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INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL
UNION OF REVOLUTIONARY WRITERS

№ 6

1935

Distributors in the USSR: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR Nikolskaya 7, Moscow. Distributors in Great Britain:—Martin Lawrence, Ltd., 33 Gt. James Street, London. W. C. I. Distributors in the U. S. A. International Publishers, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York, U. S. A.

Address all communications to Box 850, Moscow, USSR

Road-Builders *by ERNST NEUSCHUL*

V. Jelezniak

Tin Soldiers

A Soviet Short Story of Civil War Days

Petrograd. On the fences, wall, and columns the moist October wind is fluttering the corners of the latest dispatches that smell of fresh printers ink, and announce: "Our troops have vacated Gatchina."

I am fourteen. I am thin and pale and can hardly drag my legs after me from sheer weakness. I am positively feeble. Our miserable rations—an eighth of a pound of bread and a few mouldy potatoes—are by no means sufficient for my mother and myself. At school they gave us *Oblomov's Dream,* to read for homework. When I tried to read it, the book slipped out of my hand and I wanted to vomit. I made two attempts to read it and each time felt the sickness of a starved stomach rising to my throat.

Then I wept in a fury of indignation to think of Goncharov, the author, calmly painting a picture of universal gluttony. I was ashamed of my tears, but they would keep running down my cheeks. I flung the book under the table, wiped away my tears and lay face downwards on the couch.

The adjoining room is occupied by an engineer, Alexander Alexandrovich. He and his family are just sitting down to a meal. Today they are going to have tea with saccharine and bread. The engineer has received a loaf of bread in return for a design of his. It is a more valuable reward than any other.

A loaf of bread! Tea with saccharine! What does it matter if the tea has a brassy, dry taste, it is hot and sweet; and then there is bread, beautiful, crusty bread of which every single crumb smells sweet.

The engineer is a friend of ours. We have lived in the same flat for years. He occupies three rooms and so do we. Since the central heating apparatus has been out of order, we have begun to live in adjoining rooms, the smallest and warmest. We heat them with the iron stoves known as "bourgeois"—(probably because they look like stolid, fat, bourgeois women). The other four rooms are cold and deserted and unwelcoming these days. Dust lies thick on everything in them. The corners are festooned with cobwebs.

The engineer's twelve-year-old daugther, Irka, is a great friend of mine. We go to the same secondary school, only I am in Group Three and she is in Group One. Irka runs in to see us and brings me a mug of tea, a piece of bread, and a cigarette. I know that smoking is bad for me, but it deadens the hunger for now. The school commissar allows it. "From a pedagogical point of view it's bad," he says, "but what can we do? Smoke in the lavatories if you like." Irka is a nice little girl with a comical, flaxen pigtail. She is inclined to be sentimental and has a face like a fox-cub's muzzle. I am a little bit in love with her. Whenever I have had enough to eat we sit together on the couch and dream and kiss—"just like grown-ups" (as Irka puts it). She lays the things she has brought me on the table as near as possible to the glimmer of the tiny kerosene lamp. Something has gone wrong at the power station and very often the electric light does not burn. I get a sudden spasm of pain in my stomach and my throat seems full of saliva. I seize the bread and begin to eat it, washing it down with the hot tea.. Irka watches me sympathetically; the pity of a grown-up woman shines

in her eyes as she whispers: "Tomorrow morning I'll bring you another piece!" This means a great sacrifice on her part; she is depriving herself of half her share. I put my arm around her skinny shoulders and we sit down on the couch together.

"I love you very, very much," I tell her with conviction (my hunger is appeased now). I smoke my cigarette. "Wait till the Civil War is over, we'll go to the Caucasus for a holiday."

"Why?" she asks, overcome with feminine curiosity and the desire to hear something flattering about herself.

"Why?" I repeat vaguely. "Well, because it's necessary. I have a plan—I'll talk it over with you some day—it needs working out."

"There are wild mountaineers in the Caucasus," she whispers, pressing closer to me. "They wear silver mounted daggers and things and they're awfully brave."

"I wouldn't be afraid of them," there is profound scorn in my voice. "After all, they've nothing but brute force. I shall strike them with electricity—it's part of my plan."

"Strike them dead, you mean?" Irka is interested at once. She strokes my hand. She is struck by my heroism.

"Oh, not quite," I say magnanimously. "I thought of simply depriving them of the power to move for the time being . . . and then they'll come to see I'm not their enemy and we'll become friendly."

The room is growing colder.

"Lets's heat the 'bourgeois,' " Irka suggests.

I crawl under the table and haul out two huge volumes of the *Laws of the Russian Empire* inherited from my dead father, who was a lawyer. We have burnt ten volumes of them already. There are still twelve left. Two volumes and one leg of the kitchen table are sufficient for heating the stove once. The heavy binding makes a glorious blaze. It grows warmer in the room. I put on the kettle. Irka and I kiss each other, putting up our lips clumsily.

"We're just like real grown-up lovers!" says Irka, laughing delightedly.

Then Bobka Grekov, my schoolmate, comes in. He is two years older than me, a pock-marked, stockily built fellow. His voice is breaking and there is dark down on his upper slip, under his big nose. He hangs up his old cadet overcoat and his red-banded cap on a hook on the door. He is dressed in a black jacket cut like a sailor's only with red tabs and piping. It is his old school uniform that he is wearing out. Bobka and I got to know each other in September, 1918, when the old educational system—with its gymnasia Realschule cadet corps and women's institutes—was being revised. It was then that the first experiments in co-education were carried out. Into what had been the Princess Obolenski School for Girls—twenty-five cadets from the Tsar Alexander and Tsar Nicolas Cadet Schools, together with some of the boys from the Realschule and the Royal Humane Society's school, were introduced. To prevent this horde of young folks from doing anything reprehensible in the girls' school, Daniel Alexandrovich Abrossimov was appointed school commissar. He was a choleric, elderly teacher and social worker, who had suffered a good deal under the Tsarist government for his revolutionary sympathies. He was undoubtedly a very capable teacher and proved quite equal to shepherding this variegated flock. The signboard bearing the words "Girls' School," was taken down and "Secondary School No. 41" put in its place.

I became very friendly with Bobka Grekov; the first stage in our friend-

ship was marked by our tin soldiers. My contemporaries probably remember those soldiers. Before the Revolution they used to be sold in the neat straw boxes of the Nurenberg Toy Factory. A box containing twenty-five infantry or ten cavalry cost forty kopecks. Then there were the Russian made variety at fifteen kopecks a box of ten infantry and seven cavalry. The Nurenberg soldiers were much more elegant and wore uniforms of different regiments and even of different periods. There were knights, soldiers of Napoleon's time, Montenegrins, Englishmen, Guards, Moscow Musketeers with red coats and halberds, and so on. At the beginning of the war they were all the rage among the younger pupils in the military schools and high schools. I had a friend from the Tsar Alexander Military School, who became an engineer and died just this year. I remember that while the craze was on he collected about twenty thousand of these Nuremberg soldiers and when he set them all out, it was really a splendid sight.

Bobka Grekov won my heart by offering me his five hundred soldiers.

"I'm past the age for playing," he declared one day in the lavatory. It was in the interval between two lessons in mathematics. "You'd better take them." He was silent a moment and then added in a stern voice: "But I'll come and review them occasionally—and my Gurko (a battered old soldier on a battered, tailless horse) must remain the commander-in-chief of the whole united corps."

I had a favorite old soldier, too,—Murat, who had been in command of my eight hundred soldiers since the beginning of the war. This important addition to my forces, however, obliged me to send my faithful marshall into retirement. It was very painful for me to do it.

Both Bobka and I were fatherless.

Bobka's father, a cornet in an Orenburg Cossack regiment, had been killed in Galicia in 1915. His mother was living with an actor now, so Bobka generally came to spend the evenings with me, and sometimes stayed the night. During his five years in the military school he had acquired rude ways and bravado, under which he hid his good nature and his tender heart. He often risked a beating in the market for stealing potatoes which he always brought to us.

"Here you are," he would say to mother. "Here you are, Olga Constantinovna, I happened to get these from a man I know, a war profiteer in a small way," and he would look aside as he handed them over. Once in the winter when even water in a glass on the table turned to ice, Bobka dragged home to us a heavy wooden window shutter.

"Where did you get this?" asked my mother in delighted amazement. Bobka snuffled and said in his deep hoarse voice (he had caught cold):

"Oh, I just took it off a window in Eighth Rojdestvenski Street. We can't die of cold, can we, because someone wants shutters over their windows?"

Mother could not find it in her heart to scold Bobka for taking private property. It was really very cold and the *Laws of the Russian Empire* were only suitable for heating the stove in the autumn. In wintertime the "bourgeois" demanded something more solid.

Bobka smoked a great deal. He was not ashamed to pick up stubs from the pavements. And he was very fond of cards. It was a habit he had acquired in the cadet school—the passion for "Twenty-One," in the cadet school they had played for money, stamps, pens, and sometimes for punishments. "If you lose you're to get either a whack over the head or let me spit in your face three times." In the secondary school they played, unknown to the commissar, in the lavatories for cigarettes, bread and money. The latter

they made of bits of paper upon which they wrote the sum owing and their signatures. Afterwards these papers were counted up and paid for in cash.

Bobka sold his father's coat for two "Kerenski" notes and lost at cards. He got very excited: a whole tragedy could be read in his face. He began to hiccup when he put on his last fifty kopecks.

"F-f-fifty k-kopecks!" he stuttered. When he lost he left off playing and went upstairs to the Natural History room. There he committed a crime. He took one of the numerous jars of spirit in which snakes, frogs and lizards were floating about, poured the spirit into an empty jar, and poured water over the anatomical toad in the first jar. Next day he lost the spirit at a game with a lout named Vasska Blinnikov, who had been kept down another year in his class.

A fortnight later the toad decayed in the water—to the horror and indignation of our commissar.

The watchman was suspected. He swore he had nothing to do with it. Then Bobka strode into the commissar's study and declared:

"Daniel Alexandrovich! I was too cowardly to admit it before, but it was I who drank the spirit."

"Didn't it make you sick?" asked the commissar in amazement.

"No."

"Hm—hm—" was all the commissar could say. "Well, you can go out in the yard now and help to saw the firewood for the school."

So Bobka sawed and chopped till evening, when the grateful caretaker gave him two birch faggots, which he proudly carried home.

Such was Bobka.

Now he comes in and shakes hands with Irka. Then he says solemly: "Volya! I must have a serious talk with you!"

He emphasizes the word "must." Irka rises reluctantly from the couch and says in a slightly offended, sarcastic tone (she wants to sound like a grown-up):

"Excuse me, please. I had no idea I was intruding!"—and her naive little flaxen pigtail whisks around the closing door.

"She's very nice, but not just now," says Bobka in response to my compassionate glance. He begins to pace up and down the room. "Listen, Volya! Have you got a cigarette, by the way? You have? Oh, thanks," he smokes the remains of Irka's present with evident enjoyment. "You know what? Yudenich," he corrected himself—" General Yudenich is coming." He did not wait for my reply, he was evidently anxious to get something off his mind. "A lot of the cadets from the Pekov Cadet School have joined him .... Just now when I was going by the Summer Gardens, they were digging trenches—even women—there was one woman who couldn't have been less than sixty, honestly. Mamma's actor is trolling out *My Life for My Tsar,* by way of preparation, you know. Mamma's a good one, too; do you know what she asked me: where had I put my nice shoulder straps with the royal monogram . . . When I came out in Suvorov Street, I met some boys who actually had the cheek to put their tongues out at me and shout: 'Yah, your father's an officer! Where are your shoulder straps if you're a cadet?' And Sereshka Pereverzev—that horrid little civilian in specs—from our school—has entered a Communist Military School and Mikhail Shorin, an ex-cadet, has volunteered, too." (Bobka pauses for breath: his throat is parched) . . . "They've had uniforms given out to them: long coats like the military undergraduates

wore and little pork-pie caps . . . . Then I went to see our commissar at home. I've been to see Daniel Alexandrovich three times altogether."

"Why didn't you tell me?" I ask curiously.

Bobka seems a little embarrassed. "Why didn't I tell you? Well, there was no opportunity, somehow. I would have told you eventually anyhow . . . but the others might only think I was fussing up to the commissar, trying to get in his good books. And his flat (Bobka's voice livened up) it's as cold as the grave—you can hardly breathe. But he has a gold-fish in a little aquarium—and he keeps two tiny kerosene lamps burning by it—to warm it . . . He is a queer chap. (This is said in an affectionate tone) He's awfully clever, Volya, awfully—such a Bolshevik, too. Says awfully true things, you know; I was talking to him about the cadet school last time and what do you think he said: 'They lamed you in that school, Grekov, they made wax figures out of you boys—stuck labels on you about the honor of the uniforms —the Sovereign Emperor, the Fatherland, and so forth. But your system,' he says, 'was all wrong; it was deformed; it was based on contempt—contempt for the civil professions, for science, and art. The only good thing about your cadet system was perhaps its comradely solidarity.' Today Daniel Alexandrovich spoke about Russia and the cadets who became Decembrists—about Prince Kropotkin, who was a cadet first and then became an anarchist. The commissar kept walking up and down the room in his wadded jacket reciting Nekrassov. As I was going out he said to me: 'Both courses are open to you: you're either with them or with us.' And I've been thinking . . ."

He pauses and then his voice rises to a shout:

"Yes, I'm a cadet from the Tsar Nicholas Military School—but I'm going to join the volunteers and defend Petrograd. I've starved and frozen under the Soviet Government and I've given up wearing the shoulder straps with the royal monogram. Those who joined Yudenich have got officers' uniforms and shoulder straps and I—I don't want to go—I don't want people to be hanged on telegraph wires! If I have to look on while a commissar is being hanged—I won't be able to stand it—I—I!"

He actually begins to stutter in his agitation—this funny Bobka.

"I . . . I . . . I've been given the chance to go to school by this government —I—a Cossack cadet. What, am I such a blackguard, then? What do I want with defending a factory or an estate that I haven't got—I don't want anything—anything at all . . . Colonel Kamenev, Captain Maslovsky, and General Nikolayev have gone over to the Soviet side. And General Nikolayev graduated from my school and the Vladimir Infantry College. Vasska Blinnikov got a kick in his stomach from me for calling Nikolayev a traitor. They're traitors themselves." Then, speaking very softly, Bobka concluded: "Volya, I want your advice!"

He sits down beside me, perspiring and excited in his threadbare, outgrown, school uniform, and his big, bluish-grey eyes gaze attentively into mine.

What can I say to Bobka? I am two years younger than he is and I am so thin and pale I have been exempted from drill at school. Furthermore, I am a coward . . . yes, I admit it, I am a coward. I am only brave before Irka and while playing at soldiers; then I am a reckless commander and lead the most difficult strategic operations. But now I feel terribly humiliated and somehow ashamed before Bobka. I admire him and his knowledge of military things so much. On the training grounds in the Tauric Palace Gardens he is already a platoon commander. The chief of the training ground, ex-corporal Gorobchik, says of Bobka:

"That's the right kind of lad . . . none of your snotty nosed whelps!" I know that Bobka hates sentimentality of any kind; one dare not kiss him or embrace him. He is not a little girl, he is a soldier—therefore no demonstrations of affection are allowed.

"You're a hero!" I say with conviction. "You're a regular Garibaldi."

Bobka is flattered, but he asks abruptly:

"So you approve of it?"

With a deep sigh of envy and admiration I nod my head.

"Yes, of course."

Bobka marches up and down the room. On the other side of the wall, in the engineer's room. Irka is practising piano exercises. They are monotonous and dreary. Bobka's voice breaks in upon the silence in the room. "I'm going to join up tomorrow morning, but I'll have to add on another year to my age."

"And supposing you're taken prisoner?" I ask. I begin to feel sorry for my pal. Now he is moving about the room, alive and near and comprehensible to me, while the day after tomorrow he may be beaten with rifle butts and kicked by heavy soldier's boots and afterwards either hung or shot.

"I won't let myself be taken prisoner, and if they do take me, I won't be white-livered and beg for mercy." He begins to pace up and down again, humming his favorite song about the forage-cap.

Old forage cap, stick to my head.
Our lives are joined until I'm dead.
Our stormy youth was passed together
You've stuck by me through wind and weather,
You've stood by me in school and camp,
We've been on every kind of ramp.

I chimed in and we finished the last couplet in a peculiar tension.

At home or on the training ground
In battle or on pleasure bound,
We're never parted, all year round—
My forage cap and me!

"Do you know what?" says Bobka. "Do you know what? Let me review the picked regiment for the last time."

The picked regiment is made up of the best soldiers from every regiment and battalion in my army. I take the big box containing the picked regiment out of the cupboard. There are a hundred bayonets. We set them out on the table. There they are, the cuirassiers fixed on their white horses, the Uhlans with their yellow badges, the Hussars in their scarlet uniforms, the French, the Germans, the artillerymen, the Zouaves in their gay, embroidered jackets.

Out of another box I take the staff officers: Bobka's favorite General Gurko on his moulting, tail-less horse and Murat, the old chief of the staff, mounted on his white horse and surrounded by adjutants, reviewed the parade.

"The fact that I'm sixteen doesn't matter," Bobka justifies himself. "I've read somewhere that H. G. Wells plays at soldiers with Conan Doyle even to this day. Conan Doyle has actually got mechanical soldiers!"

In a deep bass voice, Bobka commands: "Atten—tion! Quick march!"

We are still playing at this when mother comes in.

Dear mother! She comes in so tired. Her face is as bloodless and white as the Sister-of-Mercy handkerchief bound around her head. She is working in a hospital for the Red Army. She is just off duty now. Without even waiting to take off her out-door things, she calls out excitedly from the threshold:

"Listen, children! Tsarskoye Selo has just been occupied by General Rodzyanko's troops. Our troops are retreating. A patrol of White Guards has arrived at Pulkov Hills."

Bobka springs out of his place. He is trembling all over.

"I'm off!" he cries excitedly. "Dear Olga Constantinovna and Volya, I'm off to the barracks this very minute!"

He pays no attention to our entreaties to wait till morning, but flings on his coat and crams his old forage cap down on his head. Then he comes up and holds out his hand to me. I throw my arms round him and kiss him:

"Olga Constantinovna," he begs, "kiss me once—on my forehead!"

Next day there is no Bobka at school. His place next to mine is deserted. And not only his. Five boys are missing. Nina Obolianova, a pretty, doll-faced girl of fifteen is talking in an undertone to her neighbor, a frail, over-refined looking cadet called Nika Rodionov. They are just behind me so I can hear what they are saying. Nina: "Papa says the Finns are going to help Yudenich . . ."

Nika: "Oh, I wish they would hurry up about it! Then we'd have our own car again; it's horrid living in this kingdom of boors."

Nina: "The commissar'll be arrested, and we'll get our country estate back again and I'll invite you there for the summer."

Nika: "Merci! We've got a splendid country house of our own at Peterhof!"

I turn round and, pretending not to have heard anything, I say:

"Do you know that Grekov's gone to the Red training school?"

Nina wrinkles her nose in disgust. Nika shrugs his shoulders.

"I'm not surprised. He never did belong to a decent circle."

I can feel my blood beginning to boil, but I restrain myself a little longer.

"You think he's a low fellow?" I ask Nika.

"Of course," he replies contemptuously. "A perfect boor, a Bolshevik from the Youth Union!"

Then I fling my insults delightedly in his angelic countenance.

"And do you know what you are, Nika? A filthy blackguard and a low dirty sneak, and when Grekov comes back from the front, he'll bash your silly mug in for you!"

The school commissar comes in. He looks at us through his pince-nez, old fashioned pince-nez like those Chekhov wore on a long black cord.

"Is Grekov here?" he asks.

I jump up immediately and say: "Daniel Alexandrovich! Grekov went to the barracks last night."

"Oh, so he went, did he?" the commissar says and his eyes brighten behind his glasses. Turning to us, he says: "Five of your finest comrades have gone to fight on the Revolutionary front. We should feel proud of them."

So Bobka is at the front? There is no news of him for three days.

In the evening, when the life of the city dies down, one can hear the distant cannonade and see the white searchlights stretch across the leaden sky.

Once during recess, the commissar calls me to him:

"You're Grekov's best friend, aren't you? Tell me something about him."

He takes me by the elbow and we walk down the room. I tell him about

Bobka. Then the commissar tells me how, just two months ago, Grekov came to him and demanded—"demanded, mind you, in a very severe tone indeed that I should explain honestly all about communism to him. 'And if you lie to me, Daniel Alexandrovich,' says he, 'I'll catch you at it, never fear!' " . . . There is a tender note in the commissar's voice as he says this.)

And then another day:

The military students are attacking. Youdenich's and Rodzyanko's troops are retreating beyond Pulkovo, Detskoye Selo and Gatchina.

One nasty evening, when a penetrating dampness is spreading inwards from the sea, I sit and listen to Irka talking about her teacher, Nina Petrovna. The latter, it appears, fainted during the geography lesson today. She was explaining something about Polynesia and looking for it on the map when she suddenly collapsed on the floor as pale as death with her head rolling about. The girls got such a fright. They brought some water and Varya Platonova gave her a rusk she'd brought with her. The teacher got up from the floor. She'd taken the rusk and was holding it tight in her hand. Then she turned very red and handed it back to Varya saying: "Thanks, very much, but you're mistaken. I'm not hungry. I'm simply tired . . . I had to sit up with my son all night . . . he has pneumonia." "But it wasn't anything of the sort," says Irka, "you could see it was hunger."

Irka talks rapidly, stumblingly, looking at me with a bewildered expression.

"Why do people live like this, Volya?"

"Like what?" I ask.

"Well—why do the White Guards fight and why is there blood and starvation and typhus—when they see they're not wanted—can't they go away?" Irka's voice drifts into silence.

"When I'm big," she begins again after a few minutes, "When I'm your wife and we go to the Caucasus, I'll open a school for the mountaineers' children and teach them to be against war . . . they'll have plenty to do without that!"

Just at this moment mother comes in. She has come in the back way through the kitchen and brings a smell of iodoform and suffering with her.

These days and nights she only comes home for a few hours, weary and wornout and goes to bed immediately for about four hours' sleep. Then she has to get up and go back to the hospital again. If she cannot get on a tram, she has to walk to the Vassilievski Island-side. She is sparing of her words and caresses nowadays. She drops heavily into a chair and says:

"Bobka's been brought in from Gatchina—he's very bad . . . Put on your clothes and go for the school commissar . . . Bobka wants to see you badly. I'll go and see his mother after I've had a little rest. I'll meet you in the hospital. Ward number 20, cot number 17."

"Can I go too, Auntie?" asks Irka. She is trembling and her lips are white.

"No," mother replies sharply, "you can't!"

The commissar lives quite near the school.

I dash out into the street, buttoning up my coat—an old one like Bobka's —on the way. I tell myself: "You're a man, you mustn't cry!" I keep telling myself this and wiping my eyes with my grubby handkerchief.

The trams simply crawl. If I were a driver, I would speed up the trams like the cowboys in Mexico speed up horses. I jump off in Liteinny Street without waiting for the car to stop and search for the commissar's house. My eyes are misty. I do not notice the wind and rain; there is only one idea in my head; to catch Daniel Alexandrovich at home. I run up the four flights

of stairs without stopping. My heart seems ready to burst my chest, and my legs tremble.

"Daniel Alexandrovich!" I shout as he opens the door to me. "Come quick! Our Bobka's dying in the Vassiliev Hospital! Quick!"

The commissar takes off his spectacles and his head begins to shake like a woodpecker's in astonishment.

"Grekov! Dying?" Then he dashes out into the corridor searching for his hat. He cannot find it at once. "Come along then, quick," he says. We do not speak while we are on the tram. We want to, but we cannot.

We get out at Seventh Street and run up to the gloomy building that was formerly a girls' high school, and has now been turned into a hospital.

The ambulance-men all know me. I have often been to see mother here. But today I do not seem to recognize anyone. I do not even feel that the water is soaking through the holes in my boots. The commissar shakes the rain from his things in the vestibule, explaining something to the sister on duty. We follow her along the corridors. Through the open doors of the wards the groans and delirious mutterings of the wounded are carried to our ears. The men have just been brought in from Yamburg and Detskoye Selo, Gatschina and Pulkovo.

From one of the wards a clear voice rings out, giving an order:

"The enemies of the Revolution are before you! Machine guns, fire!"

The nurse turns to the commissar and says in a respectful tone:

"That's Commander Matrossov—he led a special regiment. He's got four wounds, and his regiment was the first to enter Gatchina." She halts by the door of the adjoining ward. "And you'll find Comrade Grekov in here."

We go past the bed on our tiptoes, very softly, so as not to rouse the occupants from their sleep of exhaustion.

Bobka's bed is the last one, near the window.

Outside the window, under the grey driving rain, lies the city, the city that Bobka has won back from the White generals.

It is a good thing he can see his city through the window as he lies there. It is Bobka who says this, not I. He raises himself on his pillows. He is pale and his hair has been clipped close to his head.

"So we've kept St. Petersburg, after all!" he cries.

He looks at the commissar and at me and tries to smile, but his face is distorted with pain.

"Thanks awfully for coming to see me. I'm glad—" he bites his lips in agony and then, as if continuing a story begun long ago, says: "I never thought it would turn out like this . . . when I saw the old familiar shoulder straps and cockades before me, I couldn't raise my rifle on them—they were our chaps after all,"—Bobka stretched out his pale, thin hand. "Our chaps! And their colonel shouted: 'Hey there, you dirty Yids and blackguards! Hand over your communists!' Then our company commander Sedov said to me: 'Shoot the swine, Grekov,'—and Sedov, you know, used to be a lieutenant—he could see how upset I was and so he said: 'You were a cadet, weren't you? Well, listen, Cadet Grekov, the people don't want these reptiles of White Guards—do you understand? The people absolutely don't want them. And we're serving the people, aren't we?' And he went on—it was very convincing. 'No hanky-panky, Grekov!' he said."

Bobka is getting excited. A red spot glows on each of his grey cheekbones.

"Never mind that now, Grekov, my boy," the commissar pleads, stroking Bobka's hand. "You'll tell us afterwards!"

"No—it's a relief, I must!" Bobka protests angrily. "It's very important—that you should understand—properly—as I understood you and Sedov. So I raised my rifle and took aim and down went the colonel . . . And when I marched with the rest to the attack, I felt sort of exalted—no pity or anything; just the feeling that—I had to do it."

A fit of coughing interrupts him. Beads of perspiration break out on his brow. Daniel Alexandrovich fumbles for his handkerchief, but it is a dirty one, so he puts it back again..

"Water!" Bobka gasps. He seizes the enamel mug greedily and gulps down the water, spilling it on the grey blanket.

"And in the skirmish next day I got this wound in the stomach," he continues; then, seeing our mothers approaching the bed, he whispers hurriedly: "Volya, bend down near me!" I bend over and he grips my hand. "Volya, don't tell anyone, will you—but you know what? When I'm—when I'm gone—put my Gurko on my breast if you can—when noone's noticing. Please do this for me, Volya. It'll be nicer with old Gurko for company."

He squeezes my wrist hard in moist fingers that are weakening noticeably.

"You'll do it? Promise!"

I can only nod my head. I want, if I can, to keep from breaking down before Bobka.

"Well, that's that, then," he says with a sigh of relief. "And now—now you had better go . . . I love you very much, Volya—and give my regards to Irka." Then he turns to the commissar and, in a voice breaking with weariness, says: "Goodbye, Daniel Alexandrovich! I'm so glad you came—thanks very much!"

The commissar rises from his chair, and goes close to Bobka. The old man's hands tremble as he strokes Bobka's close-clipped hair.

"I've no son of my own," he says in an almost inaudible voice. "I've no son of my own, but I have many children I'm answerable for. And you're the very best of them all—the manliest—the—"

A few tears squeeze themselves out of Bobka's eyes against his will.

"Don't!" he whispers. "Don't—I did it simply because—Daniel Alexandrovich—I did it for the others, out of shame, really . . . I was ashamed of myself . . . because I'd taken everything and given nothing—and now I've paid it back." Then, very softly: "Take my forage cap for yourself, Daniel Alexandrovich.—Mother 'll give it to you . . ."

He cannot speak any more. He waves his hand wearily, and we go out. My mother stays by his bedside.

We go home through the streets. A fine misty rain is falling. We get on the tram, and I go with the commissar as far as his house. At the door he says. deeply moved:

"I have a son now, and his name is Grekov."

I remember a night.

Mother has told me already that Bobka is dead. I am no longer ashamed of my tears. Irka and I cry together. She says, sobbing:

"He was such a nice boy. If he'd only been older and had a baby—we could have brought it up."

We are alone in the room. The engineer's family are all asleep. Mother is at the hospital. I take out the boxes of soldiers. I open them sorrowfully with a tremor.

Just now General Gurko seems to me to be the impersonation of Bobka. And in order to do honor to my comrade, I must bury Gurko.

I set out the picked regiment. I do not allow Irka to touch them: "Another time, maybe, but not just now." Then I lay General Gurko in a matchbox and set it on a miniature gun-carriage. Six horses draw the gun-carriage. I get a bit of red stuff out of mother's portmanteau and cover the match box with it. Thus I bury the bravest of our commanders.

Choking back my tears, I give the command:

"Attention! Present arms!"

Then I make a speech:"

"Today, boys, we are called upon to bury our great commander! He died like a hero defending St. Petersburg! He—" I cannot go on.

But I am bound to carry out Bobka's last request and conduct the funeral ceremony to the very end.

Irka looks on, awe-struck. She wipes her eyes and says:

"It's awfully touching, Volya! Please bury me this way, too when I die."

At last I take the red-covered match box off the gun-carriage and lay it carefully in the side pocket of my tunic.

Tomorrow morning I shall take Gurko to Bobka, I say to myself. Tomorrow becomes today and I get on the tram that takes me to the hospital. No one must know of Bobka's dying request. When I arrive at the hospital, Sidorov, an ambulance man whom I know quite well, leads me to the mortuary. How cold and grim it sounds!

Bobka is lying in a simple wooden coffin.

"His face looks quiet and very youthful. He is dressed in the Red Training School uniform, and half covered with a red pall.

"The head of the school has been here and arranged everything," Sidorov explains.

"Could I stay a little while with him, comrade?" I plead.

"Oh, all right," Sidorov agrees good naturedly. "If you want to stand guard over him, my lad, you can, and I'll come back in about ten minutes' time."

So Bobka and I are left together.

I will not deny that I feel rather nervous. The strangeness of the circumstances send me into a fever. But I overcome my horror and bend over the cold, quiet face and say softly:

"Bobka, old chap! I've brought you Gurko." Bobka is silent and calm: he knew I would bring Gurko.

Then my fear leaves me and I unbutton Bobka's tunic and over the place where once a warm, true heart beat, I lay Gurko, the battered old tin soldier on his moulting tail-less horse. As I button the tunic again, my hands tremble; the chill of Bobka's body penetrates my consciousness.

"Oh, you're here!" says a familiar voice. I turn round with a start. Daniel Alexandrovich is standing by the coffin. His face looks tired and aged. In his hand he holds a wreath of artificial flowers with a red ribbon amongst them. He lays the wreath at Bobka's feet. The ends of the ribbons hang down and I read the gilt inscriptions: "To Grekov, a Soldier of the Revolution," on one end and "The school and I are proud of you," on the other.

We bury Bobka next day. The coffin is followed by the band, a regiment of the boys from the Volodarski Red Training School and our group. Snow is falling. It melts as soon as it reaches the pavement. It is the first snow of the season, Petersburg snow, chilling and wet. But the boys from the

Red Training School march along briskly. Their young weather-beaten faces are calm, their step crisp and even. They know that Yudenich is defeated and that the sacrifices they themselves have made saved the great revolutionary city.

When we get to Smolenski Cemetery our commissar makes a speech. In his youth he was in the historical-philological faculty of the university and he is fond of fine phrases.

"Comrades!" he begins, "we are burying Grekov, a youth who has behaved like the heroes of the great French Revolution! He came to us from another circle, but he was young and receptive to all that was bright and beautiful. He understood that the new would be born out of the torments of hunger and the struggle for the happiness of the oppressed. He came to us at the most difficult moment and said: 'If this is revolution, if my free country needs my life let her take it!' And he laid down his life gladly for the new youth of his great country. He died from the bullets of those generals who had wanted to train him to carry out their wishes faithfully, to be an obedient servant to the Tsar and the gentry. It was old, decaying Russia that killed Grekov. But Grekov still lives!" The commissar flashes his pince-nez on us as we stand around the grave, and concludes in loud ringing tones:

"Welcome children! You stand guard over the youth of the Republic, and every one of you is as brave and honorable as Grekov!"

The band strikes up the *Dead March.* The coffin is lowered by a long towel into the grave. We throw a few handfuls of clayey soil down on the lid. The spades get to work. A little hillock rises over the grave. An order rings out and a salute of guns crashes in upon our grief. As we leave the spot, each of us casts a last affectionate glance back at the fresh pinewood post with its metal tablet, bearing the words, (inscribed with much labor) "Boris Alexandrovich Grekov, student of the Volodarski Red Training School, Born 1903. Died of wounds, October 30, 1919."

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

It Happened In Odessa

A Short Story of Pre-revolutionary Days

I began it.

"Old Arye-Leyb," I said to the old man, "let's have a talk about Benya Krik. Let's talk about his lightning-like rise in the world and his frightful end. There are three black shadows blocking the way of my imagination. There is One-Eyed Froim Gratch. Will not the rusty steel of his exploits bear comparison with the force of the King? Then there is Kolka Pakovski. The simple minded frenzy of this fellow contained all the essentials that make for power. And was Hain Drong incapable of detecting the top of the rope ladder while the rest clung to the shaking lower rungs?"

Old Arye-Leyb sat silent on the cemetery wall. Before us lay the green quiet of the graves. A man thirsting for an answer must posses his soul in patience. A man who possesses knowledge must conduct himself with dignity. Therefore Arye-Leyb sat silent on the cemetery wall. At last he said:

"Why him? Why not the others you want to know? Well, then, forget for a moment that you have spectacles on your nose and autumn in your heart. Stop kicking up rows at your writing desk and stuttering in public. Imagine for a moment that you are kicking up rows in the market places and stuttering on paper. You are a tiger, say, a lion, a tom-cat. You can spend the night with a Russian woman quite satisfied. You're twenty-five years old. If heaven and earth had a couple of rings fixed to them, you'd catch hold of those rings and drag heaven down to meet the earth. And imagine that your papa was Mendel Krik, the carter. Now what does that kind of a papa think about? He thinks of drinking a good glass of vodka, of giving someone a crack on the jaw, of his horses, and—nothing else. You want to live and he forces you to die, twenty times a day. What would you do in Benya Krik's place? You wouldn't do anything. But he did. And so he is a King and you have to keep your tongue in your cheek.

"Benya went to Froim Gratch, who was already looking out at the world through one eye and was what he is. He said to Froim: 'Take me on. I want to moor my bark to your shore. The shore where I moor my bark will be the gainer.'

"And Gratch asked him:

" 'Who are you? Where d'you come from and what d'you live on?'

" 'Try me, Froim,' said Benya. 'And let's save our breath to cool our porridge.'

"And the gangsters called a council to consider the case of Benya Krik. I was not at that council. But people say the council was called. The elder at the time was Levka-the-ox that's dead.

" 'What sort of a bee has he got in his bonnet, this Benya? Levka-the-ox that's dead asked them. And then One-Eyed Gratch told them his opinion.

" 'Benya doesn't say much, but what he says has a point in it. He doesn't say much, but you feel you'd like him to say more.'

" 'Well, if it's like that,' cried Levka-that's-dead, 'if it's like that, then. let's try him on Tartakovski.'

" 'We'll try him on Tartakovski,' the council decided, and everyone who had a scrap of conscience still alive in him turned red with shame when he heard that decision. Why did they turn red? You'll know when you get to the place I'm taking you to.

"We used to call Tartakovski 'the kike-and-a-half' or the 'nine-raider.' We called him the 'kike-and-a-half,' because one Jew alone could never possess as much downright impudence and money as Tartakovski. He was taller than the tallest policeman in Odessa and weighed more than the fattest Jewess. And we called him 'nine-raider' because Levka-the-ox and his gang made—not eight nor ten raids on his office, but exactly nine. So the honor of making the tenth raid on the 'kike-and-a-half' fell to the lot of Benya Krik before he became King. When Froim told him of this, he just said 'yes' and banged the door after him as he went out. Why did he bang the door? This you'll know when you get to the place I'm taking you to.

"Tartakovski had the soul of a murderer, but he was one of us. He sprang from us. He had our blood in his veins. He was flesh of our flesh; it was as if one mother had borne us. Half Odessa worked in his shops. And he suffered a lot through his own people, through the people of the Moldavanka quarter. They kidnapped him twice for a ransom, and once during a pogrom they staged his burial with choir boys singing over him and everything. It was the time the gangsters from the outskirts started beating up the Jews in Great Arnaut Street. As Tartakovski was running away from them he met a funeral procession with choir boys in Sophia Street. And he asked them:

" 'Who's that they're burying with choir boys?' The people passing by told him it was Tartakovski that was being buried. The procession got to the cemetery on the outskirts. Then our boys got a machine gun out of the coffin and turned it on the local gangsters. The 'kike-and-a-half' didn't expect this. He got the fright of his life. What man in his shoes wouldn't get the fright of his life?

"Now, to make a tenth raid on a man who had been buried once already was a nasty job. Benya, who had not been made King at that time, understood this better than anyone else. But still he had said 'yes' to Gratch and so he wrote a letter to Tartakovski that same day, a letter that was pretty much the same as all those kind of letters are.

" 'Respected Reuben Ossipovitch: Will you please be so kind as to place under the rain water barrel on Saturday night the following sum,' and so on and so forth . . . 'In case you should refuse, a thing you have, unfortunately, taken to doing lately, you may expect a staggering disappointment in your family life.

With the compliments of

Your old acquaintance,

Benzion Krik.'

"Tartakovski was not the lazy kind. He wrote a reply without delay.

"Benya:

If you were an idiot, I would have written to you as an idiot. But I do not know that you are one and God preserve me from ever knowing it. You evidently are trying to play the innocent, yes? It cannot be you do not know that this year there is such a harvest in the Argentine as never was, while we people here are ruined, with our corn lying on our hands? . . . And I may tell you seriously that, spit my death, I am sick of eating the bread of bitterness in my old age and having such troubles after slaving

all my life like the lowest drayman. And what have I—I ask you—after all my years of everlasting hard labor and drudgery? Only ulcers and scars and anxiety and sleeplessness. So stop this nonsense of yours, Benya.

Your friend (much more than you think)

Reuben Tartakovski.'

"The 'kike-and-a-half' had done his job. He had written a letter. But the post did not deliver the letter to the right address. When Benya found he got no answer, he got angry. Next day he appeared in Tartakovski's office with four of his friends. Four young men with masks and revolvers burst into the room.

" 'Hands up!' they said, starting to wave their pistols about.

" 'A little calmer, Solomon,' Benya remarked to one of his men who kept shouting louder than the others. 'Don't get into that habit of exciting yourself when at work.' Then turning to the clerk, who was as white as a sheet and as yellow as a guinea, he asked him:

" 'Is the kike-and-a-half in the factory?'

" 'No, he is not,' replied the clerk, whose name was Mugginstein, known as Joseph the bachelor son of Aunt Pyesya, a poultry woman from the market.

" 'Who's the master here, when Tartakovski's away?' they started to ask that unfortunate Mugginstein.

" 'I'm instead of the master here,' the clerk told them turning as green as grass.

" 'Then open the till for us laddie, with God's help!' Benya ordered him, and then it started—an opera in three acts, as you might say.

"Excitable Solomon packed their bag with money, papers, watches and monograms while Mugginstein that's dead stood with his hands up and Benya told them tales from the history of the Jews.

" 'Since he's played at being a Rothschild,' said Benya, referring to Tartakovski, 'let him fry in his own fat. Just tell me this, Mugginstein, as one pal to another: he gets a letter containing a business proposal from me; now, why can't he get on a tram and for five kopecks come to my house and drink a glass of vodka with me and my family and eat a mouthful of whatever's going? What was to hinder him having a regular heart-to-heart talk with me? All he had to say was: Benya, things are this way and that way, here's my balance sheet for you, allow me just a couple of days, allow me just to draw my breath and so on—'

" 'What would I have said to him? A swine doesn't go out to meet a swine, but a man can go out to meet a man, can't he? Mugginstein, you understood me, didn't you?'

" 'Yes, I understood you alright,' said Mugginstein, but it was a lie for him because he couldn't possibly understand why the kike-and-a-half, a respectable man and the first in the district should go in a tram to take a glass of vodka with Mendel Krik, the carter's family.

"And in the meantime misfortune was wandering up and down under the windows like a beggar at daybreak. Misfortune burst into the office with a good deal of noise. This time it took the shape of the Jew Saul Buzis, and he was as drunk as a water carrier.

" 'Ho-ho!' shouted Saul. 'Excuse me, Benya, I'm a bit late.' Then he started to stamp his feet and wave his arms about. Then he let off his revolver and the bullet happened to lodge in Mugginstein's belly.

"Need we explain? A man there was—and then—he was not. An innocent bachelor living like a bird on a bough—and—lo and behold!—he's dead!

A Jew who looked like a sailor came in and fired a stupid bullet—not at some old bottle or other—but at a live man. Need we explain?

" 'Quick march from the office,' Benya shouted, running out last himself. But before he left he found time to say to Saul:

" 'By the grave of my mother, Saul, I swear you'll lie beside him yet . . .

"Now tell me this, young gentleman who clips coupons from other people's bonds, how would you have acted in Benya's place? You would not know how to act, yes? But he knew. That is why he became King of the underworld, while you and me sit on the wall of the Second Jewish Cemetery, shading our faces from the sun with our hands.

"Aunt Pyesya's unfortunate son did not die all at once. An hour after he had been taken to the hospital, Benya was there. He ordered the head doctor and the nurse to be brought before him and, without taking his hands out of his cream colored trousers, he said to them:

" 'It is to my interests that the Mugginstein case should get well. Let me introduce myself in case it should be necessary—Benzion Krik. You must provide camphor, oxygen and a separate ward—with a free hand and an open heart. And if not, no more than two yards of ground are allowed to any doctor, be he a doctor of philosophy itself.'

"And for all that Mugginstein died that very night. Then, and only then the kike-and-a-half set up a howl over all Odessa.

" 'Where does the police come on," he howled, 'and where does Benya get off?'

" 'The police get off just where Benya comes on,' reasonable people told him, but Tartakovski would not let things be. And he waited till the day when Benya's red motor car with the musical box in it playing the opening air from *Pagliacci* darted up in broad daylight to the house where Aunt Pyesya lived.

"The motor car drove up with a roaring of wheels, spitting smoke, glittering with brass fittings, letting out a stink of benzine that would knock you down and playing an aria on its horn. Someone jumped out of it and passed through to the kitchen where little Aunt Pyesya was rolling about in grief on the clay floor. The kike-and-a-half was sitting on a chair, wringing his hands.

" 'Hooligan!' he shouted, when he caught sight of the visitor. 'Bandit, may the earth vomit you up! This is a nice fashion you've set, isn't it, murdering people alive!'

" 'Monsieur Tartakovski,' said Benya quite gently, 'this is the second day I've spent crying for the dear departed as if he was my own brother. But I know my youthful tears are of no interest to you. Shame, Monsieur Tartakovski, where have you hidden your shame? In some fire-proof safe, I suppose? And you had the heart to send the mother of our poor dead Joseph a mangy hundred rubles? Why, my very brains, let alone my hair, stood on end when I heard of it.'

"Here Benya paused. He was wearing a chocolate colored jacket, cream trousers and raspberry-red buttoned shoes.

" 'Ten thousand down!' he roared, 'ten thousand cash on the nail and a pension till her death even if she lives to a hundred and twenty. If not forthcoming, I'll trouble you to leave these premises with me, Monsieur Tartakovski, and get into my car . . .'

"Then they squabbled with each other. The kike-and-a-half cursed Benya

and Benya cursed him. I was not a witness of their quarrel. But those who were there, they remember it. The two came to an agreement at last: five thousand down and fifty rubles a month.

" 'Aunt Pyesya,' said Benya then to the dishevelled old woman rolling in convulsions on the floor, 'if you want my life, you are welcome to it, but remember: everybody makes mistakes—even God. There's been a terrible mistake made, Aunt Pyesya. But wasn't it a mistake on God's part to send the Jews into Russia to be tormented the same as if they were in hell? What harm would it have done if the Jews had lived in Switzerland where they would have been surrounded by first class lakes, mountainous air and Frenchmen without end? Everybody can make a mistake, even God. Listen to me with your ears, Aunt Pyesya. Here you have five thousand rubles in hand and fifty coming in to you every month till the day of your death,—though you live to a hundred and twenty. Joseph's funeral will be a first class one: six horses like six lions, two carriages with wreaths, the choir from Brodski Synagogue, and the cantor Minkovski himself will be there to hold the burial service over your dead son . . .'

"The funeral rites were held next morning. You can ask the cemetery beggars about those funeral rites. You can ask the schamesses from the synagogue about them, you can ask the kosher poultry dealers or the old women from the Second Alms House about them. Such a funeral Odessa has never seen before and the world never will. The electric lights burned all day in the synagogues which stood wide open and were decorated with green boughs. Coal black plumes tossed on the heads of the snow white hearse. There were sixty choir boys in the procession. The choir boys sang with the voices of women. The elders of the synagogue—the kosher poultry dealers—went leading Aunt Pyesya by the hand. Behind the elders came members of the Jewish Clerks' Association, and behind the Jewish Clerks the lawyers and solicitors, the doctors of medicine and the certified midwives. On one side of Aunt Pyesya walked the women who sold fowls in the Old Bazaar, and on the other side the most respected women who sold milk in Bugayevka. wrapped in orange shawls. They tramped along like police at a bank holiday parade. Their broad hips gave off the smell of the milk they sold and the salt sea. Behind all the rest came Reuben Tartakovski's employees —there might be a hundred of them or there might be two hundred, or there might be two thousand. They had on black coats with silk facings, and new boots that squeaked like sucking pigs tied in a sack.

"And now I will speak as the Lord spoke from the burning bush on Mount Sinai. Open your ears to my words and let them go in. All that I saw, I saw with mine own eyes, sitting here on the wall of the Second Cemetery with lisping Moses and Shimshon from the undertaker's office. All this have I seen, I, Arye Leyb, proud Jew, who performs the last rites for the dead.

"The carriage rolled up to the cemetery synagogue. The coffin was placed on the steps. Aunt Pyesya was trembling like a birdie. The cantor got out of the phaeton and began to sing the *Requiem.* Sixty choir boys took it up and sang it after him. And just at that moment a red motor car came flying round the corner, playing the famous air from *Pagliacci*, and came to a dead stop. The people stood silent like the dead. The trees, the singers, the beggars all kept silence. Four men climbed out from under the red cover of the car, marched slowly up to the coffin and laid on it a wreath of such roses as have never been seen. And when the burial service had been sung, the four men put their shoulders hard as steel under the coffin

and with burning eyes, and chests well out, marched along with the members of the Jewish Clerks' Association.

"Ahead of them all went Benya Krik, who at that time was called King by no one. He was the first to come near the grave; he got upon a sort of little knoll and flung out his hand.

" 'What is it you want to do, young man?' asked Koffmann from the Funeral Company, running up to him.

" 'I want to make a speech,' Benya Krik said. And he made a speech. It was heard by everyone who wanted to hear it. I, Arye Leyb, and lisping Moses who sat on the wall beside me heard it.

" 'Gentlemen and ladies,' said Benya Krik. 'Gentlemen and ladies,' he said, and the sun rose up over his head like an armed sentry with a gun. 'You have come to pay last respects to an honest working man who lost his life for a brass farthing. I want you to accept my sincere thanks and the thanks of those who are absent. Gentlemen and ladies! What had our dear Joseph seen in his life? Just half nothing. What did he do? He counted other men's money for them . What did he die for? He died for the whole of the working class. There are people already doomed to die and there are people who have not yet begun to live. And the bullet found its billet in the doomed breast of Joseph, who had seen just half nothing in his whole life. There are people who can drink vodka and there are people who cannot —but who still go on doing it. And the first get a satisfaction out of both sorrow and gladness and the second suffer for all those who drink vodka without being able to. Therefore, gentlemen and ladies, I beg you after we have prayed for our poor Joseph, to accompany to his last resting place one who, though unknown to you, is already dead, namely Saul Buzis . . .'

"And having made his speech, Benya Krik came down from the mound. The people were silent, and so were the trees and the cemetery beggars. Two gravediggers carried a plain deal coffin over to the neighboring grave. The cantor stuttered service to a finish. Benya flung in the first spade full and crossed over to Saul's grave. Behind him, like sheep, came all the lawyers and the boys with brooches. He made the cantor sing the burial service through from beginning to end and the choir boys after him. Saul would never have dreamed of such a burial service—you can believe Arye Leyb who is an old, old man.

"They say that day the kike-and-a-half made up his mind to close down his business. I was not a witness of that part. But that neither the cantor, nor the choir, nor the undertakers took a penny for the funeral—this I saw through my own eyes, the eyes of Arye Leyb. Arye Leyb I am called. But I could see nothing else, for the people, after moving quietly away from Saul's grave, took to their heels as if from a fire. They fled in cabs, in carts and on foot. And only the four who had come in the red motor car went away in it. The musical box played its march, the car gave a start and drove off. 'A King,' that was what lisping Moses said as he watched the car out of sight, the same Moses who robs me of all the best places on the wall.

"Now you know all. You know who was the first to utter the word 'King.' It was Moses. You know why he did not call either One-Eyed Gratch or Mad Kolka by that name. You know all. But what use is it, if you still wear spectacles on your nose and autumn in your heart? . . ."

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

Jean Guehenno

Journal of a Man of 40

Excerpts from a New French Novel

Europe—that is the only question today, the question of her wounded and bleeding body, of her miseries. I remember that about 1917, leafing through an American magazine, I found a frightful colored picture with this legend: Finis Europea. Over a road encumbered with all the debris of a complete collapse, ran a distraught little girl, seeking a refuge. I believed in this picture at the time. I have since come to understand that it was not a time of death, but of birth. Europe was being born of our blood and our tears.

There was no Europe when we were children. Perhaps our story is but the story of the devices which Destiny has employed in order to dedicate us to the service of a thing which wished to be born. We were made dupes. We made war, bore the colors of our nations, the blue, the grey, the khaki. All these colors have gone down to ruin. At least we were innocent dupes. We did not, we could not know. But what should be thought of our masters, of those who supposed that they were pulling the strings? Greater dupes than ourselves, and criminals because they were imbeciles. Destiny had shot past them. While Europe strove to be born, these pigmies worked for their little country. They lacked understanding of the present and lived on old songs. Hymns and canticles had lulled them to sleep. Even the sound of the cannons did not awaken them. Their only response was to take up the refrain again. The one sang: "My France," the other: "My Germany." Before fifty years have passed, it will be apparent that this war in which all the men of Europe seemed to face each other for their mutual destruction was their first meeting in which they recognized each other. But if our masters had been shrewder, if they had not been under the sway of stupid, outmoded songs, this recognition might have been bought less dearly. Europe could have been born of our will.

My "European memories," if I may say so, are ridiculous. Only much later, did I learn of the honor done me in being born in the only truly civilized part of the world; as we demonstrated to Africa, that god-forsaken abode of Negroes, to Asia, that land of badly washed savages, and even to America and Australia, those upstart lands where the monkey would still be the most representative of the animal species, if Europe had not deigned to send thither her undersirables, her bandits, her visionaries, her bankrupts. In this sheep preserve was I born, like everyone else, with a collar around my neck. But I was not conscious of the fact. Possibly we were never fully conscious of our glory until the war arrayed us in all our insignia. But holding a grenade, a rifle, a knife, or a revolver in his hand, who could still doubt the grandeur of his role? Europe scorned the small effects. Like God. she revealed herself to me in the thunder and the lightning.

Nevertheless, it is all too clear that all that took place would have been impossible if, for long years, we had not been subjected to certain preparations. It is said that people can be made immune to poisons by poisoning them a little each day. Doubtlessly we profited by some such immunity in 1914. So I shall evoke my ridiculous memories. I am amused nowadays, to put it mildly, by the contrast between their mediocrity and the immensity

of the tasks which the nations of Europe set before us. In this contrast lies all the drama of our lives. We were nothing, we had nothing, and we were required to give all.

My conception of the world, it seems to me, has shrunk in the measure that I have grown older. In the days when my nurse maid used to explain to me where the stars got their light, the idea which I got from her account, mysterious as it may have been, was nourishing. I was full of dreams and bore the world within me. And then the stars were extinguished, or at least I was no longer conscious of their light. The world became reduced to the confines of our suburban house; of a room in this house, in which my parents struggled for a subsistence and within which all our destinies seemed to be enclosed. Here dwelt my desires and dreams; here were enacted my dramas. If the politicians had been sensible, they would have striven to satisfy these just desires, to resolve these genuine dramas. But history moves slowly, and doubtlessly the time was not yet ripe. Lies seized upon us, made us their marionettes. Before we were a meter in height (54 km. less than is requisite for a soldier) we were already little Europeans, Frenchmen, Germans . . . classed, trained, registered, drawn without knowing it into obscure intrigues. For these experts, without delay, calculated our number, our energy, our credulity, our capacity for enthusiasm and fervour. When we were six, on Sundays we were given berets decorated with a cockade and ribbon. An inscription in letters of gold on the ribbon assured the world that we would only consent to serve on *The Invincible* or *The Indomitable*. We were united for combat. We were consecrated as Zouaves or Turcos, brandishing their wooden swords, had a foretaste of the joys of battle and victory, and we envied them their finery. At the age of ten we attended our first communion and sang strange psalms:

Save Rome and France
In the name of the Holy Heart (repeat)

or again:

I hear from on high
The Voice of the Fatherland!
Catholic and Breton forever!

Stupid songs. We did not even grasp their meaning. Among ourselves we improvised remarkable variations, which were not all of a respectable character. At the age of twelve we obtained our school certificates, having recited by heart and in the proper order all the sub-prefectures of France, the date of the death of Clovis, the date of the birth of Henry IV, the date of the marriage of Louis XIV. How could one believe that this nonsense was our veritable soul? Nevertheless, when, so gently, so discreetly, one day tripping on the heels of the other, on a sleepless night of Saint Sebastian, during which my father put a wooden gun and an orange as New Year's presents in my waxed wooden shoes, I began this twentieth century great with our destinies; this clap-trap already had us in its power. Poor little devils, all recipients of communion, all certified, all bearing the same little bundle of empty knowledge, proud of our ability to read and make the proof anew, our only duty was to bear ourselves well!

Europe I occasionally encountered of a Friday in the spring or summer, in the public gardens. She used to promenade here in outlandish garments. From the terraces of the garden there is a beautiful view over the valley and the grove below. Tourists used to come and stay five minutes in this

spot. There were English families in long, gray raincoats, German families in plumed hats: all bore a resemblance—or so at least our prejudices caused us to see them—to the caricatures which appeared in the books and magazines of the day. We felt contempt for these foreigners. One does not love those whom one exploits. And really they were ridiculously easy game. When they came upon the terraces our tactics were always the same. We stopped playing and followed the travelers at some distance with all the marks of devotion and respect. What a squalling arose if one of the travelers put us a question! Conversation was difficult. With a single voice we showed them the "antiquities" of the place and the sellers of bric-a-brac, the chateau of Queen Anne and the shop of old Mother Augeard. This information seemed to satisfy them. They would occasionally give us two sous and sent us to the devil. Such were my first encounters with my natural enemies.

In this same garden we played at being English and Boers. If often happened that the municipal gardener put our armies to rout with blows of his broom, but we always returned. Such were the advantages of the position, the declivitous character of the terrain, so favorable to our battles, with its benches, its caves and its rocks. The Boers were always victorious. Unlike the situation in South Africa they always outnumbered their enemies. There were always disputes as to who would be Botha, or Kreuger, or Villebois-Mareuil. We were Englishmen only by force. We already aspired to be of the party of the just, and we preferred service under De Weth or Botha to a position of command in the English armies. If at ten we indulged in such squabbles over justice, is it surprising that at twenty we were willing to die for what we still considered justice? That is what happened to several of our number. For a long time before we actually made history we parodied it in our play.

It is true that we could read: that is a fact which must not be overlooked. I am reluctant to assign importance to that paper soul which those many printed stupidities, day after day, formed in us. But I must, if it explains so much. We read the newspapers. On Fridays, at five o'clock, old Mother Pannetier, as round as a tun, in her hood and wooden shoes, went up and down the suburb, crying: "The news, the news!" I went down the stairs four steps at a time, a little sou tightly clutched in my hand. This fat woman, always in a hurry, her hood flying in the wind, was the messenger of our distant masters. From her enormous bag she drew forth their lies and their truths, and, for my sou, handed me the chronicle of the week, what our masters thought fit we should know of the universe.

Like a sick man who is not content to suffer, but must know his illness in its every detail, and pores over medical dictionaries to a point that his study becomes for him a distraction and remedy. I have wished to know my own history and bring to life again the many days which, although they have not left behind significant memories, I have nevertheless lived and which, one after the other, moulded me, prepared me, bent me, like those trees of my homeland which the continual breath of the sea wind bends and directs.

I write these lines in the Public Library of F . . . In my youth I passed many Sundays there in winter. It was very pleasant there. It is a long and lofty room, clean and full of light, on the second floor of the post office. Books covered three of its sides, while, over the street, above great cupboards of beech, extends, like a blue and white tapestry, an immense window full of sky. One is alone there, removed from the world. I have resumed my former seat. I used to install myself at the end of one of the long shiny tables, at

some distance from the canopy of black cloth which rustled in the middle of the room. The warm air seemed to dance. The day was splendid. Goatchafers made a creaking noise. It was splendid weather. The bells of Saint Leonard suddenly sounded vespers. It was three o'clock. The window panes trembled. I raised my head for an instant and saw in fancy the women entering the church in their great black shawls. Clouds rolled by the great window. A bug the color of black and yellow wood made his way up a plinthe. The last sound vibrated to an end. I returned to my book. Far from the world. In full sky.

The librarian has not changed: diminutive, dry and grey, with a small beard, although he had large ears in which he was slightly deaf, (to such a point that when I try to recall his appearance his face seems assymmetrical, because he was always opening around his right ear the tent of his two hands) and who looked so tiny as he moved about that the mice must have taken him for one of their own. He was a great sayer of paternosters and watched over our reading with a pious solicitude. The municipality paid him badly, but he found vengeance and consolation in performing the duties of his post otherwise very punctually, but "to the greater glory of God," being careful that his readers should only read what was proper and prepare their salvation. I am certain that he himself is in some fear of the many evil printed thoughts which surround him, and that he regards himself in the light of an archangel whom God has seen fit to test by confiding to his charge the administration of a hell. But he does not succumb to temptation, and, perched on his chair at his desk as though on the rock of faith, he defies his thousands of books, all the thought of the ages, all the light talk of this world, reading with the delight of triumphant piety the latest *Religious Week.*

The first time I made a request for a book, and I have since seen the scene repeated a hundred times with other youngsters, he showed me to the door, brandishing his directions, written in round with his own hand, which he has pasted on a piece of cardboard to make them more wieldable. Be it due to a terror induced by the thought of his responsibilities, or simply from a desire to disembarrass himself of a large clientele, his first care is to show all newcomers to the door. But if he meets with resistance, when it becomes evident, from the budding hairs on one's chin, or the display of a birth certificate, that no article of the directions excludes you, he conducts you, crying at the top of his voice, to a large bookcase near his desk, where he has placed those books which he considers least dangerous and least evil. Into this case he thrusts you, head and all, ordering you to choose. It was from this cave of perdition, from this deep and sombre cupboard that I obtained all my stock of wordly knowledge before the war, all that I could know of other men.

I wished to read again the files of the weeklies which appeared in F. . . . from 1890 to 1914: the *F . . . Journal,* the *F . . . Chronicle, The Little Fa . . .-ian.* It was experience full of instruction. There is the history of the world, such as we knew it. Those "resumés of the European Situation" signed so artlessly: "The F . . . ian Informant," in which the naivete at the bottom comments, even without seeing it, on the deceit above, constitute the truest account of how we were duped and of how powerless we were.

Because I now know what war is, I cannot read these journals again without horror; 1895, War in China; 1896, War in Abyssinia; 1897-98, War in the Sudan, 1899, War in South Africa; 1900, War in China; 1904, War in Manchuria; 1905, War in the Balkans. Twenty years during which the earth

was always bleeding, somewhere. We lacked imagination. We did not see this stream of blood. The earthly sphere, rolling among the stars, suffered from an inferior disorder which broke out here and there. A sore opened: Peking, Port Arthur, Mukden, Tchataldja. Continental wars, colonial wars. The white man was accomplishing his mission. The F . . . Informant denounces "Mr Chamberlain's sordid passion," but he cites with admiration the sage words of a young French minister who demands that France "exercise her privilege of carrying her light to the end of the world." Unknown to us, we were held fast in this system of violence and hypocrisy: that is what governments call depending on our patriotism and our sense of duty. We had to be ready for the day when the sore would open on the side of Verdun. While we waited they councelled us wisdom. Really, what could we do, we who had nothing? I gather from these "resumés" that our masters were not altogether content with us. What sign had escaped us? What hopes had we avowed? Our masters, those bugbears, loudly announced their discontent.

And here I find the history of our passions, the hates and the loves which were decreed unto us. 1891. The mother of Williams II has had the audacity to come to Paris, and France is dishonored. I am a year old and am covered with shame. 1896. The Tsar and Tsarina make the trip in their turn, and I feel within me the pride of a strong and free France. My passion for the Empress Alexandria dates to this time. A blind love for a princess. Here is her portrait and that of her husband, Nicholas, two figures that I used to see above my father's trunk for a long time. The order of the day was to love the muzhiks. Have you any money? Subcribe to the new Russian loan. 1898-1903. If I can rely upon these sheets, this was the most troubled period of our emotional life. Perfidious Albion becomes our great friendly neighbor. In five years, from Fachoda to the Entente Cordiale, our feelings towards her pass from the blackest hatred to the tenderest admiration. King Edward wore white gaiters and there was no doubt that he was a good fellow. About 1905, our heart could at last know repose. Tanger, Agadir had fixed its hate. From that time on we did not cease to love the English and the Russians, nor to detest the Germans.

I questioned old Pitois concerning this glorious epoch, concerning the speech of the president in 1896. He tugged at his little beard two or three times, as if to induce his memories to descend, and then, in his harsh voice, which grew louder as he continued:

"Ah, it was a splendid speech!" he said to me. "If France had always had such presidents, we wouldn't be where we are today."

"Are things going so badly, then, Monsieur Pitois?"

"No, of course not, thanks to you young men. Because you have been heroes, yes heroes!"

I received as gracefully as I could this well dealt compliment. I lowered my eyes modestly. Old Pitois continued:

"Yes, if it had not been for you, those rascals of Charles Blanc street[1] would have ruined France."

"And the president, Monsieur Pitois, what kind of a man was he?"

"A man who loved order, Monsieur, a man who was familiar with work and workers. I once heard that he employed 1,500 workers in great silk mills up north. And all went like clock-work. He was a good, a pious man. He first

[1] Old Pitois usually designates the Socialists and Syndicalists by this scornful expression: "The Charles-Blanc street crowd." The reason is that the F . . . labor exchange is located on Charles Blanc street.

offered his workers a church and then their daily bread. In short, he was a very sensible man. There is only one truth: work and piety. Work is the law of Christ. The North, for example, is the most industrious and pious province in France. You'll see, it will come to that here. I've known manufacturers here who could simply eat up the parish priest. Now they subsidize our activities. It's just as I'm telling you."

Old Pitois is not lukewarm in his faith. It always carries him away. Certain of sitting one day in the church triumphant, he awaits the hour battling in the armies of the Lord. Whatever be the subject of the conversation, he invariably breaks away and begins a sermon. I had some difficulty in returning him to the speech of 1896.

"The words of the president," he finally said to me, "lent confidence to property. It was felt that we had a government. You see, no one felt safe in his own home any longer, what with these syndicates, these strike leaders, those agitators of Charles Blanc street."

At this point in his sermon old Pitois made a clucking sound with his tongue and, menacing me with his finger, his voice exceedingly sweet and with great courtesy, he said:

"Ah, I believe that Monsieur, your father, was one of that Charles Blanc street crowd!"

I did not reply. Old Pitois had spoken so nicely, so well, and with such a noble desire not to see me follow the same sinful path! And then to hear my plebian father called "Monsieur" softened me, I believe. Man is weak. It is true that he was one of the Charles Blanc street crowd. And still I suspect that in 1896 he applauded, like the rest, like old Pitois himself, the speech of the president. He applauded because the day was a holiday; because a holiday is a day of rest, and also because there is a certain unctious manner and oratorical purring which will for a long time to come captivate the unwary. He applauded from politeness. He applauded because he was a radical. Boulangist, syndicalist, all together, and all in good faith. The business of learning to think is a difficult one.

Old Pitois conjured up the very eloquence of the president to comment on "the new situation."

"It was a proud language, Monsieur. A language to which that scoundrel Gambetta had not accustomed us with his: 'Let's not ever speak of it.' At the time I was secretary of the F . . . section of the patriots. I immediately got his idea. Peace in force and honor! Bismarck supposed that he had crushed us with his Triple Alliance. But we showed him that for once two was more than three. The Russian alliance was signed. The war began on that day. And it began with a victory. Who would have thought, after that, that the Russians would turn out so badly and rob us of our money!"

And again he wandered off, not to his book of masses but to his portfolio. He explained that this cheapskate republic should either pay the dividends on the Russian loans or else make war on the Bolsheviks.

When July 1914 came, our memories and our historical consciousness were as worthless as those of old Pitois. The time had come to put to the test the efficacy of our loves and our hates. Then in the most intelligent, the most reasonable country on earth, each of us, body and soul, was confided to the safekeeping of some mysterious medals which his mother suspended around his neck in a little bag, and, like Marlborough, left for the wars.

Discovery of Another World

But it is not yet time to evoke those miseries.

I was sixteen, I entered an enchanted world. The adventure is not very original, and the reader may be surprised that I should speak of enchantment in this connection. But the very essence of adventure is the unknown and the test of ourselves which it proposes, and I was entering an unknown world.

It was really a sort of enchantment. Not that the world around me changed. My relations with the universe continued to lack gaiety. For two years I had worked in a mill. I was employed in the office and earned twenty five francs a month. My mother endlessly repeated: "It's a positive misfortune! He doesn't even earn his board!" And I burned at those words. I felt a profound hatred for conditions about which I could do nothing. I did not protest. I knew that my mother's complaints were just. Money was needed at home. My father was ill. My mother's complaints sometimes decided me to go to my employer and ask him for a raise. I remember those incidents as some of the most humiliating and courageous of my life. My employer was not really a bad man, but he would not compromise with the principles on which reputable firms are founded. I believe that he would have preferred to give me a thousand franc note out of pure charity rather than raise my pay by five francs. In four years I received raises amounting to twenty francs; from twenty five to forty francs a month. Three sous for each working hour. My comrades in the office were treated no better. There were four of them four hulking boys newly come from the country and the boss' faithful dogs. They were sturdy, I was small, sickly and the youngest, the "kid." We each had a nail on which to hang our clothes. One day I made a mistake and hung my jacket on the chief accountant's nail. He threw it down on the ground and trampled upon it, yelling that I should keep my diseases to myself: "filthy consumptive!" They were not really wicked, but boredom induces melancholy and malice. After that I was suspect to them. I believe that they unconsciously resented the sort of dream in which I seemed to live and which often gave me the appearance of being absent in their midst.

From more genuine miseries I did not suffer much in those years. Was it the horror of this base life? Did some secret impression of what I had glimpsed at school continue to act in me? I had begun to dream with such fervor and so continuously that the miserable world about me was as if abolished. A school friend, who had remained faithful to me even after I donned a worker's blouse, was perhaps the person who opened up unto me the mysterious portals. He used to invite me up to his attic. I went there on Sundays. He was the son of a professor of physics; he had a mania for experiments and constructions, and had constructed by himself, among other marvels, an electric machine which he had carved out up to the very glass disc. When it was finished he asked me to come. He put the glass disc in motion. I trustfully put my hand on the copper bar. A strong shock revealed to me the hidden forces of the universe. Later my friend became a student of mathematics, a "grind." As for myself, I had no aptitude for even the simplest calculations. But when the vacations brought my friend back to F . . . he told me such wonderful stories about infinity, space and numbers, that I believe I am indebted to him formy first idea of an absolutely pure world animated by spirit alone.

But those days are already distant, and I have always been a man without memory, living in the moment, uneasy concerning the morrow, and never according myself those pauses during which the soul puts in order the

vanished past. My soul resembles those rivers which muse in the plains and in which the sky forever regards itself. My youth has been as a mountain spring which cascades down, runs and falls, wrapped up in its own sound. My memory is poor, and I am not certain that I can recall the true motive which, when I was about sixteen, thrust me along a totally new path. Was I only conscious of those motives then? I know that I was smothering. I broke away; I fled; I deserted. Yes, all those days have left in me only a great, vague, joyous memory. I could no longer live in the bogs, the choas, the confusion. I refused to endure any longer without understanding. It seems to me today that I suffered from a frightful mental silence which extended all around me. The sky was too low. One night in January 1905, I made my decision. For hours, seated at my table, in my icy room, I had heard my heart beat. It was impossible that the world should be so confined and sombre. Somewhere a spirit had to exist who purified, commanded, did justice and spread light. And I left in search of him. Timid heart, I said to myself, a feast is prepared for you!

From that time I lived two lives as separate as are two individuals. When I had come from the factory, done various small tasks about the house, washed and arranged the dishes, dyed black the Charles IX or Richelieu which my mother had stitched on her machine; there began, about nine in the evening, a new day for me; a new day which I met with a new and pure heart. It lasted until about two in the morning. What I read is not very important. I was drunk with liberty, with the feeling that I belonged only to myself. All my pleasure consisted in seeing how a world which until then had only moved me by its mystery, and which I knew only through its fatalities, began to take form anew by the decree of the spirit, whose sense I was gradually grasping.

I sometimes fell asleep at my table and over my papers. But if I felt sleep coming upon me, with a thousand precautions, so as not to awake anyone in the neighboring room and not hear my mother say: "You're not sleeping yet?" a reproach which hardly touched me, but which destroyed the charm of my solitude, I opened the window, and the freshness of the air cleared my head. I permitted myself a quarter of an hour's leave. The little town slept in black silence. I could almost believe that all our old miseries had declared a truce. At that time we lived near the railroad. The only signs of life were a few red fires on the signal lights on the ways, sometimes the puffing of a locomotive returning to the depot. I thought of the engine driver upon it as a companion and accomplice. The lonely night belonged to us alone. We were the only living beings in it, the only witnesses of its starry splendor. The spirit moved in it, flew from the earth to the ends of the sky, so light, so free. Magnificent nights, I fear that they created some illusion in me. The spirit will always be for me that great archangel whom I saw in my youth fly so effortlessly through the shadows. But perhaps such an illusion has its commendable side. When I have since seen so many men confound their ideas and their interests, give I know not what base concoction of their instincts and their passions as the result of their most disinterested reflections; I have said to myself that I had been very fortunate. I am almost sure of not falling into such a confusion. I do not regret having followed the great archangel in his journeys. Perhaps it was wrong of him to detach me from the earth, and we did vagabond it about a little, but it was from him that I learned that absolute disinterestedness is the first prerequisite of true reflection.

In vain did I lower the lamp wick; I squandered petroleum in a ruinous

fashion. My mother disovered my stratagem. It was a great drama, I had to reveal all: the everlasting vigils, the endless reading. "Why do you do it, what's it all for?" she asked. "You'll fall sick and then you'll be sorry." My father intervened: "Let him alone. It's his business. He'll be happier and wiser than we." For, without ever having read anything, he naturally identified, like an ancient sage, knowledge, happiness and virtue. One day the dear man even offered me, on the sly, a pipe and some tobacco to keep me awake in case I should be overcome by drowsiness. I am certain that at bottom the old agitator hoped that I would "agitate" in my turn, only better armed than he had been. My mother was fearful. All these books, all this unknown world which made me feverish, was suspect to her. She wished to keep me close by her side and suspected that all this mysterious labor might prove the prelude to a flight.

"You don't love us," she said to me one day, "neither me, nor your father —nobody. If you loved us you would consent to live as we have always lived. But you're so conceited! That's why you want to grow wise. Soon you'll only know enough to feel contempt for us."

All her words were full of the same reproach. And perhaps it is true that a little more love would have helped me to endure with greater patience. It seemed to me that she spoke in the name of an eternity of drudgery and hardship. Plebeian birth imposes as many obligations as does noble. I was a traitor. Innumerable ancestors whose portraits I had never even seen, all the ancient tribe to which I belonged, and which as far back as man's memory reached had vegetated around a calvary in the vicinity of Josselin, restrained me and rebuked my pride. The only exaltation which an old people, ignorant and Christian, could understand was not that of the intelligence but of the heart, not wisdom but saintliness. And I sometimes say to myself that if I did finally attain liberty of spirit, it was only by becoming a bad child.

I have told this story in order that my readers may know the author and be more on their guard against the prejudices which he may have. The life of the spirit was for me primarily the result of a flight and a conquest. I believe that it is that at first and almost always for all the poor wretches to whom it is socially forbidden and who finish by acquiescing in that interdiction. The books and theses of M. Maurice Barres, when I later came to know them, seemed to me comical. He wishes that culture should be a recognition of what he calls our "anterior fatalities," and a preparation for submission to them and love for them. No doubt the "anterior fatalities" to which he was subjected were not altogether devoid of agreeableness. This man, who possessed all the good things of life and who was nevertheless unhappy, could never understand that there is nothing in the "anterior fatalities" of the poor which they can love, as soon as they have seen them in their true light. Nothing. They smash these fatalities, dream of another world. Such is the price which they pay for happiness.

Apparently my first encounter with the world of books and ideas had completely intoxicated me. A lock-out broke out which lasted for several months. The employers' union had decided to crush the workers' union. The entire population of F . . . suffered the greatest privations. As for myself, I am not certain that I did not occasionally rejoice at the liberty which this forced repose granted me. In my narrow room, close to the railway crossing I was a sort of god seated before the window almost the entire day, in my hands a book, the book of knowledge, eating little, all my life reduced to a subtle flame which burned under my forehead between my eyes. The human misery around me was nothing to me. Did I already begin to experience

that sort of stupor peculiar to so many intellectuals who suppose that they can dispense with living life because they meditate upon it?

And yet! It was winter. The city was covered with a pall of gloom. The people shut themselves in with their cold and their hunger. Only from time to time the noise of a passing group filled the street. I would press my face for a few minutes to the window pane. Now it was a group from the strikers' relief station returning from the forest, a file of wheelbarrows and carts piled up with wood. They had to turn in front of our house in order to go up Charles Blanc street. They would let the carts back up. The foliage and branches acted as a brake on the roadway, and thus the carts turned more easily on the incline. Then, for honor's sake, so that their arduous labor might seem like a celebration, the men began to sing as they pulled and pushed, and, with a last effort, they seemed to draw the entire forest into the labor exchange yard. Or again, about four o'clock, it was a strike procession which crossed the city, red flag flying in front, after some meeting: a crowd of men and women who still sang of their misfortunes, their hopes and their rights, as men pray.

I found many charms in Rousard, Racine, Lamartine.

At the end of two months, the employers announced that the gates of their mills would reopen on the first of February and that those who accepted the new wage rates could return. That brought me to myself. I was a clerk, paid by the month, and consequently the dispute did not concern me. For this war had its laws, and, by a connection between the unions, the "clerks" had resumed correspondence with the mill's clientele, in anticipation of the moment when operations would recommence. But never in my life did I suffer greater anguish. Would they return? Wouldn't they? Would they admit a decisive defeat? I was faced by a world in disorder. Ten thousand famished men, women and children whose honor forced them to reply that they had not hungered enough as yet. The employers, in the Cafe du Centre, "expected a mass return." Among our people reigned the agitation of a crushed anthill. The women exchanged opinions on the doorsteps of their houses, asked each other what their men would do. The men cried together at the meetings, but, the meetings ended, they hid in their homes, pensive and not daring to utter their thoughts. Their wrath at feeling conquered in advance in a shifty battle in which they could not even close with their enemies, made them clench their trembling fists.

On the first of February, at seven o'clock, the sirens howled over the city and the gates of the mills opened. The clerks, the employers, the foremen were at their posts. We stood behind the lustrine curtains which shut off the high windows of the office on the second floor, ridiculous, observing what was taking place on the square through holes in the curtain, each taking a turn, like actors in the theatre. A small fine rain was falling, that rain so peculiarly ours . . . . the workers had huddled together on the church steps. Under the office window, gendarmes, who were to assure "freedom to work," stood on guard. Between the church and the mill, the square was empty and seemed an abyss. No one crossed it. Not a worker entered. I watched the crowd on the church steps. They yelled, sang. I recognized, one by one, the countenances on which great drama was depicted. There were those whom I would have liked to kiss.

That evening, going home, I perceived under a gas lamp, a young woman, a "yellow" whom a crowd of workers, men and women, had pressed against the wall and covered with their spittle. I turned and ran. I felt shame, and

also fear of being swept away by this whirlpool which swallowed up all joy, all happiness, all dignity.

The protracted character of the struggle had drawn attention to the city. Aided by suffering, each could believe himself the world's hostage, the victim consecrated to the happiness of the people Not a week passed but that a deputy, a trade union secretary would come on the part of some organization, or some other community, to bring us a little money, greetings, and fraternal encouragements. Perhaps it was then that I saw the birth of what shall be the religion of the future, a consciousness of the common misery of mankind, a consciousness so weighty, so profound, so unbearable that it abolished all "as for myself," all desire of possession. Life became marvellous defiance. Joy strove to be born. Nothing mattered any longer to anyone. In their very children the mothers only saw little men whom they had to dispatch to other parts of the world where they would be happier. The city was depopulated of children. They were sent to Paris, to Nantes, to Rome, where their bread would be more certain, where the sky would be higher above their heads. Thus, perhaps, new exchanges were established, new rites were instituted. It was then that Jaures came. They went to look for him at the station as they had for the president in 1896. He was a simple man with a large, placid face. It seemed, as he went up to the labor exchange that he was escorted by all the innumerable masses of the obscure and the miserable, by all whose hopes were our hopes. He spoke in the city market. The entire city had come to hear him. Two words suddenly ascended slowly, heavily, like an appeal: citizens, citizenesses. He hardly spoke to us at all of our ordeals, but he told us that we did not have the right to suffer defeat, because our struggle was not only ours, but that of all. He only appealed to our pride. He depicted for us the world which we bore in ourselves, and we wept to recognize it. And then his voice grew graver. He evoked the evils which men were suffering at that moment, the blood drenched earth, the war which like a black cloud was mounting on the horizon and rolling towards us, a furious universe which only our good sense and our will could exercise. Only then, towards the end of his address, did he call us by that tenderest of all names: "comrades," and for the first time I had a presentiment of our true destiny.

The Canticle of the Ark

I am afflicted because of thee, Jonathan, my brother.
Thou wert all my pleasure
Thy love for me was admirable.
Above the love of women.
How have the heroes fallen?
How have their arms been lost?

Such was the funeral chant which David composed on the death of Saul and Jonathan, and which he ordered to be taught to the children of Juda. It is called "The Canticle of the Ark" because mention is made there of the ark which Jonathan bore in the battles . . . .

It was in March, 1915, at the bottom of a muddy valley, where each blow with the pickaxe made the water spring up from the earth. The trenches had been built rather than dug out, being composed of bags of fagots and hurdles, an extremely weak rampart which we had to strengthen every night. Forty meters back, on the hill, the position would have been safer. But order

and honor demanded that we stay in this sewer. Not an inch of terrain should be lost. Thirty to forty steps separated us from "the others." During the moments of calm when, by chance, not a cannon, not a machine gun, not a rifle was fired, we heard their voices, the sound of the platters which they moved about. The springtime leaped into our faces. We heard the sweet wind speak to us of an eternal universe, without, at the same time, ever actually losing the fear that this other life, so close to us, our enemy who persevered at our side as we did, inspired in us. A bullet cracked against the trunk of a mutilated tree and we fell back into our darkness.

That morning the day had risen sad and grey over the trench. The faces around me were wan. We had been up all night. Our proximity to each other made us pass the time in squabbles and practical jokes. Some wag was always thinking up some mischief which would arouse the wrath and ire of his neighbor. During the night the enemy had kept up a continual rifle fire which penetrated our sacks of earth, and at several points our parapet had been completely destroyed. We were completing the repair of these breaches. Suddenly I felt what seemed like the blow of a whip upon my head. I only had time to murmur some words of farewell, prepared long beforehand, to be transmitted to my parents, and I fell to the bottom of the trench. It was a ridiculous farewell. I came to myself: the men were washing my face, staunching the blood. They showed me my handsome blue cap. The visor hung down almost completely severed. "It got the worst of it," they said to me to console me. I was feeble and lachrymose. Those who surrounded me thought that they saw death in my eyes. They wrote home that I had been killed. But I felt a great and tender peace, because the joy of life still sang within me.

I was propped up against the parapet of the trench like the cavalier Bayard at the foot of the tree. I made them bring my knapsack and I distributed all my possessions: magnificent Algerian cigarettes, tobacco, two decks of cards, provisions. Did I give all these things as one who was about to die or as one of the prosperous living? I am not sure that there was not an unconscious hypocrisy in all my gestures. I played magnificently the great role which had fallen to me. I was ignobly gentle and wise, worthy of all that I had learned in books: the ideal and model of the young stricken warrior.

It is impossible to say of such incidents what was sincere and what was play-acting. The excuse for insincerity, if it requires one, is that it sometimes seems to cover one's face as if of itself. Only the truly simple or truly great men can be certain of meeting death in their own peculiar fashion. The others all die by imitation.

As for myself, I found myself living when I expected to die. It is not in the power of everyone to be a Lazarus without making himself ridiculous. Later one gets out of it as well as he can. The traditional parade, the masks furnished us by history and culture, supplement our deficient natures. But a few minutes later I must have had an access of sincerity. At the first aid station there appeared a great bearded corporal who spoke to me of God and a supreme reconciliation. I brutally replied that from all evidence his God was not concerned about us. But I no longer had quite so much energy.

We were awaiting the stretcher bearers. I requested that someone look for Lieutenant A . . . , my comrade, who commanded a section of the ninth company and held the trenches to our right.

Suddenly he was there. I saw him appear through a fold in the bandage, with his great, hard, clear eyes, so direct, so courageous. What could I say

to him?I regret my tenderness. Possibly it was responsible for all that was to happen. I could hardly restrain my tears. I remember that I called him "my dear A . . . ," that I recommended wisdom to him, as if what had taken place gave me some right to counsel others, and urged him to pay great attention to the trenches, which had been taken on all sides, one after another. He responded with a grave smile, pressed my hand, and the stretcher bearers carried me away.

I had formerly known him at the Lycee. We did not belong to the same sphere of society. I felt that he was integrity itself, but I found him haughty and distant. Doubtlessly I seemed fanatical and conceited to him. We had encountered each other again by chance in the platoon of student officers, and had been assigned to the same regiment. I was always timid before him. I would never have dared to reveal my liking for him. He was the son of an officer, and our opinions on the war differed. He fought with enthusiasm and never displayed any visible anxiety. I supposed that he felt contempt for me.

And then: In the evening some men of the regiment came to the ambulance to which I had been transferred; they informed me that A . . . was dead. Immediately after my departure he had assumed command of the firing on the enemy's positions, brought all our cannons, all our bomb throwers into action. He himself superintended the firing of a small 35-inch cannon. About eleven o'clock he had been killed at his place.

Ever since that day I have felt that a man died, if not for me, at least because of me; and that thought, after twenty years, is still almost insupportable.

That is how a generation went to its death. How our arms were lost. For four years we could only help each other die, at a time when we should have helped each other live. That spirit of emulation which is born of the very virtues of youth, served, in our case, only the purpose of death.

These memories overwhelm me. As I recall them I can only feel how inadequate I am to restore life, with mere words, those moments which were the most agonizing of our life. Young fraternal dead, how old I feel before you. We have had to live after you. In order to speak of you more is needed than this exhausted, hardened, solitary, disabused heart of mine. It requires that living sensation that we occasionally felt in those days, the feeling that we were all the same suffering body, the same stream of fresh and pure blood, the same bared artery. I know, it was always: one lived or one died, sometimes because of the others, sometimes for the others. All existence was reduced to those tragic terms. But better than anyone, better than at any other time, have we known that solidarity, felt that we were the same blood.

At the hospital, I was placed by the window. Through the pane I could see the continual flood of men rolling between the houses on the road, all day long. An enormous mass of new flesh, the nutriment of the war. At this point of junction of the English and French armies it seemed as if all the youth of the world had made an appointment to die together. They were the flower of the men of the earth, and its hope. There were no cripples here, no diseased, lame, one-armed, weaklings, lympathics, club-feet, short-breathed. Here had come those whom, a little over twenty years before, the mothers had conceived at their best, men, real men, with broad chests. They had been measured, weighed. Not by a gram, not by a centimeter had they been found wanting. What labors awaited this Hercules? To stand lined up along walls, their heads lowered under the rain. The soldiers, the knapsack bearers, went by interminably. A strange theatre of shades. They appeared one

after another between the posts of the window. How many faces! How many faces! There were French, Canadians, Senegalese, English, Australians. Sometimes a man would tap at the window, make signs to us, offer us cigarettes, as if offering his heart. Hindus, with eyes which shone like black diamonds, and who all seemed princes of wisdom, such was the dignity of their countenances, manoeuvred about though they were like all the others, sat on the front seats of their little carts and spurred on their teams. Two or three times I also saw pass by groups of disarmed men, in skull caps and grey cloaks, prisoners, the enemy, the young men to whom we must not extend our hands and whose dreams were suspect. Their eyes were clear like the eyes of the others; they also seemed to hear the future within them, to suffer and feel shame like the others. I exchanged a look or a smile with all these passersby of the world. They were what my nurse had long ago taught me to call—a beautiful word which is an act of faith—my "fellow-creatures."

I hear the hammering of their feet along the roads of Flanders. At that time the carnival had but begun. The long theory which came from the end of the world was but beginning to pass. For three years more it was to march over these roads. Where did it disappear to? It used to be said, at the time, that it ascended to offer up its blood for civilization, for justice, for the spirit. The worst of horrors is nonsense. My brothers, my fellow creatures, have we had our fill of their mockery? The worst is that now that you are dead, the living, and among them sometimes your comrades, still dare to call upon you for corroboration. It reminds me of a poem which I read in my youth:

The dead
are discreet,
their graves
are too cold.

There is more sadness than humor in that poem. I am often reminded of it when I think of you, when the living put so much into your mouths. For they employ you to justify their new stupidities. You assure by your mere silence a sort of posthumous service. Whenever some of these fat living who own this world feel themselves menaced in their possessions, they quickly delegate one of their number to make a great speech. He is preferably the oldest among them, and his speech is always the same. You are always his best argument. Whether this old dotard gabbles of classic memories and speaks of your names, whether he prates of ancestors, or romantically evokes "the vanished and tactiturn crowd of the fatherland's great," willy-nilly, you must appear and assent to the words and wishes of the men in power. It is the last service which they require of you. You must be the firmest support of the society of the living. The old dotard is not interested in the strife that went on in your terrified soul. Your case is classified. Those whom the gods love die young. An unconscious cruelty inspires all the variations on this theme, and your rotting body must serve to beautify the fields.

I do not know of what you were thinking at the moment of your death. Each of us had his dreams. And then death and life have this in common: one dies as well as one can. But this I know, and the old dotard will never say it: it was not easy for anyone of you to die. When this old man speaks as he does, I am always astounded that some young man of today does

not rise up, some man of your age, to proclaim that he lies. Your youth is ill at ease in the tombs. Only by force were you laid to rest, and your muscles are still strained to smash the walls of your earthly prison. I can imagine what were your last soliloquies in the shelters when you had returned from sentry duty, having passed several hours with the night. Could it be that in an instant and for forever one might lose such great wonders? You felt humiliated by the air of immortality which the night and the stars bore. You desired *to be*. The task for immortality does not leave us. A soul is much vaster than what we know of it. You murmured: "Who has given me this ardent heart?" It seemed to you that all things would live a feebler and vaguer life when you would be no more. What is a spectacle without spectators? Were these clearer mirrors than your eyes? And if you should die, the joy of all the living who would have loved you, would that also quit the earth? Or would they find other loves? . . .

Meditations Upon Useless Death

For months I have not opened this journal. As I wrote those last pages I really believed that I was in the kingdom of the dead, rubbing shoulders with them. What change has taken place in me? I now see that I very wisely circled this great domain and left it behind me. Now, for the first time, I feel that I am traveling towards it.

I have come to a point in my narrative, where I despair of being able to follow a strict order. I have entered an undeterminate, unfinished epoch. From now on chronology will count for but little. The years before the war went their slow and regular way, joy alternating with misery, and occasionally one had time to live. The war precipitated, unified, destroyed all. It seems to me that it is still going on. For it really doesn't matter how one kills people. Starving them, as is done here and there at present, is no better than shooting them. For twenty years it has always been the same night. We live under some great impressions which date from that time, bearing within us, like an incurable wound, I know not what profound offense which we shall never be able to pardon. Time has only made us more conscious of it and graver. What a child one is at twenty! And how many ordeals one must have passed through before he can seriously reflect on death! Perhaps it is necessary to have oneself drawn near the kingdom, to have engaged one's place in it, to know exactly what part of heaven, between what cypresses, what stars one will have, dying, for the eternity above him. How naive one's revolts are at first! But in the measure that we remain more alone in the world, we grow profounder and truer to ourselves. The fire in our blood no longer deceives us about ourselves. We learn that our life is the life of others, the diverse and fragile societies which they form in us, and we cease to be in the measure that these societies dissolve, in the measure that the communion in which we live with them becomes less numerous and feebler.

But it happens in moments of frightful vertigo that one's dearest desire is to rejoin them in the kingdom; so that the solitude might cease and the communion begin anew.

I no longer fear death, for I now know that we are ever dying. The carnage goes on, a carnage without carnage, hardly visible and frightfully silent. Everything is dying in us. All of us, one by one. When we shall be but ourselves, then we can indeed depart. That is what one does not

know at twenty, and what one knows at forty. Then one begins to esteem life, in others still more than in oneself. Almost all my friends died in the war. It is only now that I really know what that means. Only now can I properly judge that massacre of twenty years back, all those premature and innumerable deaths. And I feel revolt rising within me.

A poet (Rene Maublanc) whose friends died in the war, once wrote this poem, so rapid, so tender:

My friends have died
I have made others.
Pardon!

Words addressed to himself by one who would at all price be consoled, but is not. One does not replace the friends of his twentieth year. And we began to die too soon, in our friends. If at least these deaths had had some sense, some value. But all is clear now, and the time has come to say the only thing one never dare say, because it makes mothers, wives, children, friends cry from horror. The time has come to dare that which shall seem blasphemy, and I shall even want the respect which is considered due for all the old griefs which have consoled themselves, as well as they could, with old illusions and old songs. I shall say that these innumerable deaths were useless. I shall say that I feel that my friends are dead for nothing. For nothing. For less than nothing, if these millions of rotting bodies are poisoning Europe, if each tomb is an altar where rancor and hate are tended, if twenty years later we yield to some baneful spell of blood and death. All this, which cost so much heartbreak, was nothing but a useless and inordinate piece of stupidity. And we were fools. Perhaps we were courageous. But we certainly were fools. We could only add to the misery of the world. If the war had never taken place the world would be much the happier for it. Who will deny the evidence? I wait to be shown, in this fine year 1933, what anyone has gained by the war. All that it succeeded in destroying could have been put in order by the reflections and discussions of men only a little more intelligent, more attentive, more wide awake. We must have the courage of these truths, if we are ever to deserve peace.

Twelve million deaths for nothing. Let not these cries be denounced as the cries of a partisan! I have had enough of partisanship. If I ever had any penchant for it. I write these things without passion, with an infinite sadness. It is not diverting to have to admit that one has lived, suffered, fought for nothing, that it were better that he had never been. Sometimes, in my boundless despair, I repeat to myself the words of Saint Augustus: "The world totters, the old man is shaken. The flesh is under the winepress so that the spirit may issue forth and be made resplendent." But am I not once again the dupe of sublime words? I have seen the bloody and mutilated flesh, and I fear that the spirit died with it. Perhaps in the future men will not dare to pass the stream of blood which rolls from the Vosges to the Sea, from Verdun to Ypres. Words, still words! The earth has drunk the blood, the bones have become dust, the great cemetery of nations has been completely overrun by vegetation. All will soon be ready for a new harvest.

I cannot bring myself to accept the idea of this frightful waste. So all is lost, then? All our life? All our youth? all our friendships, all our loves? No, none of these things have died. I would bring them to life again, were I a better magician, could I love better.

Death is inhuman. Young fraternal dead, I think of you as living. If you

knew what joy I find therein. You died because you were deceived. But your faith is not dead. Your faith, that which made you live. The very thought of your life inspires in us the feeling of love. Ordinarily one does not reflect on the fact that one is living and that those whom one loves are also living; one thinks of a thousand other unimportant things. I think of you, and somehow I regard with other eyes the young men of today who live around me. Ah! how they resemble you! Your faith shines in their eyes. I cannot bear that they should be deceived. We must ascend from those abysses into which your death first plunged us. As long as we live, let us be of the living! And let us make good use of life. Perhaps it depends upon us whether your death shall have some utility.

And this lasted for months, for years longer. The war became mechanized. Machine labor was everywhere substituted for hand labor. The killing went on with an ever increasing sureness and rapidity. But I only waited for the peace. I was a handsome officer, dressed all in blue; I wore a lovely medal. I had been declared "incapacitated," as they put it. This was very lucky for me. From time to time, every three or four months, I appeared before a medical commission. They weighed me, listened to the beating of my heart, the respiration of my lungs. "Incapacitated!" I was fit to live! For the world was so ordered, so rational, that the more one was afflicted with ills the surer one was of living. Each of these visits filled me with shame and hatred. And then I returned to my odd jobs. Some were vile. For months I served in a postal control office, I opened the letters of others, watched over all correspondence, and ferreted out all the amorous intrigues between Switzerland and the United States. "War is like that," the ridiculous after the tragic.

One day in the summer of 1917 I went with a comrade to pay a visit to Anatole France. At that time my comrade and I were in the neighborhood of Tours, in charge of a school of reeducation for blind soldiers. We racked our heads for means to distract them in their darkness, and organized conferences and concerts for them. Thus at least they passed an hour or two. We were greatly excited as we ascended the slopes which lead to la Bechellerie. Our business was to obtain France's consent to come and speak at our school. But that was not what chiefly preoccupied us. As far as I was concerned, it seemed to me that I was going to see the last of the sages. Three years before this sage had gone mad like the rest of the world: he had enticed the clarion "upon the glorious path." He had made Demarates and Xerxes converse in dialogue like a general of the allied armies and a chief of barbarian hordes. But he soon came to his senses, and now, somewhat ashamed, seeing only some dissenters like himself, he dwelt here in retirement, in a scornful silence.

The house, hidden behind high trees, had the air of another age. We entered. What quietude! But it was the quietude of an antiquary's shop. Beauty slumbered here, the beauty of wonderful things whose life seemed to have come to an end at their most beautiful moment, as if to serve as examples, for our eternal edification. An insensible and sweet stone, the golden torso of a woman, stood in the middle of the hall. What course, what *noli me tangere* held these marvels fast in their slumbers? We spoke in a low voice and, although there were before us several high upholstered armchairs, we did not sit down. A light creaking made us turn around. Then, in the embrasure of a veranda which opened upon a garden, we saw, extended on a couch of the Directory period, a women in a white dress, embroidered with little yellow flowers, who was reading. She did not raise her eyes.

We are both surprised when the old craftly sage entered. My comrade had met him once before, in peace-time, and could tell him the object of our visit. As for myself, I had actually lost the power of speech. He regarded us, he contemplated us. We wore medals and galloons. He weighed our medals in his hand, remarked that those of my friend were heavier than mine, but, taking my hand, observed the two galloons on my sleeve. Ah! this time I had the advantage over my friend! I felt ashamed. He smiled. The gods, if they exist, must smile thus when they judge our vanities. Then his countenance grew grave again and, with a melancholy gentleness, having reminded my comrade of their former meeting and their vanished hopes: "What you've done since," he said, "I won't say that it was necessary. Let's say that it was indispensable."

Thus did the ancient sage, hidden in this lofty house, accord us our pardon, inscribing to the account of fatality the sacrifices, the crimes, the courage, the naivete with which we could not have dispensed. Before this wise ancient we were but poor children. The air became heavy, conversation impossible. He showed us all the rarities of his museum, conducted us around the hall so well that we finally found ourselves again before the lady of the veranda. I no longer remember if he introduced us, but I remember that, bending over a little and taking in his hand the cloth of the white dress with yellow flowers, he rubbed the grain between his fingers, and was greatly pleased when we remarked that this stuff, like all the other bibelots of his house, was of the authentic epoch. After which he put on an unbelievable little cap to conduct us to the road.

We descended into the valley again, as one returns to the lower regions of the passions and needs, and resumed our life of lost children.

Translated from the French by B. Keen

Sandor Gergely

Homeward Bound

A Hungarian War Story of a Personal Experience

I am getting up from my bed.

I feel as if I've had a nightmare. What have I been dreaming? I cannot remember. Have I forgotten it perhaps? Or has somebody knocked me on the head? It still aches. I feel as if all the time somebody is hammering away at the back of my skull, as if powerful drills are zigzagging through my head from one temple to the other . . . . hell . . . . what a dream . . . . I cannot shake it off, even now I am awake. Anybody here? Anybody, a nurse, a pal? . . . . No, nobody, not a soul. And how dark it is. Nobody moving about. What time could it be? Is it day or night? Queer: I went to sleep in the afternoon. Have I slept till late at night then? Where are the others?

I feel to the right. In the bed a Wendian soldier has been lying of late, one of my chums. Now his bed is empty. At my left, an infantry soldier from Bacska was brought in the day before. I grope for his bed. Empty.

Again irresistible sleepiness descends on me. I am stunned. And again a blow. Meanwhile, the drilling in my left temple does not cease. Now it also starts again in my right temple . . . . the two drills are nearing each other . . . . hell! . . . . they clash in my nosebone . . . . Sparks . . . . millions of sparks, red, blue, green, violet . . . . whirling flames shoot out in front of me. A groan extracts itself from my throat. I am frightened. Is there anybody in the room?

"Nurse!" I whine.

No answer. Gradually my groans abate. Oh yes, I remember now . . . . Then again I howl out, the unbearable pain within me pouring ugly moans through my sagging mouth into the room. There I am lying now. Suddenly the pain subsides, and by and by a soft melody surrounds me, a singing silence. Softly a swinging restfulness pervades me. My head cools off; as if somebody had plunged it from the burning heat into icy water . . . . And so I am lying on my bed, the sweat freezing in a crust on my body.

Apparently I have a fever. This gas, the devil knows how it affects people. The one it kills, to the other it gives a fever. Like in my case, for instance. But that's not half so bad. A little attack of fever, and the gassed man is put into a Red Cross train, slowly its wheels begin to move, and swaying it rattles off, carrying the soldier at last homeward.

Homeward . . . . indeed. The mass murder is over, Dad, now one can start working again! Listen, Mister Postmaster, couldn't you give me a job? My qualifications? None. How could I have any? Have been a soldier for four years. Do be so kind and put in a good word for me at Mister Labady's, perhaps I could get a job on the estate? I should like to be an estate manager! . . . . or else a village notary, anywhere in a village, yonder, across the Danube, in Western Hungary.

Certainly, Mister, estate manager or village notary, I speak the language of the peasants. Not only that. I have even learnt to ponder in a real peasant way. My life is like that of the peasants. The mud that got stuck to my clothes in the trenches, the common hunger, the common latrines, the common curses we threw at the officers, the war profiteers and the elegant whores

billeted with the division . . . . all this has welded us together . . . . hell . . . . how long ago is it since I had decent clothes on. Now our arses are coming through our trousers, and our toes are sticking through our torn army boots. In our filthy-dirty forage caps we received every day our six and a half ounces of crumbling maize bread, our portion of dried vegetables and our four ounces of canned horse meat. Besides, we received two pints of water. That was our daily ration. Right after its distribution we gobbled up the eats, rinsing them down with the water and then we crept back to our places in the concrete dug-outs . . . . Opposite our positions the Yanks had dug themselves in . . . . Damn it all, will it never end? It would be good to have a job already as an estate manager or a village notary, and then, ... let anybody dare raise his hand against a poor bastard . . . . not for nothing I've got my fists . . . . What have these bloodsuckers done at home? How bitter the life of the war widows and orphans must be! The village notaries rob them of their money. But just wait till I come home! They will be weeded out by the roots, those bastards! All of 'em!

But what the hell, it looks as if I am only gabbing so much with my mates in the trenches to make sure that they'll give me a job in their villages when I come home. It's all perfectly simple: we hang the village notary on the first tree at hand, and I take over his office. No, that's impossible. I must choose another profession. Notary jobs are soaked in blood. Enough blood has been shed. But . . . . I have no abilities whatsoever. Only as a soldier I am worth something. As a peacetime soldier! In time of peace, soldiers are needed too, for keeping order. Now, that's a swell idea. A regular, that's what one should become. And then marry somewhere. Pick up some ugly-as-hell hag or other, as old as possible, with a nice big dowry and a heart defect, so that she is sure to pass out soon.

The empty sick room noisily re-echoed my cynical laughter. A lighthearted carelessness took possession of me. I lay for a long time without a thought. Then I become suddenly restless again, moving from one side to the other. Where could the others be? Is it night? Nobody in the room?

"Araskov!" I yelled at the top of my voice, "Araskov, where are you?"

But my pal from Bacska gave no reply.

"Pinteritsch . . . . Hey, Pinteritsch!" I shouted. But the Wendian infantry soldier didn't speak up either.

"Who's here?"—Silence. "Nurse, nurse!"—Nobody came, although a nurse was always supposed to sit by the door at night to keep guard, for our room was the ward for "serious cases."

"What the hell has happened?" It cannot be that . . . . Should Araskov, Pinteritsch and all the others suddenly have been removed to the "other ward?" This "other ward" in our case was the morgue. Should I be the only one left? Poor fellows. The black, fertile fields of the Bacska, the sloping Wendian hills, they are calling in vain for you from afar. Finish. And who knows whether I shall ever start out on the way home? Things are done on a mass scale here, and incessantly corpses are being shipped off to hell by the conveyer system.

I crawled out of bed. Overcome with dizziness. I had to hold myself at the edge. Groping, stumbling, clinging to the bed-steads for support, I stumbled to the door. It was shut. All around pitch darkness. Never before had I met with such a bottomless darkness—never. Horrible. This blind darkness . . . .

Blind darkness! A queer expression. A blind man cannot see, not even the darkness. Or perhaps he can? Who knows? I never spoke to a blind man about such things.

Aha, here is the door! I've found the switch too. I turn it. Once, twice, several times. Doesn't the electric light work? What's happened? I screw, I turn, I press . . . . nothing! Damn it, and then they say that the Germans are such excellent organisers! Twenty miles behind the front lines they build hospital barracks, and they don't even think it necessary to install electric light in the rooms!

But, what the hell, yesterday the lights did work! Damn it, what does it all mean? The boys all die, and the electric bulbs don't give light . . . . I tore the door open. Everywhere blackest darkness. The noise of a crowd of discussing people resounded from the courtyard.

Maybe some meeting or other is taking place down there. I bet the Commander of the Barracks has put in an appearance again, and is now giving his usual speech: "Fellow-soldiers, perseverance!" Down in the garden, all soldiers who could limp along had gathered. Those who couldn't had been carried on stretchers. And now the stiff-necked Prussian colonel was standing on a garden bench, holding forth. On his chest he carried a whole museum-full of medals. The speech was translated into Hungarian, Serbian, Rumanian, Wendian, Slovak and Polish. The interpreters were standing in a small group by themselves and racked their brains to grasp the Colonel's profundities. Among the rank and file hanging around, suppressed curses became audible, because the colonel was saying such things as: "Impress upon your relatives, upon your dear ones and near ones who stayed at home. that not only death on the battlefield itself is heroic, but that—as His Imperial Highness has emphasized on many occasions—everybody who loses his life working for the fatherland in a civil occupation back home, is likewise to be considered as a soldier, because he is falling for the same cause as the soldier in the trenches. And therefore: Perseverance!"

"If I were only home again!" the infantry soldiers were saying. "Only once more, and then I'll know what to say, I and my gun here!"

"What are you gabbing about your gun?" corporal Janosh Poedoer asked. "I, I won't lose another word over it, but without blinking an eye I'll bite through the throat of the louse who dares to ask me again whether I love my fatherland . . . . damn it all, that's what I'll do."

My pal Araskov was translating the speech into Serbian. The Serbian soldiers always swallowed the Prussian colonel's speeches contentedly. Araskov made it all up, translating something the colonel had never said. He remodeled the contents of the speech to make it pleasing to the men's ears "Soldiers, soon you'll be able to return to your homesteads, as soon as you'll have fulfilled your tasks on the French front, as soon as you'll have the horrors of the Hindenburg front behind you, you will be released from military service; and if anybody tries to lure you back to the front again, just knock him on the block with the butt of your gun."

Afterwards he interpreted for the Hungarians, again faking the text.

"I'll be damned if I haven't heard a speech like that before," Poedoer blurted out in astonishment. "War prisoners back from Russia used to talk in just the same way. And then they said they were Communists.

"That's right, Communists," Araskov nodded.

As to me, I knew about Socialism only what my teachers had ground into me in school: that Socialists are drunkards and loafers, just like their headchief Adreas Ady, that crazy poet who also died of syphilis and his drinking orgies.

Araskov used to talk to us all through the night. He came from the Ujvideck region, where he had five acres of land which were tilled by his

wife. He himself used to go to the town in spring, working all the time in Budapest and sucking in rebellious ideas. Now, only a few miles behind the front lines, he used them to upset the education we'd had, smashing and remodeling our topsyturvy conceptions of the past four bloody years. Araskov, Pinteritsch, Poedoer . . . . to them the colonel may talk as much as he likes.

Gradually the Rumanian, Slovak and other interpreters had followed Araskov's example, and there was nobody among us who would have spilt the beans. There were hardly any officers so to say. And to them it didn't matter anyhow whether the colonel preached or not; as a matter of fact, for them it wasn't necessary. THEY would fight in any case, fight for the fatherland with the last drop of blood . . . . of OTHERS. With the blood of the Araskovs, Pinteritsches, Poedoers and all the others.

I was leaning against the doorpost, listening to the humming noise from the garden. The boys were in high spirits. Roaring laughter resounded. I missed the throaty voice of the colonel however . . . . and I groped my way towards the garden. I stumbled and fell. In fact, I tumbled down five steps in one go . . . . I'd quite forgotten that there were steps here. Had I really forgotten it? . . . . No, but I hadn't seen them. And how should I? all around it was pitch dark. What on earth had happened? Have all lights gone out? Something the matter with the current in the central, or is there a hitch in the power station? To hell . . . .!

I had fallen face downward on a concrete floor. Blood trickled from my nose and at the back of my scull the hammering started again at increased speed—a maddening pain. And the drills too . . . . the drills pierced again into my brains and threatened to crash my bones. The screeching of the steel drills was answered by the hollow blows of the hammers, as if they were going to squeeze my eyes out of their sockets . . . . I burst out in a helpless whine, lugubrously re-echoed all along the corridors.

Clattering army boots made their way to where I lay. In rustling overalls the nurses came runnig by. I was lifted up. Blood and spit flowed out of my mouth and nose. I moaned. They took me to my room and put me on the bed. Shortly afterwards, Araskov too was brought in on a stretcher. He was gasping for air. The piping of his gas-eaten lung was terrifying. Later on, Pinteritsch was also dragged to his bed.

"Stop yelling, the doctor will be here any moment now," Araskov tried to quieten me.

"Nurse, please switch on the light," I asked a little calmer.

Nobody moved.

"Switch on the light, damn you all! Or light a candle at least!"

What does this mean? Nobody moves. What's on? Why have the boys suddenly changed like that? I wanted to sit up, but fell back again. My head was so heavy, it pulled me back on the cushion. I put both my hands under my neck to force myself up. Again I fell back.

"Light!" I yelled, "Nurse! LIGHT!"

The nurse bent over me, throwing herself on me with her whole body to keep me down. Her chest pressed against mine, her face touched my face. I felt her breath.

"LIGHT!" I shrieked, spitting into the woman's face above me.

The nurse screamed, but she didn't let go. The bed trembled.

Through the door, steps resounded. The room fell silent. The rattling of spurs could be heard in the hall. The army doctor entered.

"Light, for heaven's sake turn up the light, boys!" I wept.

Now the nurse let go, and with her starched dress she rustled towards the doctor.

"What's the matter with that Hungarian swine?" he asked.

I suppressed my moans. The sister, sobbing, tried to explain something. Close by I noticed an agreeable smell of cigarette smoke. The doctor kept on repeating: "Such a swine!"

In the beds all was silent, the boys had pulled the blankets over their heads. "Araskov, Araskov, you son of a bitch . . . . is that your friendship? Pinteritsch . . . . is nobody there? . . . . Light! I want to see that spur-rattling dog!"

"Light" I kept on yelling.

The nurse bent over me, gripping my fidgeting hands. The doctor sat down next to me, his hands tinkered around my face. His fingers smelled strongly of cigarettes. They fumbled about on my eyes. Hell . . . . my eyes! As if they were being scorched with red-hot irons. The doctor pulled my eyelids apart. What is he after, that ass? Does he want to examine me in the dark?

"Light!" I yelled at the top of my voice, "LIGHT!"

The army doctor closed my mouth with his hand. I caught the hand between my teeth and bit in the flesh.

"Damn him, the cur . . . ."—he jumped up, his spurs rattling—"imagine, he's blind!"

Araskov suddenly started coughing, persistently, violently, deliberately. In the near-by beds the German soldiers started to talk. The room turned around me in an incomprehensible hubbub. And slowly I began to understand: All this is happening only for my sake! For my sake Araskov is playing about with his tattered lung and with his hoarse throat as with an accordean, and for my sake Paul Henschel, the gunner, endangers the hardly healed stitches in his belly, for my sake the infantry boys are making such a noise, for the sole purpose of preventing me from hearing the words of that spur-rattling beast!

But it was too late. I had already heard those words. Distinctly, clearly and sharply they penetrated into my consciousness, like red-hot irons. Their meaning stung me to the quick: Blind . . . . imagine, the cur is blind . . . . with disgust he had said it . . . . no doubt, such a blind man is really disgusting! A worm, a crawling creature . . . .

Silence. The spurs trotted off. The linen overalls of the nurse rustled away. Nobody stirred. "Pinteritsch, what is the matter with you? You haven't yet spoken a word today. Or are you perhaps sorry for me? Hey, Pinteritsch, old boy, don't snivvel. That only upsets me, and you know, I'm blind. It isn't right to irritate a blind man! So please stop snivveling, you hear . . . ."

"Don't weep, don't cry." Pinteritsch bends over me. From the other side Araskov comes by. "It is not yet quite certain . . . ."

"What is not quite certain. And if not, what are you crying for and pitying me?"

They gave no reply. I wiped my face. It was sticky with sweat and tears. I noticed my jerky breathing. Indeed? Had I wept over myself? And the others hadn't cried at all? For a long time I sat upright, without uttering a word. At my right and left are my pals, my pals who are eaten away by gas, who every day are taken to the garden on stretchers, and day by day become weaker and frailer. They are my pals, who have swallowed the gas together with me, who perhaps in a week will pop off, and I, only I, I am the fortunate one, who has got away with . . . . blindness. No—I cannot bear it.

I'd rather drown myself here and now. In the latrine, for all I care. Sure, that will be the best, that's the right place for all dumb-witted fools who let themselves be driven to the slaughter, to have a bullet shot into their bellies. or a bayonet ripped through their guts and who wait patiently till the light of their eyes is extinguished by a gas attack. And for whom? For the officers, for the army doctors, for the nurses, for the village notaries, for the estate managers, for the factory owners.

"That's the people you ought to drown in the latrine, not yourself," Poedoer says.

Quite right. That's what one ought to do. But now it's too late. Blind is blind . . . . I threw myself on the bed and didn't utter another word. There I lay and lay. The nurse came and pricked into my arm with an injection needle. Motionless, I let everything happen . . . . and soon I felt unconsciousness coming.

The bed started to rock to and fro, then it rose and remained suspended in mid-air. And all of a sudden, noiselessly, it went off again. Higher and higher. Down below, lights glowed. Yes, down below, like balls of cotton wool, floated small, curly shrapnell clouds; in dirty-green shreds, gas fogs were hanging in the air and all around the world was aflame: villages, towns, forests . . . . all on fire! Fire everywhere! Then the two enemy lines swarmed out from the trenches and stormed against each other. Suddenly, and almost simultaneously, they raised their butcher tools. The two lines of bayonets were nearly touching . . . . hello? . . . . both lines have rebounded . . . . they turn right about and retreat, each line goes back to its own trenches. In front Pinteritsch and Araskov are running. Araskov's bayonet is just ripping through the army doctor's belly. Pinteritsch is making minced meat out of the village notary, and corporal Poedoer, with one tremendous blow, splits the skull of the estate manager.

Araskov . . . . Araskov . . . . what on earth are you doing? Why are you tearing up the red, white and green national flag? You think it is sufficient to keep the red strip only? You think it has been enough? . . . . Hurrah! . . . . Hurrah! . . . .

Early in the morning I wake up, still dizzy. I have a feeling as if I'm riding in a railway carriage. Underneath, the wheels are rattling penetratingly. I call for Araskov. Then I yell for Pinteritsch. No reply.

I crawled out of the bed. Groping my way to the passage, I trod on somebody's foot.

"Hey, can't you look out!" a German voice barked out at me.

"Shut up!"

"You . . . . swine . . . ."

I gripped hold of the man who dared talk to me like that, took him by the throat and pressed with all my might. He gasped and yelled. They had to come to the assistance of the lieutenant to free him from my grip.

"And mind you, you cuss," I told him with blissful satisfaction, "to a blind man, a blind soldier, you have to talk in a different tone!"

In a frightened voice the portly nurse whispered in my ear that the lieutenant I had nearly strangled was Count Uehritz, commander of the hospital train.

"Indeed?" With a caustic laugh I turned in the direction where I supposed the Count would be. "Indeed? Well, then everything is in the best of order. Lieutenant, come here, I just wanted to go to the can, come and help me!"

There was uproarious laughter throughout the carriage . . . .

Translated from the Gremany by George Fles

TWO CZECHOSLOVAKIAN PAINTINGS
by ERNST NEUSCHUL

REPORTAGE

Derenik Demirjian

Lenin, Hero of Folklore

Notes on a Train Ride in Armenia

Spring has torn asunder the snowy veil of old winter and is peeping out on the world through its painted eye-lashes.

The train heaves breathlessly as it flies onward across the Leninakan plain. I look out from the car window. The plain which seems to be swaying to and fro stretches out like a vast sea. Now it speeds on with the train, then it turns around it like a whirlpool. Mount Aragatz soars high up in the sky to gaze at the universal eagle dance.

The rhythmic rocking of the train is almost intoxicating. Eyes close down heavily. It seems as if I am dreaming.

Near me is sitting a Turk from Nakhichevan, accompanied by his wife—the incarnation of the dreaming and fantastic East—and his ten-year old daughter, a blooming spring flower. The further end of the seat is occupied by a Turkish Komsomol in a military cap. On the opposite berth has perched a swarthy, curly Nabuchadnezzar, an Assyrian from Persia. Next to him is an Israelite from the same country whose long beard sweeps down like a white glacier precipitating from the mountains. Scattered about in various corners are the inevitable semi-merchants, former citizens of Van.

In the adjacent compartment a group of Red Soldiers have besieged a hoary old Armenian from Shirak and are plying him with questions. On hearing his lively and curt remarks the soldiers wink to each other sportively.

"So you're quite well, Bidza, aren't you?"

The vivacious old fellow straightened himself up and strained his neck like a rooster ready to attack.

"Very well, indeed," he said. "Just like a lord."

"A lord? O, that means that you're a bourgeois then," put in the soldiers, winking mischieviously.

"Who's a bourgeois?" retorted the old man.

"Of course *you* are. You just said that you are living like a lord. We may naturally infer that you have some servants too. Undoubtedly they do the work, while you get fat on the results of their labors."

This was too much for the old fellow. The cock-fight became hotter.

"Now, look here!" sallied the old man. "You kids can't baffle me. Why should other people do my work? Am I a cripple? May my hands live long! Together with my fellow villagers, I till the soil together with them; I sow and reap the corp thereof. I live on the fruits of my own labors. I am the lord of the soil and of the plough!"

"Hail, Bidza! Well said! That's the stuff to give 'em!" cheered one of the soldiers. "And what about your hands? Are they strong enough yet?"

"Very much so! The soil still shudders when I touch it with my hands. Aren't we the feeders of the world, Sonny? Don't you worry about us! We're all right!"

The soldiers laughed. But their game was not ended. They went on teasing the old man.

"So you mean to say that your living conditions are good, isn't that so?"

"Exactly. And now there's only one thing lacking and that's peace to all the world."

"Peace is already reigning all over our country, Bidza."

"Sure! I mean the other countries. I know that our country will enjoy peace and will ever grow stronger as long as that man stands there."

"Who's that? What man do you mean?"

"Lenin."

"Lenin?"

"Yes, Lenin himself. Who else could it be? He stands there erect as a mountain and gazes at the world . . . He came down-town today to take a stroll."

"Who did? Lenin?"

"Why of course Lenin. Who else then could I mean?"

"It may have been another man Bidza!" argued one of the soldiers.

"No! It was Lenin himself, I tell you," repeated the Bidza with an earnest voice.

"Did you see him with your own eyes?"

"Now look here, boys! Do you think he is the King of England—whom I couldn't see? He's just as common a person as I am. I've seen him many a time."

"The man you saw, Bidza, may have been a Red Soldier or a worker!"

"I tell you it was Lenin himself, and no other. Don't I have eyes? Am I blind? The other day he and I sat down together and had a nice chat. He told me a lot of things."

"What did he tell?"

"Whatever he said came out from his heart and entered mine. It was there and then that I knew he was Lenin. He is full of fire. He isn't an ordinary man."

The Red Soldiers look at him with uneasy smiles. They feel rather confused. I too begin to wonder. Is he cracked? Or is he gingerly telling tales to make fools of us? Probably he has a disordered imagination.

But his eyes are sparkling with the lights of true thought. His gaze is that of a prophet. He is fascinated by an unseen vision. He sees a real picture which cannot yet be discerned by those surrounding him. Despite the fantastic nature of his story, his unwavering tone, his sparkling eyes are deeply convincing.

Yes, there's no doubt that he has seen Lenin.

"In those days when word was brought that Lenin was on his way to us, we were burning in fires. Those were bitter and hard times. Then came Lenin and like an eagle, taking us on his wings, flew high into the light."

The Red Soldiers didn't wink to each other any more. The old man "had seen" Lenin, he had "sat and chatted" with him.

The Turk sitting opposite me was making tea. He took out from his basket a tumbler and pouring tea into it, began to sip it with great relish in the cool dawn.

"Where are you bound for, Kirva?" asked one of those sitting near me.

"To my native village."

"Where is your village?"

"It's in the Nakhichevan district. It was destroyed during the war. Then I went to Baku. Now I'm going there to rest for a month."

"But you said that your village was destroyed."

"Yes, but Lenin is rebuilding it."

"Lenin?"

"Sure! I was told that he had come there."

My traveling companion is looking at me with amazement. He cannot help smiling furtively.

The Turk is serious as a statue.

"Do you know Lenin, Kirva?"

"Sure I do! No one knows him better than I do."

"Who are you yourself?"

"I am a worker."

"And what's a worker?"

"You see there are bosses and there are workers. I am a worker from Baku. Several years ago I was merely a landless peasant. Now I am a little unwell. I'm going to my village to recover my health. I'll go back to Baku again."

"Where did you see Lenin, Kirva?"

"In Baku, at the Balakhani Oil Works."

His eyes are fixed on the floor. He speaks quietly, without exhortation, as if to himself.

"When Lenin came he gathered all the workers and told them that from now on there'll be no Khans, no Sultans, no bosses. Now the peasants and workers will be the Khans and the bosses."

"What sort of a man is Lenin?"

"He is just a worker, just a simple worker as I am."

Then putting his hand on his heart, he continued:

"Lenin has been all over Hindustan, Baghdad, Farsistan, Chinaland. He has seen the poor all over the world. And now he is in Nakhichevan."

He began to smoke pensively.

"Lenin is dead, Kirva."

A light irony curved the corners of the Turk's mouth.

"Lenin dead? Humph! Don't you believe it! As long as the world lasts, Lenin will live."

And he stared straight into the eyes of the speaker, as if wishing to reprimand him for his stupidity.

Shirak is singing in the cars, chatting and laughing—and the Shirak wind is fiercely flopping in the car windows.

I've given myself up to the whims of my contemplations.

Who's this Lenin whom the old Armenian peasant and the sick Turkish worker have both seen? Who's that legendary person that has so profoundly influenced their imagination.

Are they inventing or fabricating these stories?

The train continues to rattle and rush in the Shirak plain. The mountain peaks seem to be running with us dancing madly. The East dons a purplish hue. The rising sun shoots its golden sabres higher and higher.

And here in the middle of the Leninakan plain, the poet of the masses and the fantasy of the masses are composing the great epic about Lenin.

LETTERS and DOCUMENTS

N. G. Chernishevski

Life and Esthetics

Editor's Foreword

With this introductory installment the editorial board of *International Literature* begins the publication of Chernishevski's *Life and Esthetics,* a work of the extraordinary Russian critic, novelist, scientist and revolutionist (1828-1889), devoted to the problem of art.

The best appreciation of this writer is that given by Marx and Lenin. True, neither the one nor the other wrote any special work on Chernishevski. But in their other works, articles, remarks and letters there are scattered such a great number of apt and all-sided utterances, opinions and critical remarks that on the whole they form almost exhaustive material for appreciating his philosophy, his work and his personality. In one of Lenin's books we also have a direct expression of opinion on Chernishevski's *Life and Esthetics.* The most significant fragments from the works of Marx and Lenin bearing on Chernishevski are therefore given to serve as an introduction to this work.

Life and Esthetics was written by Chernishevski as a dissertation and published in 1853, as it was, in "the first draft." His foreword to it was written thirty-five years later when it was intended to republish the work but censorship conditions interfered.

"As I found out from L (Lopatin), Chernishevski was condemned to eight years of hard labor at the Siberian mines in 1864, which means he must suffer on for another two years. The first court was honest enough to declare that there is absolutely *nothing* against him and that the supposedly conspiratorial secret letters are an evident forgery (which was really the case). But the *senate,* by imperial orders, reversed the decision of the court and sent to Siberia this able man who, as the sentence had it, was so 'clever' that 'he maintains a legally irreproachable form in his compositions but at the same time fills them with poison.' That is Russian justice."

Marx. Letter to Engels of July 5, 1870. Works *vol. 24, p. 349*

"Thanks very much for your friendly shipment of various Russian books. Everything has been received in order. Chernishevski's annotations to J. Stuart Mill I have, but I should be very glad to get the other works of this author on economics."

Marx. Letter to Nikolai-onu of June 13, 1871. Letters of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to Nikolai-onu. St. P. 1908 p. 4.

"The manuscript you sent me (*Letters Unaddressed* by Chernishevski) is still in my hands . . . It is a very interesting manuscript . . .

"I should like to publish something about the life and activities of Cherni-

shevski to awaken sympathy for him in Western Europe. But for that I need factual data."

Marx. Letter to Nikolai-onu of Dec. 12, 1872 Ibid. p. 10, II

"About Chernishevski, I should say, it is for you to decide: shall I speak only of his scientific merits or may I also touch upon other sides of his activities. In the second volume of work (*Capital*) he will, of course, figure only as an economist. A great part of his works is known to me."

Marx. Letter to Nikolai-onu of Jan. 18, 1873. Ibid p. 12

"The continental revolution of 1848-1849 had its effect also on England. People who still had pretensions to the calling of scientist and were not satisfied with the mere role of sophists and sycophants to the ruling classes, tried to reconcile the political economy of capital with the pretensions of the proletariat which could no longer be ignored. Hence that flat syncretism best represented by John Stuart Mill. This is a declaration of bancruptcy of bourgeois' political economy as has been so masterfully shown already by that great Russian scientist and critic, N. Chernishevski, in his *Essays in Political Economy According to Mill.*"

Marx. Afterword to the 2nd edition of Capital *January 24, 1873. M. Partizdat 1934 vol. I p. 13.*

". . . . we have also had plenty of filthy squabbles, although they never came out in such an impudent, open way as with you . . . By the way, one should not forget that saying of Chernishevski's, "he who makes history must not be afraid to dirty his hands."

Marx. Letter to Sorghe of April 4, 1876. In Letters of Becker, Dietzgen, Engels, Marx and others, Sorge and others. *Moscow 1913. pp. 164-165*

". . .*The role of foremost fighter can be played only by the Party guided by foremost theory.* And in order to obtain at least some concrete idea of what this means, the reader must recall all such forerunners of Russian social democracy as Gertzen, Belinski, Chernishevski and the brilliant galaxy of revolutionists of the seventies; think of the world importance Russian literature is now acquiring . . . ."

Lenin. What's to be Done. *1901-1902.* Works *vol IV pp. 380-1*

". . . Chernishevski was a Utopian Socialist who dreamt of coming to socialism by way of the old, semi-feudal, peasant commune, who did not see and could not in the sixties of the past century see, that only the development of capitalism and the proletariat can produce the material conditions and social forces for the realization of Socialism. But Chernishevski was not merely a Utopian Socialist. He was also a revolutionary democrat, he knew how to influence all political events of his period in a revolutionary spirit, advocating,—in spite of the barriers and obstacles of the censorship,—the idea of a peasant revolution, the idea of the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of all the old powers . . ."

Lenin. Peasant Reform and the Proletarian Peasant Revolution. 1911. Works, *vol. 15, p. 144*

". . . Chernishevski, who succeeded Gertzen in developing the views of the Narodniki, made great strides ahead as compared with Gertzen. Chernishevski was a more consistent and militant democrat. The spirit of the class

struggle breathes in his books. He keenly carried out that policy of exposing the treachery of liberalism which is to this day so thoroughly detested by liquidators. He was a remarkably profound critic of capitalism, notwithstanding his Utopian sort of socialism."

Lenin. On the History of the Labor Press in Russia. 1914. Works *Vol. 17, p. 342*

". . . . In philosophy Mikhailovski went a step backward from Chernishevski, the greatest representative of Utopian socialism in Russia. Chernishevski was a materialist and to the end of his days (*i. e.*, the eighties of the 19th century) ridiculed the small concessions to idealism and mysticism made by the fashionable 'positivists' (Kantians, Machians, etc.). While Mikhailovski trailed after just such positivists . . ."

Lenin. Narodniki About Mikhailovski. Works, *Vol. 17, p. 224*

". . . We have shown in detail that materialists have criticized and are criticizing Kant from a point of view diametrically opposite to the one from which Mach and Avenarius criticize him. We might add here, even though briefly, something on the gnoseological position of the great Russian Hegelian and materialist, N. G. Chernishevski. Some time after the German disciple of Feuerbach, Albrecht Rau, published his criticism of Kant, the great Russian writer, N. G. Chernishevski, also a disciple of Feuerbach, tried for the first time to put down directly his own relations to both Feuerbach and Kant. N. G. Chernishevski came out in Russian literature as an adherent of Feuerbach's as early as the fifties of the past century, but the censorship did not permit him to even mention the name of Feuerbach! In 1888 in the preface to an expected new third edition of his *Esthetic Relation of Art to Life* Chernishevski attempted to refer to Feuerbach directly, but the censorship of 1888 did not let even a mere reference to Feuerbach appear. The introduction saw the light only in 1906 . . . Chernishevski is the only really great Russian writer who remained wholly on the level of an integral philosophic materialism from the fifties to the year 1888 and who rejected the miserable nonsense of neo-Kantians, positivists, Machians and other muddlers. But Chernishevski was unable, rather, it was impossible for him, in view of the backwardness of Russian life, to rise to the dialectic materialism of Marx and Engels."

Lenin. Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. 1908. Works *Vol. 13, pp. 293-95*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the forties most educated people in Russia were greatly interested in German philosophy; our best publicists retold the Russian public, as much as was possible, the ideas dominating there. Those were the ideas of Hegel and his disciples.

Now few followers of Hegel have remained in Germany itself; fewer yet in Russia. During Hegel's lifetime the integrity of the system of thought was maintained among his disciples by his personal authority. But even during his lifetime researches appeared in German philosophy in which inferences from his basic ideas were set forth, such as he either ignored or, in extreme cases, even condemned. When the authoritative teacher died the uniformity of thought among his followers began to weaken and in 1835 the Hegelian school split up into three sections: some remained true to the conservative liberalism of their teacher and they formed the section called the center; quite a number

began to openly express opinions decisively progressive—they constituted the left section of the Hegelian school; very many of Hegel's disciples were horrified at the brusqueness of their opinions, and, in polemics with the left, rejected all those progressive elements which were joined to the conservative ones in Hegel's system—this numerous group formed the right section.

In 1846 the author got an opportunity to avail himself of good libraries and use some money for the purchase of books. Up to that time he had read only such books as can be obtained in provincial cities where there are no decent libraries. He was acquainted with Russian expositions of the Hegelian system, very inadequate ones. When he at last got the opportunity to read Hegel in the original he began a study of these treatises. In the original he liked Hegel even less than he had expected from the Russian expositions. The reason was, that the Russian researches in Hegel set forth his system in the spirit of the left section of the Hegelian school. In the original Hegel proved more kin to the philosophers of the 17th century and even the scholastics than to the Hegel in the Russian expositions of his system. Reading him was tiring due to the evident uselessness of it for forming a scientific system of thought. Just then one of Feuerbach's main works accidentally fell into the hands of the youth who was desirous of forming such a system of thought. He became a follower of this thinker; and up to the moment when the cares of life distracted him from his scientific researches, he diligently read and reread the works of Feuerbach.

Some six years after he had first made the acquaintance of Feuerbach an occasion arose when the author had to write a scientific treatise. It seemed to him that he could apply Feuerbach's basic ideas to the solution of some problems in fields of knowledge that did not enter into the researches of his teacher.

The subject of the treatise which the author had to write was to be something that related to literature. He conceived the idea of satisfying this condition by an exposition of those conceptions about art and, particularly, poetry, which seemed to him to follow upon Feuerbach's ideas. Thus the booklet, the preface to which I am here writing, is an attempt to apply Feuerbach's ideas to the solution of the fundamental problems of esthetics.

The author has no pretensions whatever to having said anything new, belonging to him personally. He desired to be only an interpreter of Feuerbach's ideas as applied to esthetics.

Strangely inconsistent with this is the fact that the name of Feuerbach is not mentioned once in the entire treatise. This is due to the fact that it was then impossible to mention this name in any Russian book. The author does not mention Hegel either although he is continually polemizing against Hegel's theories of esthetics then still continuing to dominate Russian literature, but set forth without mentioning Hegel's name. This name was then also an inconvenient one to use in the Russian language.

Among the treatises on esthetics, Fischer's monumental and very erudite book *Esthetics, or Science of the Beautiful* was then considered the best. Fischer was a left Hegelian but his name was not included among those inconvenient to mention, hence the author mentions him when he finds it necessary to point out against whom he is polemizing.

Applying Feuerbach's basic ideas to the solution of problems of esthetics the author arrives at a system of conceptions completely opposed to the esthetic theory maintained by Fischer. This corresponds to the relation between the philosophies of Feuerbach and Hegel. It is entirely different from the metaphysical systems, the best of which, scientifically was the Hegelian one.

Kinship of content has disappeared and the only thing that remains is the employment of some terms common to all German systems of philosophy from Kant to Hegel.

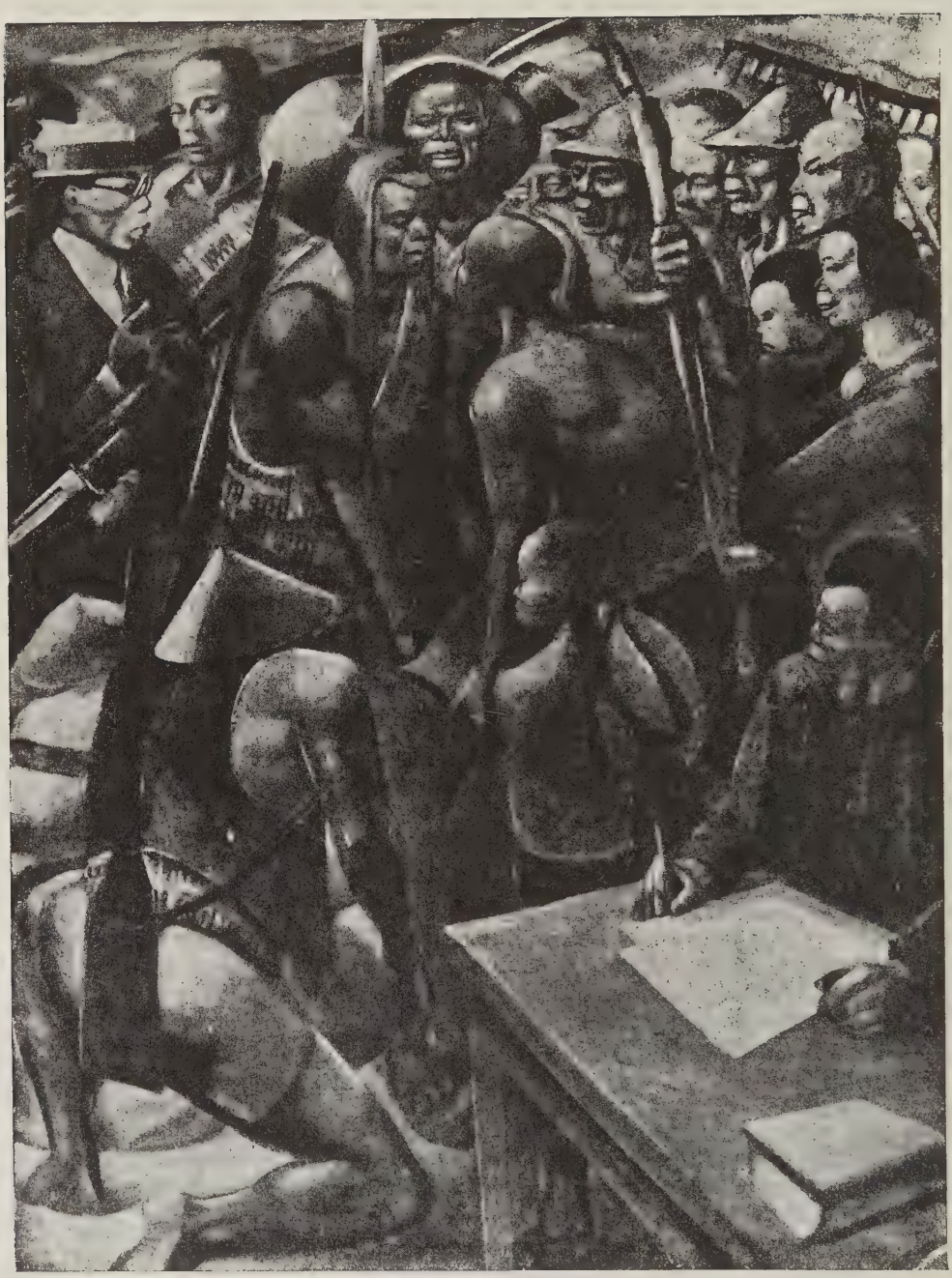
Feuerbach's system is of a purely scientific nature.

But soon after he had worked out his system ill health curtailed his activity. He was not yet old, but he already felt that he would not have time to set forth in conformance with his fundamental scientific ideas, all those special sciences which were then and still are the learned province of so-called philosophers, because of the lack of specialists capable of working out the broad conceptions upon which the solution of the basic questions of these branches of knowledge is based. (To enumerate these sciences by their old names the most important of them are: logic, esthetics, moral philosophy, the philosophy of history). That is why he said in the preface to his collected works that these works should be replaced by others, but he lacks the physical strength to do so. This feeling also explains his sad answer to the question he puts himself: Has not your new point of view also become antiquated? To my regret, yes. Leider, Leider! Has it really become antiquated? Of course it has, in the sense that the center of research on the broader problems of science, should be shifted from the field of special investigations of the theoretical convictions of the masses of the peoples and of learned systems built up on the basis of these popular conceptions, to the field of natural science. But this has not been done yet. Those naturalists who deem themselves builders of all embracing theories, in reality remain the disciples, and usually poor disciples, of ancient thinkers who have created metaphysical systems, and usually of such thinkers whose systems have long been demolished partly by Schelling and finally Hegel. It is sufficient to recall that most naturalists attempting to construct broad theories of the laws of action of human thought, repeat the metaphysical theories of Kant on the subjectiveness of our knowledge, argue from Kant's words that the forms of our physical sensations are unlike the really existing objects and that consequently things as they really exist and their real properties, their real interrelations remain unknowable to us, and, if they were knowable, they could not be the object of our thought, which clothes all the material of knowledge in forms differing entirely from the forms of real existence; that the very laws of thought have only a subjective significance, that in reality there is no such thing as what we deem the connection of cause and effect, because there is nothing previous and nothing following, no whole and no parts, and so on and so forth. When the naturalists will cease to talk such and similar metaphysical nonsense they will become capable of working out, and undoubtedly will work out, on the basis of natural science, systems of thought more precise and more complete than those set forth by Feuerbach. For the present, however, the best exposition of scientific conceptions on the so-called fundamental questions engaging human curiosity remains that of Feuerbach.

In general the author claims primacy to only those particular thoughts which refer especially to esthetics. All thoughts of a broader nature in this booklet belong to Feuerbach.

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

(To Be Continued)



Red China, a Painting by the American Artist, Jacob Burck

ARTICLES and CRITICISM

Sergei Dinamov

King Lear

A Soviet View of Shakespeare's Masterpiece

With what a sombre light the world of this tragedy is illuminated! How strange are its people! How black their malice! How bitter their hatred! How revolting their envy and how awful their vindictiveness! It is as though Shakespeare had gathered together all the malice and bloodthirstyness of the world and poured them into the heroes of this play.

Even reading *King Lear* is an emotional experience and carries us like a whirlpool into the lives of its characters. That is great art. It is real as life and vital as reality. This brilliant artist's creation is intelligible to all. But how deceptive those winding pathways often are, which lead to the summit of a mountain. You think you have only to turn another corner to reach the top, but in reality there are still leagues to be climbed.

It is the same with Shakespeare. He is simple and easy to understand, he is lucid and accessible to all. He appears to be completely transparent. But it is the transparency of a clear sky which in the far elusive distance passes into a mist, so thick and impenetrable that it strains the eyes to try and see through it. Shakespeare makes one think. He exalts the mind, he kindles it at the flame of his genius.

Lear is the chief character in the play. He stands at the meeting point of all the threats of the tragic plot. His presence keeps it alive. His last exit coincides with the last lines of the play. The very first scene discloses him as a man for whom neither human beings nor human compassion exist, a man who had made his own ego a law for all living things.

Xerxes lashed the disobedient sea. Lear would have punished the sun itself if it had shone down on him with insufficient respect for his royal dignity.

He looks upon the whole world as a ball which he can throw in any direction he pleases, and men are only motes in the air, a mere breath will disturb them and a wave of the hand will bring them to the ground.

Here is King Lear's first suave and serene monologue.

> Meantime we shall express our darker purpose—
> Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
> In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent
> To shake all cares and business from our age
> Conferring them on younger strengths while we
> Unburdened crawl toward death.

What a majestic and benign old man. He is only wearied of his power and a little before his time he has resolved to free himself of it. But suddenly this smooth stream of words meets with an obstacle.

Cordelia dares to tell him, the King himself, the truth

> . . . I love your majesty
> According to my bond, no more nor less.

And Lear is enveloped, as it were, by a cloud of madness. All his benignity disappears and the audience sees before them a despot whose whims and caprices know no bounds.

"Come not between the dragon and his wrath" he cries, Cordelia is cast out by Lear, deprived of her dowry and immediately becomes for him a poor and despicable creature. He curses her, and his language becomes abrupt and harsh.

> Better thou
> hadst not been born than not have please'd me better.

He exposes his own daughter to the greatest humiliation and this only because she is unwilling to lie, because she cannot bring herself to be a flatterer and a hypocrite.

Later on his fool tells him that he has pared his wits on both sides and left nothing in the middle. And it is just here that the paring down of his mind begins. From here on Lear begins to fall from the height from whence he had seen only himself and no one beside him.

Hegel said that Shakespeare had depicted pure evil carried to the extreme of hideousness and repulsiveness: (*Aesthetik,* German Edition, 1931, p. 304). Hegel sees in the play "an extraordinary unity of unrestricted evil."

How different the real Lear of Shakespeare is to the petty bourgeois sentimental Lear which The Studio Theatre (Now the Second Moscow Art Theatre) presented in 1922, interpreting Shakespeare as though he were Dickens.

The evil in this play is powerful, it is hard as steel.

Kent, the loyal and honest is incensed at the behavior of his superior, and he quite openly and fearlessly speaks out what he thinks. He shouts at the King as though at an ordinary human being.

> Be Kent unmannerly
> When Lear is mad. What would'st thou do old man?
> Thinks thou that duty shall have dread to speak
> When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound
> When Majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state!

And when Lear threatens him he answers that we will not keep silence as the King has acted wrongly. He goes away into exile with these words of farewell to Lear:

> Fare thee well, King, sith thus thou wilt appear
> Freedom lives hence and banishment is here.

But he remains loyal and this increases Lear's guilt and heightens the dramatic situation. Kent after disguising himself, again enters the services of Lear and does everything he can to save him in spite of the rough treatment he has received at his hands.

Lear has cut himself off from the best and is left with the worst.

The world darkens for Lear, and the minute fragments of the world which are all that remains that his mind can grasp stand out sharply and are piercingly painful to his eyes.

There is something hateful, something terrible about this blindness of Lear's, for this wave of anger finds its strength in the strength of authority. How fierce is Lear's anger in the following scenes! How terrible are the curses he pronounces! But they do not shake the world; no one is demolished by them. Here in the first scene however his sceptre makes every word that he

utters a command and every command a sword, every flash of wrath a hurricane. Here his anger rends and destroys, but afterwards it becomes a mere state of mind, mere words that are caught up by the wind and dissipated in the wide spaces of the sky.

But the chief idea in the first act is not to be found in Cordelia. We must not forget that Lear looks upon his kingdom as his personal property. He cuts it in pieces and destroys its unity for a mere whim of his own. In this he is following a purely feudal practise which was customary when every baron was a king, recognizing the authority of no other, dividing England into small parts and struggling against the unity of the State and centralized authority. The Wars of the Roses, during which the feudal barons almost completely exterminated one another, are an example of the standpoint taken up by Lear.

Here Shakespeare, struggling, as in all his plays against the feudal disintegration of England, and the system of ideas and sentiments belonging to feudalism (espectally in *King John, Richard II, Richard III, Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*) continues his attack on feudalism, and shows this to be the social political basis of Lear's psychology. During the period depicted by Shakespeare in this play, the bulwark of the system was the family. Family ties were extraordinarily strong. Shakespeare, in order to show the disintegration of Lear's kingdom, does so chiefly by depicting the disintegration and collapse of the family (Goneril and Albany, Regan and Cornwall and the families of Gloucester and Lear himself).

And it is not the fact that he gives up his crown while still remaining King due to his regard for himself as a person of tremendous authority. There seem to him to be no limits to his power. To die and give up his crown after death is too ordinary a thing for him. Is it not rather the desire to enjoy his own generosity, to feel his own power during his life-time, to hear with his own ears the expressions of delighted gratitude from his daughters (who seem to him so insignificant that no shadow of a fear for the future passes through his mind) is it not this that made Lear take the step which proves so fatal and results in the kingdom being divided up into separate baronies? Between Albany and Cornwall a rift very soon forms and it is upon this, among other things, that Kent's hopes of victory are built. We must not forget however that Lear himself refers to his plan to divide his kingdom as his "darker purpose."

King Lear was written at a period when the idea of the unity of the realm was the dominant one, when the attempts of James I to put things back only served to show in a clearer light the impossibility of such a return to an earlier stage.

At a time when feudalism had not finally passed away but the new era was dawning, this act of Lear's acquired particular significance. The theme of the play went off like a bomb and its fragments went home among the opponents of the newborn society and James I himself was hit by them.

Borrowing the story of King Lear from Holinshead (Holinshead in his turn borrowed it from other sources) Shakespeare worked it out as an attack on feudalism, which did not limit itself to Holinshead's situation but went a good deal further. The drama took the form of a conflict of characters, The old morality was represented by Lear himself, Goneril, Regan and Edmund, while at the same time in the character of Lear Shakespeare showed how this morality was doomed and exposed the disastrousness of the sentiments cherished by the feudal nobility and all the horror of the old order .

The tearing out of Gloucester's eyes, the number of deaths (Oswald, Cornwall's servant, Cornwall himself, and officers of Edmund's army, Regan, Cordelia and Edmund are all killed) as well as the whole background of cruelty and barbarity, show with remarkable clearness the sinister forces that Lear let loose when he destroyed the unity of the realm. Shakespeare made this play a great deal more gruesome than any of his previous ones.

While in *King Lear* the whole point was the simple truth that it is harmful to divide the State, this truth is only a part of the theme, and does not exhaust the great message of the tragedy. Goethe considered this first scene stupid, but this was merely the blindness of an artist who failed to see its tremendous meaning.

The loyal Kent who stood like a sharp sword before his King, ready to defend him, is banished. The terse and honest Cordelia is also banished. The kingdom is devided into two equal parts and handed ever to Regan and Goneril. The King becomes a mere father and his daughters become queens. The roles have been changed though the ties of blood and birth remain. But how tight this turning of the tables has stretched them. How high the daughters have risen and how low the father has fallen.

But have they become wiser? No. Have they become more generous? Certainly not. Have they become any more human than they were? Not a whit more. The reverse is the case. What then has changed? Only this, that in their hands is power and on their heads a crown.

It is as though Shakespeare were telling us how little it means to be a mere human being, how insufficient it is in a world which is so strictly arranged into hierachies and ranks.

Consider *Romeo and Juliet*. The same meloncholy flute note is heard here too. Men cannot be mere men because a blood feud, one of the petrified pillars of the feudal system, stands in the way of their hearts and feelings.

And now the first bitter drops of humiliation begin to soak into Lear's finger tips without penetrating as yet further into his body or causing his brain to be bombarded with the poison of deadly insult.

In the third scene the ex-king receives his first blow (the second scene, as the reader will remember, takes place in Gloucester's house and has not as yet any connection with Lear. It did not lake long for this blow to mature. That is what made it so painful. We do not know how long Lear has been staying with Goneril but we do know this, that there is not a single hint in the whole play, not a single scene where any evidence is given that Goneril has ever shown any attention to her father. But we hear as she speaks to her servant—her servant remember!):

> By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
> He flashes into one gross crime or other,
> That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it
> His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
> On every trifle.—When he returns from hunting
> I will not speak with him; say I am sick.
> If you come slack of former services
> You shall do well, the fault of it I'll answer. (I. 3)

Goneril is one mass of hypocricy. She has such an unctuous and courtly manner of speech when she lies but can only find the coarsest and most biting words for the truth. Her hypocricy never leaves her, it is her constant guide through life and prompts her in every action.

And now we find her ready to cast her father from her doors. She hates him. He is for her merely a tedious old man. But with what tenderness

she pierces him to the very heart, what flattery and falsehood are in her words as though their steel were softened by them and the wound that they inflict were made less painful by their presence.

> I had thought by making this well known unto you
> To have found a safe red'iess but now grow fearful
> By what yourself too late have spoke and done
> That you protect this course, and put it one
> By your allowance; which if you should, the fault
> Would not scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,
> Which in the tender of a wholesome weal,
> Might in their working do you that offence,
> Which else were shame, but then necessity
> Will call discreet proceeding. (I. 4)

It is after this hypocritical utterance that Lear cries out: "Are you our daughter?"

She speaks of being sorry for Lear, but Lear knows that if she is sorry for anyone in this world it is for herself. But how majestically and proudly she meets Lear when he has come to be dependent on her!

Yes, she is certainly the ill-natured Lear's daughter, he could not deny that she is his daughter, the evil in her character is an evil to which Lear gave birth.

Later on, in the second scene of Act IV she herself says that her life is hateful. She becomes so cynical that her husband, Albany, recoils from her and cries:

> See thyself, devil!
> Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
> So horrid as in woman. (IV. 2)

Regan is not only Goneril's sister in fact, she is spiritual sister also. Hers also is a lying tongue, hers also are bloody deeds and she too is ready for any crime in order to gain her end.

Listen to what she says when she answers the King after being given a third of his kingdom. How she loves him! For what sacrifices is she not ready?

> I am made of that self metal as my sister,
> And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
> I find she names my very deed a love;
> Only she comes too short,—that I profess
> Myself an enemy to all other joys
> Which the most precious square of sense professes
> And find I am alone felicitate
> In your dear higness' love.

What is interesting about these two metaphors is that they contain a certain element of truth. Lear has indeed no need of a hundred knights if he has divided his kingdom. There is no reason why he should want to feel all the pomp of kingship if he has no longer the kingdom in his hands. But this is only a half truth and that is what complicates Regan's and Goneril's figures of speech and gives them life. Lear owing to the very nature of his psychological makeup needs all or nothing, absolute power or complete ruin. In taking from him the most insignificant thing they are taking everything, for Lear is an unusually whole and integrated character. His ambitions know no bounds.

In introducing the hundred knight episode Shakespeare gave expression in scene and action to this philosophy of primitive despotism.

Regan and Goneril are Lear's daughters, they are cast in his mould. It is from him they have learnt their cruelty and tyranny. However terrible it may seem, it is he who has brought them up as they are. Their characters are supplementary to Lear's. They are required in order to bring out those of the King's characteristics which are revolting and despicable.

They humiliate the old King—and we are glad of this humiliation because we remember how he humiliated Cordelia and Kent.

Lear is receiving his first blow, his first insult.

Thus the first stage of the second cycle of Lear's evolution begins. We have seen him unshakable on his throne at the heights of his power, but he has descended from his throne to the ground, little suspecting that he will soon have to grovel in the dust. He still stands, but the ground has already shaken under him and Lear has begun to totter. Beside him, however, as though on another piece of ground stands his daughter Goneril, whose words are now a command and whose command is now law, for in Lear's world and that of his daughters might is law, authority is right. And the fool—his own fool taunts him.

> Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou
> hadst not need to care for her frowing: now
> thou art an O without a figure. (I. 4)

Probably even the most thundering din seemed quiet to the inhabitants of Lisbon after the annihilating roar of the great earthquake. All that Lear has said heretofore seemed quiet, almost inaudible, for the time has come for the last and most terrible words to be pronounced, after which all other words fade into insignificance.

Lear pronounces them and they fall upon Goneril, his daughter, and tear her from him and him from her. "Are you our daughter?"

What a headlong descent, with what sudden force the bonds of kinship are rent asunder. Bitterness, gall, torment, rancor, helplessness—what a tangle of feelings was in his mind, darkened by his great humiliation.

> Does any here know me?—This is not Lear:
> Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where [illegible]
> Either his notion weakens; his discernings
> Are lethargied.—Ha! waking? this not so—
> Who is it that can tell me who I am?

And the fool answers: "Lear's shadow!"

The cycle is complete. Then it is that the thought of his guilt before Cordelia comes to him. We are brought back to the first scene which now appears in a new light. Thus Shakespeare introduces into this passionate symphony a new note of sympathy for Lear, a note that is scarcely audible or rather has been scarcely audible. He has been a tyrant and now he is a victim, he has been accustomed to doing people injury and now he himself is suffering injury.

> . . . O most small fault
> How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
> Which, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature
> From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love
> And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear! (I. 4)

It is of Cordelia that Lear thinks in these moments of bitter despair. Up till now Cordelia has only appeared in the first scene, but nevertheless her character has been firmly impressed on our minds.

With Cordelia Shakespeare has brought an entirely new character into English literature and run counter to traditional esthetic canons. How different this King's daughter is to all the princesses of English literature. There is no court sycophancy about her. She is plainspoken and her words are studied. She reminds one rather of a businesslike burgher's daughter, who likes to have everything in black and white. She has a good many rationalist traits. She has no room for exaggerated rhetoric, she prefers to do without the sort of conventionalities which one is expected to say even when neither the person to whom they are said believes one word of them. There is something of the puritanism of the English bourgeoisie in Cordelia and very few royal characteristics.

For instance, here is one of her first speeches in Act I, scene I.

Cordelia: Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him? half my care and duty.
Sir I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.
Lear: But goes your heart with this?
Cordelia: Ay good my lord.
Lear: So young and so untender?
Cordelia: So young my lord and true. (I. 1)

Even at the most tragic moment when she suddenly learns of her father's terrible plight and her sisters' behaviour she does not lose control of herself.

Kent: Did your letters pierce the queen to
any demonstration of grief?
Gent: Ay sir: she took them, read them in my presence,
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd she was a queen
Over her passion: who, most rebel-like,
Sought to be king o'er her. (IV. 3)

She prefers to give up riches and honour than to lie. Unlike her sisters she will not allow a lying and deceiving tongue to plead her cause instead of deeds and genuine feelings. The king has told her plainly that if she wishes to receive the best portion she must speak fine words.

"What can you say to draw a third more opulent
than your sisters? Speak!" "Nothing my lord."

This soberness, this rational attitude, which seem even a little crude, but are in reality absolutely true to life, stand out in particularly clear relief against her times and her surroundings. A deliberate contrast seems here to be made between false romanticism and vigorous realism.

Cordelia: I yet beseech your majesty,—
If for I want that glib and oily art
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend
I'll do't before I speak,—that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action or dishonoured step,
That have deprived me of your grace and favour;
But even for want of that for which I am richer
A still soliciting eye, and such a tongue
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost me in your liking.

Cordelia is a strong character who finds her support, not in physical strength but in the power of honesty and sincerity, the power of the new epoch of the Renaissance. It is by no means hardness of heart. Kent is right when he says

> Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
> Nor are those empty hearted whose low sound
> Reverbs no hollowness.

Here two types of conduct are contrasted with one another, that of Lear, Goneril and Regan on the one hand and that of Kent and Cordelia on the other.

The difference between Goneril's and Regan's conduct and that of Cordelia is the difference between craftiness and straigtforwardness. We have here the clash between truth and falsehood, sincerity and hypocrisy, between fine words and plain speaking, between singlemindedness and arrière pensée. "I want that glibe and oily art," says Cordelia and this throws light on the course she takes. How deep Lear must have sunk into the slough of worldliness not to be able to see Cordelia's virtues, to be able to banish her without seeing through the "glibe and oily arts" of her sisters. Cordelia is a judgment on Lear, his attitude to her itself passes sentence upon him.

There is one other interesting trait in Cordelia's character. Although a princess, one of the King's daughters who has been brought up in luxury, she nevertheless values genuine human feelings above all else. These are for her worth more than all merely material or clan relationships. She is ready to live with her lover in a hut if he truly loves her. She says straight out to the Duke of Burgundy:

> Since that respects of fortune are his love
> I shall not be his wife. (I. 1)

She does not wish to lower herself. Her speech bears witness to an inner sense of dignity which does not allow her to be intimidated either by Lear's anger or by her sudden fall from her high position. In losing the king's favour she loses nothing of value that she formerly possessed, for Lear could not deprive her of her magnificent human qualities. The French King realises this when he says:

> . . . . Love's not love
> When it is mingled with regards that stand
> Aloof from the entire point. (I. 1)

And when Cordelia goes with the French troops to fight against Edmund and her sisters she states quite clearly that she has no ambition but is fighting for honour and her father's rights.

> No blown ambition does our arms incite,
> But love, dear love, and our aged father's right.

Her character in the play brings out the ideas that plain ungilded feelings are of worth, that there may be great love without great riches, that wealth of feelings between human beings must not be associated with mere material wealth, that the worth of a man's feelings does not depend on his fortune. Cordelia remains great even in her poverty, while riches turn her sisters into monsters.

But why in the end does she come to grief? Why does Lear appear in the last scene with the lifeless Cordelia in his arms? It is difficult to find an ex-

planation of all details in a work of art. But one feels that Cordelia's death is in perfect harmony with the gloomy atmosphere of the whole tragedy which raises doubts in one's mind as to the possibility of happiness on such a frightful planet inhabited by such terrible people. Cordelia's death also brings out most vividly the cruelty of Lear's enemies (especially Edmund) who stop at nothing to gain their ends. The last scene leaves no room for optimism. Only in passing, in one phrase of Edgar's, is confidence expressed that others will have a better life and then only if they do not live so long as Lear.

But the chief cause of Cordelia's death may be attributed to the fact that Shakespeare wanted to show the downfall of Lear's whole line. No one was left of that cruel family. It had come to an end, as that whole epoch had come to an end.

Cordelia's death is quite consistent with the main theme, for Lear's blood flows in her veins; in her character also there are purely feudal traits, for she is obstinate and high handed on occasions when she ought to be yielding, and is no less ruthless than her sisters. The only difference is that her sisters' ruthlessness is directed against their father, but Cordelia turns the French sword against her own country on the pretext of protecting her father.

But let us return to the scene where Lear repents at having banished his youngest daughter.

Lear has been false to nature in turning out Cordelia. Goneril turns him out and so the account is settled. And so later in Act II scene 4 Lear again returns to this thought like a murderer to the scene of his crime. It is the same old Lear, the man of extremes who cannot base true deeds on true thoughts. What a foul stream of imprecations he pours upon the head of his daughter Goneril, how crude and revolting he is in his powerless anger. It is not just the blind and malignant raving of an old man.

But through this viscid, offensive mass of vituperation one hears the fearful despairing cry: "O fool I shall go mad." (II. 4)

And later on with Regan he repeats the same thought: "I pr'ythee daughter, do not make me mad."

Lear tries to hold himself together, he grasps fiercely at his escaping thoughts and tries to make reason rule once more.

He clings hysterically to his departing reason which was of so little service to him in prosperity but which has now become so indispensable in misfortune.

He is shaken by a black and helpless fury. He is ready to curse everything and his terrible words burst like foul bubbles on a stagnant bog, filling the air with their poison. But they are impotent, these words of his, as impotent as if the wind were blowing in his direction and flinging his imprecations back into his face, only once more to torment his maddened brain.

If Lear had right entirely on his side there would be no tragedy, nor if he had been entirely in the wrong would passions have been heated to such blinding incandescence. He writhes like a prisoner before the guillotine. The guillotine stands there, black and silent, and in a few moments its knife will fall and the victim's fear-contorted features will be bathed in blood.

He says that Goneril "looked black upon him, struck him with her tongue most serpent like upon the very heart," and these wild and malignant words break from him:

> You nimble lightenings, dart your blinding flames
> Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
> You fen suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
> To fall and blast her pride.

It is because Lear is right up to a point that he makes such a complex dramatic figure. If he had been entirely right like Edgar who was also turned out by Gloucester, a tremendous inward sense of strength would have supported him. He is turned out. But he himself has turned out Cordelia. He is humiliated by his own daughter? But has not one of his daughters been humiliated by him? But he was her father! And she was his daughter and was weak and helpless. But he is an old man! But she was young and inexperienced. Did he not give all that he had to Regan and Goneril? Yes, but in doing so he deprived Cordelia of all that *she* had.

He had been paid back in full, and this cancels, in a way, all his threats and imprecations. He cannot keep his dignity in misfortune, his strength in trouble and his pride in humiliation. He falls as soon as he has been struck.

He has been deprived of his high position and he finds himself as helpless as a snail that has been deprived of its shell. He used to be a king, but what has he now become? He asks Oswald, Goneril's servant, "What am I, sir?" and he is told in answer, "My lady's father." Only his daughter's father—no word about his royal status.

Thus majesty has been brought low, power has become weakness, strength impotency, sovereignty—defencelessness. How little was required to turn the first set of attributes into the second—merely a throne and a crown.... But of what immense significance this is, it means that the chief thing is not the crown on the man, but the man himself, not the regal but the human attributes.

Is not the immensity of what Shakespeare is saying here due to the fact that we are prevented from understanding it fully by its apparent simplicity and transparency? Is it not a reflection of the humanist philosophy? I repeat (for those who need repetitions) that it *is* only a reflection. But does not the moon only shine with the light of the earth? And yet on a cold night with the snow on the ground how bright it shines. Lear had not been a human being, he had been a king.

The first act comes to an end. As the play was performed in 1606 it ended here. Lear goes out with a feeling of confidence in the love and care of his second daughter, Regan, lighting his way like a torch. He leaves suffering behind him thinking that he is about to find joy. He raves with humiliation, but thinks that he has the consolation of love to look forward to. He abandons the daughter who has ceased being a daughter to him and decides to go to her sister.

II

Lear is in Gloucester's castle whence Regan has come in order to avoid him. Lear's first steps towards Regan bring him to Kent who is sitting in the stocks. Earlier in the play Kent has disguised himself and entered Lear's service, and on this occasion he has been sent in advance of the King as his messenger. Shakespeare immediately brings the action to boiling point. Lear looks upon it as an unheard of insult, worse than murder, that his messenger has been put into the stocks.

Lear has set out for Regan's household with hope in his heart. He has been led there by a false hope and comes into the courtyard like an animal that steps on the floor of the slaughterhouse which is sticky with blood, without suspecting the fate that awaits it there.

Regan is like Goneril. Goneril is like Regan. Thus the evil is doubled, the

misfortune is doubled. Shakespeare again brings Goneril on the scene and the dramatic situation becomes tenser still. Lear is afraid of losing strength and falling and he appeals to God to support him. It is here that he makes the following fearful and passionate speech.

> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall,—I will do such things
> What they are yet I know not; but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth. You think I weep.
> No, I'll not weep
> I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
> ere I'll weep.—O fool, I shall go mad, (II. 4)

The words which Lear feared have been spoken. He loses his reason. Madness enters into him and his brain begins to cloud over.

The king has become a father, the autocrat has become a human being. How monstrous must his lack of understanding of himself and the world have been if suddenly being turned into a man has undermined his reason. Madness comes to Lear just at the moment when he ceases to be a king and becomes other peoples' equal. Equality is for Lear unbearable and savours of death. It is equality which strikes the hardest blow.

Necessities are not enough for Lear, he wants more than what is necessary in order not to feel himself one of the herd. But just as the vast majority are members of the herd because they have not got even the bare necessities, so the more superfluous things Lear has the more exalted he feels himself to be. This is a clear example of philosophical inequality made into a law of life for all that exists. Here the reason of Lear's anger is that he is deprived of the right to have a large suite, that the time has come when he has to weigh his desires before expressing them, to ask the price of a thing before taking it.

Shakespeare very clearly shows the economic foundation of Lear's authority here in this scene and in all Lear's conduct he shows that riches are not a source of power and that authority in society is based on exploitation. Authority is not merely power, it is also riches.

Lear was deprived of his authority, and thereby also of his riches. Lear is not allowed to enjoy what he wants, and this deprives him of his authority.

Lear is at a loss in a world where he is not the chief person. When he himself is not everything he has to run away. If he is not everything, then nothing is anything to him, for he begins and ends all his reckonings with himself.

The second act comes to an end. Darkness falls on the world. A storm like some dark cavalry breaks loose and makes for Lear. Can you hear the howling of the wind?

> Cornwall: Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night:
> My Regan counsels well: come out o'the storm.

"Come out of the storm!" A warm hearth for them—the bare heath for Lear.

Thus a new chapter of suffering opens for Lear. He becomes a lonely exile who has no hope to illuminate his horizon. The darkness of night intensified by the storm are his companions. Remember Bagritski's words from the *Ballad of Whittington*: "'Twas twilight and the wind did rave." But here is was not twilight but night, it was not a wind but a hurricane by which Lear was surrounded. Let us follow him on his new path of misery.

But let us introduce ourselves first to Lear's companion, the court fool. We do not know how Shakespeare painted the character of the fool. We do not know everything that the fool said on the stage in Shakespeare's day. The

stage fool was expected to come out frequently with new quips and witticisms, and so as a rule the actors who took his part added a great deal to their text. But from what has come down to us in the extant text of *King Lear* we can draw certain conclusions as to the character that is concealed behind the fool's mask. The fool in *King Lear* performs a special function, he utters the unspoken, he breaks through the outer covering, to disclose what is within.

The fool appears on the scene as Lear's mirror, or Lear's twin, he comes to the fore at those moments when Lear begins to admit the madness or stupidity of his actions. Like the siren of a ship he pierces the fog and sounds the alarm. He makes faces and jokes, and mixes stupid puns with caustic wit, constantly wounding Lear's self-conceit, poking fun at his proud confidence in himself and inspiring hatred of Regan and Goneril.

Their attitude to Cordelia is a test of the spiritual qualities of all the characters in the play. (For Edmund and Edgar their attitude to Gloucester is the test.) And it is significant that even before the fool appears on the scene the knight says of him:

> Since my own young lady's going into
> France, sir, the fool hath much pined away (I. 4)

At his first entrance he says to Kent in Lear's presence:

> Why this fellow has banished two own's daughters
> and did the third a blessing against his will.

His words are plainspoken and cutting. He lashes with his words as with a whip, leaving painful stripes and sparing no one.

He does not appear in Act I Scene I when Lear turns Cordelia away, but he appears in the fourth scene when the servants, at Goneril's instigation, begin to be rude to Lear, and the latter feels for the first time his humiliating position. Without mincing matters he practically calls Lear a fool to his face.

> That lord that counsell'd thee
> To give away thy land
> Come place him here by me
> Do thou for him stand:
> The sweet and bitter fool
> Will presently appear
> The one in motley here,
> The other found out there.

He cuts through events with a sharp blade that discloses their meaning, he uncovers them and turns them over in order that their true content may be seen. It is he who shows Lear the significance of what has happened to him. His inanity is merely a cloak for his acumen. It is like a pair of those dark spectacles through which you can see so much without other people seeing that you see.

He is full of sayings and folklore, and he spices his speech with the humour of the people.

> Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way
> Fathers that wear rags
> Do make their children blind:
> But fathers that bear bags
> Shall see their children kind.
> Fortune that arrant whore
> Ne'er turns the key to the poor.
> But for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours
> for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year. (II. 4)

There are notes of Moliere in the fool's words. He does not merely amuse the aristocracy, his humour conceals a sharp sting. He is a thinking person and not merely a buffoon.

Fool: Pr'y thee, uncle, tell me whether a madman
be a gentlemmn or a yeoman?
Lear: A King, a King!
Fool: No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son,
for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son
a gentleman before him.

When he foretells a time when the established order of things will change and a golden age will set in, his Utopia is essentially progressive but is expressed humourously and in a rather muddled way.

Fool: . . . . . .
I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:—
When priest are more in word than matter
When brewers mar their malt with water
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors,
When every case in law is right;
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues;
Nor cut purses come not to throngs;
When usurers tell their gold i' the field;
And bawds and whores do churches build;—
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion;
Then comes the time, who lives to see't
That going shall be us'd with feet
This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live
before his time.

Nothing can destroy Lear's boundless self love, his monstrous egoism. Things have gone badly with me! Then let the whole world choke itself like a beetle in a puddle of dirty water. Lear hates everything and does not know what pity is.

He is a man in whom all feelings have dried up and died except one and that is love for himself. Listen to that tremendously powerful speech of his in the storm;

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!
rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples,
drown'd the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought executing fires,
Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder
Strike flat the thick rotundity of the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once,
That make ungrateful man![1]

Here the richness of the metaphors somewhat conceal the meaning of the speech, but another speech follows which brings out the point. Lear calls upon the thunder and the lightning to strike the earth. They are not his daughters so why should they not rage.

[1] Tolstoi regarded this speech (and indeed the whole drama of *King Lear*) as nonsensical.

This makes Lear's words all the more terrible, for how horrible must his daughter's deeds be if they call for such comparisons.

There is a thunderstorm on the heath, and a thunderstorm in Lear's own heart. He offers his gray hairs to the torrents of rain so that the insults they have borne may be washed away. But one horror cannot be washed away by another; it can only be intensified by it.

The King alone with the fool—this is a crude and cynical but dramatically effective expression of the ex-king's fall.

> O! nuncle, court holy water in a dry
> house is better than this rainwater out o'door.
> Good nuncle, in; ask thy daughter's blessing:
> here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools (III. 2)

Immediately after this Lear makes another speech:

> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters;
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
> I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
> You owe me no subscription; here I stand your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak and despis'd old man:—
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That will with two pernicious daughters join
> Your high-engendered battlers 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O! O! 'this fool. (III. 2)

But no sooner has Lear uttered these words than the fool begins singing his obscene rhyme. Here we have two interesting planes—madness and cynicism, despair and vulgarity, thunder and giggling, oaths and jests.

This is the culminating point of the play. Lear has fallen to the very lowest point. He has become the equal of the fool and of every other human being whatever his station, for lower than this there is nothing but the grave. The despot has become a pauper, the king has become a clown, the proud egoist has become an outcast and the fool is now on a level with the king, for the king has fallen to the level of the fool.

And Lear who has stood up against the storm in the hope that it would scatter his misery to the winds, who has just cried out against the elements like one possessed, suddenly stops like a man who has stepped onto the edge of a precipice and draws back to save himself. "No. I want to be a model of patience. I shall say nothing," he says. Here the transition to prose has a most striking effect. It represents an abrupt change in the emotional experiences which Lear is undergoing. It is the transition from loud cries and thundering eloquence to an unwonted understanding of himself, of his will and psychology.

His madness leaves him. Reason immediately enters into his clouded brain and he becomes calm again.

He is broken, he is humbled. Strange how easily Lear has been humbled. Is Shakespeare, perhaps, no longer true to life here? Let us not draw hasty conclusions.

What is it that restores Lear's calm. What is it he says? He says that others are more guilty before him than he before them. That is what is at the bottom of his new state of mind. The bitter experience through which he is passing is some measure for his fault. He is beginning to find some consolation in the thought that if he is to blame, others are more to blame than he, that if he is cruel, others are more so.

'But what has this in common with his old philosophy of inequality? It has nothing to do with it and that is just the point about his new state of mind: he is beginning to reject his old philosophy. Lear has made a tremendous step forward, and this change in his outlook has been most brilliantly brought out by Shakespeare. A new word appears in Lear's vocabulary, the word "necessity." Lear formerly regarded only himself as necessary and recognised no obligation to carry anything out himself, since everything was carried out for him. Then suddenly in the torrential rains on the heath, amid the roar of the thunder the word "necessity," so foreign to him hitherto appears on his lips. He had been brought to this word through suffering. A long and painful road had led him to the truth.

Lear, as we have said, had been humbled. What seemed impossible had come about. This was perfectly natural and true to life, for humility had only entered into his conscience without becoming the whole of his being.

In the fourth scene, which follows immediately after this fall from pride, Lear again cries out wildly:

> . . . . the tempest in my mind
> Doth from my senses take all feeling else
> Save what beats there.—Filial ingratitude!
> Is it not as this mouth should tear his hand
> For lifting food to it?—But I will punish home:—
> No I will weep no more.—In such a night
> To shut me out! Pour on: I will endure:—
> In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
> Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all,—
> O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;
> No more of that . . .

He says bitterly "O, that way madness lies," and a little while later, in the fifth scene, Kent says of him "His wits are gone," and again in the seventh scene he says words to the same effect.

Lear himself several times speaks of this and his reason departs from him drop by drop leaving the old man tottering about the heath in the darkness of the night like a wounded bird.

But it was just here that Lear spoke of necessity. It was just here that Lear realized the value of simple things and the horror of inequality.

It was only now that Lear was beginning to see the real world from which as it were the thunder rain had washed away all court conventionalities. What strange words Lear utters

> Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm.
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you?

Lear speaks of justice. Lears wants to purge himself of pride. Lear sympathises with the poor. We have here a new man. We see him like this for the first time. Can it be Lear? Yes, it is Lear, but a transformed Lear. The realities of life become actual to him for the first time in the form of the mad, dirty, half-naked Edgar. Lear again reverts to prose. The sudden change from verse to prose represents a break in Lear's stream of consciousness.

Edgar is a man, Lear is a man. And the fool is also a man. Then perhaps they are all equal? Lear is struck with horror. This idea of being equal with naked men and beggars makes his flesh creep.

> Why, thou wert better in thy grave
> than to answer with thy uncovered body this
> extremity of the skies.—Is man no more than
> this? Consider him well. Thou owest the
> worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no
> wool, the cat no perfume.—Ha! here's three
> on's are sophisticated!—Thou art the thing
> itself: unaccommodated man is no more but
> such a poor, bare forked animal as thou art.—
> Off, off, you lendings! Come unbutton here. (III. 4)

Here the new Lear after he has come to know the world through fire, cold and darkness, through hatred and malice, through pity and honour, gains some understanding of reality. But the limits of his understanding of the real world are marked by his departure from that real world, for it is at this point that he finally goes mad.

Lear comes to understand something new and this understanding nearly kills him. He rushes into madness with the same speed as the wind rushes at him in the darkness of that stormy night.

Men are equal? Yes, and he has seen that equality in its most revolting form. It is the equality of beasts. And he tears off his clothes as Shakespeare tells us in one of his terse stage instructions. He wants to stamp out the last traces of his royal grandeur. He wants to make himself comparable to the very lowest beggar who is despised by all.

Thus the circle is completed. The king is no longer a king and he throws himself into the very lowest depths of life in order to drink his humiliation to the last drop. He takes his bitter draught and although his lips are burnt by it as he drinks he will not put the cup down.

And then he hears the voice of Gloucester who has not yet begun to share the King's fate: "What company are you in sir?"

There is reason in this madness. Lear wishes to know whether nature or he himself is guilty in his fearful misfortune. And this is mixed up with the most terrible nonsense like a grain of corn in the midst of a heap of chaff.

> . . . Let them anatomize Regan; see
> What breeds about her heart. Is there any
> cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?—
> (to Edgar) You, sir, I entertain you for one
> of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion
> of your garments: you will say they are Persian:
> but let them be changed.
> Kent: Now, good my lord, lie here and rest while—
> Lear: Make no noise, make no noise; draw
> the curtains.
> Soso. We'll go to supper in the morning.

And later on in Act IV Scene 6 Lear himself speaks of the light that comes to him on the heath, which blinded his reason. Shakespeare does not like obscurity, he is ready to repeat endlessly,—and how wonderfully he puts it each time!—in order that the audience may catch the meaning.

> Ha! Goneril, with a white beard!—
> They flattered me like a dog, and told me I
> had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones
> were there. To say ay and no to everything I
> said! *Ay* and *no*, too, was no good divinity;
> when the rain came to wet me once and the
> wind to make me chatter; when the thunder
> would not peace at my bidding, there I found

'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are
not men, of their words: they told me I was
everything: 'this a lie,—I am not ague proof.

Lear returns to his sufferings in the storm and gives an explanation of them. The repetition here heightens and throws new light on the situation.

Thus two streams meet, one turbid and the other clean, one disconnected and the other logical, one mad and the other rational. Lear gone mad. What a tragic scene and what magnificent art. Here one has complete inanity. But in Lear's mind a new process is taking place. Old values are being broken up, new thoughts are being born which are difficult to seize. They flutter up out of his brain and disappear before they have been able to form into connected sentences. But then suddenly a picture of the world takes shape. Lear cries out in a rage against the injustice of society which he himself has created. Lear, the ex-king suddenly finds words in which there glows a spark of protest, in which there is a challenge to society. It is hardly believable but it is Lear, the same Lear who has been so intolerant of the slightest insubordination, that speaks these words.

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind
For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it—
None does offend, none, I say, none, I'll able 'em:
Take that of me, my friend who have the power
To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes;
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not.—Now, now,
Pull off my boots:—hard, harder:—so. (IV. 6)

Think well on these words. Here the stream of meaningless words comes to an end. A definite meaning takes shape, and the speech becomes linked up with the main stream of the tragedy.

But Lear is mad and Shakespeare does not forget this. Lear speaks the truth as though he were raving, and raves as though he was speaking the truth. His words have a deathly ring about them when he says that he is a king from the crown on his head to the tips of his toes (we must remember that in leaving his kingdom to his daughters he reserves for himself the title of the king). Here Shakespeare uses his favourite trick of contrast. In his tattered clothes, with his wandering eyes, the lunatic Lear is not a king at all and so his sudden proud announcement only serves to intensify the wretchedness of his plight.

Edgar: O, matter and impertinency mixed!
Reason in madness!

These are Edgar's words. Through Edgar's words Shakespeare emphasises the tremendous significance of Lear's speech about the powers in society. The artist seems to be afraid that this may not be fully understood, that the audience may make the mistake of ascribing everything to Lear's madness, and he wants to avoid this at all costs. There is a great deal more here than the raving of a madman. There is a truth here which we must not allow to escape us.

As I write these lines a strange and oppressive feeling comes over me. How

terrible that we do not know what Shakespeare himself thought about this that we have no word of commentary from the poet himself and that succeeding centuries have so carefully removed all possibilities except one—that of knowing Shakespeare through his works. How splendid that we have these works. I do not belong to any biographical school, but there are secrets which disturb one's peace of mind. It is his poetry I am thinking of. Is there even the slightest word of criticism one could find against his poetry?

How small Lear was before he went mad. But how great he is now that his wits have left him, now that the scales have been lifted from his eyes and he can look the world straight in the face. We can now understand Gloucester when he says that a great one is fallen. It is only after this that Shakespeare begins to talk of Lear's greatness.

When Lear lived he was dead, but now that he is almost dead he has become alive. The greatness that was not has fallen to the ground and Lear has become great for he has suffered much not only for himself but also for the world. Yes, Lear has started to think of the world and of others. The great egoist has begun to think about humanity and of that portion of humanity that suffers most, because it is groaning under the weight of that huge pyramid of inequality on the summit of which he himself once stood.

With what horror is the scene inspired in which those once powerful men Lear and Gloucester meet. One of them has lost his reason and the other has had his eyes plucked out and stamped into the dust, and beside them is a third witness no less horrible of aspect, Gloucester's son Edgar in a beggar's clothes in the guise of a madman.

Here Lear unfolds everything of his new philosophy that he has not yet unfolded in the preceding scene. The new Lear and his madness do not prevent us from understanding his wisdom.

This is the climax of the whole play. All the action of the drama tends to this point where the scales at last fall from Lear's eyes. All that happens is illuminated by a great idea and events are endowed with a profound significance. The action is raised to the level of the idea and the idea is expressed by a truly passionate power of action. The parts are gathered up into a whole and the result is a mighty symphonic whole.

These words of Lear are not by any means identical with the bourgeois ideas of equality. What is most important for Lear is not equality, but inequality, and it is the latter that Lear finds in the world.

We have almost forgotten about our antipathy for Lear, we are beginning to have a soft spot for him and to follow his misfortunes with sympathy. Thus the tables have been turned. Lear's friends alter their attitude to Lear, and so our attitude also alters. Adversity has broken his pride and brought out his human feelings. His sufferings have shattered his egoism and created a new Lear who comes to know for the first time what shame and repentance mean. Misfortune has destroyed Lear's cruelty and put mercy into his heart.

Kent: Well, sir, the poor distress's Lear's i'the town;
Who sometime in his better time, remembers
What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield to see his daughters.

Gentleman: Why, good sir?

Kent: A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness,
That stripped her from his benediction, turn'd her
To foreign casualities, gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters,—these things sting.

Thus the time has come for Lear to go through his last trial, this time not alone, but with our sympathy. Lear is in the hands of his enemies, in the hands of Goneril, Edmund and Regan.

A new trait now appears in his character,—a certain nobility and courage, the hardihood of a soldier who scorns to fear or even notice the hand of the enemy stretched out to kill. He says to Cordelia:

> Have I caught thee?
> He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
> And fire us hence like forces. Wipe thine eyes;
> The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,
> Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em starve first.

Thus Shakespeare continues to raise Lear morally, and traces of nobility, self sacrifice, staunchness and love are seen to enter into the ex-king's character. All this leads up to the final situation, where we cannot help having complete sympathy with Lear now that he has become but a shadow of his former self, of Lear the despot.

He meets Cordelia and he is overcome with joy. But this joy is short lived as the last ray of the sinking sun. The earth becomes darker than ever it was, life departs and in front of him there is not a gleam of hope. Consciousness is again covered with a pall of darkness. Cordelia is dead, and Lear cries out to the unfeeling world which he himself has created, he cries out to that evil reality, with all its hatred and malice which he himself has nurtured.

> Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
> And thou not breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!—

Lear dies. The tragedy is at an end. Finis....

IV

We have followed Lear through all the stages of his wanderings. But that is not the whole of *King Lear*. We have seen only a part of the tragedy, though, it is true, the most important part.

We have left out a number of scenes where the no less tragic story of the Duke of Gloucester and his two sons, Edmund and Edgar, is unfolded.

No sooner do we gather the thread of this second story than we see how it fits in with that of King Lear, we see how much it has in common, what a strong resemblance it has and how unimportant are the differences. Lear turned Cordelia away, because she truly loved him. Gloucester drove out his devoted and upright son. Lear was driven away by his hypocritical daughters and Gloucester was condemned to death by his son Edmund.

But in following the running threat of Gloucester's fate we do not only see a unity of action and of behaviour. We see a resemblance and what is most important of all, we see what made Lear a human being, and what it was that opened up before him the world that had previously been concealed from him by his crown.

Gloucester's eyes were trodden under foot by Regan. He wanders over the country with blood suffused sockets, unknowingly led by his son Edgar who is pretending to be a mad beggar. Gloucester says bitterly: " 'Tis the times' plague when madmen lead the blind."

The world is dark, the world which Gloucester can see no more, but which crumbles from beneath his feet like an avalanche and hurls him from his height.

And suddenly pity awakens in Gloucester and he is willing even to thank heaven that his misfortune has been of benefit to the beggar that is leading him.

> Here, take this purse, thou whom the heaven's plagues
> Have humbled to all strokes; that I am wretched
> Makes thee the happier;—heavens deal so still!
> Let the superflous and lust-dieted man,
> That saves your ordinance, that will not see
> Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly,
> So distribution should undo excess,
> And each man have enough. (IV. 2)

The same thought emerges here as in the case of Lear. One has to be in the position of the unfortunate in order to know the full weight of their misery, one has to be in the position of the poor in order to know the horror of poverty, one has to change places with the person who has formerly seemed only to be there to fulfill one's wishes, in order to understand that person.

Let me repeat it. Here we have only the most misty, the most elementary expression of the idea of the evil of inequality. But nevertheless it is this idea that is being presented, with however weak a flame it is burning.

That is what makes *King Lear* stand out among all Shakespeare's plays and gives us a side of Shakespeare's character which is clearly an essential and important one, without which our idea of the man would be incomplete.

Gloucester's fate is a repetition of Lear's. His son Edgar takes the same part as Cordelia. His illegitimate brother Edmund slanders him, and Gloucester who believes what he is told, leaves his enemy Edmund and drives out Edgar.

Shakespeare in dramatising "The Story of the Blind Man" from Philip Sydney's *Arcadia* (1590) and fusing it into the tragedy of Lear was not merely following a whim. He had a very definite plan in his mind. The story of the trials and misfortunes of Gloucester make a splendid supplement to the story of Lear. He brings out the points in common and thereby makes what is most important still clearer, and makes what is clearest most important.

Until Act II Scene 3 Edgar hardly appears. He is merely a dumb, one might say limp incarnation of good characteristics. In order for his true character to be seen to the full he has to undergo great trials.

There is something in common with Hamlet in the way he acts. In order to save himself be becomes mad. In order to preserve his reason he externally divests himself of it. In order to save himself from ruin he pretends that he has already been ruined. He goes into the darkness of the night in order to see the dawn, he turns away from the sun in order not to die in its light.

But is not this mask of the madman the last step into the abyss? Is it not the very depths of humiliation?

Madness is terrible when it is real, but the madman himself does not know this, otherwise he would not be mad. But to be mad while yet possessed of reason, to be beyond reason while yet possessing all the faculties of thought; to wear this frightful and humiliating mask—how unendurable, how terrible that must be.

Edgar's father, Gloucester, longs for madness, for reality has become too horrible, the truth that life has to offer is too impossible to bear.

> The King is mad: how stiff is my vile sense,
> That I stand up, and have ingenuous feeling
> Of my huge sorrow! Better I were distract:
> So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
> And woes by wrong imaginations lose
> The knowledge of themselves. (IV. 6)

That is the borderline. And Shakespeare, great artist that he is, loving great contrasts of tone and blinding colours, flings his heroes beyond that borderline so as to show them the lowest depths of despair, so that one may feel the utter hopelessness of their position.

A strong man has his sensibility only increased by suffering. A brave man is only made braver by a fight. Suffering only heightens the heroism of the hero. Edgar after falling to the very bottom of the pit does not stay there, but rises up from it.

He derives his strength from the thought that it is better to come to know the truth through suffering than to be enthralled by falsehood.

> Yet better thus, and known to be contemned
> Than still contemned and flatter'd. To be worst
> The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
> Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear:
> The lamentable change is from the best;
> The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,
> Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!
> The wretch that thou hast blown unto the world
> Owes nothing to the blasts.—But who comes here
> My father, poorly led?—World, world, O world.

It is not by chance that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Edgar those remarkable words. These words of Edgar are among the most important in the tragedy. They are inscribed in flaming letters on the realist banner, which is streaming in the wind of great ideas. Can it be merely a coincidence that Gloucester says the same thing? Shakespeare repeats the same thought twice, in order that it should not merely illuminate for a moment and then disappear like a flash of lightning.

> Old man: You cannot see your way
> Gloucester: I have no way, and therefore want no eyes
> I stumbled when I saw: full oft' 'this seen
> Our means secure us and our mere defects

Edgar asserts that evil contains its own punishment, that sin punishes the sinner.

> The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us.

Recollect the Duke of Albany's words:

> This shows you are above,
> You justicers, that these our nether crimes
> So speedily can venge! (I. 1)

Let us recall, finally, the last magnificent scene where Edgar saves his blind father from suicide, and the latter eventually admits his weakness. Evil must not be meekly endured but must be combatted—that is the idea that Shakespeare wishes to bring out here.

The idea of the salutariness of suffering for people who are too happy, and happy through no virtue of their own, is one of the threads which knits together the whole action of the tragedy and determines its movement and line of development. This is a confirmation of the greatness of truth, it is a defense of the realist's attitude to the world. It is war—and war to the death—with the false art of many artists of Shakespeare's day.

Enter into life and it will teach you to live. Go to meet suffering and it will open your eyes. Descend into the depths and you will learn the worth of peo-

ple who spend their lives there and never rise up into the sunlit heights. Go down to the people yourself or you will be thrown down, thus Shakespeare continues his line of thought a year later, in creating the character of Voluminius who was so well aware of the power of the people, in *Coriolanus.*

A representative of the ideas of the section of the nobility who were becoming capitalists, Shakespeare in creating *King Lear* at a time when James I was trying to put the hands of the clock back to feudalism, shows with extraordinary force how destructive the ideas of feudalism are and how fatal it is to divide the realm into little pieces (we might recall here Kent's words where he refers to "this scattered kingdom"). Shakespeare sympathises with Lear when he begins to understand his fatal mistakes but he paints him with hatred when he sits on his throne and like a proud feudal lord shows that he is a law unto himself by dividing the map of his kingdom according to his caprice.

The final situation is built up on contrasts, the rapid change of events and the rapid culmination of the plot. Cordelia is at the head of powerful forces and victory seems certain, but nevertheless she is defeated. Edmund comes out victorious, his colours flying. He is covered with honour and proud as Caesar—when suddenly the Duke of Albany threatens him with arrest, the herald blows his trumpet, and Edgar appears on the scene and draws his sword. Regan dies of poison, the blood is warm on the dagger that has pierced Goneril's heart.

All the lines of the plot are worked out by the artist to their logical conclusion. Lear has come to the end of his journey, Edmund falls defeated in single combat, Gloucester has died at the happiest moment of his life. The last words have been said, the last deeds have been done. The dead crowd to the finale as though death itself were standing by the curtain and preventing it from falling, until the last sight of those who are doomed to fall had died away on the murder-poisoned air. But the full toll of deaths has not yet been taken. Lear and Cordelia still remain. We are rejoicing in their victory when Lear appears with the dead Cordelia in his arms. A few minutes more and Lear's heart breaks. He is the last to fall. "Curtain," cries Death. . . . The tragedy is finished, murderers and victims, guilty and innocent lie on the same piece of ground and there is not a breath left in any of them, not a spark of life.

It is not by chance that Shakespeare took such a remote period in order to have an effect on his contemporaries. More verisimilitude was thus lent to the bloody end, but at the same time parallels with the present must inevitably be drawn.

The evil done by Lear, the hatred let loose by him, the falsehood that was allowed to flourish, had taken root like a poisonous weed and grown up to suffocate Lear himself. It is as though Shakespeare were saying: "Evil does not die." It lives once it has been given birth. Food conquers, says Shakespeare, in this terrible world, though evil has its last word to say. Good is a power which becomes weakened in its struggle with evil but does not die. It is man that paves the road to evil and to good, to love and to blood. Is that a happy ending? No, it is pessimistic. It is a bitter ending this finale of *King Lear,* although Edgar hopes that he, being young, will not see so much and live so long. Is it not pessimism when such a modest hope is the conclusion to such a terrible story? It is a candle flame which will be extinguished by the first gust of wind.

Translated from the Russian by N. Goold-Verschoyle

E. Clay

The Negro and American Literature

An Estimate of the Latest Work of American Negro Writers

The following analysis is in the nature of a retrospective report. These remarks will include a criticism of work by Negro writers as well as of work about Negroes by white writers. Certainly it might have been more succinct to have written in as exhaustive manner as possible of a large body of literature by Negro revolutionary writers. It is unfortunate that there are not a dozen Negro revolutionary writers in the country. At first thought this might appear to be strange. An examination of the actual facts would of course reveal the reasons for such a small group.

Despite the deepening changes occurring in America, most Negro intellectuals have remained indifferent to the increasing leftward movement in American thought. Most of them have continued, undismayed, trying to solve their individual problems within the orbit of capitalism. A still more important factor is the inability of the Negro intellectuals to understand the real traditions of the Negro people. Nor have they been able to understand the significance of the roles played by the Negro intellectuals who have misled them.

They do not seem to be able to see the splendid traditions of revolt of their own people. Before 1860 when the vast majority of Negroes were servants or slaves tied to a feudal peasant economy there were hundreds of insurrections. These rebels soon lost many of their tribal traits. Due to the uniform material conditions of the plantation economy of the South the emotions and aspirations of the slaves assumed a growing national unity. In the reconstruction period the Negro peasantry fought for the division of the land of the plantation lords, only to be forced back into serfdom. It is this tradition that the Negro has forgotten. It is this tradition—reflected in mass art forms which must be appropriated and carried onward.

The Negro intellectual neither knows of this tradition nor does he have any realization of the misleading roles played by his cherished idols such as Booker T. Washington and Dr. Du Bois. He does not see the class nature of literary careers of talented writers such as Charles Chesnutt and Paul Laurence Dunbar. If he could see that these men were as much contact men and entertainers as were Bret Harte and Mark Twain, it might be easier for him to examine their careers. Their search for the bourgeois amenities is mirrored in their books. It is very true that they were products of their age. One feels that Dunbar could have written differently. He could have depicted the aspirations of the class he knew best, the working masses. Instead he fell into the slough of individualistic middle-class art forms.

Unfortunately this is the path that many followed in the period after the World War. This was the period during which European countries were on the verge of proletarian upheavals. These intellectuals knew nothing of the social and political character of these events. While the Negro people were being jimcrowed and lynched the Negro intellectual refused to protest or even think about it. The post-war prosperity lulled him to sleep.

Upon this was heaped another form of corruption. The Negro was "discovered." The "Harlem tradition" was inaugurated. The social basis for this

discovery is not hard to find. The American bourgeoisie had prospered in the redivision of spoils and profits. They wanted new amusements and new thrills. They clamored for what was to become a hothouse culture. They began to import all sorts of things. When you were pointed out to them they saw that they had missed something in their own backyard. Sated New York with its bloated nouveau riches and its follies began to fawn upon and lionize the "New Negro." The new Negroes served as entertainers to a bloated bourgeoisie. The new Negro was paraded before them. They were glad that they could act, sing, paint and write as well as their white-skinned patrons. They had arrived.

When the crisis came one would have thought that the Negro intellectual would have been among the first to awaken from the lethargy which had enveloped the country. Many of them had become de-classed and pauperized. Many have had to stop their studies because of "poor returns on investments." Retrenchments have taken away university positions.

Confronted by the new onslaughts upon the miserable living standards of the Negro people, and by the new wave of terror unleashed against them, we must become cognizant of the social forces behind the conditions. With the Negro masses, we must take up the tasks which face us as the inheritors of the revolutionary tradition of our people.

First we must realize that all our "Negro problems" are rooted deep in the economic system of the United States, in the perpetuation of the old slave system in the Black Belt, of the oppression of the Negro people as a national minority as well as the whole character of capitalist exploitation of the working masses. Then we can really understand the reasons for Jim Crow and Judge Lynch, then we can understand that the salvation of the Negro intellectual lies in his identification with the revolutionary working class movement throughout the world.

When the Negro writer begins to realize the truth of these statements, then we will have a larger body of material to examine. The number of revolutionary writers among Negroes is growing, if only slowly. Many of them are now in the fellow traveler stage. Certainly with the deepening of the crisis and the rapid movement left of the best known writers, the Negro writer can not remain passive. He must choose. He must be made to see that only in a socialist society will his work be of value either to himself or to humanity.

Langston Hughes and His Work

There is no pretense made that everything revolutionary written by Negroes has been examined. It is also our intention to analyse the work of Southern realistic novels in order to point out the changes in Negro character in their novels. It is noteworthy and again regrettable that whereas hundreds of white writers have been moved to write plays, agit-prop sketches, chants, poems, and novels about Scottsboro and Herndon, hardly a few lines have issued from the pens of Negro writers. As Countee Cullen has written:

SCOTTSBORO, TOO, IS WORTH ITS SONG

(A poem dedicated to American Poets)

I said:
Now will the poets sing
Their cries will go thundering
Like blood and tears

Into the nation's ears.
Like lightning dart
Into the nation's heart.
Like disease and death and all things fell.
And War,
Their strophes rise and swell
To jar
The foe smug in his citadel.

Remembering their sharp and pretty
Tunes for Sacco and Vanzetti
I said
Here too's a cause divinely spun
For those whose eyes are on the sun
Here is epitome
Is all disgrace
And epic wrong
Like wine to brace
The minstrel heart and blare it into song.

Surely, I said:
Now will the poets sing.
But they have raised no cry
And I know why.
. . . . . .

The appraisal of Langston Hughes by the late critic, Lydia Filatova, in *International Literature* last year was timely, critically sound and to us Americans surprisingly correct. Then Filatova made allusions, attentive analyses and prophetic remarks about Hughes' future. The tenor of her criticism and an intimate knowledge of Hughes' work would lead us to believe that Hughes would develop as Filatova thought. Let us see what happened in 1934 in his poetry and fiction.

We can say once and for all that much in the fourteen stories of *Ways of White Folks* is disappointing. We can say that there are in this collection definite advances in Hughes' revolutionary perspective.

As Filatova did point out, Hughes' development has been steady and positive. He has not followed in the retrogressive paths of his "New Negro" renaissance colleagues. His works from 1926 to 1931 were links in this evolution. There were certain retrogressions—*Dream Keeper, Dear Lovely Death, Popo and Fifina*—but these are allowable in the career of the fellow traveler. What ought to be pointed out is that the change in his work from 1931 to 1934 was in the nature of a solution of many of his personal conflicts. There began to appear in his work an anti-bourgeois-intelligentsia outlook. It was reasonable to think that Hughes would go further along the right path than either Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Rudolph Fisher or Wallace Thurman. It was not difficult to see that Hughes possessed the clearer vision, that he was able to see through the paper thin structure of a contradiction ridden and decaying capitalism. This is so apparent in *Ways of White Folks* and other stories published last year.

This is not to be taken to mean that each one of these fourteen stories or others published in magazines are realistically anti-bourgeois or revolu-

tionary. They are not. Some of these stories ought not to have been allowed into the sacred company of the volume's best stories, "Father and Son," "Cora Unashamed." Many of these stories appeared in popular magazines and were extolled because their lampooning of Negro bourgeois habits was mis-interpreted. Some of these stories had no message at all. They merely offended. This offense was good in a way. But their publication—in certain magazines—often led to reconsiderations of Hughes' sincerity. That such philistinism on the part of critics is unpardonable goes without saying. Nevertheless, it is simpler to see that all of these stories considered together form a more tightly knit pattern than when taken singly.

If they offend, well and good. That is one of their purposes. If they tell white and Negro bourgeoisie alike that the reasons for the failure of true cultural rapport between them is a social and economic reason, all the better. This has to be done and the sooner the better. As a most effective bludgeon on the psuedo rapprochement of Negro and white in their artistic relations, many of these stories possess no equal. They are even more effective when they tear away the flimsy veils of patronising philanthropy. They succeed too in destroying time-honored stereotypes such as the "Negro as a faithful servant," "blood will tell," "fear of the Negro for his companion white worker," "the Negro is congenitally joyous," "salvation (for the whites) through Negro Art," and the "Contented Negro." This is yoeman's service and must be done by Negro and white writers alike.

One objection heard throughout the country, in salons, unit meetings, symposiums, literary teas, in share-croppers' huts, in workers' schools was this: why did he choose to portray the characters he did rather than workers. The only valid answer to such objections is that he chose the type he knew best. Noone would deny, not even Hughes, that the stories would have been more effective had he essayed to write of workers. It would be sectarian leftism to insist that he should have done what he didn't do. This work would have been as schematic and tendencious as some of his earlier revolutionary poetry. Who is the Marxist critic to say about whom and about what a writer must write? Of course, these stories would be greater than they are if they had to do with share-croppers, peons, convicts, factory workers, sailors and stevedores. Hughes has known and knows these types of workers. He, himself, has been a sailor, farmer, kitchen boy, bellboy and many other things. He knows Mexico and the horrible slave conditions of the peons there. Perhaps he knows the other side better. If he does, he feels the necessity for portraying the evils of that side. That is the purpose of the stories. In the past ten years his surroundings have been largely bourgeois, in universities, art circles, and the homes of generous Maecenases. Nor is it fair to say that in this book or in other stories that he neglects the portrayal of the worker.

Hughes has mastered the objective short story form. Occasionally, a subjective note is noticeable which leads to a cheapening in the march of the narrative. But this is only seldom the case. The stories resemble in form and content those of Chekhov. The resemblance extends to the superb irony and satire, the simplicity, the use of effective images and splendid craftsmanship. His words seem to be weighed, tested, burnished and carefully inserted. There is such economy of structure the stories are told so ably that one experiences the feeling of having read what might have been a novel. There is in these stories a sense of ease and yet vivid writing. They remain indelibly on the mind. You live them. They constitute special experiences for you.

As Filatova remembered in her essay, Hughes has not always felt about

art as he does now. Eight years ago in defending Negro Art he wrote: "If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not it does not matter. We know that we are beautiful. And ugly too." Now he writes of those same white people. His approach now is a class approach. Now he does not mean all white folks, but as one of his characters says, "the ways of some white folks." Hughes, realizing the struggles that exist between two classes conceives of certain white people who in their control, circumscribe and influence the lives of the Negro masses. He writes of Negroes in their relation to the white people who are part of their very existence. This is so since for Hughes all men stand in relation to each other as parts of a social whole. He is interested in Negro and white class psychology, in their class differentiations.

In "Father and Son," the most powerfully absorbing story in the book the author states his belief in the knowledge that the union of white and black workers will be the single force which will smash American Capitalism. "Crucible of the South, find the right powder and you will never be the same again—the cotton will blaze and the cabins will burn and the chains will be broken and men all of a sudden will shake hands—black men and white men like steel meeting steel."

Many of Hughes' stories which have appeared elsewhere are decided improvement on the majority of the stories in *Ways of White Folks*. There seems to be a closer understanding of the problems confronting the workers. They are indications too that he has gotten over schematism and abstractness in his earlier stories. This is especially true of one story which appeared in the *New Yorker* recently, "Oyster's Son." Here he has succeeded in depicting social relations in a realism of the highest order.

Hughes' poetry has been the most voluminous. Most of it is excellent and in his usual style and technique. At times the triteness which was noticeable in his earlier work is evident. Often there is a note of forced striving for effect in his handling of revolutionary themes.

But Hughes is a good poet. He knows how to incorporate in his work all that is likely to stab and tear away the flimsy framework of bourgeois ideals. He has a mastery of imagery and his usage of the old forms are more than felicitous. In this poem on the President which appeared in the *New Republic* this is clearly seen:

BALLAD OF ROOSEVELT

The pot was empty,
The cupboard was bare
I said, Papa
What's the matter here?
I'm waiting on Roosevelt, son,
Roosevelt, Roosevelt,
Waiting on Roosevelt, son.

The rent was due,
And the lights was out
I said, Tell me, Mama,
What's it all about?
We're waiting on Roosevelt, son
Roosevelt, Roosevelt,
Just waitin' on Roosevelt.

Then one day
They put us out o' the house
Ma and Pa was meek as a mouse
Still waiting on Roosevelt
Roosevelt, Roosevelt.

But when they felt those
Cold winds blow
And didn't have no
Place to go
Pa said, I'm tired
O' waitin' on Roosevelt
Roosevelt, Roosevelt,
Damn tired o' waitin' on Roosevelt.

I can't git a job,
And I can't git no grub.
Backbone and navel's
Doin' the belly-rub—
A-waitin' on Roosevelt,
Roosevelt, Roosevelt.

And a lot o' other folks
What's hungry and cold
Done stopped believin'
What they been told
By Roosevelt,
Roosevelt, Roosevelt.

Cause the pot's still empty,
And the cupboard still bare,
And you can't build a bungalow,
Out o' air—
Mr. Roosevelt, listen!
What's the matter here?

There was one poem which appeared in No. 5 of *International Literature* 1934 which evoked much comment in this country, "Letter to the Academy." It is one of the finest things Hughes has ever done. Here his pen is sharpest. His words burn into the consciousness and remain there. In that poem I believe that Hughes achieved what every poet hopes to achieve—the knowledge that he has struck an entirely new chord.

The Rise of a New Revolutionary Poet

The poetry of Sterling Brown, (after *Southern Road,* 1932, which was commented upon by the writer in *International Literature* No. 2, 1934) has become progressively more realistic and proletarian. This poetry, soon to be published, has justified any of the comments made a year ago as to the sureness of his approach. Not only is the handling of his material more deft, but his irony has become more trenchant, the revolutionary implication surer, the humor more Olympian and the perspective wider.

He has forsaken the purer English literary forms, not because of their ineffectiveness, but because his metier and format fit better in his earthy, "down-home" dialect of the workers he knows so well. Now his purpose is clearer. He wants to depict his workers, convicts, street walkers, bishops, "big job jigs," first with clarity which broadens into realism of the highest kind, then to show the way out. That this is the correct and only path depends upon the artist and his motives. If his motives are correct, then his experiment will be. For the artist is more than right if he knows that he will knock over too many hurdles by depicting what he doesn't know.

Brown is still terribly aware of and anxious to lay bare all the inanities and barbaric clod-hopper mores of black-white society. He can do this most effectively by stripping away the tinsel cheapness, exposing the roles of the "fancy Uncle Toms" the "preachers and bishops," the fawning, patronizing whites.

Where his greatest advance has been is his growing insight into the possibility of the unity of white and black workers in the South. Brown knows the South, he has lived there, he knows their customs, their "tall tales," their delicious humor and their peculiarities. He knows the Georgia cracker too. He knows the cracker's limitations, how hidebound he must be because of the restricting class relations existing in the deep South. That he sees this clearly and the necessity for the solution of this one perplexing hindrance is evident in his "Colloquy:"

BLACK WORKER AND WHITE WORKER

"It's been a long time since we got together, Sam."
"A long time? I disremember when we did befo!"
"Sure you remember when we was kids,
Long time ago?"

"I recollec' how you chased me and my brothers
Out of de crick, an' I recollec' when
You rocked us through Cottontown clean acrost de railroad
We didn't get together, then."

"We didn't get together cause we niggers ran too fast.
We knew we'd keep our health a little better if we run
That's about all de gettin' together
You an' me's ever done."

"Reckon you're right—we uns been tarnation onery
But we didn't know no better, an' that time's past!
I got to stop my pitchin' rocks, an' you—you got to trust me
An' not run away so fas!

The bosses got us both where de bosses want us
An' dey's squeézin' us both an' dey won't let go.
We gotta get together, we gotta jirk from under
Or else we are goners, bo".

"I coulda told you, long ago, Mist' Charles
Bein' onery wan't no way you should behave
When both of us got more'n our share of
From rockin' cradle to de lastin' grave."

"Shake hands, Sam. We'll be buddies now,
And do our scrappin' side by side from this."
"Well, here's my hand. I never gave it before
Scared I might draw back a wrist."

"But dere's hard time's comin'—wussn' hard times now
An' in de hard times dat I recollec'
De whites stood together on top of our shoulders
An' gave it to us squar' in de neck.

"So I tells you like de bull frog say unto de eagle
Flying across de stone quarry high in de sky
Don't, don't, big boy, don't do it to me
Not when we'se up so high . . . ."

In "Side by Side," there is a distinctly new note. In this long poem, the poet attempts to portray the degrading poverty and similar on-the-fringe conditions of white and black inhabitants of a Georgia town. They live a few yards from each other, their churches are equally ramshackle, their pay envelopes are not very dissimilar, both eat "collards" and "jimson," they enjoy the same joys and suffer the same sorrows. They even fraternize. If the South could read this poem, a rousing tocsin would sound. The poem begins:

Your unpainted, ramshackly churches stand
Side by side, Lord, side by side
In one, you hear of hell for sinners
Of heaven for the hard-worked, meek, long suffering—
In the other you hear of heaven, bright heaven
For the hard-worked meek, long suffering
And of hell for sinners.

Richard Wright, Young Negro Poet

There must be Negro poets—workers and intellectuals—who are anxious to join the rapidly swelling leftward tide. One of the reasons we don't know them is that we don't go after them. It might be debated whether we ought to broadcast our program and objectives clarionlike or in a more subtle manner. They must be won over and the surest way is to convince them that there is no future for them as artists under capitalism. Some of the John Reed clubs have realized the necessity of winning over the declassed Negro intellectuals and have gone after them. This is correct and more should do the same. Doubtless there are many more than Richard Wright (Chicago John Reed Club) but he is the only Negro John Reeder whose work I know. His poetry is exceptionally fine. There are some faults, but they are due to his youth and zealousness rather than to any hastiness. His work has appeared in the Chicago club magazine, *Left Front, Anvil, New Masses* and other left wing publications.[1] Let me quote from one:

Everywhere Burning Waters Rise
Everywhere,

on tall and smokeless stackpipes,
on the silos of deserted farms,
on the rusty blade of the logger's axe,
on the sooty girders of unfinished skyscrapers,

the cold dense of clammy fog
of discontent is settling . . .

Everywhere,

on tenemented mountains of hunger,
in ghetto swamps of suffering,
in breadline forest of despair,
on peonized forest of hopelessness

the red moisture of revolt
is condensing on the cold stones of human need . . .

Everywhere,

men are gathering in groups talking talking, tiny red pools are forming;
hundreds are joining protest parades marching, marching, small red rills are trickling;

[1] Two new poems by Richard Wright appeared in *International Literature* No. 4, 1935.

thousands are surrounding food stores storming, storming, storming,
rising red rivers are flowing
till on the lowlands of starvation meeting
and swelling to a roaring torrential tide
and becoming strangely into waters of fire
and blazing their way to the foaming sea of revolution . . .
. . . . . .

Now at first sight the poem might seem to jostle you out of your seat with its apparent profusion of images. The first impression might be that the poem suffers from schematism and sloganish cliches. All of these initial impressions recede into the background when the poem is reread. Now the first thing that struck me was the complete absence of the usual identity of subject matter with race. Is this desirable? Of course, it is, especially in such a poem where the subjects are workers and not white workers and Negro workers. The revolutionary poet has no need to specialize or ever be racialist enough to ignore other problems.

To me the second startling thing in the poem is its simplicity, a characteristic notoriously absent in present day revolutionary poetry. This simplicity is what is needed. It is implicit in the imagery and symbols which run through the poem. And unlike a too frequent use the symbols do not jar. The line: "Sweep on, O red stream of molten anger," gives me a peculiarly strong reaction. This is poetry which is written with force and directness. True, its melodramatic taint reminds of a theatricalism, but such lines are preferable to much of the obfuscating drivel which passes itself off as revolutionary poetry.

Richard Wright is a poet who has developed rapidly in a short space of time. He has quickly achieved a surer mastery of technique and image association. His poem "I Have Seen Black Hands" is admittedly one of the finest poems which has appeared in the *New Masses*.

In the following two poems many of the faults prevalent in present day revolutionary poetry are noticeable. First of all there is too much dependence on Langston Hughes both in approach and subject matter. There is a feeling that the dependence extends to a studied use of images too. They are immature, but they serve a purpose if only that they show the poet that his work suffers from imitativeness. He will always strive to divorce his work from too strong dependence on others and find new forms. These are not bad poems at all. There are excellent lines in both. The real thing is the certainty that Wright will develop even further than he has.

REST FOR THE WEARY

You panic-stricken guardians of gold
are wise to tremble
and snatch of themselves hurried
counsel
with white faces of grave concern.
for the claws of history
have stripped from your tawdry lives
the tinselled pretense
leaving nothing but the vulgarity
of your studied pride
and the naked uselessness
of your existence
but I weary laden tyrants
do not despair
even these encumbrances
will not long weigh you down
for soon our brawny hands shall
relieve you of all your burdens.

A RED LOVE NOTE

My dear lovely bloated one:
when we send you our final love-
notice of foreclosure
to vacate this civilization which you
have inhabited
long beyond the rightful term of your
tenure
there won't be any postponements,
honey,
no court delays,
no five day notices, darling;
no continuations, sugar-pie;
it'll all be over before you know it.
And the immortal kiss that we will
plant
upon you and your kind
will make you think that the world
is going up in smoke.
It'll be nice and sudden, dumpling,
it'll be like love;
it'll be a red clap of thunder rising
from the very depths of hell.

Since Hughes, Brown and Wright are the only poets who ought to be mentioned, what of Countee Cullen whose poem appears earlier in this report? Mr. Cullen should be thanked for his expression of Scottsboro consciousness. The poem itself however is neither as good as he is capable of writing, nor is it a particularly desirable type of revolutionary poetry. It isn't necessary to point out the stilted and carefully muted form of the poem. In this instance the poet himself deserves the analysis.

There might be no objection at all to Mr. Cullen's refusal to align his interests with those of the workers. We do know that some writers remain in the fellow-traveler stage a long time. And each artist has his individual way to approach the revolutionary movement. In the case of Mr. Cullen his ideology remains little different from tea-drinking-parlor radicalism. Mr. Cullen was an excellent poet, one of the best of that "New Negro Renaissance." His expression of approval of the 1932 candidacy of Foster and Ford has been nullified by no action or expression since. It might be too harsh to say that there is lacking intellectual courage. But the impression remains that the above poem was motivated by a humane impulse, due entirely to the fact that the nine boys are Negroes, and not because they are workers. Just another championing of racialism.

Criticism, Journalism and the Novels

There have been some notable contributions to Marxian criticism and journalism. The outstanding Negro Marxist critic is Eugene Gordon. Gordon is a pioneer and his work has been of invaluable service to white and Negro writers alike. He writes for his own bourgeois paper, for the bourgeois Negro press and for the revolutionary publications. In the Negro papers he writes of the parts played by Negroes in all wars in which America has engaged. He castigates the inglorious past of their haloed misleaders. He criticizes their apathy concerning Scottsboro and Herndon. His reviewing is always sound and interpretative.

The Liberator, organ of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, has been a proving ground for left wing writers. Loren Miller, a Los Angeles John Reeder, conducts a regular column which is widely read.

In discussing the novels, only one by a Negro author has any significance. Zora Neal Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine.* This novel is in the Julia Peterkin manner, but with a difference. Miss Hurston knows what she wants to portray. That is, she knew beforehand what kind of novel she would write. Whether

she is conscious of the manifold issues involved in her novel is another matter.

She tells the story of a certain stratum of poor, exploited, circumscribed Negroes in the South. To achieve her effects the author skillfully employs native superstitions and dialect. But that is all Miss Hurston does. She knows the South and she knows of the class relations which honeycomb her characters. But these class relations are either obscured or ignored.

She writes well. Her descriptions come very close to realism. Where Miss Hurston fails so completely is that she is as circumscribed as those people about whom she writes. Once in a while—very seldom—there will appear an inkling of the share-cropping debt slavery system. We know that a writer ought to write what she sees and knows best. We know that a writer ought not to be subservient to prescribed patterns. We know too that any Negro novelist writing of poverty stricken Negroes in the South cannot gloss over the glaring realities and cruelties so glibly. Occasionally, there appears an insight into the class character and consciously built up religious furbelows of the South. But these are rare. The author has neither the intention nor the insight to penetrate beyond the sacred citadels of Southern bourbon rottenness. When she writes of a mulatto and his white father, the impression received —which is only an instance of the perpetuation of a vicious stereotype—that white fathers are good to their bastards. When you realize that she does see behind the perfidious character of the whole Negro church set-up, you are amazed that the author seems to conclude well, after all, perhaps this is best for them. Nowhere in this otherwise readable novel is there an attempt to see the whole system clearly. Instead, Miss Hurston seems content to look at the decaying mess, with her eyes wide open, but staring.

Now, in *Come in at the Door,* a novel by a white Mississippian (who wrote *Company K*), we have one of the best novels of the generation. This novel is neither revolutionary nor proletarian. Its significance lies in the radical change in this novelist's conception of Negro character. For nearly the first time, a white Southern novelist has set down a picture of Southern society with the most engaging objectivity. He writes of what he has seen and remembered, with no commenting or editorializing. He decribes Chester's life making it hinge upon the hanging of his mulatto tutor, for which, through jealousy of his father's black mistress, he has been largely responsible. True, his educated mulatto has a tragic ending, but there is a feeling that here there is no perpetuation of the "Tragic Mulatto" stereotype, but rather a single true picture of a frustrated Negro who could not overcome the superstitions in his nature. His portrayal of Chester's father living in wedlock with Chester's nurse, Mitty, bearing him six children and all of them living in the house together is not only unusual. To the South and North alike, it is anathema. Such things might exist, but it is an inexorable law of the South that they are unmentionable. Then the most sympathetic portraiture in the book is that of Chester's educated aunt, who is a communist. March has performed a valuable service no matter what his motive. He has written of a degenerating disease and insanity ridden family struggling against the inevitable, and there is a courage in the way William March does it.

Unfinished Cathedral is T. L. Stribling's best novel. Here is a stark, cold, bludgeoning portrait of the South by a Southerner who knows and is not afraid to tell. There is nothing revolutionary about this book either. For Stribling's aims don't point that way. Stribling happens to be a liberated Southern novelist who pillories with driving force.

In this novel, there is neither the tongue-in-cheek-pity of Carmer's *Stars Fell on Alabama,* nor the folklorish paternalism of Julia Peterkin. There is often a resemblance to Faulkner and Wolfe, but where the resemblance ceases is in the style and purposes. For Stribling, unlike Faulkner, is not concerned with degeneracy and symbols in themselves. There is resemblance, too, to Caldwell, but where Caldwell's work depicts the inevitability of the breakdown of the feudalist, barbaric system, Stribling's work has no such pretensions. In the work of both, there is direct portraiture with no pardons asked, only in both the perspectives are different, the outcome different. Where Stribling is to be given the most credit, however, is in his almost revolutionary conception of Negro character.

The novel is an amazingly direct indictment of all that has come to be known as traditionally Southern. Even the title of the book is expressive. In the book there is drawn with incisive thrusts the hypocritically class character of religion in the South, its rotten connivings and separateness. He shows how the Florida real estate boomlet, the Scottboro case, the Klan and fascist organizations have all become intertwined to symbolize that barbaric hell known as the South. He spares no feelings. Many of his Negroes are as Negroes are in the South, militant educated blacks, pussy-footing Uncle Toms, militant, hating, educated mulattoes, the cringing servant, the hat-in-hand (but laughing-behind-the back) "niggers," the aroused Negroes to whom injustice has been done. Throughout the book, though often it seems strained and artificial, Stribling shows how genealogically crazy, how racially and biologically mixed his characters are. He shows how closely related the leading aristocrats are to the boys whom he symbolizes as Scottsboro and how this blood relationship is one of the bases of the Southerners' innate fear of the Negroes.

This is the end of a trilogy, depicting the degenerating emptiness of the Vaidens. Stribling is a realist after Zola and Dostoyevsky. There is none of the insight so characteristic of Stendhal or Balzac. Often the impression remains that Stribling is vaguely conscious of the social forces rending his South. This impression vanishes after the finished reading. Nevertheless, Stribling, a Southern novelist, has displayed courage in writing such a book and it may be that, like Caldwell, he will be forced to see the social relations at which he only hints.

Babouk, by Guy Endore, is a more significant novel. Written by a white revolutionary writer, it deals entirely with the early slave trade and the insurrections which arose in San Domingo (Haiti).

The novel as novels go has many excellent qualities. *Babouk* is one of the first attempts to novelize the events surrounding the slave trade. This is in itself remarkable. With amazing facility and dramatic intensity, Endore draws terribly authentic pictures of the captures of different tribal slaves, of the "nigger tasting," of the parts played by Negro slavers, the horrible passage across and many other gruesome events which particularized any slave expedition. His backgrounds, social, ethnic and historical, all seem excellent. Endore had knowledge of certain forces before he wrote, the disease contracted by slaves and captives alike, the customs of different slaves, the habits of the governing colonials, the motleyed character of mixed races in the colonies. He is aware of the economic conditions which seem to make slave-labor imperative. He traces the wealth of Europe to the profits from slavery. He knows the kind of economy built upon slavery, the leisure which does always arise from slave labor. He has caught the habits of the transplanted slaves,

the reactions of native mulattoes, the imitativeness of many slaves. He sees the insidious part played by the master's administered religion. These and many more insights into the conditions of the island are brought out with surprising lucidity. The ideology of the planters is one of the motifs. The sentiments of Abbe Gregoire, Robespierre, Voltaire, Mirabeau and others regarding slavery are carefully inserted for contrasts.

The story of the life of Babouk, his insurrectionary career, are more than plausible. Where, then, does the confusion arise? Where one would least expect it. Strange as it seems, Endore's position in the novel is that of a racialist, a Negrophile. It is even consciously so, if we are to judge by the declamatory passages toward the end of the book. The confusion is more apparent when he cries out that Africa—or the Negroes—because of great injustices, will one day come into her own. "Then, white Europe, beware." Or something akin to the professional Negro racialist: "Ethiopia will one day spread her wings."

He confuses, too, because he seems to attribute the economic ills of Negroes to the forced separation of Negro and white. Though he says, "Black and white, unite and fight," if they fought the way Endore suggests, they would be hating, misdirected race rioters.

Why is this? Primarily because Endore is not able to see the Leninist implications of imperialist policy toward colonials and minorities clearly enough. He must revise this position that all Negroes are right because oppressed, and that all whites are the oppressors. It is un-Marxian to state that people in the same social relations do not circumscribe each other. Endore must see these relations in their correct approach. Certainly Endore is sincere. It may even be that the confusion results from misinterpretation. Even so, the defects pointed out are important. That this is the first of its kind, that more will be likely to follow is even more important.

What is the position then of the Negro in revolutionary literature in 1934 and what will that position be after 1934? There have been many healthy signs. Nor is there doubt that many Negro writers have awakened from their lethargy. Obviously, we are in need of barometric bearings which will chart future courses for the Negro writer. We must be able to point the reasons for the small number of writers, the reasons for weaknesses, and the means to be used to rectify these mistakes. Fortunately, the First American Writers Congress held in May, 1935, was an excellent chance to clear up many of these problems.

Much can be done in an alignment with white writers. Perhaps it is not the fault of the white writers that they have been so blissfully ignorant of this entire question of the necessity for recruiting the Negro intellectual for cultural purposes. But it is obvious that the correct thing to do is to analyze our past faults and building upon these, erect a new edifice which will stand as a testament to the unity of all artists. We must intensify the fight in the universities. These are the strongholds of conservation both in culture and in politics. By activizing the advanced students we can hope to build a strong and fighting group which will aid in the approaching battles. There must be worker poets and writers. They must be found and developed. They must be made to see their importance as to the consummation of the coming struggles. We must hasten our inroads in the ranks of the intellectuals. Those who will be a value must be made to see that they are being mobilized for the common purpose of creating a literature which will be the basis for a socialist culture.

LITERARY PORTRAIT

F. Y. Kelyin

ANDRES CARRANCHE DE RIOS: Spanish Writer

A Pen-Picture of a Rising Young Novelist

It is October in Madrid. The morning air is fresh. Children still throng the city squares, basking in the afternoon sun. But the leaves are already a yellow tint. The parks are no longer green but gold. In this treacherous Madrid autumn one must change his clothes five times a day. "From Madrid straight to the sky," runs an old Spanish saying. The citizens, however, and particularly unwary foreigners, find it much nearer to the Western Cemetery. Madrid has a sad reputation for pneumonia and catarrhal troubles, ailments which are particularly frequent when the cold winds blow from the mountains. But if there are still sunny hours in Madrid, the rest of Spain is plunged in storm and rain. Only in Andalusia is there no rain, but even there the sky is glum.

But in spite of everything, Madrid, and with it the whole of Spain, lives a feverish, tense, impassioned existence. The predictions of the nation's official Sybils that during the autumn bull fights noone would take interest in politics have been falsified. Famous toreadors like Belmonte, Ortega and others may accomplish miracles of professional skill in the rings, but only *aficionados* will be found now to delight in their *veronicas*. The street which fifteen or twenty years ago the Madrid bourgeoisie heard of only through a sentimental romance on the death of a popular toreador, or the news of a big swindle, or the story of how the favorite daughter of Don Paco or Dona Marino-Pilarista had disgraced the family honor by eloping with Don Joselito—that street now awakens the bourgeoisie with the cries from its bread lines, the loud protests of workers, or the noise of shooting. These October days life "storms over the stones of the streets" with the tramping of many thousands in anti-war demonstrations. Life cries out too, from the pages of the Communist *Mundo Obrero*.

"Comrades of the unemployed, comrade anarchists, communists and socialists, and you too who are unorganized—there are hundreds of thousands of you—every day increases the numbers of the starving. Fight for work, bread, social insurance. Do not permit your children to die from hunger. Down with the bourgeois-land-owning clique. Long live the united front of the workers. All on to the streets!"

Andres Carranche de Rios, Spanish writer

And the workers of Cuatro Caminos, the Northern district, and other proletarian quarters of Madrid, answer as one man to the call, preparing for street fighting, for battles on the barricades.

The political barometer is unsteady. It now falls, now rises, but always pressages oncoming storm. There is panic on the blue velvet ministerial seats in the parliament house. The "Radical" Government of Camper has tendered its resignation—Camper is a bald headed man with the clean shaven face of an advocate, wearing horn rimmed spectacles. The Madrid cartoonists are fond of depicting him as a bleary eyed fish hesitating in immobile indecision before an appe-

tising worm. But Camper is not a stupid person at all. He knows perfectly well how he should act.

"The Moor had done his work, the Moor may go," in order to make way for Alexandro Lerroux, chief of the Radical and Gil Robles, leader of Spanish fascism, whom the bourgeoisie and landowners have entrusted to save the country from imminent anarchy.

"We shall save Spain," they promise. But save her from what? From hunger, unemployment, poverty? Nothing of the kind! From the corroding influence of the Bolsheviks, from the bacilli of internationalism, from Moscow. And why should they not save the nation? They have the army and navy, the gendarmes, the storm troops, the Morocco Legion, the fortresses and the arsenals. The workers have only their heroism. None the less the governing clique turns its gaze toward the west, to the blood-stained soil of Asturia, center of the revolutionary struggle of the Spanish proletariat.

A Book Appears

It might seem that in these days of tense revolutionary struggle the Spanish reader had no time for literature. And yet a huge crowd is gathered outside of a library. They are looking at a huge poster in colors with the figure "I" and the word *Uno* which fills one of the principal display windows. *Uno* is the title of a much talked of novel by the young writer Andres Carranche de Rios. "A vile, disgusting, hateful book," writes the reactionary press. "A weak, unfinished book, but one that reveals unmistakable talent," comment the more moderate newspapers. "A remarkable, a unique book," shout the enthusiasts. But whatever the critics may write—the most celebrated, Gerado Rivera, that stern "arbiter of the arts," even deigned to write a few words of approbation—there can be no doubt that the book is of unusual interest. It has been sold with lightening speed in the Madrid bookstores. This is quite comprehensible, for *Uno* is a product of the stormy revolutionary days when the class struggle split all Spain into two opposing camps.

On the outskirts of this crowd, which includes both readers and the merely curious, there stands a well built young man in a brown suit. He has an inspired face, with thin longish features, black eyes showing under his thick brows—the face of a poet or an artist. Hands clasped behind his back, his head held high, the young man listens attentively to the chorus of praise and blame. This young man is the author of the book. Andres Carranche de Rios.

Uno is a first novel. It is three years old —like the Spanish Republic. It is the story of the Spanish "young man," a story of the new generation which has entered the political and social life of the country through the revolutionary struggle. In Spain people begin at a young age to "live for politics," and "live for art." It was thus a hundred years ago when Lope de Vega wrote his first comedy *The Real Lover* as a child of thirteen. So it is in our day. Ramon H. Sender was fourteen when he ran away from home to begin his career of a writer and revolutionist. In Madrid there is now a writer, Renato Ibanez, who though only fifteen, is author of poems which have attracted considerable attention. Rafael Alberti has written about the talent of this young poet.

The children of Spain know perfectly well who stole their boots, who tore their clothes and who closed their schools, Rafael Alberti wrote in his poem "Estramadura Children." The class struggle sharpens their minds at an early age, drawing them into political life. It is significant that the government has passed a law forbidding people under the age of twenty-three to take part in political organizations. But last International Youth Day and the joint demonstration of Young Communists and Young Socialists at the funeral of De Grado, the young communist murdered by fascists, has shown the futility of all such maneuvers of the class enemy.

The reactionary press noted with horror and fury that during the October fighting in Madrid and Barcelona, "among the revolutionaries in the insurgent districts were many boys and girls of from sixteen to twenty, the majority being children of miners. The whole world knows that when the troops had occupied the Barcelona telegraph building a young operator remained behind and appealed over the radio to the toiling masses of Catalonia to continue the struggle for national emancipation. Her last words were "Fight for your freedom. The woman who is speaking is herself dying for the freedom of Catalonia."

After the October fighting, Salasar Alonso, formerly Minister of Home Affairs and now Mayor of Madrid, visited a number of schools and discovered to his horror that many of the pupils had portraits of Lenin and greeted one another with the Pioneer salute. A month later the Spanish press reported that San Sebastian school children had gone on strike, singing the *International* as they marched onto the streets. Many teachers and pupils were subsequently arrested.

The Man of Action

Andres Carranche de Rios belongs to this heroic generation. His interesting biography is characteristic of present day Spain and deserves to be described in detail. De

Rios was born in Madrid of a working class family. As a child he went to work in a carpenter's shop. This was the time when the Spanish proletariat, having grown dissolutioned in social reformism, threw itself into the embraces of the newly organized anarcho-syndicalist Federation of Labor. Young Carranche flung himself into politics heart and soul. After a few months he had organized "Spartak," a small group of revolutionary workers. Disorders broke out in Madrid. Crowds of hungry unemployed raided shops. Carranche was in the front ranks —was he not the leader of "Spartak?" As a result of his action he was thrown into prison. Here he wrote his first poems, "Songs of Dynamite" "Glory to the Pistolette," and others. The poems were published in anarchist sheets. But the boy was not taken seriously at home, in spite of the pipe which he was unable to smoke but which he never let out of his mouth, thinking, presumably, that the pipe was a distinguishing feature of all real poets.

His writer's sensibilities offended, he decided to run away from home and the new year found him in the lacquer shop of Senor Bilbao's factory.

His urge to wander gave him no peace. He decided to go to sea. With a Portuguese friend he made his way to Santander where he became a stevedore. The work was too heavy for him, he injured his shoulders He found himself without money for a night's shelter and more often than not slept under the open sky. His sailor friends came to the boy's assistance. They gave him an old naval hat and a small quantity of contraband tobacco. Carranche went from cafe to cafe and, speaking a broken Spanish, which he proudly called French, offered his goods for sale.

At last his dream came true. He succeeded in convincing a sea captain that he was a much traveled sailor, a hardened "sea wolf." The ship was bound for Antwerp. Tormented by sea sickness, he spent four miserable days on board staggering from rail to rail. When the captain saw what kind of a "sea wolf" he had taken on, he threatened to kill Carranche. During the voyage the lad made friends with the cook with whom he made the rounds of the taverns when the ship reached Antwerp. . . . One morning he woke up penniless in the strange city to discover that the ship had left. The captain had taken advantage of the hapless traveler and had "forgotten" him. The hungry youth long tramped the streets before chancing on a "shelter" maintained by the "Reverend Faters." For saying the "Lord's Prayer," he could now receive a glass of strong tea without sugar, a crust of bread and a bed. For four weeks the lad was a penitent sinner. Eventually he grew weary of this comic role. He managed to take a train bound for Paris without purchasing a ticket. However, he had to alight at Saint Quentin, still half in ruins after the ravages of the world war. Carranche spent some time in the town, got together a little money and finished the journey to Paris. After more hungry tramping in a strange city he returned to San Sebastian. "It was a severe winter," he writes. "I slept on the platform. As soon as the waiting room was opened in the morning I went in and I was the last to leave it at night. It was very cold and I was extremely hungry. After much trouble I succeeded in finding my old comrades; they introduced me to a carter who offered me a job in a hayloft. They later made a collection and bought me a ticket to Madrid. My family was delighted to see me. 'You must now work and become an honest man,' said my father. I again became a carpenter. But I lost my job for having a book always hidden under the bench. Each time I shoved the plane I read a line of the book. Father regarded me as lost. I was nineteen at the time. Poems from my pen, regarded as 'modernistic,' were published in the local press; I considered myself more of an anarchist than ever."

A Writer Is Born

Carranche decided to try his hand at prose and wrote a story for *La Voz*, a Madrid newspaper which paid him forty pesetas for it.

"That was quite an event in the family," Carranche de Rios recalls. "With the money I bought a pair of shoes." He soon discovered that he could not live by writing stories. He again became a hired worker, "At eight in the morning I set out with boxes of nails, rope and a pickaxe. I was allotted a small patch of ground and ordered to dig three meters deep. In half an hour my hands were covered with blood.

"I held the job until a load of bricks fell on my feet and I became incapacitated. What was I to do? I knew of a certain cafe, which was frequented by film actors. I made their acquaintance; they accepted me as one of their own. Among them was a gloomy specimen of humanity, who affirmed that he was shortly to "spin" a film 'You want to work with us Carranche? If you do, let your hair grow in curls and then you can play the part of a page in the *Salamanca Student*.' So I, another page and 'the principal lover' began to wear wonderful curls. For three months we were a source of amusement to the frequenters of the cafe, though there were no signs of the film being 'spun.' When all hope was lost the pages cut off their curls. But the hapless 'principal lover' was not in a position to follow our example. He received credit in a hotel on the strength of his curls which were regarded as evidence that he was ac-

tually engaged in a new film. His ridiculous appearance continued to raise many a laugh in the cafe."

After this Carranche traveled throughout the provinces giving poetry readings in village casinos. On returning to Madrid he was given a role in *Madrid Hollywood,* which was never shown. Our author, however, acted in a number of films, meanwhile continuing his literary work. He wrote a long story as well as several short tales and reportage. About this time he made the acquaintance of Pio Baroja.

"I met him when one of his novels was being adapted for the screen. I was playing a minor part in the film. At the time I was working on *Uno.* 'If Don Pio consented to write the preface for it I could easily find a publisher,' I thought to myself. I decided to call on him. 'Well, young man, what brings you here,' he asked. 'I am a writer and I have brought you my novel.' Don Pio was surprised. 'Have you read Dostoyevski's *Letters from the House of the Dead?*' 'No, Don Pio.' 'And after that you want to be a novelist! But why do you want to be a writer? So that the newspapers talk about you? At best they will give you a few lines on the third page. But if you could repeat a few striking phrases you would be sure of fame, though you hadn't an ounce of talent.'

"A few days later I called on Don Pio again. 'I shall write the preface,' he said, 'though your novel seems to lack something . . .' Baroja waved his hand and moved his head about in a way that said my characters were badly developed. However, in two months the preface was written. For three years I made the rounds of the publishers. Some of them found that the novel was 'too Marxist,' others that it was untrue to life and so on. But when the novel was finally published it was a success."

About the Book

Carpenter, poet, tramp, anarchist, political offender, bricklayer and film actor, Carranche had written a truly fine novel. The book, it should be said, is not without shortcomings. It gives the impression of being unfinished, but it is the stuff of life, every page bearing witness to unmistakable talent. It consists of episodes from the life of Antonia Luna, "a young person" of semiproletarian origin. In three episodes the author shows us his hero in the barracks where he serves his term of compulsory military service; then in prison where he is sent for a political offense; and finally, returning to his family. The author gives us a faithful portraiture of the types of Spanish militarists. He describes the barracks, from which came the executioners of workers. He presents them not at the time of military action as Ramon H. Sender has done in his novel *Magnets,* but in their daily surroundings. The Spanish officers are dull ignoramuses, degenerate physically and morally. These "Christian" gentry, drawm from the wealthy classes, spend only a few hours in the barracks each day.

We see, too, the poor rank and file soldiers in their worn coats and torn shoes; they resemble beggars more than anything else. We are further introduced to the three prisons in which the hero is confined,—typical Spanish prisons these, filled with the insane, the epileptics, pedarasts, and murderers as well as the political offenders convicted of "creating danger to public order." The term of imprisonment depends on the good will of the governor. We see the old mother who goes every day to the Moncloa Gardens from where she can see the prison; she dies before her son returns home. Then there are the familiar types of writers and artists who spend their whole life discussing neckties and whether Verlaine drank absynthe or not. There is the drunken father and the prostitute with whom the hero falls in love. Towering above all are the king, the generals, the bishops, the ministers, the factory owners, the bankers and the executioners.

The weakness of the Spanish "young man" who passionately aspires towards a new and better life lies in his isolation. But he is commanded by the guardians of bourgeois order.

"You say that your mother is dead. Is it strange for an overworked old woman to die? You say that your sweetheart was forced to become the lover of a rich shopkeeper. But she is a prostitute. There is no end of prostitutes, thieves and syphilitics in the world. You say that you are unfortunate. But you have only yourself to blame for this. Dip your pen in the blood of your fellow misfortunates and extol the wisdom of the existing order—happiness will then stare you in the face. You will be well fed, wealthy, famous. What else do you need?"

"No, I shall not submit," answers Antonio Luna with all of his being. "I prefer poverty and hunger to joining your ranks and supporting the all destroying spirit of capitalism. I have no need of your favors, I turn my back on proud isolation, on the pernicious anarchism that has bound me. I am sharpening my class consciousness, I shall yet find my brethren and in union with them shall fight against capitalism. When the 'final conflict' is really to be faced, none of your generals, bishops, army or prisons will avail you."

In the last episode Antonio leaves the city, meeting a group of workers whose ranks he joins. In this way the path which Carranche proposes to the young men of Spain is to decline all compromises with the bourgeoisie and turn their backs "on proud isolation"

The success of the book shows that such, too are the sentiments of a large majority of the revolutionary youth of Spain.

Spanish Senoritas and Soviet Literature

The echoes of the October storm have died down. Spain is filled with the blackest reaction; prisons are full. The military courts are doing their bloody work. The ministers and generals declaim rapturously that they have saved the country from the "bicilli" of corruption and anarchy. The newspapers are full of solemn speeches; they raise funds on behalf of the "brave regiments" which crushed the uprising. The monarchists have raised their heads. Attempts are made in the press to reassure the frightened bourgeoisie. But the spectre of revolution haunts the mines and settlements of Asturia and the authorities are powerless to disarm the workers. Together with the school children this spectre sings the *International.* It gives courage to political offenders in dock and cell It conducts fearless propaganda among the factories and mills of Barcelona, among the orange groves of Andalusia and the hungry villages of Castille. It is even now striking terror into the hearts of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. It does so for the reason that in the battles waged in Asturia and Catalonia "the Spanisch workers gave the world not only an example of supreme heroism, but paid for their own mistakes with a temporary defeat; the beaten armies will learn their lesson, particularly if good teachers arise from their midst." (Karl Radek) The first to strengthen their ranks, to recognize past mistakes, were the heroic organizations of the Young Communists and Young Socialists of Madrid who fought side by side in the battles of October.

Along with the whole of the Spanish revolutionary youth Carranche de Rios is these days reconsidering his former views and studying with all his might. He has been working on a new book, *Hard Life,* reading much, getting acquainted with Soviet literature and its revolutionary theory. One of the heroes of his first novel, the young intellectual Lafuente made a scathing indictment of Spanish literature while dying in prison of consumption.

"Spanish litterateurs are as vain as senoritas. In Spain everything amounts to the one thing. There is the senorita in politics, the senorita in sculpture, the senorita in literature, the senorita in music." "Lafuente," we read, affirmed that "when the revolution has transformed Spain, artists will rise from the proletariat capable of creating an art utterly devoid of the senorita spirit, free from the petty tastes of the Spanish aristocracy and the toadyism of the official critics." Among those who are working to create this new proletarian art is Carranche de Rios himself.

Like all the revolutionary youth of Spain, de Rios passionately loves the Soviet Union. He dreams of visiting Moscow and is now studying Russian.

In his letters one finds Russian words printed in large characters. "You know that I am keenly interested in everything that concerns the USSR." "If only you knew how everyone here mourns the death of Kirov."

It is with these words that I wish to conclude this portrait of Carranche de Rios, young talented revolutionary writer from whom we are not only entitled to expect much but from whom we have a full right to demand more.

Translated from the Russian by Padraic Breslin

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Julian Sugasagoitia, in his cell in a Spanish prison

SPAIN

JULIAN SUGASAGOITIA

I Write from a Madrid Prison

I was born in Bilbao (Biscay) in a workers' district, next to a block where, for a low price, the depraved instincts of the bourgeois "gilded youth" found their satisfaction. My father worked in a foundry, my mother was a tobacco worker. Thus my first childhood memories are saturated with the smell and smoke of tobacco, bitter and sweet, and breathe the atmosphere of the old foundry shop in Bilbao, where I brought my father his dinner. He was a man with a strong character, extremely energetic. He aided the formation of the "Organisation of Workers Resistance," among his fellow foundry workers, and almost from its very beginning he joined the Socialist Party, which, shortly before I was born, was extremely successful in winning its first members in the Basque provinces. Father was elected to the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party. When his term expired he refused to stand for re-election. My father was a man who did little talking, like the Basques in general, especially among people. He preferred to manage the "socialist cooperative," which was besieged by creditors, and he brought it to a state of enviable prosperity. He took me on as assistant as soon as I had gotten beyond the school age, and that freed me from further studies. I went through school more by bluffing than by studying. I had a strong bent for painting. My father gave in to my entreaties, and at length I was able to receive some special training. Mornings I usually spent painting evenings I worked behind the counter at the cooperative.

After my father's death I was forced to give up painting and study bookkeeping. This was insisted on by my mother, who continued making cigarettes for the "senoritas" of Bilbao. Of course I had to help her. Soon my bookkeeping teacher found me an opening to start working in an office. My new masters were two Jewish brothers. Extremely religious people. For seven hours they had me pound away at a typewriter, paying me all in all one hundred pesetas. That was during the years of the European war and the two brothers made their living by selling wormy lentils and spoiled canned

goods to the French military authorities. My youth was spent in extreme poverty. However, I tried to work as little as possible for my masters. At this time I had the luck to win a job, competitively awarded, in the municipal government, with a salary of three hundred and thirty pesetas. A regular fortune! But within a short time I lost it. The court authorities sentenced me, as editor of the paper *Lucha de Classes, (Class Struggle)* to administrative exile.

With great apprehension I came to Madrid. My wife and son remained in Bilbao. Within a short time my second encounter with the courts occurred: in 1917 I was put in prison for my part in the revolutionary strike movement. And now I am again a political prisoner. The Spanish October sustained a temporary defeat, and we the Spanish workers, find ourselves again behind the bars.

I was a deputy to the Cortes. I must however admit that I like my prison comrades far better than I did my colleagues, the deputies! As a deputy I made a trip to Russia (1931). What a wonderful trip that was! More than once I was taken for a Russian, and I had to explain my Basque origin. And I am a one hundred percent Basque, both in character, and physical make-up. Especially in Georgia, in Tiflis, I had to do a lot of explaining. I noted that my traveling companions often used a word familiar to me, which sounded like *gora*, from them I learned that it means a lofty place, the Spanish *monte;* in Basque language *gora* means above, on top. And it was clear to me, when the matter was explained to me, why in Georgia they hold that the Basques and Georgians are cousins. At times it even seemed to me that I was in my native valleys. Once, I remember, I was sitting at the barber's. Around me, the customers were discussing loudly, and it struck me that their entire diction was Basque.

I gathered together my impressions of Russia in my book, *Present-day Russia.* A fragment of my past life is presented in my novel *Plunder,* which is indeed the first social novel published in Spain. The beginning of the social struggle in Biscay is portrayed in my other novel *Storm.* I have written several books of a lesser size: *Heroic Life, Anonymous Life,* and *Humble Life.* All of them were issued long ago . . . At present the struggle requires bold publicist work on my part, and we carry on this work even here in prison, awaiting the appearance of our organ *El Socialista,* suppressed by the government. By decision of my Party, I am the editor.

JULIAN SUGASAGOITIA

Madrid Prison, January 20, 1935

A. GIDE

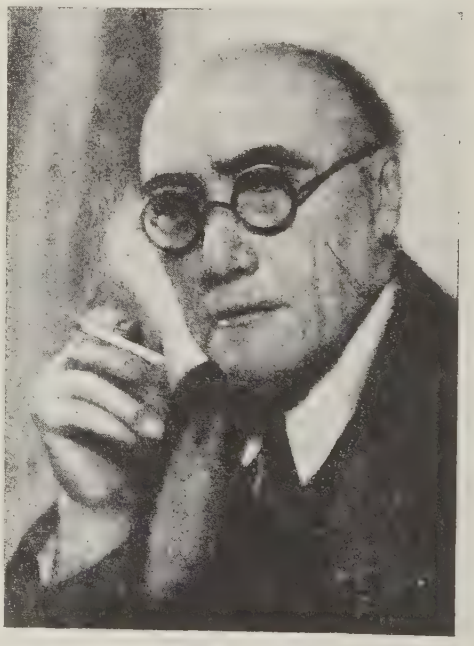
As regards my biography, I am in rather an embarrassing position. My life is not rich in events, and I shall limit myself to giving the dates of publication of my principal writings.

I was born in November, 1869. My first work was printed in 1891; *The Memoirs of Andre Walter,* the posthumous papers of a young man who won an award. Afterwards, under the influence of Mallarmé, and entirely in the spirit of the symbolist school appeared *Book on Narcissus, Voyage of Orion,* (a fantastic voyage) and *Amorous Attempt* (1892-93). Later, as a reaction against symbolism (1895) came the ironic, satirical book *Palude,* followed by *Holy Ground,* a book which, considerably later exerted a very strong influence on the young generation following us, but which for the space of twenty years remained unnoticed. This is a book against intellectualism, a call to happiness, to a healthy life, a call to earth.

In 1901 my play *King Candol* was first produced. It raises the problem of the interrelations between property-holders and poor. The play did not register any success. (My books as a rule were never successful at the outset, not in France, at any rate.)

In 1902 my first novel appeared, *Immoralist,* a critique of Nietzscheism.

In 1902—*The Return of the Prodigal Son,* this book, translated by Rilier, registered a



Andre Gide, noted French author

tremendous success in Germany, but none in France.

In 1903—*Saul,* (the best-known of my writings for the stage), put on much later and not enjoying any success.

In 1909—*The Narrow Door,* a criticism of Mysticism.

In 1914, *The Vatican Dungeons,* which appeared on the eve of the war; it was not a success; during the war I was entirely silent.

In 1920—*If the Grain Does Not Die*—my memoires.

1923—*Dostoyevski,*—a collection of articles and six lectures on Dostoyevski.

1926—*The Counterfeiters,* (a book which at the outset received a dressing down from the French critics).

1927—*Voyage to the Congo,* and a series of critical articles under the general title of *Occasions; More Occasion, Falls, and finally: School for Women.* Since then I have written nothing but diaries. In them I announced my sympathy for the Soviet Union; subsequently they aroused many attacks against me.

With a warm handshake. A. GIDE

ALBERT HALPER

I was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1904 of immigrant parents, my people coming from what is now Lithuania. I went to grammar school, to high school, then went to work, drifting from job to job like thousands of other youths who, destined neither for any of the professions or salaried positions in what is known as the "business world," burn out their strength in the industrial life of America and are thrown upon the junk pile in their early thirties.

I started writing early, working at short stories, but found myself too exhausted, both mentally and physically, after a hard day's work, to accomplish much. At the age of 24, having saved a few dollars, I threw over my night-shift job in the postal service and decided to devote all my time to writing.

I am the author of three books, *Union Square, On The Shore,* and *The Foundry.*

New York, N.Y. USA

CHRONICLE

USSR

Foreign Writers, Artists in Moscow

Writers, artists, singers, theatrical directors, and other cultural workers from the United States and other countries have been steadily arriving in Moscow to learn of the new developments in their fields.

Of the Americans recent arrivals were Harold Clurman director, critic and recently elected executive board member of the newly formed League of American Writers, of which Waldo Frank is secretary. Clurman was one of the founders of the New York Group Theatre, which produced the Pulitzer Prize Play *Men in White,* and notably the revolutionary sensation *Waiting For Lefty* by Clifford Odets.

With Harold Clurman was Cheryl Crawford, who made her bow as director with another play by Odets, *Till the Day I Die,* also produced by the Group Theatre.

Among the writers recently in Moscow was Albert Halper, author of *On the Shore, The Foundry* and other books. The last book is now being issued by the State Publishing House, which is also awaiting Halper's new book, he is now completing.

Eugene Gordon, noted Negro novelist and critic, has arrived to spend some time here. Langston Hughes, well known poet and winner of a Guggenheim Award will follow him soon.

Jack Conroy, author of *The Disinherited* and *A World to Win,* also a Guggenheim Award winner, is on his way.

Paul Strand, one of the leading American photographers is now at work in Moscow. His work is attracting the attention of leading Soviet critics and cinema directors.

Marion Anderson, American contralto, who has been having extremely successful concerts, finds that "The warmth of the Moscow audiences is a byword in the art world." She was enthused about the reception given here. She plans to come back, and thinks Moscow a city of "verve and zest, so full of the joy of life." After her visits to London, Paris and other cities, she is again returning to Moscow for a series of concerts which will include Russian songs she in now learning.

And Franz Masereel, Belgian Artist

Writing in the popular *Moscow Daily News,* Chen I-Wan, artist and critic found that: "In the introduction to the third Soviet exhibition of his work that has just opened in the Museum of Modern Western Art, Franz Masereel writes: 'I do not believe in 'art for art's sake.' I believe and have always believed that art is a means and not an end; that in our day it must be an instrument in the hands of the finest part of the human race in its struggle for a new world that will put an end to war and the exploitation of man by man.

" 'The place of the artist is in the front ranks of the fighters for this new world. But the artist must remember that he can attain the great art that alone is worthy of this new world only by achieving beauty of representational means, and that only on this condition can his creative work become that 'agitational machine' which is able to stir men's souls.'

"Franz Masereel's art as shown previously and at this exhibition is indeed the incarnation of his beliefs. The beauty of his work is immediately felt by the onlooker. He is a master of his materials, whether they be woodcuts, oils or brush and ink."

The critic continues: "The 23 oil paintings being exhibited here for the first time show us the modern man in colors and forms that synthesize into one artistic whole both the tragedy and somberness of his life and the dynamic will to a new life that must achieve its aim. Masereel's works do not reflect a hollow optimism. They are as complex as the life they portray. They breathe a certainty of victory through struggle.

"This exhibition will make many new admirers for Franz Masereel—comrade-in-arms for the new world."

Meanwhile Masereel has himself been seeing the latest achievements of Soviet art, in painting stage designing and all the arts of the Soviet theatre.

"I find," he went on, "that Soviet artists are much occupied with questions of schools and styles. It seems to me that all this is beside the point. If a Michelangelo were to to arise here tomorrow there would be no question of style—there would be a question only of genius. There can be little doubt that a great Soviet painter will arise, for a great epoch demands and creates its great interpreter . . . but he has not arisen yet. There are good painters and there are some very good caricaturists. I was looking at works by the Kukryniksi this morning—very interesting! The best things I have seen are in the sphere of stage designing. I enjoyed the exhibition of theatrical art in the Historical Museum very much. Best of all I remember Tishler's designs for *King Lear* at the Jewish Theatre and Favorski's for

A Soviet cartoon on the opening of the subway: street cars empty, taxis and drozhkis looking for fares — a new situation in Moscow

Twelfth Night at the Second Moscow Art Theatre, but of course there are many I have forgotten"

USA

Dreiser and the Jewish Question

A storn of controversy has been raised in the United States on the publication of letters by Theodore Dreiser in *The Nation*, liberal weekly, in which Dreiser makes scathing remarks about Jews. In a letter published on April 17, among other things Dreiser wrote: "If you listen to Jews discuss Jews you will find that they are money-minded, very pagan, very sharp in practice. . . . Left to sheer liberalism as you interpret it, they could possess America by sheer numbers, their cohesion, and their race tastes, and as in the case of the Negro in South Africa, really overrun the land."

Naturally Dreiser's attitude immediately drew widespread attention. *The New Masses* pointed out:

"In the call to the American Writers' Congress, the signers, among whom was Theodore Dreiser, pledged themselves to fight against imperialist war and fascism . . . against white chauvinism (. . . all forms of Negro discrimination and persecution) and against persecution of the minority groups and of the foreign born."

Wishing to get this matter clear, "two representatives of the magazine were sent to interview Mr. Dreiser immediately on publication of the letters. A week later he held a discussion with several persons present, among them Corliss Lamont, James W.Ford, Communist candidate for Vice President in 1932, John Howard Lawson, Edwin Seaver, Mike Gold, Joshua Kunitz, Henry Hart and Orrick Johns."

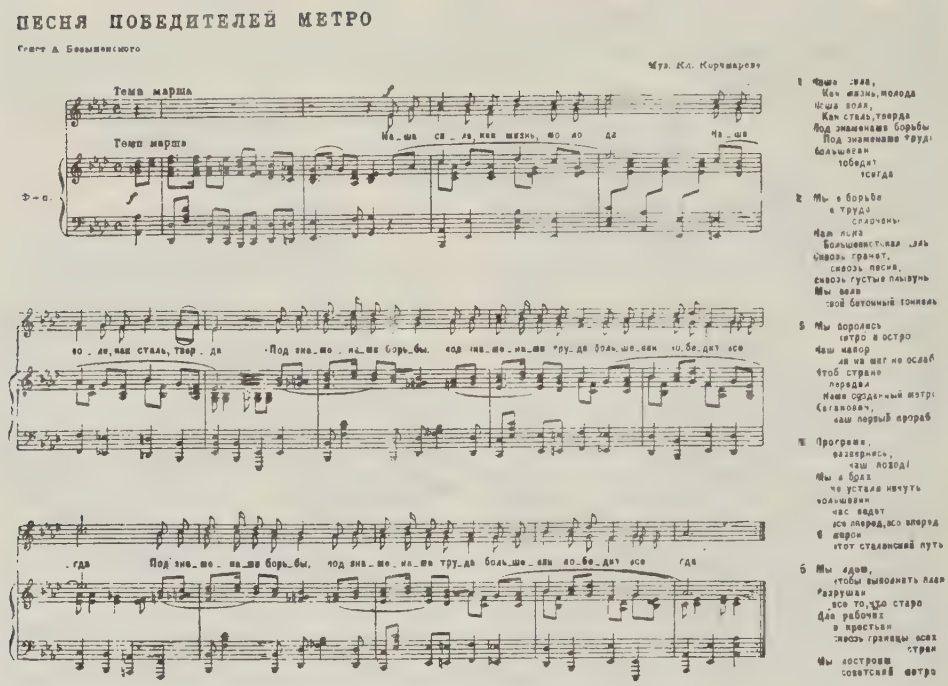
This committee advises: "We questioned Mr. Dreiser, hoping that he would stand by his long record, that he would withdraw the antisemitic opinions expressed in his letters, that he would dispel the fog of confusion and bewilderment caused by his unexpected outburst of racial prejudice.

"We came away from the first interview discouraged and dissatisfied. Mr. Dreiser clarified nothing; he withdrew nothing, in fact, simply added further to the confusion."

At the second meeting with Dreiser, held with the larger group, the matter was discussed more fully. The committee pointed to Lenin's views on the Jewish question; to the fact that the things Dreiser said were almost identical with Nazi propaganda; that it was clear the position he took in his letters published in *The Nation* was contrary to his whole career as a defender of the workers and oppressed.

Dreiser then wrote a statement of his position which was published in *The New Masses*. Written on April 22, 1935 it reads:

"Of course I make a distinction between the classes. I draw a distinction between



A Soviet song composed for the opening of the new subway

the Jewish worker and the Jewish exploiter. Everybody knows that I am an anti-capitalist. I identify the interests of the Jewish worker with the interests of all the other workers. What you have just read by Lenin on the Jewish question (quoted in the article herewith) meets with my full approval. And if my letters are used by the Nazis as propaganda, I repudiate such use. I have no hatred for the Jew and nothing to do with Hitler or fascism.

"My interest in Communism is that it will equitably solve the relations of man, and I emphatically repudiate any inference in my writing that will be interpreted as counter to this."

The view point of *The New Masses* was that it was "far from satisfied as to the adequacy of his final statement. It is inadequate, both to the stature of the subject, a great novelist who has fought for the toilers, and as a satisfactory conclusion to an event which can only be described as tragic in its sweeping effects."

The *New Masses* summary of the whole matter concluded with the statement that "We decline to believe that it will be impossible for Theodore Dreiser to regain his traditional place as a fighter for human liberty."

This still did not end the matter. Michael Gold followed with an eloquent article which attracted a great deal of discussion. Letters from readers followed criticizing the position of the editors as too compromising, not strong enough. To which an editorial footnote advised:

"*The New Masses* has squarely repudiated Dreisers's anti-semitic utterances and far from defending them, has not hesitated to say that they are the basic stuff of Naziism. Dreiser must give a clear and unequivocal answer to this challenge if he hopes to regain the trust of the working class. Our reply to the charge that we would not have dealt so patiently with a confessed enemy of the revolutionary movement, is 'Certainly not!' Dreiser's long tradition of militant espousal and friendship for the workers' cause entitles him, in our opinion, to an opportunity to clarify his position."

EDITOR'S NOTE

We understand the anxiety felt by the American Revolutionary Writers and critics in connection with the publication of Theodore Dreiser's letters on the Jewish question. But we don't think it is necessary to exaggerate the significance of these letters thus overshadowing the great merits of Dreiser —the most celebrated American writer—before the revolutionary literature of America.

In our opinion Theodore Dreiser's answer clears up his position and we want to believe

ROAD TO UTTERLY

By H. H. LEWIS

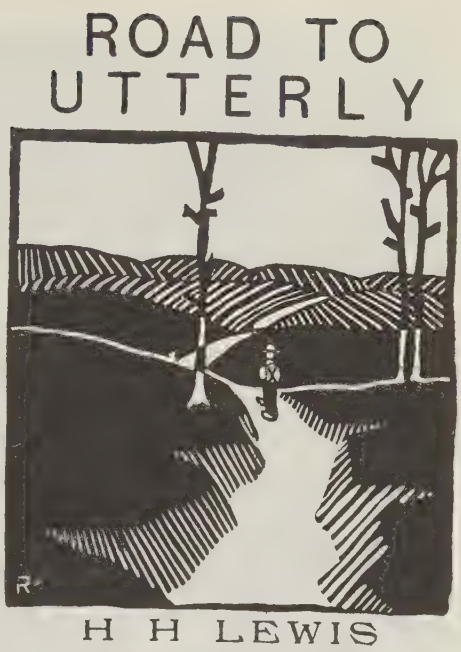
WRITTEN BY A MISSOURI FARMHAND AND DEDICATED TO SOVIET RUSSIA

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

Cover Designs by *John C. Rogers*

PUBLISHED BY *B. C. HAGGLUND*, HOLT, MINNESOTA

Certain items herein were first published, wholly or partly, by the following periodicals *American Guardian, Anvil, Hinterland, Left Front, Left Review, Modern Quarterly, New Masses, Pegasus, Scope.*



Cover — by J. C. Rogers — and title page of the new volume of verse by the American proletarian poet, H. H. Lewis

closes once and for all this, sad for the revolutionary literature as well as without any doubt for the writer himself, incident.

Now we have only to hope that the great revolutionary writer will not keep us waiting long for the proof that now, as ever before, he is in the first ranks of the writers' phalanx, that in Dreiser's own expression, has taken an "anticapitalist stand."

We are sure that the American revolutionary writers who are grouping around and closely connected with the New Masses, *the writers who have taken an active part in the recent congress of revolutionary writers will do their best to help him."*

Louis Aragon to American Writers

One of the most interesting articles in recent issues of *The New Masses,* (which steadily maintains its high standard as a leading cultural organ among world revolutionary magazines) Louis Aragon, well known French revolutionary novelist and poet, tells of his development "From Dada to Red Front." The article arrived too late for the discussions preceding the American Writers Congress. This did not diminish its importance to American writers. There is also the fact that a number of the leading younger American writers who were with Aragon in Paris, also find themselves today in the ranks of the revolutionary writers.

Aragon writes: "I was a writer who boasted of having gone through the Great War without having written a word about it. I placed my pride in this at the service of the poets, from Paul Fort to Guillaume Appolinaire, who wrapped the French flag around their literary metaphors. My revolt against the world which surronuded me quite naturally found its source in Dadaism. The quarrel in which I engaged was a quarrel of many past generations, but still without solution. It set the writer against the public. Whatever was general was an enemy.

"So it was that the Dadaists, my friends and I with a few American friends, too, Malcolm Cowley and Matthew Josephson, continued not only the tradition of Rimbaud, but that of Vigny."

Aragon confesses that "Meanwhile, amid the fog of ideologies and contradictions which we quarrelled over, from Dada to Surrealism, many years were necessary for me and for the majority of my friends to become conscious."

In the anarchistic frame of mind which they were, Aragon recalls: "Waldo Frank doubtless remembers one crazy evening when I took him to an anarchist meeting, I who thought then that the gesture of Germaine Berton in killing Marius Plateau had reached the apogee of the true and beautiful. At that time I ignored the proletariat and its every-day task."

The Moroccan war, however, proved a shock to all these ideas. "How I envied

"The Great Provider"—A cartoon from Simplicus, issued in Prague

John Dos Passos," Aragon says, "whom I met just as he was planning to take a trip to Morocco to see Abdel Krim. If we had only understood. . . ."

It was this way, in all the confusion, that five years passed. ". . . five years preoccupied by various petty disgusts, the warped cult of a poetic world which my friends and I had fabricated and the whirlpool into which I had tried to fling myself. Five years of hesitation, of detours."

His meeting with Mayakovski was a turning point. From then on there was a steady growth. Now Louis Aragon can write to the American writers: "The man that I have been appears to me like a shadowy being. I see the long course of his re-education. This education was not achieved without pain, there have been vacillations, backslidings, but here he is today, healed, cured of his social malady. Look at him, comrades, and tell me have I not a right to be proud?

"The old materialism, Marx has said, had for its basis a bourgeois society. The new materialism has for its basis the new society, 'the human society or socialized humanity.' Also I wish to say to you here, all legitimate intellectual activity, all the living part of human thought which is connected with the future of humanity, has for its foundation today the same foundation as the new materialism, the new victorious society in the Soviet Union which creates itself in struggle in your country, in our country, and throughout the world. The literature of tomorrow has for its foundation the new humanity which rises from the proletarian revolution and which is forged in its fires. The literature of tomorrow can have no other basis. But this transformation of myself and of my work by the Soviet and by actual work in the revolutionary organizations is not a simple fact of my biography. Compare the whole world to the Soviet Union, to the men of the Soviet Union who have utilized the best among their writers and have put them outside of themselves and often at the expense of the premises of their literature. I appeal to you, Dreiser, Dos Passos, Waldo Frank. Consider our André Gide, Jean-Richard Bloch, Jean Giono, André Malraux, Victor Margueritte, who have joined hands with Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland. What future does Bernard Shaw dream of today? Towards what goal has Hitler forced Thomas Mann? In Japan, in China, a great literature is springing up conceived in the blood of the workers. Renn is in prison. Kisch is driven from country to country. Only yesterday Barbusse was barred from Switzerland. Above this living literature floats the red flag of the new materialism, of the Soviet literature of the whole world."

In regard to the French writers Aragon writes eloquently "We writers of the country of Babeuf and of Varlin, we writers of the country of Rimbaud, Zola and Valles, we are with the workers. We stand with the heroes of Vienna and the Asturias, with the metal workers of Toronto and of Boulogne, we support the fighters of the February days in Paris and of the October Revolution in Russia. We stand with the heroic masses in Germany who are ready again to hear the voice of Liebknecht. We join the militant workers of France in the shipyards and in the barracks, who are fighting against those who have restored to their German accomplices the weapons which killed Karl and Rosa, after having assassinated Jaurès."

Last Number of Partisan Review

In *Partisan Review* (No. 7) organ of the New York John Reed Club, there is a most interesting discussion on the problems of American fiction, criticism and poetry. In the discussion, among others are: Edwin Seaver, author of the recently published novel *Between the Hammer and the Anvil;* Granville Hicks, critic, now at work on a biography of John Reed; James T Farrel. whose latest novel, *Judgement Day,* has just been issued; Isidor Schneider, poet and novelist; and many others.

In the discussion over Edwin Rolfe's article on poetry with which the poets Isidor Schneider, Alfred Hayes, Stanley Burnshaw

Display of the work of Egon Erwin Kisch at an exhibit in the headquarters of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers

and Ruth Lechlitner took issue, Schneider points to a serious omission:

"The work of H. H. Lewis," he writes, "has a decided place in revolutionary poetry. He is spontaneous, his range is common experience and he has an unusual talent for literary invective."

The Latest Work of H. H. Lewis

Lewis' new book of verse, *The Road To Utterly* has just been issued . . . "Written by a Missouri Farmhand and dedicated to Soviet Russia." It includes verse which has appeared in a number of American publications and shows up all the faults and virtues of this gifted American "peasant poet."

He is original, fresh, proletarian to his marrow, and a genuine revolutionary. Even though with it he brings some of his undisciplined anarchic spirit shown in earlier work.

After all, this book is a much more mature collection. *Road To Utterly* adds to the stature of an American poet of the soil who is an undoubted working class talent.

H. H. Lewis' work has been noted in other issues of *International Literature.* Michael Gold, Jack Conroy, Isidor Schneider, Walt Carmon and other American writers and critics, on a number of occasions both in the American and Soviet press have pointed to the work of this unusual worker-writer in the American literary field. It is undoubtedly high time for a thorough estimate of his work.

American Revolutionary Theatre

The American monthly, *New Theatre,* offers a resume of the achievements of the revolutionary theatre in the past few years—and of the increasing brightness of future prospects. The growth of revolutionary plays of high standard; of new playwrights; and of new theatres has been particularly striking. This splendid journal editorializes:

"After four years of alternate silence and

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AND WAR

Cover of a new British pamphlet issued by the students of Cambridge University

scoffing, the New York daily critics are all playing follow-the-leader behind Brooks Atkinson's (critic of the *New York Times)* straightforward admission that, while the Broadway Theatre has no comment to make in the midst of vast social upheaval, the revolutionary theatre is becoming increasingly dynamic and is no longer merely a skirmish on the fringe of the theatre. Nowadays, almost every dramatic page from *Zit's, Variety* and *Billboard* to the *New York Times* is filled with unqualified praise of the Theatre Union, the Artef, and particularly, of the Group Theatre and Clifford Odets."

The editors go on to say that today it is easy to understand this praise "coming at this late date when the left theatres have fought and won their battle for existence."

They point, of course, to past achievements: plays like *Waiting For Lefty, Stevedore, Till the Day I Die, Black Pit, Awake and Sing* and others. These are achievements to be proud of. Yet they are only the beginning of a deluge of revolutionary dramas, all bringing further promise of continued growth.

The Theatre of Action, formerly the Workers Laboratory Theatre, has moved into the New York theatrical district with a permanent professional theatre. Its first play is *The Young Go First,* by two of its playwrights Peter Martin and George Scudder. *My Dear Co-Workers,* a one-act play based on recent department store strikes, was written especially for this theatre by the novelist Edward Dahlberg. In Philadelphia The New Theatre Players present Christopher Woods' play *Too Late to Die*—a new playwright and a new theatre. In Detroit, in the annual dramatic festival there will be presented *The Ugly Runts,* a strong social play by Robert Reynolds (author of the Harper prize novel *Brothers in the West*), based on a hunger strike of the miners.

Despite all this, and other items of theatrical interest, there are the plans for the coming season: John Howard Lawson has written *Marching Song,* a play on unemployment which is to be produced by the Group Theatre. And he has already started on *Saga Center,* a farm play. Clifford Odets' new play *Paradise Lost,* uses the same Bronx family background as *Awake and Sing,* but treats it in a different manner. The Theatre Union plans to present *Strike Song,* on the famous Gastonia textile strike by J. O. and Loretto Bailey. There are other revolutionary plays being considered for production.

And while this is written, the Theatre Guild, conservative leading New York theatre is producing the first "radical satirical revue" *Parade,* written jointly by Paul Peters (co-author of *Stevedore)* and other Left dramatists.

More news concerning this rapid growth of the revolutionary theatre is the fact that among others two plays are now demanding attention: Samuel Ornitz's play *In New Kentucky*—and *John Henry: "Bad Nigger"* by Herbert Kline editor of the growing *New Theatre.*

Editor-in-Chief SERGEI DINAMOV

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

C O N T E N T S

№ 7 JULY 1935

Editorial Assistant WALT CARMON

IN NO. 8

STORIES by ALEXANDER FADEYEV and BRUNO JASIENSKI (USSR); ERNST OTTWALT (Germany); *ARTICLES* by SERGEI DINAMOV, N. G. CHERNISHEVSKI, E. V. PESIS (USSR) and FRIEDRICH WOLFE (Germany), RAMON J. SENDER (Spain); *LETTER FROM HOLLAND:* JEF LAST; *BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES; INTERNATIONAL CHRONICLE.*