in our movement, as I can myself testify, the writer was regarded as a sort of Bohemian hanger-on, a kind of loafer whom every organizer itched to put to work at something more useful.

"This attitude, it is true, has changed, but not enough of our people have reached the positive attitude of a Tony Minerich, who now edits the *Coal Digger* in Pittsburgh.

"This splendid miner and union organizer, when in New York recently, organized a group of writers, and fired them with the idea of coming down into the coalfields, and writing a series of pamphlets for the coal diggers. Tony Minerich understands the great importance of such work, and the value of skilled writers in presenting a mirror to the workers in which they can see clearly the facts of their own lives.

"How many of our organizers, have reached this point, where they know how, or even care to, employ those valuable allies, the writers, in the sphere of mass-agitation?"

Michael Gold also points out that writers can take part even in fields outside of their immediate craft. He writes:

"The best large meeting we have had in New York recently was the great Lenin Memorial meeting at Madison Square Garden. Some 22,000 persons were there, the meeting began at 8 and ended at 10:30. Everything ran by the clock, and there was time for everything, including a revolutionary pageant. Scores of letters came into the *Daily Worker* congratulating the Party on this model meeting.

"Well, I can tell the inside story of the Madison Square model meeting. It was managed by two writers, two men trained in stage technique, Albert Maltz and Paul Peters, author of that stirring revolutionary play, *Stevedore*.

"It was they who held the watch on the speakers and the chairman, and made the whole vast meeting click like a first-rate play."

The participation of American writers in the direct struggle of workers goes further. A group of novelists, playwrights and critics took part in a demonstration to bring wider attention to the conditions of the underpaid workers in two large New York clothing stores. In the group were the novelists Nathaniel West, James T. Farrell, Edward Newhouse, Leane Zugsmith, Edward Dahlberg, Herbert Kline (editor of the growing *New Theatre*) and the critic and editor, Oakley Johnson.

The writers were ridden down by mounted police. Edward Newhouse (author of *You Can't Sleep Here*) was clubbed. At the police station James T. Farrell (*Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*) was told by the police (mostly Irish) that they could not understand how a "good Irishman" could be implicated in such affairs.

This action of the writers, their arrests, and the attention paid to the affair by the press proved to be a great aid to the workers of these establishments.

*New Books*

While these writers are active in the daily struggles of the workers, they continue their literary activity. Publishing lists for this spring include their novels: *A World to Win* by Jack Conroy; *Between the Hammer and the Anvil* by Edwin Seaver, now editor of *Soviet Russia Today; Judgement Day* by James T. Farrell; *Somebody In Boots* by Nelson Algren; *Puzzled America* (sketches) by Sherwood Anderson; and others. Two English poets who have been receiving considerable attention in the American press will be seen in the volumes *Vienna*, by Stephen Spender and *The Poetry of C. Day Lewis.*

*Non-Fiction*

Among the books of non-fiction are *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis* by John Strachey (whose article "Fascism and Literature" in *International Literature* No. 4, 1934 has appeared in book form under the title *Literature and Dialectical Materialism); An American Testament* by Joseph Freeman; *America Faces the Barricades* by John L. Spivak; *The Illusion of Immortality* by Corliss Lamont. Three books


*Jacket design by Fred Ellis, American artist, for a new volume issued in Moscow in English by the Co-operative Publishing Society for Foreign Workers in the USSR*

on the Soviet Union are included: *Dawn Over Samarkand* by Joshua Kunitz; *Soviet Journey* by Louis Fischer; and *I Change Worlds* by Anna Louise Strong. A volume *Marx On Art and Literature* is also being prepared for early publication.

*Publications*

*The Anvil*, now jointly edited by Jack Conroy and Walter Snow, both of whom have contributed to *International Literature*, appears in new dress and with an imposing number of contributions in its March-April number.

There are short stories by Erskine Caldwell (whose new book *Journeyman* has just appeared); by Jack Conroy; Saul Levitt; Josephine Johnson, (author of the popular novel *Now in November*; Louis Zara; H. H. Lewis and others.

An announcement in this issue advises of plans for an increase in the size of the magazine and of a continued growth in circulation of the "pioneer American proletarian fiction magazine."

*Malcolm Cowley on American Literature*

The pertinent criticism of Malcolm Cowley, literary editor of the *New Republic*

*Scene from* Doctor Mamlock *the play by Friedrich Wolf, noted German revolutionary playwright, as it was produced at the Schauspielhaus, Zurich, Switzerland*

continues to attract attention. Granville Hicks, in *The New Masses,* pointed out some months ago that this criticism is the best appearing in any publication outside of the revolutionary movement.

In a recent issue ("A Letter to England") Cowley reviews the development of American literature since 1900. It is a keen analysis concluding:

"There is the fact, in any case, that many of the talented writers who have appeared since 1930—Erskine Caldwell, Jack Conroy, Robert Cantwell, William Saroyan, James Farrel, Grace Lumpkin, Albert Halper and others—either come from what we have learned to call the proletariat or else have allied themselves with it by writing about strikes from the standpoint of the strikers.

"And so the last thirty years of American literature make such a neat pattern that I hesitate to define it, out of an habitual distrust for neat patterns and a consciousness of the thousand and one exceptions that distort them. First there were the upper-class writers, then the middle-class writers, and now, since the depression, there are the proletarian writers, let alone those of poetry and criticism. First there was the English influence, then the Continental influence, mostly French, with a touch of German, and now.... It can scarcely be said that the new foreign influence is Russian so far as technique is concerned. There is no doubt, however, that many of the younger novelists and poets are being inspired by the world revolutionary movement, that political ideas play a large part in their writings, and that their politics are those of Lenin rather than T. S. Eliot, let us say, or Ramsay MacDonald.

### *About Soviet Russia*

*The New Masses* steadily continues to grow in circulation and influence. Its articles on foreign conditions, literature and art are equally of interest.

In February three articles on the Soviet Union were especially of note. The First "A Prison in Russia" by Lester Cohen told the story of a visit the author made to a penal colony near Moscow. Lester Cohen, author of *Sweepings* and other novels, and scenario writer for the past few years, visited the Soviet Union in 1934. The vivid illustrations for the article were by Phil Bard, well known revolutionary artist.

The second article, "Aspects of Soviet Art," was by the artist and writer, Louis Lozowick. It reviews the history of Soviet art since the Revolution and concludes:

"The October revolution not only furnished the artist new themes—it gave him a new social status; it provided him with

economic security and offered him greater opportunities for the exercise of his talent; it eleminated the private speculator and brought the artists work before a new million-strong audience concerned with the same interests as the artist himself.

"His activity like the activity of other workers, physical and mental, is devoted to the creation of a new better world.

"He is intent on communicating in adequate form his tremendously varied experience.

"If art has ever had a nobler motive, history does not record it."

The third article "Minority People in Two Worlds" by Langston Hughes, noted poet and novelist, author of the recent collection of short stories *The Ways of White Folks,* compares the status of the Negro in the United States with that of the national minorities of Soviet Central Asia. It is a moving and convincing ac count of what the author has seen in both sections of the world.

### *A Workers' Museum*

Commonwealth College, a labor institution at Mena, Arkansas has begun the organization of a Workers' Museum and is receiving response from all sections of the country. The press has taken note of it and writers from Michael Gold on the extreme Left to H. L. Mencken on the extreme Right have been assisting in the project.

The *Commonwealth College Fortnightly* says:

"The whole radical press has helped advertise the fact that we want bigger and better exhibits and they have been flowing in. Not only radicals, but the cap press as well has fallen for the building of a museum to show its own decay.

"Already we are getting exhibits from Paris and London and soon will be exchanging duplicate tear-gas bombs, police black-jacks used in strikes, souvenirs of the Unemployment Congresses, Ku Klux Klan diplomas and the like, with class-conscious museums of Leningrad and Moscow. Nancy Cunard sends relics of Scottsboro and a Stavisky handkerchief from the Rue de la Paix, saying: 'Our aristocracy over here is just as collapsed as yours.' John Rodker, British author and representative of Preslit, contributed contrasting souvenirs of desperate slum poverty and the snooty Duke of Kent wedding."

"Other workers' museums will be started here. Already other radical organizations are asking us to help them in particularized lines."

*Another scene from the Swiss production of* Doctor Mamlock *by Friedrich Wolf*

Bob Brown, poet and novelist now residing at Commonwealth College, is a guiding spirit in this work.

### *Eisler in America*

Hans Eisler, famous German composer of *Comintern* and other songs now being sung by workers all over the world, began a tour of the United States at the end of February in the interests of the victims, of Hitler Fascism and orphaned children of these victims, for whom children's homes are being established in several European cities.

All compositions of his have been banned by the Hitler regime.

### *Soviet Music Scores a Triumph*

Writing in the American *Daily Worker,* Sergei Radamsky, well known singer, writes about the great success achieved by the American presentation of Shostakovich's world known opera:

"The production of *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk (Katerina Ismailova)* by Dimitri Shostakovich, at the Metropolitan Opera

*Albert Halper, prominent young American writer, author of* The Foundry *and other novels*

House on February 5 by the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra was a triumph for the composer and Soviet music in general. The large opera house was filled to capacity as it has been few times during the current season. The enthusiasm with which the opera was received, the outbursts of laughter at the satirical situations and the spell bound attention at the dramatic moments, the vociferous applause after the two musical interludes in the first and third acts was a triumph which gladdened the hearts of all those who love superb theatre and music."

The conservative music critics however did not forget the class aspects of all this. Carl Sands, reviewing the reviews in the bourgeois press writes:

"Only one thing remained to convince us that our (on the whole) favorable judgments of *Lady Macbeth* were correct. This one thing was an unfavorable judgment on the part of New York's old guard of music reviewers—Gilman of the *Herald-Tribune*, Henderson of the *Sun* and Downes of the *Times*. But they have come through laughably naive, scurrilous and superficial, true to type as usual.

"Gilman confessed at once that the 'work had its moments.' But reading on we learned to our intense relief that the moments were mostly 'melodrama of a juvenile sort.' 'Musical barrenness,' 'imaginative indigence,' 'portentious emptiness,' 'very young for his age' 'yeasty and naive mind,' 'pretentious musical sterility,' 'premature impotence'—this from a man who has never shown that he has in his whole body as much musical taste or skill as Shostakovich has in his little finger! Better and better, to the final slam: 'It is barely possible that economic propaganda is not the perfect soil for merely musical ideas'. . ."

The writer goes on to the "criticism" of the second of the old die-hard critics:

"Beside the shameless phrase-mongering of Gilman, the more judicious Henderson is pale reading. A few gems must not be left unquoted. We learn that it is in the modernistic (!) vein, dealing with undisciplined persons of a low grade whose passions are open and elemental.' (In other words, typical opera characters!) The music is 'free and unconventional;' the score is 'filled with rhythmic force and insistence,' 'rich in orchestral devices,' and shows 'unquestionable skill in the construction of theatrical effects.' 'The transitions from moments of melodic charm to others of crass ugliness and even violence serve to administer shocks to the hearer and keep him stirred up, if not delighted.' But in spite of this (how it can be is not clear), 'there did not seem to be any musical ideas of great importance in the opera."

But the prize rant of the bourgeois critics was left for the newspaper that prints "all the news fit to print."

"As to Downes of the *Times*, it is in his 'review' that the absolute low-water mark of critical incompetence is reached.

"Says Mr. Downes: 'It was time for Mr. Shostakovich to strut his hour. His opera cannot last, for it has no real music to make it last.' It is a 'flimsy, lurid and callow score.' Compare Stravinsky and Shostakovich—'the one is the extreme of a decadent and, in his case, superimposed culture; the other is of the dire, the squalor, the "ideology," the satire, the blazing resentments of the last revolution.'

"'It is a revolution that would fling not only the earth, but manure in the face of the past.'

"It is not just the music that made these reviewers write as they did!"

### *The Revolutionary Theatre*

The workers theatre is growing rapidly in America. The plays of Malz, Sklar, Wexley, Peters and others are only the first in a continuously growing number. The

latest is *Waiting for Lefty*, based on a taxi strike in New York.

About the first performance, Stanley Burnshaw writes in the *New Masses:*

"When the curtain rang down on the first performance of Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* the audience cheered, whistled and screamed with applause. One week later when the same actors had repeated their performance, the Fifth Avenue Theatre, packed to capacity with hundreds of standees, fairly burst with a thunder of hand-claps and shouting. A valuable new play has been written into the history of the American revolutionary theatre, a dramatic work with roots coiled about an actual event in the life of the New York proletariat. (It was Joe Gilbert, Secretary of the Taxi Drivers' Union, who emerged from the wings to say that just such a meeting as Odets presents took place last March when members of the Union met in the Bronx and overwhelmingly voted to strike.)"

In the last scene:

"In an electric appeal to the meeting the leading character demands that it vote to strike, and the play ends with the whole house—actors and audience—yelling "Strike, strike, strike!"

"The terrific emotional drive of the play as a unit is more than the total effectiveness of the eight scenes."

"One basic reason for the impressiveness of *Waiting for Lefty* is the idiom used throughout. The phrases are pungent, fresh, simple, mobile, the ringing speech of flesh and blood proletarians."

*Waiting for Lefty* has been printed in full in the February number of *New Theatre* and deserves serious consideration from revolutionary theatres in all countries.


*Cover of the new publication issued by the American Film and Photo League*

*The Artists*

The artists of Chicago conducted a fight against art censorship by officials of the Davis store. The management refused to give display to a painting by Gilbert Rocke, young revolutionary artist, after announcing an exhibition of all paintings rejected by the Chicago Art Institute.

The title of Rocke's entry was *May Day, 1932*. Following protests the management compromised by hanging the picture behind an exit sign. A protest meeting against the action of the store was held by the John Reed Club.

## IN THIS ISSUE

*Michael Zoshchenko*—is a widely known Soviet humorist. His stories and books have been reprinted in many countries.

*I Babel*—holds an important place among Soviet writers. He is best known for his stories of the civil war days and of the Red Army.

*Paul Nizan*—French revolutionary novelist and critic has contributed stories and articles to earlier issues of *International Literature*. He is author of the novel *Antoine Bloye* and is seen in this number in an excerpt from his latest work. He is an editor of *Commune*, organ of the AEAR in Paris.

*Sandor Gergel*—is a Hungarian novelist and short story writer. He has completed a new anti-war novel in which he relates his own experience of two years of complete blindness.

*Ben Field*—has completed a book on American farm life. He is a member of the New York John Reed Club and a contributor to the *New Masses, Partisan Review* and other publications.

*N. A. Andreyev*—late distinguished Soviet artist and sculptor devoted most of his time and talent from 1919 until his death in 1932 to a study of Lenin. An article about him, with reproductions of his sculpture, appeared in *International Literature* No. 1, 1935.

*Lloyd Ross*—is an Australian playwright. He has written and produced *The Second Meeting of the Soviets*, and two chronicle plays, *May Day Through the Ages* and *Labour Cavalcade* from which three choruses are included in this issue.

*M. Nechkina*—is a Soviet critic. She contributes frequently to leading journals.

*Walt Carmon*—an American in Moscow, is assistant editor of *International Literature*.

*Jacob Burck*—at the age of 28, one of the leading American political cartoonists, is staff artist for the New York *Daily Worker*. His volume of drawings *Hunger and Revolt* has just been issued.

*S. Ludkiewicz*—is a Polish writer and critic now living in Moscow.

*Karl Schmukle*—is an editor of the German edition of *International Literature*. He was formerly editor of the *Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung* issued in Moscow.

*Alfred Kurella*—close co-worker of Henri Barbusse, about whom he writes in this issue, is author of a volume on Italy under fascism, and other books.

*Alfred Durus*—is a German revolutionary art critic.

*John Heartfield*—now living in exile in Czechoslovakia, is an internationally known German revolutionary artist. His photomontage in leading European publications and his book jackets and frequent exhibits have earned him high rank in his particular field.

*Ilya Selvinski*—Soviet poet, is author of a number of volumes of verse. His prose and poetry appears frequently in the Soviet press.

*H. Mullenrode*—is a Norwegian journalist.

*Rafael Alberti*—is a well known Spanish poet. He attended the Soviet Writers Congress held in Moscow last year and has recently visited the United States.

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# C O N T E N T S

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*Editorial Assistant WALT CARMON*