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INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

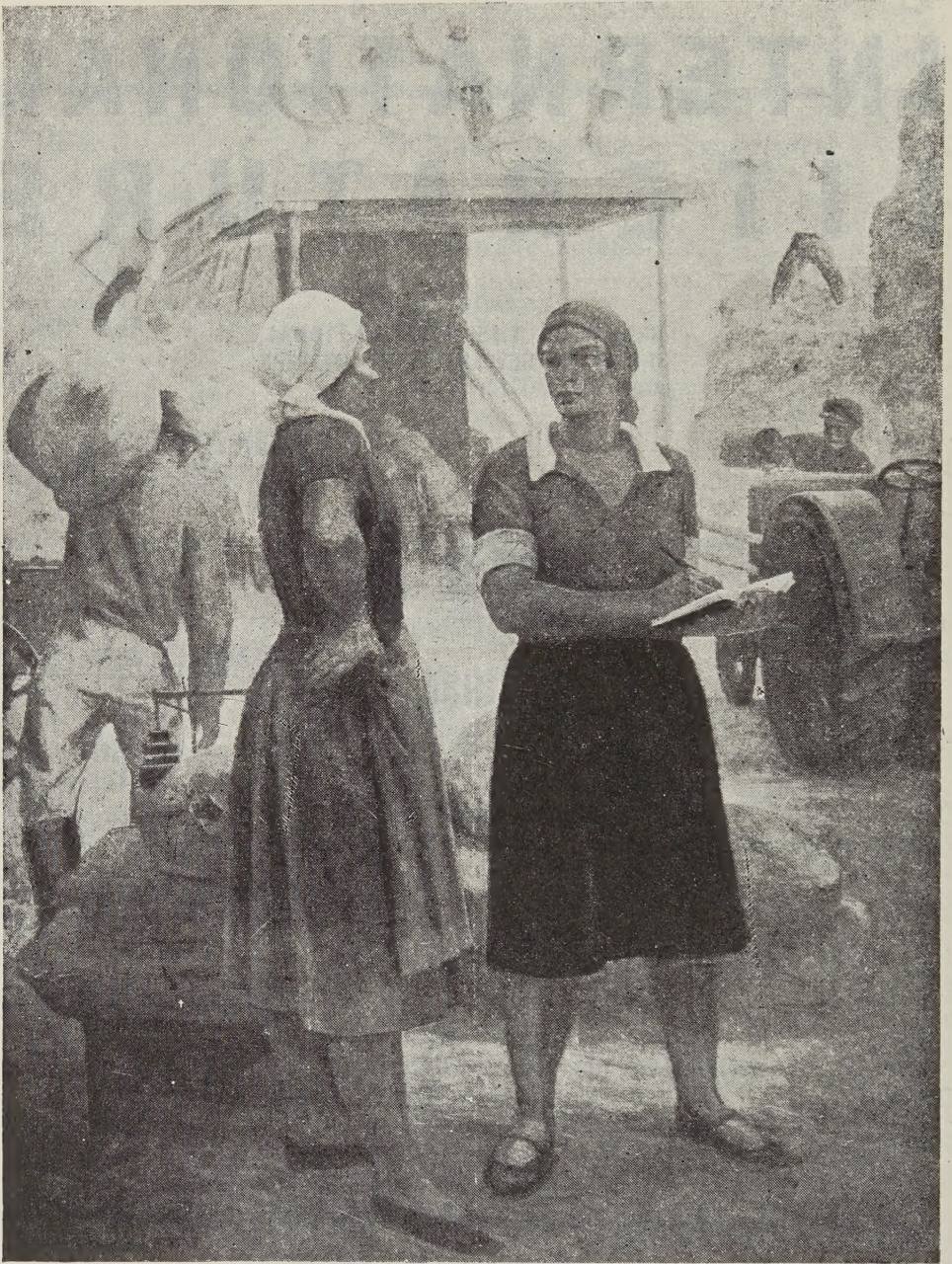
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Kolkhoz Brigadier—a painting by the Soviet artist G. RYAZHESKI

A Comrade Relates

From the New German Revolutionary Novel The Awakening and Coordination of the City of Billigen

The first hours were the hardest. There they both sat: one of them fat, with sleepy eyes and a small moustache that had a funny way of bobbing up and down when he breathed; the other a tall thin fellow with an angry face. If I went into the corridor, one of the two would come along. If I said I must go out buying, one of them would come along. I couldn't get rid of them. I tried every method—I cursed, cried, pleaded with them to leave me alone—but it was useless. "We can wait. Her husband must come home some time or other." That was all they said.

And this was just the day I had a date with Karl. You know I can see him only a few hours every month. I'm always happy when the day comes around. I keep counting the hours till I can see him again. And now I sit in the kitchen and bawl. I know exactly what's happening: now he's waiting near the soda-water stand and looking in the direction from which I come. He's standing there chewing on matches. I really can't bear this habit. But when I see him once a month waiting at the stand, and he spits out the matches and says quite simply. "Well, here you are, girl," you know, I even like chewing on matches.

And I know absolutely: now he's standing there and I can't come. Here I sit and yell at the two secret police pigs. Four o'clock; quarter past four. Now he'll go. Now he thinks I've been caught. And just that minute one of the two says ever so slimily, "Don't cry so. We won't do anything to you. We only want your husband!" The ass says "only" and isn't even ashamed of me. Then I pulled myself together and didn't say another word. But that didn't make it any easier for me. You can't imagine the fear, the terrible fear that he'll do something silly, that he'll come here to find out about me! That maybe he'll go to ask the comrades in my cell! They all know him in the district; he mustn't go there.

And there was no one I could send to the meeting place. Karl is illegal since Hitler, and after my release from jail I moved into this part of the city where no one knows me. Here no one knows about me. I still am active in my old cell.

So three hours passed, four hours. And here I sit clutching my fear. I keep thinking: Karl's experienced in illegal work; he won't come here; he'll be sensible, even if it's hard. But then I start thinking: but he loves me; he'll want to know what's happened to me; he'll come here and the police will nab him. And then the door bell rings, one time after another. With every ring I jump, the two dicks reach for their pistols, and one comes along into the corridor. A woman in the house wants to borrow an iron, peddlars, the janitor about the plumbing, and I keep thinking Karl always and nothing but Karl.

Then the thin one starts talking to me. I'd have liked to scratch his eyes out, but I have to sit still. He sighs hypocritically and says from the pit of his stomach: "It's really a shame, you poor woman. Married to a Communist. It's no cinch." And I'd have loved to shout in his face, "But

it's nice! And it's right! Lot you know about it!" But I must keep quiet. I had no appetite, but just to keep him from jabbering I started to cook; I ground coffee. Well, they wanted coffee. I said I've none to give away. Then they said they'd pay for it and I poured half the coffee down the drain. "You, don't you get so fresh now," growled the fat one.

Towards evening the two were relieved from duty and two others came.

I told them they could wait till they were blue in the face. My husband never comes here anymore. I haven't seen him for eight months. The two new ones simply answered that they had four weeks time if necessary. And it made me proud of Karl, to think they thought him that important.

And then the night! When I was in the Storm Troop barracks and they beat me so I couldn't get up for fourteen days, I don't think I found it as hard as that night here. I didn't shut my eyes a minute. The two secret police sat in the kitchen. I lay in the bedroom and kept hearing Karl's voice. And I want to tell you something—I want to be altogether honest but you mustn't tell it to anyone else—will you? Once I also thought—why isn't Karl lying next to me and sleeping. And our kid is asleep nearby, and the gas meter ticks and Karl will go to work again tomorrow morning and doesn't have to be illegal. We'll always be together and not have to hide. Why does Karl have to be a Communist? I was that shot to pieces from fear he'd come. And then I was so ashamed of myself that I wanted to cry. But that would only make things worse.

Next morning the two old secret police returned. The fat one dozed off almost at once and the thin one started making National Socialist speeches for my benefit. I didn't say a word. And then—about eleven o'clock in the morning the bell rings again. I go to the door, and there stands Karl in front of me. He looks at me; he sees the thin fellow standing next to me. And even though I've been thinking of nothing else but this moment for eighteen hours, my jaw paralyzed and I couldn't get a word out.

Karl stared at me. I got the feeling that the hair at his temples had gotten somewhat greyer than before. And his cheeks so sunken and pale . . . All this lasted only two seconds and then I roared, "This god-damned begging! I've nothing to eat myself." And I banged the door.

The thin chap looked at me suspiciously, but said nothing cause he didn't know Karl. I held my breath and pressed my lips tight, and I heard him going down the steps. Then I saw him from the window going along the street, not hurrying at all, but with his shoulders drawn. And he didn't turn around once. I began to feel dizzy, but I waited another half hour.

Then I turn to the thin one and say, "You can go. The beggar half an hour ago was my husband. Now he knows definitely."

The guy walked right up close to me. "So, you swine" he hissed and struck me twice in the face with his fist. I kept looking him straight in the eye, and even grinned. "Bang away, you won't get Karl."

"We'll meet again," said the thin one. And they went away.

It's two months now. I haven't been able to establish any contact with Karl. The comrades think I'm being watched. Only once Karl sent me his regards. Nothing else. But I know he's alive. No, no. I'm quite all right. I won't break down. It's not so simple, of course. But he's still alive. And he's still active, yes. I know that. And his being active, is the main thing. Well, you know him—isn't he a good comrade?

Translated from the German by Anne Bromberger

P. O.

From the New Spanish Novel Public Order

"Centers of disturbance in Germany, South America and British India. In the Atlantic between the 55th and 20th meridians, and up to the 57th parallel, an anti-cyclone is forming which will probably strike the Antilles. Low atmospheric pressure in Scandinavia and high pressure in the Northwest of the United States and in the Great Lakes region. Also in the Mediterranean, with strong high winds from the East. Strong winds in all Spain with sky cloudy in the storms in Catalonia and Andalucia."

(Note from the Meteorological Observatory.)

There is the wind of the parks and of the cafe terraces on Sundays. It blows the ashes off your cigarette, plays with your hat brim and with the skirts of the pretty girls. That is the civilized wind of the city. But there is another and stronger wind that sails high over the fields and comes down only to cause wreckage and upheavals. If you have ever stopped to listen to it in the corner of some forgotten hour, you already know this wind of the high places which you heard as a child in the bottom of sea shells and which now sleeps in your ears besides sharper memories.

The protagonist of the perspective, as a genteel essayist would say, is the light, faithful mistress of the wind. From the Moncloa, where the lovers have rendezvous, we see how the light makes holiday in the sugar plantations of the mountains and sacrifices herself on the bars of the prison where she is found each morning crucified. The wind laughs at these languishments but it loves the light. For the wind also, the Moncloa is a slough of memories. There are all kinds. Heroic, passionate, amusing and mischievous. Ascetic and ruffian. If the light in the Moncloa shows two contradictory natures, the wind in the jail has a thousand.

The wind itself was put in jail and ever since it has hovered over the prison and guarded it faithfully, having become attracted for all time to the penal population. When they imprisoned the wind something unexpected happened. It broke jail without intending to, without knowing it. It opened the prison walls and flew through invisible space. Our thoughts rode with it and adorned it with short wave diadems. It was a vehicle of the impossible against a horizon obstructed by walls covered with sketches and scrawls; it was an inexpressible longing, perhaps, who knows, the presentiment of bourgeois "chaos;" but it was also, above all, the passion for liberty.

There were men who breathed in satisfaction. "We have jailed the wind. The disturbances will stop." Now the signs over the shops won't fall down on the passers-by and no one will have to climb up on the roof to repair the chimneys. That monument to liberty, the jail, would like to imprison the wind which howls on the corners and prowls up the by-streets, sometimes laughing and sometimes threatening. "What do you think I am!" It grumbles through the bars. "Do you want me to tell you? I am nothing more than the air you breathe convulsed by laws and reasons beyond the reach of your calendars." Only the prisoners understand this language. The wind uses it

only with them. Outside the jail, as you know, it plays pranks and jokes about everything. In the jail they are drunk with eternity and it can no less than be sincere and profound.

Solitude seeks heroic dialogue and in solitude the prisoners talk with the distant automobile horns, the familiar rumble of the tramcars, with the bells, with the bolts of the quadrangular gallery, perforated like a beehive. Above all, they talk with the wind which learned the language of the prison during its term of iron and cement. Since then the prisoners are its very good friends. Among other reasons, they find it convenient for the wind to lament or protest for them on the roof, in the pines of the Moncloa, in the mountains, while they read or sleep.

The day the wind entered the jail it expanded until it made the crystals of the five galleries jump; it shook the doors, made the flying stairs tremble, whirled along the walls and the metal locks . . . tried the doors, went up and down the quadrangular iron abyss of each gallery, caught up cries and insults, and when it seemed as if it would be drowned in groans up at the zinc of the roof, it fell back down in whirlwinds on the asphalt pavement and again rose up in agitation. The prisoners watched the struggle from the pigeonholes where they are kept. In the trees of the plaza, in the smoke of the factory chimney, in its dull and powerful moan, the wind is inapprehensible, imponderable; hate, love, ambition and even thought. Precisely thought. The wind attacked, defended itself, could escape through a window, but preferred if possible to destroy everything. In each of the points of the star formed by the five galleries there was a little table and a man in a grey uniform rolling cigarettes. Sometimes with a simple gesture he lifted up his whiskers, also grey above his chest, to moisten the paper. Five men were rolling cigarettes at the five tables. They licked the papers methodically and looked at one another with regulation suspicion. The wind blew their caps off and scattered about some papers stamped with two big black letters: P.O. The five gathered up the runaway bits and imprisoned them under a jar of soda and commented:

"What a gale!"

The wind had read the letters on the flying papers and laughed: "P.O., public order." All Spain was suffering from those two letters as if they were embroidered on its heart: P.O. The wind also had its runaway paper. It came to my cell.

"Well, boy! Greetings. Look at my entrance pass. 'P.O.' They have detained me in the name of public order—" and added laughing: "Public order! I am universal order and they—do you know who they are? They are the Saragossan calendar."

In the name of the Saragossan calendar they had to lock up the wind. It was still laughing when back again in the first gallery it looked out from the top of a skylight. Its mistress arrived pale and melancholy. The wind tipped over a potted plant in displeasure. The day was muggy with lakes of mother of pearl and the light wanted the wind to come out and sweep away the clouds that shaded its eyes. The wind wrapped itself around the iron gratings which it left trembling, and a watchman crouching in the corners tried in vain to light his cigarette. The clouds and the light were rosy once more. The wind was in jail P.O. The wind was a governmental prisoner. P.O. But the wind continued in the country, in the street, in the hair of a child and the wing of a crane. It blew in and out of the cells, whistled in the barrel of a gun, brought the morning siren of the factory nearer and then carried it away, and at the same time growled in the angle of the eaves, whipped

the canvas that covered the enormous crucifix above the central nucleus of the galleries, looked into all the cells and scrutinized all eyes. In the lower cells, common cells—it found a boy tumbled on his cot reading a pamphlet which he sometimes marked with a line in the margin. He was the classic and eternal type of political prisoner. The wind greeted him too effusively—this exaggerated wind—and asked him:

“Did you risk much?”

The boy raised his eyes, bored:

“Pshaw! I risked my life.”

“It is strange,” commented the wind. “Exposing nothing more than your life you sometimes lose even your liberty.”

It left and began to growl against the stone wall. The boy closed the pamphlet and listened. In the voice of the wind came the millennial wrath of the rocks, the water, the trees; the protest of a universe which—who would think it—seemed from within mute and uninhabited. The boy became a friend of the wind, an inseparable friend. The wind would now be the Wind. They sealed the pact with an embrace. The boy's shirt puffed out like a balloon while some loose papers blew about the cell.

Bread and the bishop, exploring the subsoil, blood in the gallery

The order to assemble sounded before the usual hour. The prisoners marched in formation to the cells and were told that those who had them should put on fresh shirts and everybody should look as well as possible. Soon we again formed in the gallery. La Hostia declared he had changed his underdrawers, since that was all he had, and when everybody laughed, showed them to prove it. The laughter increased and the wardens ordered silence. They were also polished up. The bishop was not long in arriving, preceded by other priests and surrounded by the director and the inspectors. The Ceneque nudged The Journalist with his elbow and barely murmured: “That would make a good target. Not a birdshot would be lost!”

The group had the appearance of a colonial missionary committee such as you see in the old engravings in the *Museum of the Families*. The gallery acquired a new expression. The thing was going to be magnificent. Perhaps our pictures would come out in the *Black and White*. The Professor trembled with emotion. The Cripple looked indifferently at the wall. Paunch crossed himself and the two lawyers, at the farther end of the line, hid their glance from the new arrivals, perhaps to hide something. The pickpockets and the professional assassins smilingly recognized the picturesqueness of the moment. The prisoners in the older galleries were also in formation, and the bishop looking at them from the center made some comment to the director. Then all came down to the first gallery and the bishop made them some brief reflections with that matronly coquetry common to prelates. Discipline and order were necessary in society in order that everyone might enjoy the well being to which God had given him the right. Men driven by an obsession might be led to sin but society with moderation and forbearance corrected and re-educated the sinners. He could do no less than approve and praise the humanitarian regulations which governed the life of the prison because they represented the laws of brotherhood given by Christ. The bishop continued talking, his attitude one of lofty resignation, very convinced of the importance of his mission. All the prisoners, except The Professor, felt like giving him some good punches.

When he finished, The Curro advanced from the line. The silence became tense with anxiety.

"Senor Bishop," said the homicide, his eye winking more than usual. "What you have just said seems very good to all of us. Precisely for that reason, I, The Curro, ask you to try this bread and say whether or not a Christian can eat it."

He advanced heavily, half a loaf of bread in his hand. The bishop, for a moment perturbed, recovered himself and without taking the bread said that the director was surely ignorant of the deficiency, in case it existed, and the prisoners could be sure that, as usual, the humanitarian sense of justice would prevail. The director took the bread with two fingers and said that insofar as it was justified, the desire of the prisoner would be attended.

"I am not the only one, Senor Director," The Curro imprudently informed him. "There are all these."

The director grew pale. That was going against the regulations. Collective petitions or protests would not be tolerated.

"Is it true? Let us see. Those who agree with the complaint take one step forward."

The bishop looked uneasily on both sides. In the voice of the director was the desire to coerce and intimidate the prisoners. All those who had promised The Curro responded by advancing. The director said to the officials as he was departing:

"Very well. Let the rest break line while these remain."

The officials felt culpable before the director as The Curro himself and showed themselves much more timorous. The complainants remained lined up in the gallery while the brilliant committee went away to review the prisoners in the other galleries. Their measured steps were heard through the winding stairs on their way to the cells. The Professor was much vexed at the thought of the annoyance the director had undoubtedly been caused. It was necessary to call the doctor and the next day they took him to the infirmary with a terrible depression of spirit. In the rarefied air of hatred, a threat was trembling. The Curro was silent with his eyes on the floor and his hands folded over his stomach. The Journalist, who was at his side, heard him lament:

"It I had just a little . . . right now!"

He saw the enemy coming and did not have a pistol or even a knife. Feeling the touch of his neighbor's elbow, he felt with his hand. "Let him have it." It was a spoon which had been converted into a dagger. The blade could scarcely be more than six centimetres long but it cut like a razor. It had to be handled with three fingers but in The Curro's manner of taking it, The Journalist recognized all his bloody efficiency. They entertained themselves while waiting for the director by calculating the possibilities of exit. The Curro no longer trusted in anything but himself—not to have a . . . The Journalist noticed near the upper central balustrade in the "monkey cage," as they called the department for political prisoners, a newspaper acquaintance of his. Blonde, straw-colored, with heavy shoulders and large spectacles, he had a simian like appearance which went with the name they had given that section. What was he doing there? Why did he not come down to the patio? The Wind came and spoke in loud tones.

He won't come out if he can avoid it because the "socials" (political prisoners) know him too well as a parlor communist who quotes prices on his radicalism to the bourgeois and accepts or asks for soft jobs. In communism

he had discovered a means of livelihood just as in his goggles he had found a way to disguise the empty stolidity of his gaze. Under the mask of communism, he passed among the timorous as a man of talent. His present ambition is to become an ambassador and have the guards present arms when he arrives. On this account, he became careless, fell into a petty intrigue and lies in jail. Of course, he has scattered the news to the four winds so that everybody will know and he can make capital of it when he gets out. Two of the other prisoners have recognized him and there are jokes and laughter. He finally becomes aware of it and disappears with the walk of Germania de Racito and Frederick the Great. Attention is concentrated on the "monkey cage," where there now appears a vague, rose colored form in glittering silk. It is pajamas. The Curro protests. That is a woman. They are bringing women for the political prisoners. From behind, the rose colored silk suggests certain forms which excite The Ceneque and La Hostia. When it comes closer and turns around, The Journalist recognizes another of his companions whose whiskers deceive everyone. It is a bald republican, with heavy beard, well known and respected by the Atenistas. The laugh twists in his frame, and the companion recognizes The Journalist and waves his hand to him.

An official who had noted the numbers of all the discontented, spoke to the director, who was very pale, and then said:

Numbers 7, 41, 12, 48, 106 and 22 take one step forward.

The Journalist was number 48 and advanced with the rest, who, certainly, were not the most outstanding. The Curro, The Cripple, La Hostia and The Ceneque and various of the most decided "social" prisoners remained. They made a new selection. To what end? The wind shook the crystals and explained: They are going to beat those who remain. The bile of the director is much more poisonous than hemlock, more corrosive than hydrochloric acid. He is going to pour it over the galleries and its fecund power is such that garrotes and cowhides will spring up spontaneously from the ground.

An official conducted those who had advanced in the second selection to the cells and locked them up. The Journalist knew nothing more. The silence was absolute. The prisoners of the other galleries were already in their cells and the bishop had gone. The Journalist stayed near the door and listened with bated breath. He could hear the noise of handcuffs being locked on wrists and an unintelligible protest from The Ceneque. Once more the measured steps. The door acted as a filter and let only the less expressive noises pass through. All the prisoners in the first gallery were glued to the doors like The Journalist. Still more minutes of grey silence passed. Prudence and fear. Then the silence would turn red and burst into clamor. A distant moan was heard; another. Cries of pain. A virile voice, that of The Cripple—resounded through the five wings of the jail:

"Comrades, they are killing us!"

The cries were each time more distant. Shuffling steps were heard on the asphalt and hurried orders. The same voice, much deformed by pain, repeated the supplication and a dull murmur began to arise from the walls, the floors. The cement and iron protested. The hard material of the flying stairs, of the beams, trembled and passed on their vibration to the deserted galleries. The prisoners pounded frantically with their fists, with their feet, on the doors.

The rumble was dry and penetrating like metallic thunder, slow and sustained. A surge of wind and iron, a hurricane of hate which must shake the very tiles of the roof. The Wind added its wrath. "Beat furiously those

who have endangered the placid unconsciousness of the bishop, the tranquil vegetation of the director, the meditations of the wardens. A complaint in the jail compels annoying diligence and gives the higher authorities the impression that discipline is not firm. All this alters the timorous ruminations of the wardens. Patch uniforms, cut the hair so it won't interfere with the prison cap and beat the prisoners after searching and handcuffing them, are duties which the rules do not establish very concretely but which are imposed by the *esprit de corps* and the authority's own self. Beat the defenseless prisoners! Beat them! Your duty is to sow hatred and fertilize it with blood. This blood is live and red and some day you will drown in it. We will set up the Republic, but what of it? The Republic will not wipe the blood from the patios of the jails, the flagstones of the streets, from the white-washed walls where they shoot. Sow hatred. Your unconscious mission like that of the torrent, is to wear away the rock just as that of the river is to fertilize its banks. Beat the handcuffed and shackled prisoners! Beat them! Be the arm of a fatal destiny which plays its role as well as possible and impels men at quickened pace toward their own sleeping consciousness. Beat the lowly, the homicides whose instincts and passions have dragged them far from a mother's sorrow and the divine health of children, far from goodness and wisdom. Beat the noble men who study and suffer to redeem you. Beat the men with strong wise consciences. Beat them, you wretches, now that no one sees you, now that the crucifix is covered up with canvas such as they use to cover the unidentified corpses in the graves of the morgue. The hatred soaks deeper with your cudgels, it is squeezed into the arteries and quickens the heart-beat. Hatred will fertilize healthy intellects, someday bring them to action in spite of all precautions. Beat hard, without hearing the hurricane of nine hundred torments focussed on your fear, without listening to the protest of the iron and cement as they roar and cry. Prepare the catastrophe, hasten it, you the artifices of ruin, the supreme revolutionaries, the instigators of implacable hate. Beat while I sing the bloody song of the assassin. Beat while I sharpen my knife, the north wind, on the roof."

Now the Wind howled mournfully. It gave unity to the protest of the prisoners as the choir director gives the pitch with a fine diapason. The protest continued rude, violent, tireless. The fists of the prisoners pounded against the doors. Their feet unloaded their wrath. Everything trembled beneath the tumult except the hands of the wardens armed with lashes. Below was heard the sound of the bugle. The guard formed a ring, a ring bristling with guns and machetes, in the center facing the galleries. From there they could see the nine hundred doors and could comfortably mow down nine hundred men. The same architecture which raised the level of the palaces had also thought out this device against the wretched and hungry. But the blindage that isolates us also defends us. Don't be afraid. Keep on. Keep on pounding the doors. Fire, soldiers. Your shots will swell the magnificent fury of the moment, augment to overflowing the insuperable fear, the pathological terror of the wardens. Who is protesting? Where are the men? The protest comes from the lime, the air, the cement and the iron. The conscience of the inanimate, the bowels of the inorganic. The bolts scream, the stones speak. The men are not to be seen. Shoot, shoot, boys. If you let us out we will all go to meet your bullets. Blood will make the wretched familiar with its odor, the river will overflow its banks, will sweep away the wooden saints (*lignum vitae*), the embroidered robes and the clergymen's hats. The

spillways will be full and the dams will give beneath the current. How well the mills will work, the chains pump the turbines! The bread will come out red. The light of the turbines will flow through the gratings also red and blossom in the bubbles, scarlet for love, for crime, for prayer. Shoot, boys, shoot. The conscience of Spain demands it. Shoot and wound with impunity. Do your work. We do not hate you for that. We know that at last some day . . . Because the guns are part of the people, the people taciturn and philosophical, who know their mission and who, like Machiavelli, know what will be the end of tortuous roads.

The door opens suddenly and The Journalist finds himself on the threshold before two wardens with cocked pistols. The protest of the jail is better perceived with the door open. The clamor rises and swells in the solitude.

"Hands up!"

The wardens enter. To make way for themselves, they have pushed him to one side. They stand behind The Journalist, put their revolvers to the small of his back and order:

"March."

He goes out with his arms up. He sees his companions in protest, numbers 7, 41, 12, 106 and 22—standing near their doors in the same attitude. The clamor grows more violent and the cornettist gives orders in the moat, in the portcullis, in the interior of the galleries with an epileptic speed. The soldiers of the guard keep the five galleries in the focus of a wide circle with guns ready. The Journalist sees his last hour arrived. They are going to beat these also and he knows that the first blow will awaken dormant instincts and he will kill, if he can, if they don't kill him first. He has no arms but what does it matter. Teeth, nails, fists, feet, the arms of the *homo sapiens*, and the bushman, the insufficient arms of the tree against the machine, the rock under the drill. The Journalist does not know this kind of offense and knows that nature will oblige him to repel it. But to offer one's life in a manner so ineffective, so sterile, so intranscendent! It is neither low nor stupid to answer force with force, to risk one's life to defend not poor personal dignity but that other, the dignity of the species, human dignity. Come on, myrmidons, go ahead and beat. I will leave my life on the flagstones of the jail but under my nails and between my teeth will be your flesh. You won't beat me like a slave. If you kill me it will be at least like a beast. Now downstairs they are searching us. They did not find anything on The Journalist. On number 12 they found a long steel needle on which he had made a paper hilt, rolled and pasted it with chewed bread crumbs. He swears he did not know he was carrying it and it must be true judging by his air of sincere stupidity. But they separate this one and 106, who carried a pistol under the armpit hanging from the shoulder. They send the rest of us below to the punishment dungeons. Those who carried arms will suffer a flogging like their predecessors. The Journalist hears a warden say as he rolls up his sleeve:

"If you yell, you will die here like dogs!"

Before reaching the dungeon stairs, broad stairs like in a school or factory, The Journalist sees red stains on the ground. What blind, stupid cruelty! With blood you are sealing the countersign of a struggle that will also be bloody and implacable, and will be settled at last only by hatred satisfied. On the flagstones of tomorrow, we will certify justice with your blood. You will be the guilty.

The jail trembles. The roar is a hurricane which deafens so the wardens have to scream when they talk. Those who were beaten have become silent.

knowing that they are accompanied by 900 fists which make a noise against the blindage like war tanks on the march. Voice of iron made for bolts, hinges, iron which revolts because it was born of the strength and of the exertion of the workers and because it is their child and their brother. The Journalist and his companion arrive at the dungeon in darkness. Dusty lamps open small livid circles here and there. The distant shower baths are recalled as serpents standing above the grating of the drain. One of the prisoners remarks as they pass a wretched little air hole:

"Here is The Chavea."

Inside, the darkness is so thick that nothing is visible. When he has already given it up, The Journalist perceives a few inches from his eyes, other human eyes, round, alive. The Chavea was looking out and The Journalist did not see him. The Chavea is alarmed at the tumult and asks The Journalist:

"What is happening, sir?"

There is an unbelievable terror in his face. The Journalist is silent and The Chavea hazards a childish hypothesis:

"Have they begun to kill the prisoners?"

Fear is destroying him as others are destroyed by tuberculosis or by cancer. There is a gash across one eyebrow and cheek and clotted blood on his face and shoulder.

"Or maybe they are quarreling?"

The Journalist said yes. They were quarrelling. And he allowed himself to be shoved toward his calaboose which was next.

Translated from the Spanish by Naomi Warden

Earthquake

A Soviet Short Story of Changing Life in the Far East

In 1920 parts of a Pacific military group, fulfilling the conditions of an armistice concluded with the Japanese intervention command, retreated beyond the neutral zone, thirty kilometres from the railroad. The second Vangunk battalion retreated deep into the taiga, to the village of Olkhovka. There the battalion had to build winter quarters and depots in anticipation of a fresh outbreak of partisan warfare.

It was August. The winter quarters and the depots had long been completed, but no provisions or ammunition had arrived. It seemed the battalion was completely forgotten. In the course of a month the fighters received only a handful of wheat as their ration.

Then it was decided to send two commanders, Theodore Maygula and Trofim Shutka, into the nearest grain growing valley to ask for help.

Both commanders were natives of the southern region of the Ussuri; both were of the same age and from the same village. They were pals. They were real lads, tall and sturdy like oaks. Maygula was a dreamer. He used to spend his leisure time lying on the grass gazing up in the clouds, watching the play of the sun's rays on tree trunks and the interplay of color on the morning, noon and evening shadows. Shutka, on the other hand, wanted to know where all things came from; he liked all crafts and his quick hands worked with skill. He was agile and gay, as though justifying his name.¹

In order that they would not lose their way in the nearby swamps they were escorted by the local tiger hunter, Conrad Frolovich Serdyuk, an old partisan whose enormous stature resembled that of Peter the Great, but who was much broader and had a beard. His beard was so long and so thick that it was said it could sweep away a lot of peasant misery.

His attitude to tigers was kindly but not respectful; he called them nothing else but "cats." In the course of his life he caught not less than thirty "cats" alive and, as he used to say, he "lost count" of those he killed. He delivered the live tigers to the firm of Kunst for German zoological gardens and the dead ones to Chinese merchants for the manufacture of medicine.

The face and body of Conrad Frolovich was full of scars and scratches; his right arm between the elbow and the wrist was cut by tiger claws. On one occasion he and his two sons trailed a tigress with three half-grown cubs. The hunters pursued the animals for about three weeks, not giving the tigress a chance to hunt for food. Finally the cubs lost strength. The tigress, pursued by dogs, gave the hunters a merry chase over the taiga and it was difficult to take aim at her. Before nightfall they had tied up two of the cubs and were after the third one. In the excitement of the pursuit Conrad Frolovich suddenly found himself in the dark face to face with the tigress. He jumped at her from the side with a rope in his hands, pushed her with his chest and the impact sent the old tigress tumbling on her back while Conrad Frolovich, too, lost his balance and fell. In another moment the bared teeth of the animal flashed over Conrad Frolovich

¹ Shutka in Russian means jest.—*Translator's note.*

and its roar nearly deafened him. Nothing else remained for the old man to do but to drive his fist into the open mouth of the tigress as far as it would go. Groaning and gasping for breath the tigress was gnawing at his arm, while his sons, afraid to shoot for fear of wounding him, were beating the tigress over the head with Winchesters until the latter were broken. At the same time, the old man managed to drive a dagger near her heart.

Because he was compelled to remain silent for months at a time, Conrad Frolovich liked to talk when he was in company. All along the way he entertained Shutka and Maygula with his staid conversation.

The conversation began with Maygula's question:—

"How is it, grandfather that you are not afraid of tigers? Aren't they vicious?"

"Why should I fear them when I know that they are afraid of me still more," replied the old man. "It is true, our hunters like to tell stories that a 'cat' attacked this one and a bear attacked that one, but that's not true at all. The most savage animal tries to avoid man. An animal will attack a man only when it has nowhere to retreat. A more frightful animal than man does not exist in the taiga."

Here Conrad Frolovich began to speak about man and it became clear that his opinion of mankind was not of the best.

"Not only animals are afraid of man, but men are afraid of one another. A man is afraid even of himself," said the old hunter. "About twenty years ago I was guide for an expedition which was led by an educated colonel who drew up a map of our region. He told me once:—'You are a plain man, Conrad Frolovich, you have an eye of a child.' And I said to him:—'Never mind the eye, I have a heart of a hawk.'—'No,' he said, 'you are a very noble man, and you are noble because you live in surroundings of nature.' And I said to him:—'One can not expect anything noble from nature. If we, the moujiks, were ruling nature, perhaps we would be noble through our contact with it, but as it is nature is lording it over us. Throughout the week we root out stumps of trees until we sweat blood and during holidays we guzzle vodka till we begin to cut each other's throats. Nature gives us only anguish and hatred, but not noble feelings.'—'Look at the Goldi,' he said, 'they are altogether a savage people, but they live amid nature, just like children. Are they not noble'?—'Yes,' I said, 'I admit they are noble. This is because they live according to a brotherly law, but they regard nature as a step-mother and are afraid of nature.' And so I did not let him out-talk me. But isn't it the truth: we live badly, very badly. No matter how much we fight for justice, things somehow remain as of old. I wish an earthquake would shake up mankind. Perhaps those who remained alive would start to live in a new way. Out of fear," the old man explained and looked smilingly at his two companions.

Thus they arrived at the spring where they were to part, sat down in the shade of a cedar to have a bite to eat before resuming their march, this time in different directions. The meal was finished and suddenly Conrad Frolovich said:—

"I do not envy you, lads. Your road ahead is frightful. What a taiga this is! It is a dead taiga. No birds, no animals. Not even the wind reaches it. What stillness!"

He took his hat off and listened. His eyes glittered strangely. Maygula and Shutka raised their heads and listened, too. The impenetrable thicket rose in front of them like a wall. Not a leaf moved, not a rustle, not a

breeze, only the spring was faintly murmuring. The lads cast a glance at the old man, then at one another, and, being young they began to laugh.

II

As a matter of fact the taiga was so dense that the sun seldom penetrated through the heavy foliage. Ferns, the height of a man, stood motionless all around, as though chiselled. The air was suffocating and humid. The ground was strewn with dead, rotting trees felled by age and moss-grown. Several times Maygula and Shutka sank to the waist in the rotten wood and foliage which covered the ground.

They walked and talked of this and of that. At first they talked because they had already left dreary Olkhovka far behind and were, therefore, in a gayer frame of mind. Later they talked, because they were afraid to keep quiet, such was the silence which enveloped them.

At night they sat a long time near the bonfire, looking at the tongues of flame.

In the morning Maygula went with the kettle to fetch water for the tea. He descended to the spring, bent down to fill his kettle and . . . began to tremble. A rotten tree was flung across the spring; a huge snake was lying on the mouldy trunk of the tree, its coils glistening like emeralds, and its small flat head resting on the coils. The snake was looking straight at Maygula. Its eyes seemed like two golden points. The silence all around was broken only by the faint murmur of the spring.

Maygula's hand trembled when he filled the kettle and on his way back he had to restrain himself from running. A thought flashed in his mind to take the rifle, return to the spring and kill the snake. But he did not find enough strength to compel himself to do it: he was afraid to return.

In the evening the lads began to quarrel quite unexpectedly. Shutka started to make a bonfire and Maygula insisted that it was not necessary. He did not know himself why there ought not to be a bonfire. He was afraid that no sooner would the flame of the bonfire expose them to view than the whole power of darkness and silence would cast itself upon them and smother them. But Shutka knew that the surest thing in the taiga was to be near a fire.

And so they began to quarrel without even noticing that their voices were mere whispers.

Maygula hissed:—

"It is warm without a fire. We will roll up our coats and fall asleep."

And Shutka hissed in return:—

"It is better to have the fire burning. Besides, what are you afraid of?"

Maygula was angry because he was accused of cowardice and hissed:—

"It is you, who is afraid to remain without a fire. It is warm even without it."

"And I did not know that you were such a fellow," Shutka said irritated, "it is safer with a fire."

In the end they made a bonfire, but they ate the broth without looking at one another. They went to sleep not side by side as on the previous night, but on opposite sides of the bonfire. They woke up angry and with swollen eyes.

Throughout the day they did not speak to one another nor look at one

another for fear of quarreling. During that day they had crossed two large *spoki* (large volcanic mounds). In the evening even Shutka did not want to make the fire any more.

Maygula was ready to say:—

“Aha! You are no better than I am. Now you, too, admit that it is frightful here.”

But he did not want to confess that he was afraid. He thought that Shutka would make a bonfire for spite and that then both would feel the dread of the taiga much more intensely.

All night they tossed from side to side without sleep, pricking up their ears like animals at every imaginary sound.

In the morning Maygula realized that he had forgotten a small axe at their previous stop. This was cause for another quarrel:—

“I did not know that you are such a simpleton,” said Shutka with venom.

Maygula looked at him with eyes full of hatred and said:—

“But you packed the knapsacks. You packed them, you did!”

In the end they became loathsome to one another. Shutka thought that Maygula was eating too much (so that they would not have enough for the trip), that his lips were thick and horrid and that he was lazy, so that the whole work was left to him, to Shutka—making fire to cook dinner, washing the kettle and packing the knapsacks. On the other hand it became clear to Maygula that Shutka only made believe that he was gay, but that in fact he was a crafty and vile man. The thought would not leave Maygula that the Shutka family was looked upon as thieves in their native village.

Now they did not speak at all. Their hatred became more intense day by day. Still they were afraid to clash or one of them would kill the other and himself perish in the taiga of anguish and fright. They were lying down to sleep far from one another, but remained sleepless, somehow making up for the loss of sleep during the day. It seemed to them they were walking a century. One day they climbed the Velvet Pass famous for its steep ascent and wild scenery. They reached the summit towards evening, extremely fatigued. It was incredulous: the starry sky was above their heads. It was windy. The taiga, bathed in the light of the stars lay far below.

The lads began to descend into the valley even before daybreak. On their way to another spring they were startled by a sudden sputtering sound. This unexpected sound seemed terrifying after so many days of stillness. It was a flock of hazel-grouse, which flew from the bushes. Shutka and Maygula looked after these living beings and did not believe their eyes.

The taiga began to thin out and towards noon they came to a sunlit valley. A gay rivulet barred their way. On its opposite bank fields were stretching under the blue sky as far as the eye could reach. Peasant women were gathering in the wheat.

The lads undressed and dived into the cold water. They were swimming and smiling. Then Shutka said:—

“So we’ve come out of it after all, eh?”—and began to laugh.

They looked into each other’s eyes—the first time since they had started out—and noticed how thin they had become. Maygula felt sorry for Shutka; he turned aside and began to blink his eyelids.

III

The Suchansk regiment was stationed in the valley which Shutka and Maygula reached when they came out of the taiga. In a roundabout way the regiment succeeded in bringing provisions to the Vangusk battalion.

Partisan warfare flared up anew. It lasted till 1922 when not a single Japanese soldier remained on Soviet soil. Shutka, Maygula and Conrad Frolovich Serdyuk fought in the ranks of the partisans until the end of the war.

When the war was over, Conrad Frolovich returned to Olkhovka and to tiger hunting, this time, however, for Soviet zoological gardens. Shutka and Maygula went to study.

Another twelve years passed.

All three began their life in the socialist land simply and unnoticed. Now they became notable persons and the whole country knew them.

The tigers, which Conrad Frolovich caught, were seen in the zoological gardens of Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, Tiflis. And the children, who went to see the animals in these gardens, pointed out the tigers that were caught by Conrad Frolovich, the famous hunter from Ussuri and collective farmer of the village of Olkhovka.

Shutka learned to build railroads. He built them in the Ural Mountains, in Kazakhstan, in the Khibins and in the Caucasus. Men, who never in their lives saw a railroad, now travelled along the roads he built. Among them were Votyaks, Kazaks, Korells and Lezgins. On the honour rolls at the stations, among the names of other notable people, the passengers could read also the name of Trofim Shutka.

And Maygula learned to paint on canvas. His paintings were exhibited in Moscow, Baku, Gorlovka and Magnitogorsk. It was said everywhere that these paintings instilled in men the spirit of a new life.

In the Autumn of 1934 Maygula returned home.

He did not recognize the old familiar places. Even men changed. Double tracks were being laid for hundreds and thousands of kilometres along the old Ussuri railroad. Brigades were working here and there. Good brigades—under a red flag and bad brigades—under a flag of matting rags. In the course of the nights Maygula looked for hours and hours at the headlights of tractors and listened to the roar of their motors which rose in the fields above the noise of the train.

There were many Red Army men at the stations. They were well clad. When the train remained long at a station, Maygula watched them training and exercising. They were all diligent students. Any young fellow fresh from the village could take a machine gun apart and assemble it again, knew the name of each part, knew the duties of a fighter in battle and was ready for every self-sacrifice. It was ridiculous even to think that there is any power in the world which could compel such men to retreat thirty kilometres beyond the railway line.

Airplanes soared in the sky above the taiga. The roar of their motors mingled with the rhythmical throb of the train and their shadows glided over the golden fields of collective farms and over the blue waters of rivers and lakes. The airplane became as much a part of the native landscape as the larks and the pigeons.

Maygula looked at his native place with wet eyes and thought:—"This is the earth which my father, my brothers and I were tilling—the earth drenched with our sweat, tears and blood. And now people are beginning to live well on this earth"

He was particularly excited when the train reached that station from which the Vangusk battalion retreated to Olkhovka during the days of war.

Maygula jumped to the platform and saw in front of him Trofim Shutka, wearing blue breeches and an order of Lenin on his chest.

"Ah, Fedya,"—Shutka exclaimed, as though they parted only the other day and not twelve years ago—"where are you bound for?"

"And what are you doing here?"—cried Maygula.

They showered one another with questions but did not wait for answers; they kissed and shook one another by the shoulders. They were the same sturdy lads, only Shutka became bald—just the reddish eyebrows stuck on his face like little bushes—and Maygula turned grey.

In the end Maygula said that he was going to visit the old folks and Shutka said that he was building a new railroad in these parts. Maygula thought that since the old folks waited twelve years for his visit, they would have to wait another few days and that they would be no worse off for the waiting. And he left the train.

IV

The road which Shutka was building stretched along that very dead taiga where fourteen years ago fear kept Shutka and Maygula from killing one another. The road was ready as far as the Velvet Pass and was to extend to the sea.

On that one night when the lads were standing under a starry sky on the crest of the Velvet Pass, did it occur to them that one of them would one day completely destroy the pass? But now it became a reality. Shutka was preparing to blow up the Velvet Pass. He loaded the pass with twenty-six carloads' full of explosives—an event unheard of in the whole history of mankind. The pass, famous far and wide in the region, stood like a pie stuffed with cabbage waiting to be eaten. A man even came with two motion picture cameras—a large one and a small one—in order to photograph the explosion for the screen, so that all men may see it.

In the evening the three left in a caboose along the road which Shutka built and arrived at Olkhovka towards morning. They were planning to take Conrad Frolovich along.

Just then the distribution of collective farm earnings was taking place in Olkhovka. A file of carts loaded with grain moved along the dusty road—fifteen carts with six or seven sacks of grain on each. All this grain was earned by the family of the collective farmer, Ivan Prutikov.

Behind the file of carts an orchestra of five trumpets was marching in front of a group of collective farmers. Each trumpet was playing a tune of its own, so that it was impossible to walk in step. But the sun was shining on the trumpets, red flags were fluttering on the carts and everybody felt very gay and happy.

When the file rolled in towards the court of Ivan Prutikov, the chairman of the collective farm jumped down from the cart and ran to open the gate, while the orchestra began to play louder, each trumpet playing a tune of its own. The Prutikov family of sixteen people came out of their log cabin into the courtyard. Ivan Prutikov, a short fellow whose face was pockmarked till it resembled a thimble, ran out to the gate, stopped there and pressed his little fists to his chest.

The chairman of the collective farm reached for his papers and began to read how many days the family of Prutikov had worked and how much grain it had earned. But Ivan Prutikov did not listen to the chairman; he just pressed his little fists to his chest and kept on asking:—

"It this mine? Is all this mine?"

He was so frightened by his new riches that everybody began to laugh. The cinema operator took his small camera out of the case and began to direct it now on the file of carts, now on the orchestra and now on Ivan Prutikov. And there stood Maygula wiping the tears from his face and thinking how difficult it would be to render this picture with paints on canvas. Everything in life was changing, everything was forging ahead, while on canvas it remained immobile.

They found Conrad Frolovich at home. He sat at the table and looked through his glasses at a child's geographical globe. The old man turned the globe with both hands from side to side, like a doctor turns the head of his patient when examining the throat or the eye.

When he heard the greetings, Conrad Frolovich took his glasses off and exclaimed:—

"What guests! . . ."

He was still powerful, only his beard became shot with grey and in order not to frighten children at night, he shortened it almost to a third of its former size.

"Look how noble he became now!" said Shutka and winked at Maygula.

"Now I can be noble," the old man gravely agreed and did not even smile. Then pointing at the globe with a huge finger he said:—

"I am just looking how many seas there are on this planet. Quite a number of them. We ought to build submarines. A number of submarines . . ."

He spun the globe with such speed that all seas and lands on it became one multi-coloured mass.

They traveled towards the Velvet Pass in the evening, proceeding at a slow pace, because there the rails were laid only roughly.

Of course, the territory was unrecognizable. All along the railway line the dead taiga was hacked up and burrowed by explosions, so that only small stumps protruded here and there like decayed teeth. The car now dived into a deep gorge, now emerged and crept on stony embankments at a height which made the space on both sides of the embankments look like precipices. The same spring was flowing there, only its shores were bare. It was spanned by wooden bridges in the place where the road crossed it. Wouldn't it be rather foolish for Maygula to look for the place in the spring where he saw the snake!?

It was dark when they arrived. They walked along a dirt road on an unfinished embankment. Bonfires blazed in front of barracks and tents. was stuck in the mud. Its horn roared and its headlights shone brightly in the dark of the night.

"Well, grandfather, your tigers have been scared away!" said Maygula.

"That's all right! My time is up," calmly replied Conrad Frolovich.

V

Towards morning the Velvet Pass was wiped out. Maygula and the old tiger hunter watched the explosion from a distance of two kilometres in a sheltered spot on a small *sopka* (mound). From there the saddle-form of the pass was clearly seen, as well as the blue and yellow patches of the whole taiga around. The cinema operator was perched on the same mound with his large camera on a tripod.

They saw the bustle of men on the neighbouring mounds and heard

the voice of Shutka who was cursing somebody for all he was worth. Then the hustle and bustle ceased, men took to cover and it became very quiet.

Suddenly the whole bulk of the Velvet Pass began slowly to grow in the air and a heavy black cloud rose precipitously into the sky in the place where there was the saddle-like depression of the pass. At first the cloud rose like a pillar, then it began slowly to broaden. At that very moment the sound of the explosion was heard and a current of air hit the face. Rocks were seen flying in the dust and smoke.

The sound of the explosion did not resemble a cannon shot or a thunder clap. No, it was a hard subterranean rumble which filled the whole space around and passed in waves under the earth, so that Maygula and Conrad Frolovich not only heard it but felt it with their whole bodies. Stones which fell out of the cloud like cannon balls began to crush trees near the mound behind which Maygula and Conrad Frolovich hid themselves. The air was filled with roaring and hissing sounds in which the clatter of horses' hoofs and the roar of threshing machines seemed to merge with the whining of gigantic twigs. Stones began to fall on the mound from which they were watching the explosion and one of these stones tore into the ground with force in a distance of two metres from where the cinema operator stood covered with sweat and foam and turned and turned the handle of his camera.

When everything was over, a yellowish-greyish fog remained in the air. It was thickest near the centre of the explosion. And when that fog disappeared it was seen that the edges of the saddle-like depression of the pass had moved wider apart and that a deep gap filled with heaps of stones was formed in the centre. Beyond the edges the azure of the sky was seen in the distance.

Around the former Velvet Pass the taiga was swept away and broken into splinters. The whole terrain lay bare in the grey dust, showered with stones and rooted out stumps of tree trunks. Even on the other side of the mound, which served as shelter for Maygula and Conrad Frolovich, the tops of many trees were cut off as if with a gigantic lawn mower.

But the most interesting thing occurred on the third day after the explosion. A sedate grey-haired old man arrived at the construction site. He was a professor in charge of a seismological station. His station recorded an earthquake in this region and the professor arrived to investigate on the spot. For a long time he did not want to believe that the earth was shaken at the will of Trofim Shutka, but when he finally did believe it he was as happy as a child.

The professor received as a present a sack full of cedar cones. He was sent home in the caboose together with Conrad Frolovich. The old men became very friendly. All along the way they stuck their grey heads out of the windows of the car and they resembled one another so much that both could be taken for either moujik or professor.

Translated from the Russian by Leon Epstein

Virineya

Continuing A Well-Known Soviet Novel

Synopsis of the first installment: In his forty-ninth year Saul Magara had a vision and began prophesying. He foretold that there would be a great war, and when two years later his prophecy came true and all the young men of the village were marching away, he predicted that it would last a long time. And so it happened. When the second plowing came round, the best men of the village were still spending their strength in the Tsar's service faraway; and Mokeikha, the midwife, was considered lucky when her tubercular son came home, even if he brought the beautiful Virineya to live with him out of wedlock. But under the old woman's jeers and watching her lover become more and more unhealthy, Virineya became disgusted and left the house, seeking shelter with the only woman in the village who would speak to her, Anissia, herself a "loose woman." About this time a neighboring woman was ruptured doing the heavy work on her farm, and until she recovered Virineya, who was both healthy and strong, took her place. When this work was finished, she thought of getting a job on the railroad that was being built through the nearby mountains. But the engineer who was superintending the construction had seen Virineya and he could not get the thought of her out of his mind. One evening when she was standing in Anissia's vegetable patch, gazing at the cranes in the sky, he came to her and talked. In the end he asked her to do his washing, and, bargaining like a calculating peasant woman, she agreed to come to his house to do it.

God was getting more and more into the habit of talking to Magara. As a result of this the people heard many strange prophecies, and got a great deal of help from prayer. Magara had made considerable progress in his praying. His heart had softened, his soul was much easier now.

But as spring advanced his heart grew heavy again. His hands were itching to be at the peasant labor they knew so well. Thoughts of the ploughing, the cattle and his son-in-law's farming drove the prayers from his head. Then a night came when, no matter how he tried, he could not get the prayers to come. He was in such anguish that his head went round. It was near morning when, kneeling on his stone, Magara pleaded:

"Deliver me then, merciful God, from these earthly cares! Deliver me forever, Lord! Better for me to be taken up to serve you along side your saints in glory. Deliver me from the demands of this rebellious blood, these sinews, these hard and stubborn bones. Send the hour of death to me soon! From heaven I can send down help to thy people below, here on earth. I can hold out no longer. Lord God, hear my prayer, I beseech thee!"

The last word was a hoarse cry torn from his breast. Then, as if in response to that cry, an old saint appeared through the thick mists of dawn, and stood a little distance from the stone. It was the saint who appeared to awaken Magara's soul in the first place. Magara did not yet know what name to call him by. He could not see clearly at once; he stood dumb and expectant. Then the old saint spoke—not in his former penetrating tones, but gently and kindly. And the words were wafted on the breeze, together with the scent of the steaming spring soil.

"Saul, thou faithful servant of God, thou art not long for this world. Thou canst not expect thy last hour at any time now."

In joy that was almost anguish, Magara fell face downwards upon the stone, now cold from the night dews. When he collected himself again and raised his head, the old man was nowhere to be seen.

"Merciful saint," pleaded Magara. "By what name shall I call thee? What rank dost thou hold before God? Show me thy simple face once more, God's sufferer. Tell me how soon, what day and at what hour will God require my soul of me?"

He did not see the saint any more, nor did he receive any answer. But Magara began to prepare for his death. He came home unexpectedly that day while his wife and daughter were cleaning the house. The old woman wiped her wet hands on her apron and looked at her husband. He was weather-beaten, tousled, dirty and on the whole not much like the saints in the icons.

"Maybe you'd like to steam yourself in the bath house, would you?" she asked timidly. "Shall we heat it for you?"

But Magara only shook his head violently as if freeing himself from annoying flies.

"Get out grave clothes you made for me—they're in the big trunk. Hang them in the yard."

He went out without another word. The wife sighed bitterly and wept. The whole district believed in Magara's saintliness; but, although she was afraid to say so, she thought privately that it was not saintliness but sickness made him like that. She knew her own husband, and knew how much saintliness there was likely to be in him. He was just wearing himself out without sense or reason. She was not angry with him. All she felt was a great pity for him. Her pity aged her before her time, bent her back, dimmed her eyes, spread an ashen pallor over her face. She carried out her husband's orders at once. As she was hanging out the white linen shirt and drawers, Mokeikha came in.

"Goodday to you, Grigorievna. What, is he thinking of dying?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. He's ordered me to get his grave clothes ready for him anyhow."

"He told us, Grigorievna, he's just told us. He was in our street just now. He'll get a warning what day it's to be. I ask you to send for me when the time comes. I'd be glad, I'm sure, to do my best for a praying man of our own. Folks have turned terrible wicked these days: there's not many deserving to get a warning of their death, I can tell you. They don't die when their proper time comes, but all of a sudden, mostly. Leave his clothes to hang out as long as you can. Let them warm in our sun, let them air in the breeze, so as his remains will take the smell of the soil with them and he'll be reminded of it when he stands before his Maker and do his best for it. Aye—well! Well now, see that you send for me without losing any time. Saul Magara's swimming across the river now. . ."

"Where to?"

"He wants to do everything in a godly way, as it was always done. Not like the silly, flighty folks nowadays. He's swum off to church for to take the sacrament."

It was the eve of Palm Sunday when Magara swam back again. Darkness had fallen when he tapped at the windowpane of his house.

"Hey, open the door to me, Mikhaila."

His son-in-law recognized the voice. He was surprised.

"What, are you coming back to us, then?"

But Magara, after praying to the icon in the corner, replied:

"You can tell all the people tomorrow that I'm going to lie down and die. Have you got the coffin ready?"

His son-in-law scratched first his head and then his chest.

"And where are you thinking of lying down to die. Over in your mud hut or out on the stone?"

"Here in the house as a Christian peasant should. Here I was born and here I'll die."

The son-in-law stood a while, thinking. Then with a long yawn, he said:

"M—yes, you've prayed yourself a right end from God. I think I'll go and get a bit more sleep, shall I? Eh? It's a long time till morning. I got tired out today."

"Yes, go to bed. I'll go out in the yard and wait for daylight."

When he had gone out, the son-in-law called out to the old woman:

"Are you awake? Did you hear him? He couldn't stay in the house, do you mind, he's not used to the smell of mortal folks now. Shall I rouse the wife or not?"

"No, there's no need. I'll wake you both at daylight. We're all in God's hands. It's all the same to him when he dies. It's years since he did any work. Maybe he's right, and his time has really come. We'll do our best and see him on his way. Lie down and sleep a bit longer."

"Virka—a—a! Vi—ira! Where've you got to?"

"What are you bawling about? I wanted to rest a bit in the shade of the barn there."

"Oh, you'll have plenty of time to sleep. Come quick and look at Magara."

"What—is he really dying?"

"Yes! He's started long since. Look sharp, if we don't push our way in now, we won't see him."

"I was thinking, Anissia, that he was only lying. He's a strong chap, I thought, you can't knock him over so easy."

"Well, come on, quick, stop gabbing. All the folk are running there and we're wasting time and missing it."

Anissia raged at herself as she ran along, breathless.

"Now how did it happen that I should miss it and me with such sharp ears; I'm always the first to know every little thing that goes on. Oh, Virka, what if we aren't in time? I'd like to see how he ends. He even had the sense to die on a Sunday and all—when folks have plenty of time to look at him."

The whole village was moving towards Magara's house in a great, gaily colored wave, pleasant and cheering to the eye. There was an unceasing hum of voices in the street, the yard, and even in the house itself, though it was more subdued. In the street and the yard it was like a cheerful prayer to life.

The sunshine, the soft spring warmth of the day, the women's dresses and head shawls billowing in the wind, the fluffy willow catkins in the hands of the young people, were infectious in their gaiety. Every now and again a burst of hearty, youthful laughter would come from the crowd, or a woman's shriek of pretended fright. These sounds were drowned, however, in the squabbling and ready wailing of the old women.

Virineya and Anissia pushed their way to the front of the crowd, snapping and snarling without anger as they went and giving little squeals and giggles whenever any of the men pinched them.

The windows of the house were open. But there was a heavy odor of incense, thyme, anointing oil, and well greased Sunday boots. The mingled smells, the smoke of the censer in old Egor's hands, and the dreary, droning voice in which he read the psalms, stifled the people and made it difficult to breathe. The feeble yellow flames of the wax candles trembled before the Virgin in the icon. An open coffin stood on the bench under the window. The carefully planed boards still gave off a fresh, woody smell.

Magara lay on two benches placed close together and covered with clean,

coarse linen. His head rested on a pillow of dried wild thyme. He wore his white linen drawers, a belt with a prayer book attached, and slippers of soft black material. His great knotty hands he kept crossed on his breast in laborious calm. Two old women in black bowed low and regularly at Magara's feet.

"Look down, O Lord, and deliver my soul, have mercy upon me and save me," boomed Egor.

The people came and were replaced by others. Their movement disturbed Magara. He opened his eyes and cried out in a hollow voice:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

Old Egor brightened up at that and droned in a louder tone:

"Judge me, O Lord, by my righteousness and the cleanliness of my heart!"

And again Magara interrupted in a hollow voice:

"Deliver my soul, O Lord!"

The candles flickered. Egor's drone grew drearier. Magara was uneasy under the eyes directed on him—some sympathetic, some indifferent, some mournful, some mocking. He noticed that even his own family had left the house, all except his wife, who, with her face almost hidden by her dark shawl, stood at his head. He began to pray in a livelier passionate tone.

"Deliver me, O Lord, take the living breath from me. Have mercy, O God, upon the faithful servant..."

Virineya plucked Anissia by the sleeve.

"Let's go home. He's not going to die as soon as all that, it's plain."

The other gave an impatient twitch of her shoulders, but followed Virineya readily. When they returned once more to Magara's death bed, it was well on into the afternoon. Six candles were guttering before the icon. The village folk, now rested and refreshed, filled the house once more. Magara lay there still alive. He felt the cooling breath of the dying day, and moved his head uneasily on the pillow. He tried to hold his breath for a long time but let it out noisily at length and spluttered. One of the old women in black bent over him.

"Are you suffering before your death or not? Looks like as if you weren't going to be taken this time. The folk are weary waiting. How do you feel about it inside? Is it getting near the time or is it still a long way off?"

Magara glanced at the old woman out of the corner of his eye and did not reply. His eyebrows twitched in vexation. Stumpy little greybearded Egor interrupted his doleful prayers for a while. Turning towards Magara he advised in a sympathetic tone:

"Try closing your eyes tighter, so as to keep them from staring at living folks. Keep your mind on your own affairs and hold your breath hard inside you, don't let in out. Clench your teeth down on it!"

Then he took up his whining again in a livelier tone:

"Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow..."

Soon, however, he turned to Magara once more and suggested:

"Well, maybe you'll lie there a while by yourself without the psalms, Saul. I'm tired out, I think I'll go and stretch myself. You'll stay where you are without me, won't you?"

Magara stretched his hands; they had pins and needles in them.

"Go on, then," he grunted. "It'll soon be over now, I've felt it some time back."

Virka's glance accidentally met that of a merry eyed young fellow in the crowd. She could no longer contain her laughter. There was a flash of white

teeth and her changeable eyes glinted golden with audacious mirth. Her voice was louder than she intended as she cried:

"I say, Granpa Saul, why don't you get up and stretch yourself, too? You back must be fair stiff and sore with lying. Aren't you?"

That set all the tongues wagging at once.

"Hold your tongue, you impudent hussy!"

"The very idea! Some folk are bold and no mistake!"

"Oh, well, what about it? even though she just said it for cheek, still perhaps she's right; he ought to get up if he isn't going to die."

"Just tell us straight, ol' feller, are you going to peg out or have you thought better of it?"

"Pray a bit harder, Saul, the folks are tired waitin'."

"Try gettin' into a rage, Magara, and die! What are you waiting for, anyhow?"

Then Mokeikha cried in a furious ringing tone unlike an old woman's:

"It's all that Virka rousing the folks like this. The cursed adulteress! She'd even bring her dirt to the last hours of a saintly man's life! Drive her away, old folks!"

But the laughter and chattering only spread the more freely through the ranks of the watchers. Then the anxious voice of a little boy came from the street:

"Vasska! He's not dying after all! Come an' play marbles."

Magara's elderly wife stood huddled and limp with shame. With trembling hands she pulled the shawl further over her face to hide it.

"What a disgrace! What a disgrace it'll be! He's made a fool of himself and the people as well. What'll happen now. What'll happen if he doesn't die?"

There was both pity and anger in her heart. Why shouldn't he have been a real saint since he'd gone in for being one, instead of making a fool of himself? She wept and covered her face with her apron.

Egor, who returned to the house at that moment, asked her with an air of relief:

"Is he dead? I can't tell, the folk are making such a noise."

Magara sat up on his deathbed of benches, looked around with great, anguished eyes, then lay down slowly and stretched himself out again. The laughter ceased. The people held their breath, and their expressions became severer. There was a long silence in the house. It was interrupted by Magara himself. He gave a hoarse sigh and sat up once more. His eyes, burning with intense passion, glowing and terrifying, fixed themselves on the icon. The eyes begged and prayed and demanded. The crowd began to chatter again. Smothered titters reached Magara's ears. Suddenly he rose to his full height, gave a profound sigh and muttered indistinctly:

"The Lord God has denied me my end. He promised it to me and he's never sent it..."

His glance flitted to and fro about the rows of faces. Here and there it seemed to linger as if seeking compassion or sympathy. But everywhere it met the same mocking or spiteful expression. Then he gave his deathbed an angry kick and shouted fiercely:

"What are you gaping and staring there for! Smelt a corpse, did you? Eh? Well, I'm not going to die, after all! So there! Clear out of the house, everyone of you! I'm not going to die, I'm telling you—the curse o' hell on you bastards!"

He bellowed out a stream of frightful curses with a strong peppering of

obscenities. His eyes turned red, and seemed to swell with rage. He waved his huge fists threateningly. His frightened daughter shrieked in the yard. Another cracked woman rushed out with a scream to join her. Then all the women ran out, screeching, and squealing. Behind them came the men, laughing and flinging back obscene curses at Magara. The old folk drifted out with reproachful grumblings though their eyes sparkled with secret satisfaction. The house was empty in no time.

Magara went on bellowing after them, almost choking with the torment of furious, indecent words:

"To the devil with God! To hell with the Virgin Mary! . . ."

He dragged the linen pall from his death bed, crumpled it furiously into a ball and flung it into the corner. With a powerful, angry breath he blew out the lamp before the icon and the candles.

The buzz of conversation was still going on in the yard.

"Listen at him swearing, the old devil!"

"Got sick o' praying, he has, likes a light word now and again!"

"God Almighty! How'll he ever be able to pray away a sin like that? What can he do now to get God's forgiveness?"

Magara's son-in-law, red and perspiring, his eyes starting from his head, pleaded with the people in the yard.

"Go to your homes, Christian folks. In the name of God, leave us alone. Lord knows there's shame enough come on us! The disgrace of it! If he'd only lain down first and seen whether he was really going to die or not; it would have been time enough to call the folk round afterwards. Go away, old folks, for Christ's sake. Better come tomorrow to shame us. He's not himself today. What is it to you? You've disgraced us so now go! As for us—he's practically certain to cripple us out of shame."

The young folks whistled derisively and capered about in the street outside the house. Some yelled at the top of their voices.

"When will you ask us to come again, Magara? Eh? When shall we come next time? We'll have a real wake, with pancakes and everything!"

"Only see you don't fool us again, else we'll put you in your coffin ourselves for your cheating!"

Our Magara, he wanted to die, but he changed his mind in the evening! He got into a tear and started to swear and—they sang.

Magara thumped his fist on the window sill so hard that the glass rattled in the open windows.

"I'll kill you! Clear out, you scum o' hell! Now, then, be off with you—"

He lowered his head as if ready to spring. He swung his arms furiously and stuck out his purple face with its terrible bloodshot eyes. The crowd recoiled.

Over the street, the farmyards and the fields the soothing, perfumed dusk was falling. Women were calling anxiously for their husbands and children. The people were dispersing, laughing and abusing him as they went. Magara sat down heavily on the bench between the two windows. He dropped his tousled head on his hands and breathed in heavy, difficult gasps.

Grigorievna opened the door. It creaked slowly and softly. Her old heart was fluttering like a dove in her breast. She could hardly speak for fright. But her great compassion drove her to her husband. She went into the house. At last Magara said slowly, wearily:

"Give me some different clothes and wait—tell Dashka to put on the samovar."

But he did not drink any tea when it was ready. Instead he gulped down greedily three great ladlesful of cold water.

"Where are my daughters and their husbands?" he asked in a surly, hollow voice.

"One of the men has gone home and the others lay down in the carts in the yard to sleep. They're frightened to come into the house..."

"Alright, let 'em sleep there."

"And what about you, Saul?"

Then shyly and almost inaudibly she concluded:

"You're not going back—by yourself there—beyond the village, are you?"

He did not reply. With a firm, heavy tread he moved over in his bare feet to the old woman's bed. The wooden bed creaked and groaned under his great weight. The old woman sighed and was just settling herself for the night on the bench under the windows when Magara called out loudly and distinctly:

"Lie down along with me!"

All that night he indulged himself, as fiercely as in his youth—wordlessly, fondling and disturbing with his cruel animal-like caresses, the flabby ageing body of his wife.

At daybreak he suddenly burst into wild, hollow howls—wordless, tearless, terrifying.

"Saul, Saul! . . . Be patient, the good God'll have pity on you yet! It's your pride. He's punishing you so hard!"

"Hold your tongue woman!"

He leapt out of bed and stood in the middle of the room, big and tousled and loosely hung together.

"Hold your tongue, woman! It's not for you to understand! Hold your peace! I'm going to live out the rest of my days in sin! In loose living and fornication and blasphemy! I'm going to choke and kill people—I'm going to commit the greatest sins. He wouldn't let me come to him in my great righteousness, well—I'll come to him as a great sinner. I won't be afraid. At Judgement Day, I'll blame him to his face!"

He stormed until the sun rose. That morning he left the house, and was not seen again until Easter. On the second day of the holiday he reappeared tipsy and very rowdy. From that day onwards he set himself to earn the title of being the first and foremost in the neighborhood for drunkenness, debauchery and brawling.

VI

For three years they had been measuring the steppe hereabouts. For two years they had been blasting the hills. Cartloads of earth, sand, timber and iron had been brought. Men dug out and filled in, built banks of earth, wove spells over them and called it building a railway. But it would be another three years or maybe more before anyone rode on it.

The gentlemen who were building it were slackers, hiding here from the war, and were evidently in no hurry to finish it. All that had been done was to build a number of houses for the engineers. There were also some badly built, depressing barracks and mud hovels for the poorest of the laborers and the worker refugees. The clerks and bookkeepers bought up all the good houses in all the surrounding villages for offices. No wonder Matvei Fadeyev grumbled:

"With all your stations and the rest of it—you're very little use to anyone."

Yet he had been pleased at first. The peasants had charged the newcomers unheard of prices for their farm products and made a good bit of money. Matvei had not been the only peasant to welcome the railway folk, either. Now he was not the only one to grumble. True, he had returned from the war minus an arm and was, therefore, ill humored and inclined to see the worst side of everything. But now others—both old and young—began to show signs of well founded anxiety. The money brought into the place by the engineers—all employees above the rank of foremen were known as engineers—had brought no luck with it. Illgotten gains bring bad luck.

The folk from the towns built public houses—or as they were called, tea houses. These were equipped with gramophones, intoxicating liquor was served in tea pots to evade the law, with food peppered and highly flavored in town style. All this was a novelty to the moujik and drew him like a magnet. The drink and the spicy food aroused the desire for a spicier type of woman. The "tea houses" drew prostitutes from far and near, and illgotten gains, drew men into this business, too. Even the elderly, even the steadiest of the peasants yielded to temptation. These citified, sophisticated ways appealed to them. From the prostitutes and the gentlemen building the railway a shameful disease spread throughout the district. Women full of sap were pining for their husbands away at the war; there were no husbands for the young girls, who were of a marriagable age and in sore need of them. And the railway employees had persuasive city ways, and were open handed with presents and the like. Not only did the country woman exchange her country clothes for the short, clinging modes of the town, but also her conscience. She became wanton, ready to misbehave herself with strange men. The engineers could go to their doctors to be cured. But the village folk had no time for that sort of thing, unless they were taken very sick and had to lie up. They could not leave their land and their work to go to the hospital, and so the rot set in and the bones of the moujiks rotted. Many people, if they were to be counted, had the disease now. Diseased soldiers came in from the town, too. The war and the building of the railway were undermining the constitutions of the village folks. Alarms and adultery did their work. In other places the moujik had been rotted up altogether, torn away from his accustomed labor. Magara's vision of carts came true. Newcomers—flabby, flaxen haired and clumsy—arrived from distant provinces. And although they were not much to look at beside the local folks, they had owned their own land once and worked hard, and got a living out of it. Now they huddled in any corner the local peasants would give them, or in the barracks and mud hovels and wore themselves out over unaccustomed labor and lived on bread and water. There was not much to be earned on the railway. The war was ruining everything and the building of the railway was doing its share of harm, too. That was why the villager, comprehending the misfortunes of his kind, felt the same towards the railway as towards the war. If only it was over. There was a good deal of hostility mingled with mistrust towards the engineers at the head of the construction work.

Virka felt it, too, and it turned her away from the swarthy, well built engineer. People like him were harmful to the peasants. They did not belong to the same sort. Still a healthy desire drew her to him. A woman who has never borne children is restless. Twice in her dreams they caressed passionately. She always remembered him at night and raged at those secret night thoughts afterwards. In the daytime, the engineers disgusted her. That was

why, when she saw him hanging about near the bath house as she went to fetch water on washing day she said harshly:

"Don't you come hanging around here, sir. It isn't the proper thing for a man. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What have you to do round here?"

His eyes gleamed approvingly as they roved over a neck and arms of a rare whiteness, exposed by a low cut, short sleeved chemise. The arms were slim and smooth above the work coarsened wrists, and so were her legs, which the short petticoat did not quite conceal. He said in a stifled, passionate voice:

"I've been looking forward to this day as if it was a holiday. I love you, I want you, Virineya. Listen to me..."

He stretched out greedy hands and moved towards her. She repulsed him with an angry shout:

"Now then! Don't dare to touch me!" and, very straight and stern, passed close by him into the bath house.

"Don't you come bothering me," she shouted from the doorway. "If I catch sight of you anywhere near this bath house, I'll scald you, I tell you. Get somebody else to sleep with, somebody that's easier to get round than me. I don't want you!" and slammed the door. As he walked shakily out of the yard, for his knees were trembling, he met two women belonging to the house. Judging by their eyes and their tightly compressed lips, they had seen and heard everything. His cheeks flamed.

"Where's Peter?" he snapped. "I want the horse brought round at once."

He rode away to the section where construction was going on, and spent the night there. The money for the washing he paid Virineya through his landlady.

At Eastertide, however, when folks were giddy with unaccustomed drink and kvass and rich food, he met her by accident in the street. He wanted to pass her without speaking, but she called out to him:

"What, are you going by without passing the time o' day with me or even looking at me? First you were too hot and now you're too cold? Come on for a walk with me, my handsome young gentleman!"

He looked round and stopped. In her light print frock, made in town style, she was as fresh and gay as a young birch at Whitsuntide. Her eyes looked vexed, as though intoxicated, her face was flushed, glowing, tempting, her voice excited.

"Virineya! Viri!"

"Come along, now. Let's go out to where the young grass is green in the steppe and we'll rest on the hillocks. I've been wishing and wishing to see you these days and it's all turned out as I wished."

With an imperious touch on the shoulder she turned him and they walked out beyond the village together. She did not look to see if people were noticing. As she tripped along lightly, she chattered unceasingly.

"I'm as shameless today as if I was out on a spree! And it isn't the drink for I only had one sip from a glass. It's just the day—the holiday—and the fresh, free air and the green grass. The blood in my veins is restless and my heart beats fast. 'Aye,' thinks I to myself, 'you'll only rot and die anyhow! You've wasted the best years of your life and now what?'"

"Virineya... Virka, my love! My lovely one—you're drunk, surely you're drunk! Tell me, where did you get the drink? Have you been out visiting folk?"

"Yes, I'm drunk, sure enough, but not from drinking. I'm telling you why.

I'm not one to tell lies for nothing; it isn't as if you were my husband or my father; why should I be ashamed before you? It's my blood that's like as if it's drunk these days. There's no one else I seem to want; I remembered you. It's the third time I've passed by your house."

"Darling!"

The village lay behind them. The breath of April was in the joyous green of the young grass, the mild, scented breeze, the fresh mould waiting to be ploughed, and the cool, youthful blue of the spring sky. He glanced into the golden brown eyes, smoke veiled as it were and dimmed today with yearning. Then he seized her by the shoulders, drew her close to him, and pressed his lips to her hot, pale mouth in a long uninterrupted kiss.

"Wait, let me breathe a minute. Oh, my head—it's not clear any more! How sweet your kisses are, sir. I've forgotten what to call you, I've forgotten your name, but all the same I'd like you to kiss me more. But wait—oh—oh—Let me go—just a minute, let me get my breath!"

"Vira, my love . . . How delightful it is to be with you! What an extraordinary creature you are! You are not the first I've kissed and yet . . ."

"Sit down, I want to lie on your knees and rest. Put your arm like this. Wait, don't stroke me, don't torment me! My heart is too full, let me breathe. A—ah! Men are just like flies for knowing where sweetness lies. Let me go!"

"Vira, Vira . . . But why? Virineya, just one moment . . . Oh, but why do you do that? You don't hate me . . . Come, my dear, my love, my darling."

"Don't touch me, I'm telling you! Let me go! I'm agreeable—all the same—I've been wanting you these days. No, no! Let me get my breath! It's too sweet, it takes my breath away, I haven't the strength . . . Let go of me, let me breathe. Wait, don't kiss me!"

Suddenly a strange voice broke in upon them—a hostile, outraged voice full of hatred and pain.

"Virka—a! You strumpet!"

They let go of each other at once and jumped to their feet. Vassili stood before them, shaking from head to foot with pain and rage. A red spot flamed on each of his cheeks and his old peaked cap had slid to one side of his head.

"Carrying on with the gentleman! You filthy hussy! In broad daylight, too, like any bitch!"

"Stop! That'll do, you rotten carrion! Don't shout at me! I'm not your wedded wife, I was never more than your fancy woman. Well, I'm done with that now and I've left you. What are you trailing after me for?" she demanded. She was very white but she stared at Vassili steadily and fearlessly.

"Be off with you! What right have you to follow her about at every step?" the engineer burst out.

"Hold your tongue, Ivan Pavlovich!" Then with the ghost of a smile, she added: "You see, I remembered your name when the time came, after all . . . Don't shout, don't waste your breath. Go on home and I'll have a talk with Vasska myself."

"You've nothing at all to say to him. Clear out, you blackguard, else I'll . . ."

"I'll talk to him myself, do you hear? Go away, I'll see you tomorrow evening—for certain, I won't make a fool of you. But leave us now. I've got to talk to Vasska myself."

"There's nothing for me to talk to a bitch like you about! You ought to be killed, you filthy trollop!"

"Well, if you think you're able and you want to do it so much, then do

it. And you go away, sir. Look out now, if you don't do as I tell you this time, I may turn nasty, same as I did with Vasska."

"I can't leave you here alone with him."

"You can't? Well, then if you don't want to go decently when I'm asking you, then you can go to hell for good. Vassili, come to Anissia's yard, I've got something to say to you."

"But, Virineya," the engineer pleaded, "it isn't necessary. You don't know yourself."

"Will you go or not?"

"Very well, I'll go then. I'll wait for you just by the village, but it's no use you're staying behind..."

"Do go! Really, you're only making it worse."

"I'm going. But do be quick, please. I'll wait over yonder."

He went ahead, looking backwards from time to time.

"Yes, do. I won't be long. There's just something I want to say."

When the engineer was a good way off, she said to Vasska, who was gazing after him with an insatiable, evil, wolfish expression:

"Vassili, you legs are shaking under you, and you can hardly hold yourself upright. Sit down, won't you."

Subdued by the gentleness of her voice and the compassion in her eyes, he dropped down on the grass beside her.

"Vasska, I'm sorry for you, as sorry as if you weren't my lover at all but my own son. I give you my word, I'm downright sorry! When I abuse you and shout at you, I only do it so as it'll be easier for you to keep away from me."

"Virka, you say you're sorry for me? Then why did you leave me? Why do you carry on with other fellows?"

"How you wear yourself out over me. I can hear how you catch your breath. It's no use going on like this, Vasska. We won't be able to talk about anything now or get anything settled. It's so happened, without either your will or mine, we're separated and we can't come together again."

"You wanted the taste of a short life with gentry, did you? Eh? With that fellow..."

"It isn't that I specially wanted that fellow. He just happened handy. I'm not vexed with you for wanting to blame me. I'm sorry for you! I know you only do it because you're so upset. You know that what I wanted was something else. I'd have been glad to live like an honest woman and have children from my husband, and rear up a family. When I think of it—my heart stops beating. Well, and I couldn't get what I wanted, could I—I'm sorry for you. I often think about you. You weren't much, but you were my first—I was a girl then."

"You say you're sorry for me, but you don't want to live with me—Will it be better, do you think, living in sin with the gentry? You know their proud hearts, Virka, know yourself what they think of us... Why should you?"

"Hush, Vassili! Yes, I know everything. But I'm telling you, it just came about—the gentleman happened along when I was in the humor for it. And although I'm sorry for you, often and often, still I don't want to have you touch my body. Don't be vexed, I can't follow my own free will in this."

"Then what are you muddling me up for? What's all this talk about?"

"Vassiyutka, my love, my poor unhappy lad!..."

"Oh, to hell with that sort of palaver! I got weak from constant colds on

my chest and you talk as if I was a born idiot. Aye, Virka, it isn't a kind heart—that of yours!"

"Yes, it is, but it's not a deceitful one, not sly! It gives away all that's in my thoughts. I'm sorry, very sorry, for you, but I don't fancy you. If it hadn't been for you, I'd have gone off with that gentleman long ago."

"And have you settled it all with him now?"

She gave a mirthless laugh.

"No, you've spoilt all that again! And now I'm thinking I'll do without him altogether."

"Virka, come back to our house and I'll never say a wrong word to you . . . I'll never either by word or look blame you again."

"No, Vassili, I'm not able. I started to say: pull yourself together, forget about women, rest yourself. You're so poorly and so greedy. What for? Rest yourself, do! It'd ease my heart. I'm far enough from God myself, but as for you, I was wondering if you ought to go in for being a monk, perhaps?"

"Aye, you bitch. You want to go gadding about and living in sin, but you'd shove me into praying—where I'd wither up the sooner? I'll show you!"

"Get back! Take your hand away, I'm telling you. You're not strong enough to get the better of me. It's plain to see there's no use talking, words can't help. Let's go home. There's nothing more to talk about. Let everyone go his own way, we'll go on in the same old weary way."

She got up and walked away.

"Vira . . . Virineyushka! You're the only one for me, the only woman I've ever wanted!"

"Don't whine! What do you want of me? I've nothing for you. You don't want my pity. Well, then, what are you whining for?"

She went away with her swift, easy gait in the direction of the village. Vasska started after her, but stumbled and fell. He lay quiet, face downwards on the fresh, restless, brown earth.

On the outskirts of the village Virka encountered the engineer. He was striding impatiently up and down.

"Go home, Ivan Pavlovich," she said coldly. "I don't feel like courting just now. Vasska's put me out of humor."

She looked him in the face with cold, sober eyes.

"Vira . . . But you'll come, won't you? You promised me . . ."

"It was in a wild, crazy hour I promised. If I feel in that sort of a humor again, maybe I'll come. But don't expect me. Find someone else for yourself. And don't follow me, I'm going to the other end of the village."

He raged and stamped about his room when he got back. A common village woman, and yet she could twist him round her little finger like that! It was unthinkable, abominable, humiliating! To the devil with her! To the devil with her!

He called for his horse and rode away to his educated friends on the railway section. But the chief's sister-in-law and the young teacher from the town failed to amuse him. He was gloomy and his heart was full of his tender yearning for Virka.

Vasska lay for a long time on the ground beyond the village. It was growing dark. The April earth which had not yet been thoroughly warmed by the sun, cooled quickly towards evening, and chilled him. But it was so hard to rise. His body seemed entangled in a web, his heart felt as if an iron band was squeezing it. It was difficult to breathe and depressing to look out on the world. A thick, hoarse, tipsy voice forced him to his feet at last.

"What's this carrion lying here? Eh? Oh, it's alive, is it? And I thought . . ."

"It's me, Uncle Saul . . . I was having a rest."

"It's me! It's me! I can see it's you . . . The midwife's spawn. Hic! I knew 'twas you. A grand specimen the old witch turned out and no mistake. Well, what are you standing there for? Be off with you!"

Then he recollected something and called after Vassili's receding figure:

"I saw your Kerjak woman with the engineer. I wanted to fetch her one for you. Not for you but for going with that gent. But if I do—I'll kill 'em! Not her, but him. He's a great hulking fellow and an adulterer. A moujik sins because of his heart burning and these fellows because they're overfed. I hate them! I'll kill them!"

Vasska turned back and urged him: "Uncle Saul! Thrash the life out of him, for God's sake, one of these days! His sort have brought nothing but sin and trouble to the place. Heaps of trouble. I'd thrash him myself, but I'm such a sickly fellow. I've no strength in my arms. Why didn't you give him a lesson today? Fancy them going about in broad daylight where everyone can see them.

"Aw, aren't you clever? Want to get someone else to fight your battles for you? Well, of all the dirty blackguards these you meet nowadays beat all! What are you doing here? Be off with you! I don't feel like beating you! I don't feel like it, I say. I ought to squash you with my nail, that's what I ought to do. Now, then. I can beat you! Ah, you're running away, frightened, are you? You keep a good grip on the earth, too, don't you? And I don't keep any grip at all on it; it keeps a grip on me. I want to kill. My hand's itching for it. I'm going to kill those fellows! I don't want them here! They're spoiling all our girls. I'll kill them!"

Vasska ran, his rickety legs almost doubling under him. Magara could have overtaken him at one bound, but he simply spat loudly and went off in another direction.

One night, about a week later, the engineer returned from the railway section. He was already near the village and the horse was going at a foot's pace. The engineer was in a melancholy mood and the reins were slack in his hands. He was reluctant to return to his big, empty, dreary room next the office. From early morning he had felt a strange new melancholy. It was not that he was thinking of Virineya, or indeed of anyone or anything in particular. It was simply that he had an almost physical sense of being weighed down, and this weight produced a queer, formless nostalgia. It was nigh unbearable.

"Am I sick, or what? Or am I going crazy? Ah-h, it's hard to breathe . . ."

He had ridden on his rounds. The foremen had been surprised at his unusual absent-mindedness and dull, languid glance. To stay indoors alone was impossible, and even out visiting the melancholy mood did not leave him. He had urged on his horse the whole way, and been in a hurry to get home. But now, as he drew near to the village, he felt strongly inclined to turn back. He huddled down limply in the saddle.

All of a sudden his horse reared and the engineer flew out of the saddle. He got to his feet quickly and easily. The horse galloped away into the darkness somewhere off the road.

"Whoa! Whoa!"

He was starting in pursuit, when he gave a sudden start and stood rooted to the spot. A huge tousled peasant rose up before his eyes. It seemed as if the darkness itself produced him.

"Been riding eh? Taking the air? Amusing yourself? Dirty son of a bitch!"

Was it to amuse yourself you were sent here? To ruin our girls and lead the women astray? Eh?"

At the sound of this hoarse and terrifying, but human voice, the engineer took heart.

"Hands off, you blackguard! Frightening the horse like that! Keep out of the way! What do you want with me?"

He hastily pulled out a short, but strong black revolver.

"Now, then, shoot! Let it rip! Shoot! And I'll give you a taste of my fist. You'll see how easy it is to kill Saul Astafiev Magara. Now!"

"Let go . . . Let go my hand, you drunken devil! Le-et go-o!"

He fired into the air but the next instant received the full force of a heavy fist on the temples. It sent him staggering. He swayed and flung out his arms; the darkness danced before his eyes. But he kept his feet. The revolver slipped from his fingers.

"Ah, you blackguard! You want to fight, do you?"

He clung to Magara's beard with one hand and tore at it with all his might; then he got his other hand free and started to defend himself furiously from the blows. He strained towards the ground where his revolver lay, but Magara crushed him with his weight and got him down.

"Pretty strong, aren't you, you devil! Got plenty of good food in you, I suppose. Take that—and that—and here's another for you! Trying to hit back? N-n-no, no! It's not so easy to get back at Magara. My heart's heavy and my hand's the same. Now—one more! A-a-h!"

With incredible swiftness Magara seized the revolver from the ground and struck the engineer a terrific blow on the back of the neck with it. The man twitched in the last convulsion, and, very keenly, for one brief moment, caught the smell of the earth and of some sweet scented grass close at hand. Then, quite without reason, he saw or remembered in a flash that he ought to cry out, to make some last utterance. But he did not cry out, nor utter a sound. He lay there in the road, dead, unseeing, and perfectly still. An empty human sack.

"Ah, it's over and done with! I've killed him. I'll kill some more—And not because that sickly, rotten fellow asked me to—no."

He strode firmly away from the body, muttering indistinctly. He was either repenting or else gloating and threatening. About ten yards away he suddenly stood still and uttered a groan. Then he flung away the revolver with all his might and started to run. Away into the steppe he went, as far as possible from the village. He ran fast, keeping a sharp eye open for things around him and straining his ears for every sound in the darkness. Thus, do men run from captivity or from death.

VII

Winter came round once more in due course. The village was wrapped in snow, the short days were either stormy or frosty, the long nights brought heavy, wearying sleep in the close, unventilated houses.

The peasants' winter existence went on in its usual order. Only that there were fewer weddings now.

At night time, when the cold radiance of the snows lay in solemn grandeur over the still woods, the river and the high hill behind the village, the village street would shatter the stillness as before with accordions, and song, with women's squawks and furious bouts of abuse. There were few bachelors about now. The people who circled in mirthless rowdiness in the street of

a night were nearly all bearded family folk, no longer young, and soldiers home on leave.

There were more brawls now, and wild, derisive whistling, and girls' excited squeals, but the evening's fun was over much earlier and the girls came home dissatisfied. The row did not disturb the people asleep in the houses. Only in the school house on the outskirts of the village the new, young teacher from the town would jump out of her bed in a fright and examine the bolts of the shutters and the latch of the door, and cry herself to sleep. Mokeikha in her tiny house would curse and grumble and sigh and pray. Grief and pain had driven sleep from her eyes. She was alone again this winter. They had taken Vasska to prison, although he had lain at home sick and broken down by his illness the day and the night of the murder. It would have been easy enough to clear him, but Vasska had implicated himself in his fright. He had wanted to throw the suspicion on Magara but it came out that he had himself incited Magara to murder. And the more he was questioned, the worse it became. He entangled himself. At last the authorities began to doubt the truth of his assertions about Magara. So Vasska was never cleared and he died in prison.

As for the story about Magara, the Akgirovka folk both believed it and did not believe it. But no one wanted him to be caught. For then the business would start again, and the Akgirovka folk were sick of being questioned as it was. Things had quietened down now. Evidently the engineer had no relatives. As soon as Vasska died, nothing more was heard of the case. The guard on the railway was increased, that was all. The engineers became more careful and did not risk riding about after dark.

The suspicion that had fallen on Virka was soon dissipated. She had been sent way from the town as a woman possessing no passport. She was to be kept under observation in her birthplace, and now, it was rumored, she had been given a passport. Her relatives naturally refused to take her in, and she was by no means anxious to go to them. Eventually she got work on the railway. Work on many of the sections was held up during the winter months, but near Akgirovka a hill was being blasted and a tunnel in course of construction. Virka lived in the barracks now with the immigrants from other provinces. She went on a spree very often. Every Sunday she was drunk and noisily merry. She would dance and sing in the street between the barracks and keep company with the rowdiest of the peasants and workers. But, to everyone's surprise, she would never have anything to do with men from the upper classes, although many of them were curious about her. The Rural Magistrate himself came over to engage her as a cook. She would not even hear of it and they had to drag her to him by force. She leered at him knowingly as she smoothed her hair; it had got untidy in the struggle. Then she said:

"You're the boss, you've been given a heap of power. Not over me, though. No one can boss me about, kind sir, because nothing can frighten me. I'm not coming to you. You won't be able to frighten me into doing it. I don't want to and that's all there is to it."

There were three peasants and the village policeman present. Red patches appeared on the Rural Magistrate's face. He clutched one of his glittering buttons in his confusion.

"What sort of nonsense is this you're talking? I never dreamed of threatening you or calling you to come against your will. I'm looking for an experienced cook and someone told me about you. I must ask you not to make these

stupid—er—remarks and objections. If you don't want the place, don't come! I thought you were in need of work."

"We've got as much work as our backs will bear. There's no call for folks like you to send a hundred miles just for a servant. There's plenty of cooks would come if you only raised you finger; you've only to mention you want one. Bread doesn't have to look for the belly, they say. It isn't for work you want me, but for your own satisfaction—"

"Clear out, you fool! A more impertinent, filthier tongued woman I never saw in my life! You watch out!"

From the threshold she retorted—not in an angry tone but more as if she was talking to herself:

"There's nothing to watch out for, so far as I can see. Neither prison, nor beggary, nor death itself can frighten me now. And I'll set all sorts of nasty stories going about you. I can find plenty to stand up for me if I want. I'm too much like honey—even the high-and-mighty town folks buzz round it. Oh, you needn't stamp your foot, I'm going!"

The Rural Magistrate drove away in an extremely disturbed frame of mind. People thought this would be the end of Virka. But nothing happened. Even an important fellow like a magistrate was afraid to have anything more to do with her. Or perhaps he forgot her. It was said that he had consoled himself with a young woman doctor from the hospital. Another gentleman drove out to hire Virka as a servant who would incidentally, contribute to his enjoyment. He came from a distant section and was the head over a great many engineers. Very stern and going gray, this was a real gentleman, and better dressed than any of the local gentry. He held his hands as though he was afraid of soiling himself if he touched anyone, and he held his head very high. He spoke to Virka kindly, with a faint mocking smile in his moustache. She did not snub him at once. She asked:

"What wages will you pay?"

"Oh, I really don't know. Tell me how much you would be satisfied with. You know how to cook and in general you—er—seem to suit very well. I like to keep a good table and a smart, clean, healthy servant."

"That goes without saying! I've seen something of the gentry, I can guess pretty well what you need."

"So much the better. I'm very glad. I am not tight-fisted. I'll pay you twenty rubles a month. Everything found, of course. But I must ask you to go, first of all, to a doctor to make sure that you haven't got the itch or some other infectious disease . . ."

"How many in the family?"

"I live alone on the section. The work won't be very hard for you."

"Hard? I should think not. Sounds as if it was going to be a regular bed of roses. How much did you pay your last cook?"

"He was a war prisoner. But don't you worry about that. I tell you I'm not tight-fisted. I paid him ten, but . . ."

"But you're willing to pay an extra ten for the use of a woman? Aye, isn't it nice to be a woman! So far as I can see, the riff-raff have a bit better conscience than the quality. The gentry have a poor, thin, miserable little conscience, to be sure."

"What do you mean? . . . I don't quite understand? What were you trying to say?"

"He's the greatest scholar of the lot, and still he can't understand anything! He's got a family, but he asks a loose living woman into his house to live with him and it's not to commit adultery but to lead a holy life! Why none

of our sort could find it in his conscience to open his mouth about such a thing! That's what puzzles me about you. Aye, you gentry! You do something filthy just as if it was something holy. It's only common folks that just sin. Gentlemen seem to be saving their souls even when they're sinning. I'll crack your nice clean mug open for you! I'll leave a mark on it that'll never come off! I'll bill and coo with you, will I, you old crook! You don't want me to shout? Eh, lasses, come on in here. Come on quick and have a look at how the gentry—Now don't run! If you shake yourself you'll stink! If you like doing something, well then, say so, and don't sit there with a face as nice as pie, pretending all you want is to live a good life."

The gentleman used to tell people afterwards how he escaped by the skin of his teeth from a mad woman. His breath would come fast and his pompous manner would leave him as he went over the main points.

"It was really most extraordinary! A violent case of madness. Erotomania... Really, it's most astonishing to find a case of hyper-refined erotomania in such surrounding..."

Virka did not go into the village very often, and the village folks avoided her, thinking it better to keep out of the way of such a woman. She might easily drag one into some kind of a case and get one into court. So when people encountered her they neither greeted her nor got into conversation. Only that desperate character, Anissia, who could never restrain her curiosity, ran in to see Virka at the barracks one Sunday.

There were two not very long rows of barracks. They looked like brick sheds, with small blind windows almost on the level of the ground. These were now practically snowed up. The snow had to be dug away if you did not want to sit in the dark, all day. The roofs were steep like those of a bird house. Household articles and trunks lay about outside the barracks. There were no yards. Some way off stood a tall, unfinished house where a railway siding was to be built. The as yet unglazed window spaces stared into those human burrows, the doorless porch yawned. On the logs before it sat a group of refugee peasants and three war prisoners in ridiculous short overcoats. A little further off sat the women, who had crept out of their dark corners to enjoy an hour of sunshine on this unusually warm day. Anissia looked about her, screwing up her eyes, dazzled by the shining snow. Then she addressed the women who were carrying on a lively conversation.

"Good-day to you, lasses! Where's our Virka today, do you know?"

A young refugee peasant woman with a curious head dress that made her head as big as a wheel, poked her sharp face out from under her shawl and replied, laughing:

"Behind the barracks—Go and call her behind the barracks. Wherever there's a spree going on, Virka's sure to be there."

But Anissia's sharp eyes had already spied Virka—a long way ahead. She was standing near the barracks. She did not hear Anissia at once when the latter went up to her. She was standing gazing at the snowdrifts, away towards the steppe. Her face was stern and the furrow between her eyebrows very distinct. Her eyes seemed to be searching for something among the snowdrifts, something they did not find; this evidently disturbed her. She was wearing an old coat and the shawl over her head was dirty and threadbare. She responded to Anissia's greeting in a hard tone.

"Oh, good-day, if you're not joking. What you come for?"

"O-oh, how proud you've got! I've just come to see how you're getting on—I heard tell you were having a gay time. What are you turning your head away for? Here, I've come to have a pleasant word with you same

as in the old days, and you turn your head away. Other women spit when anyone so much as mentions your name while I—"

"And you haven't got spit enough, eh? You grudge me it? What did you come after me for, Anissia? To have a good look and then go gabbling all around, I suppose? Well, look your fill, then. It isn't the first time you're seeing me. I'm just the same as I always was."

"Oh no, you're not. You're crosser and much worse. I didn't know why you should be like that with me, I'm sure. It's pretty plain to see, my girl, you aren't having too easy a life. Why don't you dress yourself a bit better, I wonder? Even when you were poorer you dressed yourself cleaner."

"And who should I dress up for, I'd like to know? I've not got so much money to spend on clothes. If I can get my food out of my wages it's as much as I can do."

"Ah, you see, Virka, you shouldn't have spoken against God. You're always blaspheming, and you never say your prayers, you're not a bit sorry for your sins, and that's why God sends you so much bad luck. You've got nothing and you're driven from pillar to post. Aye—woman, I can see you've a hard, bitter life of it! Yes, indeed! I came here, thinking to envy you, but now it looks to me as if you're living poorly enough, there's nothing to envy."

"And are you living so well then? We are all living pretty badly under God's heaven, Anissia, so far as I can see. Every blade's eaten by its own rust. Whoever says he's living well is only pretending to cheer himself up, and forget about his life being so bad and stop it eating him. Just like, you, for instance."

"What's wrong with me? I've got a roof over my head and enough to eat, thank God. No one can live without tears or sickness all the time. Except, perhaps, the gentry—but not folks like us. Well, then, what about it? I live well enough."

"The gentry come up on the same yeast as we do. Out of the loins of men and women. And they've got uneasy livers, too. They know what sickness, and tears are. How else could it be? Only they happen to have plenty of food for themselves and they live well. They do cry and moan sometimes, of course, but only because they don't know what they want. If we lived on their food we wouldn't cry."

"Well, what I think is this, Virka, it seems to me you're no fool, and never were, and yet you behave like a fool. For instance—we were talking about the gentry . . . Well, there's talk in the village, you might say, that you're getting quite a terror at carrying on with men. What I mean to say is, if you want to do that, why not carry on to some profit. Have some sense and make a bit of money, then you could live like the gentry, too. There's Motka from Romanovka lives in a very good brothel in town, and she has silk dresses and a gold ring. She came home for a holiday to show off. Yes, and look at the others who are kept by the engineers. They get boots and coats and what not that anyone might envy! And why, anyone that looked at you would pity you. I declare to God, they would. Isn't it all the same to you since you've started, you might as well get something out of it. And the gentry are round you like flies. . . ."

"What about you? You don't get anything out of sleeping with your Austrian, do you? Why don't you try and make a bit?"

"Ah, fancy comparing yourself to me! I've got a house and my farm's not going downhill yet, and though I can sing and dance with the rest, I don't go and lie down beside Tom, Dick and Harry! What if I do live with the Austrian? It's only one sin. But I'm my husband's lawful wedded wife all the

same and the mother of his children and the mistress of his house. And although anyone may say I'm a loose living woman, they can't say I'm a whore."

"Yes, they do then. I've often heard them say it and so have you."

"Oh well, maybe once or twice just out of spite, but all the same people respect me as my man's wife and call me by his name and I can hold up my head with the rest. I don't know whether it's a sin or it isn't—it's still in the dark. There's no one holding me back by the leg. And if I ever let anything out about myself, well, it was just because I wanted to show off, just for fun, as you might say. Go and try to prove anything against me. But it's different with you: everything's plain to be seen. First there was Vasska and then there was the engineer and now look at the way you behave. If you want to you can't help seeing it alright. You're the only one in the whole village behaves like this, you're a regular eyesore. There's that much talk about you, you've got such a name now—why don't you make something out of it instead of doing it for nothing. Then when you've money for clothes and some property of your own you'll see we'll look at you in another light, no matter how you behave. Behind your back we may call you a strumpet but to your face we'll call you by your full name: Virineya Animovna. No, no, Virka, there's no sense in your talking. I'm advising you for your own good. Nobody else would bother to talk to you the way I do, but I've got a kind heart. I don't wish anyone any harm."

"Oh, well, Anissia, that sort of kindness doesn't touch my heart at all. Don't you bother to pity me nor advise me. Go to your home, woman, carry on with whoever you like, and don't bother me."

"No, you'll never have luck, that's certain. You're as prickly as a hedgehog and you think too much of yourself, although you are always mucking about. But—stop—wait a minute . . . There's another thing I want to say to you."

"Lord, haven't you gabbed enough yet? You've got a lot to say, haven't you? Your gab is as cheap as your kindness, I'm thinking. What is it you want?"

"I want to know why you're so set against the gentry? That's what I can't understand. There don't seem to be anyone you've a special fancy for among the moujiks. It can't be you're hankering after that measly Vasska, surely, now he's dead and gone? Or was it the engineer who treated you badly? Eh?"

Virka's lips twisted. She glanced into Anissia's eyes, alight with curiosity, and shouted furiously:

"Off with you, you long tongued gabbyguts! Don't think I'm going to tell you what's in my mind and who I'm fond of and why I'm going to the dogs. Now then clear out will you! And better forget the road to where I live for the future. There was a time when I was fond of you, too, and now I don't care for anyone. If all Akgirovka was to die tonight I'd be glad, glad! 'twas the devil drove me here among you."

With that she turned round and went swiftly into the barracks. There she lay the whole day face downwards on the heap of rags that served her as a bed. One of the refugee women who lived there looked at her a long time and then asked in astonishment:

"Why, when did you have time to get drunk, my lass? I never even saw you drinking."

Receiving no reply, she spat contemptuously and went out of the barrack. All the inhabitants of the barracks had wandered away, only Virka remained and three children who had come in because they were frozen in the street. They had climbed on to the shelf of the stove, and were chattering noisily.

When Virka raised herself from the bed, the eldest of the three, eight year old Grunka, said:

"Oh, you're sober again, Auntie. Are you going out to dance and carry on now? Mamma was saying that the blacksmith was smelling round the barracks after you. Isn't that funny? What he could be smelling—I don't know! Going round smelling, she said."

The little girl burst out laughing, a ringing, childish laugh.

Virka sighed, and drawled in a weary voice:

"Don't you listen, Grunka, to what these grown-up women say. And don't tell me. You're too little yet to be dirtying your lips with filthy words like theirs. Now, then, move up a bit, let me sit by you on the stove, and warm myself. Fine apartments they built for our folk, the wind comes in through every crack, and they've hid us so low down in the ground the sun can't get in."

Grunka rested her cheek on her hand and remarked in a grown-up tone, evidently repeating words she had heard some woman say:

"But it's nice and warm in the street today, the sun's shining for all the world as if spring was coming."

Then in her own much livelier tones, she went on:

"Why aren't you having any fun today? Oh, what funny songs you sang last Sunday! You were as tight as a lord!"

And she burst out laughing once more. Both the younger children joined in. Sadness passed over Virka's face like a dark cloud and her eyes grew big and tender. She stroked the little girl's head cautiously. The youngest boy had been growing sleepy, and suddenly his head drooped against her shoulder. He sighed contentedly and his breath came regularly. Virka, fearful of disturbing the child, resting so trustfully against her, sat very still and said softly:

"Grunka, have you ever heard the story of the Golden Cradle?"

"Oh, do tell us, Aunt Virka, tell us!"

The elder boy moved closer. Virka's heart melted with a bitter painful tenderness to the children. She caressed them with her loving insatiable eyes as in a pleasant, sing-song voice she told them the story.

"... And she grew weary and sad, and she would shed a tear very quietly, and then wipe it away, very quietly, with her sleeve. And they asked her..."

That night Virka did not go out boozing at all. She lay down sad and sober to sleep, but tossed and turned for long hours on the heap of rags

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

(Final Installment in the Next Issue)

TWO ENGLISH PAINTINGS By C. H. ROWE



Mine Disaster



Demonstration

LETTERS and DOCUMENTS

N. G. Chernishevski

Life and Esthetics

Continuing A Russian Classic¹

Having analysed the conceptions of the essence of beauty and the sublime, let us now analyze the ruling views on the various methods of realizing the idea of beauty.

It is here, it would seem, that the full importance of the basic conceptions, to the analysis of which we have devoted so much space, becomes clearly apparent. Any deviation from the ruling view on the essence of that which is most important in art necessarily involves a change in the conception of what constitutes art. The now ruling system of esthetics justly distinguishes three forms of beauty, which includes, as alternate forms, also the sublime and the comic. (We shall deal only with beauty as it would take the readers patience to repeat the same thing thrice. Everything the ruling esthetics says of beauty it applies equally to the alternate forms of beauty. Similarly, our criticism of the ruling conceptions of the various forms of beauty, as well as our own conceptions on the relations of beauty in art to beauty in life is equally applicable to all other elements entering into art, including the sublime and the comic).

The three distinct forms of beauty in existence are the following: beauty in life (or in nature, if we should adhere to philosophic terminology), beauty of imagination and beauty in art (in objective existence, lent to it by man's creative imagination). The first fundamental question here is the one on the relationship of beauty in life to beauty in art and beauty of imagination. The now ruling system of esthetics answers this question as follows: beauty in life has shortcomings which destroy beauty, hence our imagination is compelled to modify beauty as found in life in order to free it from those shortcomings which are inseparable from its existence in reality and thus make it truly beautiful. More fully and sharply than all other estheticians Fischer enters into an analysis of the shortcomings of objective beauty. We shall therefore subject his analysis to critical study.²

Before we enter into the various cavils against beauty in life, it can be said without hesitation that it is truly beautiful and completely satisfactory to healthy man despite all its shortcomings, however great these might be. Of course an idle imagination may always say: "This is bad, this is lacking, this is superfluous"—but such cavils of imagination which nothing satisfies must be acknowledged morbid. The healthy individual finds many objects and phenomena in life which, in contemplation, he would not wish otherwise or

¹ The first installments of this pioneer work on esthetics by Chernishevski, carefully followed by Marx and Lenin, appeared in preceding issues of *International Literature*—Nos. 6 and 7, 1935. It will be continued in the coming issue.

² Here the author gives a very long quotation from Fischer's *Esthetics*, Vol. II, which we omit as materially unessential to the argument. Fischer's views are sufficiently well known and are given briefly by the author.

better. The idea that man must absolutely have "perfection" is a fantastic one if we understand by "perfection" such a form of the object as would incorporate all possible virtues and lack all shortcomings, which the idle fancy of one with a cold and sated heart might discover. "Perfection" to me is that which is fully satisfactory to me of its kind. And a healthy man finds very many such phenomena in life. When a man's heart is empty, he can give rein to his imagination, but as soon as there is any satisfactory reality, imagination folds its wings. Imagination in general holds sway over us only when our life is too squalid. When he has to lie on bare boards, a man will sometimes dream of a luxurious bed, a bed made of precious wood, softened by eider-down pillows covered with Brabant lace and sheets of some fine material. But will a healthy person dream of such things when he has, not a luxurious, but a fairly soft and comfortable bed? "One does not run after good things when one has them." When a man has to live in the Siberian tundra or the parched land beyond the Volga, he might dream of magic gardens with unearthly trees having coral branches, emerald leaves and ruby fruit; but if he should move, say, to the province of Kursk where he can walk about to his heart's content in tolerable orchards of apple, cherry and pear trees, under shady maples, our dreamer would most probably forget all about the magic gardens of *A Thousand and One Nights* or even the lemon groves of Spain. The imagination begins to build castles in the air when reality offers nothing in the shape of a good house or even a tolerable hut. It begins to play when the emotions are not engaged; poverty of real life is the source of life in fantasy. As soon as real life is in the least tolerable all fruit of the imagination waxes pale and uninteresting before it. The idea that "man's desires are unlimited," is false. On the contrary, man is satisfied not only by "the best that life can offer" but even by very mediocre reality. We should distinguish between what is really felt and what is only said. Desires are excited by dreamings to hot tension only in the absence of healthy even if only rather plain food. This is a fact proved by the entire history of man and experienced by anyone who has observed his own life. It is a particular case of the general law that passions reach an abnormal development only as a result of the abnormal situation of the person in their sway and that only when the natural and really rather simple want in which the passion originates has long been unsatisfied. It stands without the least doubt that the human organism does not require, nay cannot bear titanic longings and satisfactions; it is also not to be doubted that in healthy man desires are commensurate with the strength of his organism. From these general considerations, let us go over to the more particular ones.

It is well known that our senses rapidly tire and become sated, i.e. are satisfied. This is true not only of our lower senses (touch, smell, taste), but also of the higher ones of sight and hearing. The esthetic sense is inseparably connected with the senses of hearing and sight and is inconceivable apart from them. When one loses the desire to look at beauty on account of weariness the necessity for esthetic pleasure also cannot but disappear. And since one cannot look for a month daily at a picture, even by Raphael, without tiring, it cannot be doubted that not only his eyes, but also the esthetic sense itself have been sated, satisfied for a time. What is true of the duration of pleasure can be said also about its intensity. Upon normal satisfaction the strength of esthetic pleasure has its limits. And if it occasionally excels these limits, it is a consequence not of internal and natural development, but of special circumstances of a more or less chance and normal nature (for instance, we admire a beautiful thing with particular enthusiasm when we know that we must

soon part with it, that we shall have little time left to enjoy it, etc.). In other words, it seems beyond all doubt that our esthetic sense, like all our senses, has its normal limits with respect to duration and intensity of tension and with respect to these one cannot call it insatiable or infinite.

It also has its limits—and fairly close ones—with respect to discrimination, subtleness—its exactingness or its, so-called, hunger for perfection. We shall have occasion later to show that much which is far from superior in beauty satisfies the esthetic sense in fact. Here we only wish to point out that even in the field of art its discrimination is really very circumspect. For some one merit, we forgive a work of art many shortcomings—do not even notice them if they only are not too ugly. It is enough to mention the greater part of Roman poetry as an instance. Only one lacking an esthetic sense can fail to admire Horace, Virgil, Ovid. But how many weaknesses these poets have! Strictly speaking everything in them is weak except one thing—language and development of thought. The content is either entirely lacking or most insignificant; no originality, no freshness, no simplicity. In Virgil and Horace there is even no sincerity or passion anywhere. But even if criticism points out all these shortcomings, it must add that form has been brought by these poets to the height of perfection and for our esthetic sense this one drop of good is enough to satisfy it. As a matter of fact all these poets have serious shortcomings even in the matter of form or finish. Ovid and Virgil are almost always long drawn out; often the odes of Horace are also drawn out; the three of these poets are exceedingly monotonous; very frequently one is struck most unpleasantly by artificiality and labored verse. Nevertheless something good is still there and we enjoy it. As the complete opposite of these poets in external finish one can take folk poetry. Whatever their original form may have been, folk-songs reach us always in distorted form, altered or torn to pieces; their monotony is also very great; then there are certain mechanical features about folk-songs, the springs, so to say, without which they can never develop their theme, stick out. But there is much freshness and simplicity in folk songs,—and this is sufficient for our esthetic sense to enjoy them.

In fact, like any healthy sense, like any true need, the esthetic sense has more need of being satisfied than of being exacting in its pretensions. It is by nature happy when satisfied, dislikes the absence of anything to feed it, hence ready to be pleased by the first tolerable thing. The unexactingness of the esthetic sense is also shown by the fact that even when it has excellent works of art to satisfy it, it does not disdain less excellent ones. Pictures by Raphael do not make us find the pictures by Grosse; although we have Shakespeare we read with pleasure the works of second rate and even third rate poets. The esthetic sense seeks what is good and not the fantastically-perfect. Hence if beauty in reality even had many important shortcomings we should nevertheless enjoy it. But let us look more closely at the justice of the reproaches brought against beauty as it is in reality and see to what extent the inferences made from them are just.

1) "Beauty in nature is undesigned; for this reason alone it cannot be as great as beauty in art, which is produced by design." It is true, inanimate nature does not think about the beauty of its work anymore than a tree thinks about its fruit being good to the taste. It must be admitted, however, that our art has thus far proved unable to produce anything even like an orange or an apple, not to speak of the luscious fruit of the tropics. Of course, the designed product will be greater in merit than the one not designed; but only when the powers of the producers are even. And the powers of man are much less than those of nature, his work much more crude, graceless and clumsy than that of

nature. And that is why the superiority of the designed in the works of art is outbalanced, and outbalanced by far, by weakness of execution. In addition—undesigned beauty exists only in inanimate, dead nature,—the bird and the animal are already concerned about their external appearance, ceaselessly improve it: almost all of them love neatness. In man beauty is seldom undesigned—care of external appearance is strong in all of us. We are not speaking here, of course, of refined methods of imitating beauty, but only of the constant care one takes of external appearance as part of national hygiene. But if, strictly speaking, beauty in nature cannot be considered as designed just as any other action of the forces of nature, neither can it be said that nature in general does not attempt to produce beauty: on the contrary, if we conceive beauty as fullness of life, we must admit that the urge for life which permeates all organic nature is also an urge to produce beauty. Since we must see in nature generally not aims but only results and can not therefore consider beauty an aim of nature, we cannot but consider beauty an important result towards the achievement of which all the forces of nature are strained. Its being undesigned (*das Nichtgewolltsein*), the unconsciousness of this trend does not prevent its reality, just as the unconsciousness of any geometric tendencies in the bee, unconsciousness of any tendency to symmetry in plant life, does not prevent the regular hexagon structure of the hive or the symmetry of the two halves of a leaf.

2) "Because beauty in nature is not produced by design, beauty is rarely met with in reality."—But even if this were so, the rarity would be regrettable to our esthetic sense, but that would not in the least detract from the beauty of the few phenomena and objects in which it did occur. Diamonds the size of a dove's egg are a rare find. Lovers of diamonds may justly bewail the fact, but they are nevertheless unanimous that these rare diamonds are very beautiful. Only complaints of the rarity of beauty in reality are not altogether just: beauty in reality is not at all as rare as German estheticians claim. There are very many beautiful and majestic landscapes; there are countries where they are to be met at every step—as for instance, not to mention Switzerland, the Alps, Italy, say, in Finland, the Crimea, the shores of the Dnieper river, even the shores of the central portion of the Volga river. The majestic in human life is not met with continuously—but it is doubtful if man himself would wish it to be met more frequently. Great minutes in life are too costly. Exhaust man too much. The one who has the urge to seek them and the strength to bear up under their influence on the soul, can find occasions for noble emotions at every step: the road of bravery, self sacrifice and high combat of the law and harmful affliction and evil is never closed to anyone. And there always have been thousands of people everywhere whose entire lives were a continuous series of noble feelings and deeds. The same can be said about charmingly beautiful minutes in the life of man. Man cannot complain of their rarity, at any rate, because it depends upon himself as to the degree to which his life will be filled with beauty and majesty. Life is empty and colorless only to colorless people who talk about feelings and needs when they are not, in reality, capable of harboring any special feelings or needs except the need to pose. Finally it would be necessary to discuss the question as to what specially is to be called beautiful and how rare female beauty is. But this is perhaps inappropriate to our rather abstract treatise—so we shall limit ourselves to the remark that almost every woman in the bloom of youth seems a great beauty to most people, which might be a warranty for speaking of the lack of discrimination of the esthetic sense of most people rather than of the statement that beauty is rare. People with beautiful facial features are no rarer

than good or wise people. But how is one to explain then the complaint of Raphael on the paucity of beautiful women in Italy—classic land of beauty? Very simply: he sought the most beautiful woman—and such there can be only one in the world—but where is one to seek her? First rate of its kind there always can be only few—for the very good reason that as soon as there are more we again subdivide them and call first rate only that of which there are but two-three specimens—the rest are second rate. It can be said in general that the idea that “beauty in reality is rare” is a result of confusing the concepts “really” and “most”: really majestic rivers there are many, most majestic of them there can be only one; really great leaders of armies there have been many, greatest of them, of course, was only someone. Authors of treatises on esthetics in the ruling vein reason thus: if there is or can be anything of a higher order than the thing I am contemplating, then the thing I am contemplating is of a low order. But that is not the way people feel. Fully aware of the fact that the Amazon is a more majestic river than the Volga, we nevertheless continue to consider the Volga also a majestic river. The philosophic system adhered to by those authors asserts that if one object is superior to another then the superiority of the first is a defect of the second. This is not so at all. In reality this defect is a positive virtue and not at all something resulting from the superiority of other things. A river which is only one foot deep in places is not considered shallow because there are other deeper rivers; it is a shallow river without any comparison, by virtue of the fact that it is not navigable. A canal thirty feet deep is not shallow in real life because it is perfectly suitable for navigation. No one would think of calling it shallow although everyone knows the Pas de Calais is far superior in depth. Abstract mathematical comparison is not a view entertained in real life. Let us assume that *Othello* is greater than *Macbeth* or *Macbeth* greater than *Othello*—notwithstanding such superiority both tragedies would remain beautiful. The merits of *Othello* cannot be accounted as defects of *Macbeth*. That is how we look at works of art. If we should view beauty in reality similarly we should often be compelled to admit that the beauty of one thing may be irreproachable although some other thing may exceed it in beauty.

3) “The beauty of the beautiful in reality is fleeting”—suppose it is—is it any the less beautiful for that. Besides, this is not always just: a blossom really fades quickly, but human beauty lasts a long time. It would even be said that human beauty lasts just so long as is required by the one enjoying it. It may not be altogether appropriate to the nature of this abstract treatise to go into a detailed proof of this thesis—hence we shall only add that the beauty of each generation exists and should exist for that same generation; and it does not in the least contradict the esthetic requirements of the generation, when beauty fades together with it—the succeeding generation will have its own beauty and no one has anything to complain about. It is perhaps also inappropriate here to enter into detailed proof of the fact that the wish “not to age” is a fantastic wish, that in fact a middle aged man wants to be middle aged if only his life took a normal course and he does not belong to the superficial kind of people. We all recall our childhood “with regret,” saying at times that “we should like to return to that happy time”: but hardly anyone would really agree to become a child again. The same can be said about the regrets that “The beauty of our youth is gone”—this expression has no real significance if one’s youth was a satisfactory one to any extent. It would be annoying to have to experience again all that one had already experienced, just as it is annoying to hear a story repeated even though it may have been thought very interesting the first time. It is necessary to distinguish between

real desires and fantastic, fictitious ones which one should actually be disappointed to have realized. Such is the fictitious desire that beauty would not fade. "Life rushes ahead and carries the beauty of reality along in its stream"—the estheticians say. Which is true—only together with me, our desires also rush ahead, i.e. change in content, and fantastic are the regrets that beauty recedes—it recedes having accomplished its work—of giving as much esthetic pleasure today as the day could hold. Tomorrow will be another day with new requirements and only a new beauty can satisfy them. If beauty in reality were stationary and unaltered, "inmortal," as the estheticians would have it, it would bore us to distraction, become odious.

4) "Beauty in reality is not constant." But to this one must answer with the same question as before—does this prevent its being beautiful when it is? Is a landscape less beautiful in the morning because its beauty is veiled with the setting of the sun? And again it must be said that this reproach is unjust most of the time. Suppose there are landscapes the beauty of which vanishes with the crimson dawn; most beautiful landscapes however are beautiful in any light. And it must be added that the beauty of a landscape cannot be great if it is only a momentary beauty and not one inherent in the landscape as long as it exists. A physiognomy is occasionally extraordinarily expressive and sometimes much less expressive. But the physiognomy of a person radiating wisdom or kindness can lack expression only at very rare moments. A clever face retains its expression of cleverness even in sleep, a kind face also retains its expression of kindness in sleep. And the fleeting variety of expression on an expressive face lends it fresh beauty. Similarly variety of pose lends fresh beauty to a live creature. It often happens that the very disappearance of a beautiful pose is what makes it precious to us: "a group of warriors in combat is beautiful; but in a few minutes it is upset"—but what would happen if it were not upset—if the combat would last on for days on end? We should get tired looking at them and would turn away, as frequently really happens. What is the end of an esthetic impression under the influence of which we are detained for half an hour or an hour before the motionless "eternal beauty," the "eternally unchanging beauty" of a picture? The end is that we turn away without waiting for darkness to "tear us away from pleasure."

5) "Beauty in reality is only beautiful because we observe it from a point of view from which it seems beautiful." On the contrary—it happens much more frequently that beauty is beautiful from any point of view. Thus, a beautiful landscape is usually beautiful from whatever angle one may look at it. Of course, it is *most* beautiful only from *one* point of view—but what of that? A painting also must be viewed from a certain point for all its beauty to become apparent. This consequence of the laws of perspective hold equally for enjoyment of beauty in reality as for beauty in art.

It would seem in general that all of the faults so far found with beauty in reality are greatly exaggerated and some are grossly unjust. There is not one which could be applied to all forms of beauty. But we have not yet considered the main, the most important faults that the prevailing esthetics finds in the beauty of the world of reality. Up to this point the faults found, referred to beauty in reality not being satisfactory to man. Now comes the direct proof that beauty in reality cannot be called beauty at all.

(To be continued)

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

MOSCOW SUBWAY STATIONS



Red Gate Station — by G. SUSKHIEVICH

DRAWINGS by FIVE SOVIET ARTISTS



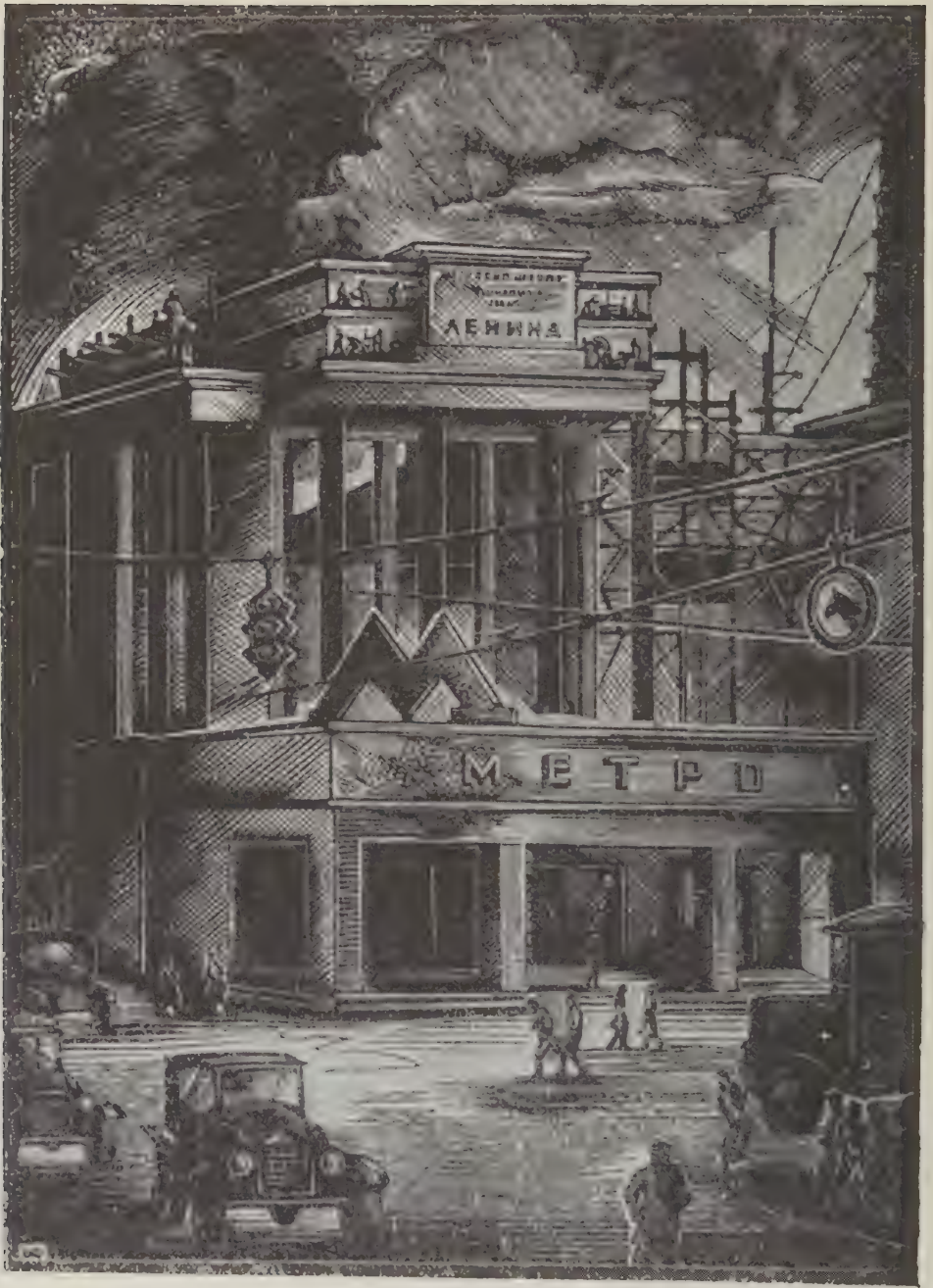
Kirovski Gate Station—by G. ORLOV



Gorki Park of Rest and Culture Station—by A. ROMODANOVSKAYA



Arbat Square Station—by B. GUTENTOG



Lenin Library Station—by J. SAKHNOVSKAYA



Another Entrance to the Lenin Library Station—by J. SAKHNOVSKAYA

ARTICLES and CRITICISM

Z. V. Pesis

Fascism and the French Intelligentsia

Notes on the Esprit Group

The transition from the crisis to a depression of a "special form" found the working intelligentsia of capitalist countries in a dire condition.

"Capitalism tries to escape from the crisis at the expense of the workers and toilers" (Molotov).

In this regard France is no exception.

The representatives of the ruling circles of the French bourgeoisie, in view of existing unemployment, openly talk of the necessity of putting an end to the further output of intellectuals, as they foresee no need for new cadres of intellectual workers.¹

On the other hand, a growing proportion of the intellectuals: sees that the only way out of the crisis is to put an end to the very existence of the capitalist system.

In the latest phase of the radicalization process of the French intellectuals, several new factors have emerged, among which, one of the most important is the triumph of the united front.

In the year and a half since the February events, when the united front raised an iron barrier to fascism, the movement of proletarian solidarity has embraced the broadest masses of toilers.

The intellectuals, on whom the spectacle of the fascist disturbances had had its effect, could not fail to react to the growth of this movement.

Almost spontaneously, anti-fascist "vigilance committees" sprang up, uniting wide circles of people of varied political shades, writers, teachers, who announced their determination not to countenance in France a regime of open bourgeois terror and war. The committees expressed their readiness in time of need to place themselves at the disposal of the workers' organizations.

During the same period, under the influence of the magnificent new victories in the land of socialism, the masters of French culture began to understand with increasing clarity the historic role of the Soviet Union and the material and spiritual values it was creating.

The congress of Soviet writers played no small part in this process. Not only was this congress an act of celebration of the new Soviet art, but a major event in the lives of the Soviet intelligentsia, and, by the same token, in the lives of the intellectuals of the whole world.

¹ The French prime minister Flandern announced at the beginning of 1935: "It should never be asserted that in France today a diploma is enough to guarantee a job. Quite the contrary holds true. We are faced with an overproduction of intellectuals, fully as alarming and perhaps more alarming than industrial or agricultural overproduction. It is time to put a stop to this and to turn to the training of farmers, masons and roofers who are of more use to France than unemployed university graduates.

Such, at the present stage, are the basic factors that characterize the radicalization of the French intellectuals.

However, this process has by no means involved all the layers of the intelligentsia, the mass of which shares the social fate of the petty bourgeoisie, with all its consequent waverings. Thousands of people still dream of finding a way out of the crisis. Thousands of others have not yet abandoned the state of inertia.

Seeking to halt the radicalization of the intelligentsia and reverse the process of political differentiation, fascism tries first and foremost to influence that section of the intelligentsia which is sitting on the fence.

From the standpoint of ideological equipment the fascist front is in poor straits.

Not long ago the leader of the "Fiery Cross," Colonel de la Rocque, published a book wherein he attempted to set forth a program containing the ideological aims of French fascism.

Here is what the magazine *Cahiers du Bolchévisme* writes concerning this program.

"The Program of the Fiery Cross" . . . is extremely confused, full of empty phrases and unclear formulations. In this sense it reflects the condition of the movement itself, which is at present in the incipient stage of its development, in the stage of ideological and political formulation. But in a program of this type, clarity and respect for logic can have little place. Fascism addresses itself to sections of society which are too heterogeneous for it to be able to present a homogeneous program . . . Therefore fascism tries first of all to create a mood which on the basis of certain common emotions, may serve to cement these dissimilar sections . . . The point is to create, as de la Rocque expresses it, a certain mysticism." (*Cahiers du Bolchévisme*, No. 2, January 15, 1935.)

Because of the poverty of its philosophy, fascism tries to seize upon any thought current, any "intellectual" activity, that may help it to array itself in the armour of any spiritual and emotional values whatever.

Meanwhile, it is precisely among certain circles of the French intelligentsia that one may find the formulators of an ideology which, under given conditions, can serve as grist for the development in France of so-called cultural fascism, that is, for the creation of every conceivable doctrine which may serve to clothe fascist activity.

The germination of doctrines of this type is inevitably fostered by that tawdry confusionism, which, among given groups of thinkers, is even to-day regarded as one of the most imperishable attributes of the intellect. This confusionism is most highly prized for its so-called spiritual diversity, for its apparent "many-sidedness" of mind and heart, for its readiness to drink from any, even the muddiest, of springs; this is regarded not as a lack of elementary perspicuity, but, on the contrary, as a sign of insatiable spiritual thirst.

Right now, in the days when the class struggle has attained sharpness never before witnessed, this confusionism acquires new forms.

Reduced to the last extremes of "despair" and "disgust" with "bourgeois disorder," the confusionists declare the necessity of adopting a definite position in the struggle. They assert, however, that this position should be something in the way of a "third" position, distinct from both that of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. A "third force."

The social roots of this phraseology are quite apparent—the illusions of certain groups of the petty bourgeoisie, who try to regard themselves as an independent "third force," supposedly capable of retaining an intermediate position in the struggle even at the present time, under the conditions of a decisive alignment of class forces.

From this follows the contradictory nature of the ideology of the "third force" and its representatives, who are only capable of begetting innumerable "isms," one-day theories in sociology, philosophy and art, diametrically opposed to the theory and practice of the revolutionary way out of the crisis, of preaching a "spiritual revolution," "personalism," etc.

And here, at this juncture, the knights of the "spiritual revolutions" are waylaid by fascism, which, as we know, is not averse to talk of the struggle of spirit and matter, of "anti-capitalism," etc.

One of the most outspoken expressions of this type of theory is to be found in the literary philosophical experiments of those French writers whose organ is the magazine *Esprit*, appearing under the editorship of E. Mounier.

The *Esprit* group, by their own admission, hold the position of "pluralism"—the "multiplicity" of ideological aims, that is, the position of that same confusionism whose political fate we discussed above.

At the same time, the writers of *Esprit* repeatedly express their decided annoyance with those who "scornfully brand" them fascists.

Of course it is not a question of "branding" as fascist all those without exception who for one or another reason are connected with the magazine *Esprit*.

It is simply a question of giving a precise definition of *Esprit*, as a literary group whose views are typical of certain circles of French intellectuals.

Fascism directs its appeal to different social strata, among them, to those whose ideology *Esprit* is trying to formulate.

Does not the activity of *Esprit* and of similar cliques ("third force" and others) answer to the "call" of fascism?

Is not the confusionism of *Esprit* transformed into its very opposite—into an ideology of a definite hue, which serves reaction or can be utilized by reaction?

Such are the questions which the present article tries to answer.

2. Revolution or Counter-Revolution of the Spirit

Esprit speaks of having "broken" with bourgeois disorder, with the "crimes of property," and so forth.

However, these slogans are charged with a specific content which is defined as "the unifying idea"—the idea of "spiritual revolution."

What is the meaning of this first dogma of the gospel of Monsieur Mounier?

The abstract playing with the idea of revolution is not a new game. The demagoguery about a spiritual revolution is supposedly directed on two fronts—against bourgeois "disorder" which destroys spirituality, and against the materialist order of the proletarian revolution—this demagoguery was utilized not only by the bourgeoisie, but even by the theorists of the reactionary nobility.

The theorists of the nobility denounced the bourgeoisie because the latter is incapable of settling accounts once and for all with the proletarian movement, and they vented their hatred on the proletariat for the fact that it is capable of fighting the bourgeoisie. Such was the case, for instance, with the celebrated third class metaphysician Leontiev, whose mystical nonsense Berdyayev described as "revolutionary."¹

¹ See Berdyayev's article on Leontiev (1904) in the book *Subspecie Aeternitatis*.

The reactionary essence of the "spiritual revolution" is directly attested to by manifestoes of the Catholic priest Maritain, advertised in *Esprit*.

"It is impossible to deny that the world has entered a period of revolution," writes Maritain. "Consequently, one is justified in calling oneself revolutionary, in order to indicate that one keeps pace with events and understands the necessity for 'essential' transformations affecting the very principles of our present system of civilization." (J. Maritain, Letters on the Bourgeois World, *Esprit*, No. 6, March 1, 1933.)

"The devil," says Maritain, "has become a historic agent." In other words, history is at present going against the capitalist world. If good does not conquer evil, then, according to the opinion of Maritain, humanity should be forcibly infused with the "sap" of Christianity, although this "sap" will be "somewhat admixed with blood." (*Esprit*, No. 4, January 1, 1933.)

The revolution, declares *Esprit*, "must be done by spiritual war, if communism is to be prevented from being the only successor."

Some people "hope to save what needs to be saved by clutching at economic forms We can assure them that we value these essential goods quite as much as they do and serve them better than they . . ." Indeed "for their safety it is imperative to adapt them to new conditions, just as a painting is transferred to a new canvas in order to preserve it. (*Esprit*, Nos. 11-12, September 1, 1933.)

The revolutionary spirit, these theoreticians further tell us, will be "personalistic" or else it will not be at all.

What is the meaning of this second dogma of Mounier?

"Personalism" consists of the "philosopher's" attempt to solve a number of problems that trouble the intellectual, closely connected with the process of his ideological differentiation.

The French intelligentsia to a greater and greater extent is taking up the struggle against fascism, throwing in its fortunes with the working class, creating "vigilance committees," etc.

"But," reason the fascists, "maybe the vigilance of that intelligentsia can be lulled." Maybe a few hundred petty bourgeois souls can be won for the ranks of Colonel de la Rocque, by showing that fascism at home will be considerably different from fascism abroad, that "their" fascism, on the strength of some noble traditions or other, will take an interest in the fate of individuals, solve a number of other problems facing the French intelligentsia, save it from "despair," isolation, "from losing contact with the soil" and heal other social-psychological ailments, not to mention afflictions of an economic nature.

Under such conditions of concrete class struggle these writers come forward toying with the theory of personalism.

On first sight this theory may seem merely one of verbal *déception*. For aside from all else it is based on a play on words with the concept person and the concept individual.

However this play is charged with a definite political meaning.

Indeed, the personalists do not protest against the exploitation of millions of individual workers by the capitalists (for, according to *Esprit*, both the former and the latter equally suffer from the crisis!), but against transformation of individuality into "electoral unity," against "electoral individualism," which they counter with the Catholic dogma of individuality.

These utterances are interesting because they not only coincide with the "criticism" of bourgeois democracy to which fascist demagoguery is addicted,

but because this criticism is based on Catholicism, that is, on the most reactionary arguments of bourgeois ideologists.

"Only Christianity made a person of the individual; that is why individualism is liberal and personalism Catholic." (Al. Marc, *Christianity and the Spiritual Revolution*.)

It appears that the full bloom of personalism, which is, as we should have anticipated, menaced by the "depersonalizing" philosophy of Marxism, can be attained only beyond the borders of this world, inasmuch as the latter remains very badly organized.

"In giving up an anonymous life our action must be based on the realization that our existence is limited in time, that is to say, on a striving towards death. Being is only apprehended by experiencing nothing. Nothing contains a source of life. The free soul is the soul which is dying." (M. Chastaing, "Person and Community," No. 23-24 September 1, 1934.)

A religion of the suppression and mortification of the individual, cathedral gloom, prayers and fasting, this is what *Esprit* proposes to intellectuals in place of socialism, whose fault is that it aims not at death but at life. *Esprit* attempts to rehabilitate religion, "to untie" it from the capitalist order, to present things in such a light as though the pure spirit of the church through the centuries had soared over the murky gloom of capitalism, and remained unsullied by the "sins of property."

They try to make the intellectuals believe that there is nothing better than the international discipline which is supposedly supplied by religion, for this moral state justifies any action whatever in the external world.

But this is likewise nothing new. Indeed, some ten years ago reactionary French writers wrote that authors and artists should be recommended to take Catholicism, "just as they take aspirin powders."

Well, that was ten years ago. The best section of the intelligentsia has since found other, more effective, ways out of the so-called spiritual crisis.

Regardless of all that, religion is again recommended now, as a means of moral stupefaction, which shall make people's minds susceptible to the hypnosis of fascism. This medicine can yield no other results, especially when Catholic dogmas are mixed in with the dogmas of a spiritual revolution and the whole together offered as an "anti-capitalist" concoction.

The reactionary nature of personalism is all the more apparent from the fact the preaching of religion is here organically linked with propaganda of the "national idea" and of the corresponding forms of state structure. (See Roget Labrousse, "Stages of the National Idea," *Esprit*, No. 16, 1934.)

As a social idea "organic society" is advocated, ruled by "the patriarchal government of a Christian prince."

A Catholic dictator is the persona grata of personalism.

The Christian ruler, Labrousse tells us, "did not concede his subjects any rights, but as against this, he was not indifferent as to their moral development and did little for their pleasures, enough for their needs and all for their virtues."

What government in the throes of the capitalist crisis refuses to follow these rules of feudal wisdom?

In order to realize the idea of the national state, one must do away with the "legal citizen," replacing him by "the real person," tied to the soil, to regional communes and other "living cells" of the national state. This idea of the "national" state *Esprit* borrows from the reactionary historian Bonard. From Barrès it has taken the undisguised race metaphysic of

"blood," "soil," the element of "dark forces," supposedly deciding the fate of individuals.

Apparently *Esprit* wants to clothe its ideology in the garb of a native doctrine, asking that it not be confused with similar doctrines abroad. This explains the persistent searches for noble antecedents, forerunners of personalism, in reactionary French literature.

No matter how personalism is diluted with formless historical allegories and analogies, the basic meaning of its myth can be interpreted only as an apologia for the personal dictatorship of a "führer," sanctified with a religious halo.

Let the editor of *Esprit* try "to transfer the old painting to a new canvas" and the dashing figure of some Colonel de la Rocque will inevitably come forward as the Christian prince. Indeed he would not refuse to head the "spiritual revolution" which "summons us under the sign of the cross to take up the stiff fight for a new order." (*Esprit*, No. 6, 1933.)

As a trend of thought, personalism must "keep aloof" from bourgeois individualism; its very existence testifies to the breakdown of the bourgeois individualist religion, reflecting the general collapse of bourgeois ideology. Real revolutionists fight for true liberation of the individual through the establishment of the socialist order. But bourgeois demagogues seek to utilise this breakdown for the advocacy of the moral conveniences which fascism supposedly affords the individual, provided the latter is willing to swear allegiance to the dictatorship of finance capital.

This is the sort of demagogy which the religiousist doctrine of "personalism" bolsters up.

3. *The Anti-Capitalism of Esprit or "Solemn and Sanctified Nonsense"*

In order to form an estimate of the "anti-capitalist" position of *Esprit* it is not uninteresting to examine the group's attitude to the problem of property.

A special issue is devoted to this problem; throughout hundreds of pages the collaborators of *Esprit* and "specialists" whom they have invited in, abandon themselves to endless toying with the concept of property as an abstract category, taken out of connection with the social order, with classes and the class struggle.

The editor Mounier opens the game and writes the following, word for word:

"The bourgeois says, 'my automobile.' He is wrong, however. The automobile owns him. The same can be said of his bed, cigar, factory, etc.

"The proletarian is in an entirely different situation, for according to Christian doctrine the poor man may, without having anything, possess much.

"Never for an instant will the propertyholder own what is within the poor man's range of vision at a single glance."

And M. Citroën has a marvelous dream. He dreams of the writer M. Mounier, whom he knows as a clever fellow, who well understands what is good and what is bad for property holders.

"I have a factory," says Citroën, "I have many factories, I have an automobile, I have a cigar."

"Not at all," answers Mounier. "What is the meaning of have? You know that in French the verb to have is also used in the sense *I have hunger, I have cold, I have a flannel shirt, I have an estate in Normandy.*"¹

¹ The quotation in italics is genuine. We have taken it from Plaquevent's article in the same issue. Plaquevent tries to prove the eternal and unchangeable nature of private

"Do you mean that you are the owner of hunger and cold? Impossible," answers Citroën confidently. "That's just what I do mean," continues Mounier, your factories do not belong to you, but to your workers, who merely have to cast one glance at the buildings of your giant automobile plants, in order to become their true, that is to say their spiritual, owners."

After the play on verbs, *Esprit* goes on to play on adjectives. They take the adjective *privée*, feminine gender which together with the word *propriété* means: private property. But the verb *priver* also has the meaning of deprive.

From this follows the conclusion that private property, as is obvious from the derivation of the word *privée* will never disappear, for it is based on human nature, whose attribute is not simply the desire to have but the desire to have what others are deprived of.

Such are the frank expressions sometimes found in *Esprit*.

The entire anti-capitalist demagoguery of *Esprit* can serve as an excellent illustration of the famous pages of Marx and Engels' *Deutsche Ideologie*:

"If the bourgeois declares to the communists: by destroying my existence as a bourgeois, you destroy my existence as an individual; if in this fashion he identifies himself as a bourgeois with himself as an individual, we cannot at any rate deny his frankness and shamelessness But when there appear on the scene bourgeois theoreticians who give this assertion a general expression only then does this nonsense become solemn and sanctified. Stirner above refuted the abolition of private property under communism by changing private property to 'ownership' and then announced that the verb 'to possess,' 'to have,' is a necessary word of 'eternal truth,' because even in a communist society one may 'have' a stomach ache.

" The bourgeois may prove without any trouble, on the basis of his language, the identity between commercial and individual relations or even human relations in general, for his language is itself a product of the bourgeoisie, and therefore, just as in reality, so in language, the relations of buying and selling have become the basis of all other relations. For example *propriété*—(property and attribute) *property eigen*—(own, peculiar, special) in the commercial and individual sense; *valeur*, *value*, *wert* *commerce verkher*; *échange*, exchange, *austausch*; etc. All these words signify both commercial relations and the attributes and interrelations of individuals as such." (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Deutsche Ideologie*.)

4. Even More Solemn, or on "The Necessary Revolution"

The pages of *Esprit* advertise a theory of "the necessary revolution" or, to be more accurate, of "the needed revolution," whose authors are R. Aron and A. Dandieu from the *Ordre Nouveau* group, in many respects related to M. Mounier's organ.¹

As indicative of the level of these theoreticians we should point out that the list given in their book of the literature they examined for the sake of ridiculing Marxism, does not give a single work of Lenin, and from the works of Comrade Stalin only *The Results of the Five Year Plan* is mentioned.

What is the theory of necessary revolution?

The Marxist revolution cannot, according to Aron, be regarded as a truly constructive revolution. For it only reckons with the given, with the actual,

property by playing with the various meanings of the words: my, to have, etc. In part he points to such uses of the word "my" as, for example, "my hair," with the obvious inference that hair will always remain the property of the individual, and consequently a communist society is impracticable. The central task of Mounier and his likes is to prove: 1. That property has now been transformed into an "abstraction," that there are no property holders, there is no one to "ask" it from; 2. that property must be revived "as reality," for by its very nature it cannot be done away with and will remain eternally.

¹ R. Aron and A. Dandieu, *Revolution Necessaire*, B. Grasset, 1933.

and promptly "does away with" their opposition. (This is how Aron understands the dialectic.) Really creative revolution, in their opinion, must itself be a break with the present, with actuality and must consist of an "instant," of an "irrational act." Only in this case can it be regarded as constructive.

How do the leaders and teachers of the proletariat present the question of constructive revolution?

In the interview with the American Labor Delegation, Comrade Stalin said:

"I think that every popular revolution is a constructive revolution; for it breaks the old system and creates a new one. Of course, there is nothing constructive in such revolutions (if we can call them that) as take place, let us say, in Albania in the form of toy 'rebellions' of one tribe against another. But Marxists have never regarded such toy 'rebellions' as revolutions. Obviously, it is not such 'rebellions' that we are discussing, but mass popular revolutions, the rising of oppressed classes. Such a revolution cannot but be constructive. Marx and Engels stood for such a revolution, and only for such a revolution. (J. Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. 1, p. 364, English Edition, 1934.)

We dwell on Aron's arguments on "constructive" and "necessary" (for the fascist bourgeoisie) revolution because they reveal one extremely characteristic feature.

We have in mind the urge, peculiar to bourgeois fascist science, "to break away" from the laws of history and present an "irrational act" (adventure, putsch), as the decisive factor in the process of history.

Panic in the face of the laws of history and the inevitability of the proletarian revolution are especially apparent in Aron when he comes to the general discussion of the questions of the proletarian revolution in the USSR, to the history of the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The singer of "constructive" and "irrational" historical "leaps" in the future refuses to understand the historically grounded constructive process of building a classless society, by establishing and strengthening to the utmost the dictatorship of the proletariat. He does not understand "how it is possible at one and the same time to strengthen the state and prepare to abolish it . . . how one can do something by preparing the contrary."

Let us quote two more articles by Stalin apropos of this subject:

"We are in favour of the state dying out and at the same time we stand for the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents the most powerful and mighty authority of all forms of state which have existed up to the present day. The highest possible development of the power of the state, with the object of preparing the conditions for the dying out of the state: that is the Marxist formula. Is it 'contradictory'? Yes, it is 'contradictory.' But this contradiction is a living thing, and completely reflects Marxist dialectics." (J. Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. 2, p. 342, English Edition, 1934.)

"For what does the victorious proletariat require the strengthening of the state power? In order to dispatch the remains of the dying classes and organise the defence against the capitalist encirclement, which is far from destroyed and will not be destroyed soon." (J. Stalin, *Results of the First Five Year Plan*.)

And, finally, the decisions of the Seventh Congress of Soviets, taken at the initiative of Comrade Stalin, on the further democratization of the constitution, administers one more smashing blow to the counter-revolutionary demagogues who ask how can the maximum strengthening of the proletarian dictatorship lead to the classless society.

The writings of Aron and Dandieu are in a definite sense an effort to generalize the usual slander and demagoguery of the capitalist press, which seeks to "bring together" socialism and capitalism on the grounds that socialism does not make an "irrational leap" from capitalist actuality, but overthrows the capitalist system in the most rational and real manner.

For the fascists are terrified by the proletarian dictatorship.

The USSR is proof of the tremendous constructive strength of the proletarian revolution. The proletariat is the true heir of the great achievements of humanity, and the creator of magnificent new material and cultural values.

In its relation to communist society, not only that "given" which the proletariat receives from contemporary society, i.e., dying capitalism, but likewise the so-called golden ages of the past figure only as the prehistory of the real development of mankind.

5. *Brothers of Berdyayev of the Political Co-thinkers of the Esprit Group*

In one number of *International Literature*, *Esprit's* connections with the White Guards, and in particular with Berdyayev were pointed out.

In answer to this accusation the editors of *Esprit* write that they:

"... demand permission for a quiet laugh over our connection with *Reaction*... and the White émigré elements whom Berdyayev supposedly represents."

At the risk of again provoking the smiles of M. Mounier, we nevertheless decided to gather a few facts that serve to characterize the political face of *Esprit*.

Esprit and the White Guards

Speaking of several White Guard magazines, *Esprit* writes in black and white that the ideas set forth in them "have in view that 'sanitation' which Berdyayev talks of and which the collaborators of *Esprit* are likewise striving for. The young company of Russians marches side by side with the young French company. . . . They follow the same ends and the resemblance is too obvious to require emphasis." (*Esprit*, No. 18, March 1, 1934.)

The specific error of *International Literature* was that it emphasized this proximity.

But perhaps the magazines which *Esprit* refers to should not be counted as White Guard magazines.

Here is the list of their collaborators: Berdyayev, Stepun, Kuskova, Dmitrievski. All dyed-in-the-wool White Guard hacks. An array of spies and fakers.

Such are the people who march side-by-side with the youthful company led by M. Mounier.

Esprit and the Fascists

The editors of *Esprit* swear that nothing attracts them to fascism.

What do the facts prove?

The facts show that the pages of *Esprit* are freely placed at the disposal of people who openly praise fascism.

Here are a few examples, taken from the number of *Esprit* devoted to the "exposure" of German fascism.

"Fascism brings in an element of health." (No. 16, January 1, 1934, Mounier.)

"Fascism is a lyrical reformism." (A. Marc, "Christianity and the Spiritual Revolution," No. 16, March 1, 1933.)

"Fascism is born of the revolt of youth against men past their prime."

Furthermore *Esprit* has displayed a number of features which make the German fascists akin to the "personalists."

"Well, what of it," say the editors of *Esprit*, "don't you know our principle is to assume no responsibility for the opinions voiced in the pages of *Esprit*?"

We know that, we know that you are confusionists and muddlers. However, we also know, that *Esprit*, despite its tolerance of opinions, and inexhaustible curiosity, has never once, for instance, reprinted communist documents on fascism. Never once has it set itself apart from those who, in the pages of *Esprit*, link the group's philosophy with the theory and practice of German fascism.

True, the editors of *Esprit*, along with the praises of fascism, also allow protests against the "false spiritualism" (?) of German fascism.

But, in the first place, this mild criticism only testifies to confusionism. In the second place, we know that it is easy to criticize "alien" fascism and at the same time try to keep from seeing the enemy at home, as Romain Rolland said. In the third place, even Colonel de la Rocque, well aware of how unpopular racial ideas are among the wide masses of the French people, likewise "exposes" German chauvinist propaganda.

What is happening in *Esprit*?

While allowing propaganda of fascism as, among other things, the most "competent" regime for purposes of war, Mounier also prates on the subject of the struggle against the menace of war:

In a questionnaire on the problem of war, *Esprit*, assuming a pacifist pose, submits the following question to its readers.

"What is the evil of war against which you mainly revolt, (death? destruction? falsehood? etc.)."

The entire questionnaire is so formulated as to lead away from the basic question: do the French people need war?

Such methods of "struggle against war" are of no use to those who are interested in exposing the imperialist incendiaries of war, they are, on the contrary, useful to those who try to mask their criminal work.

Esprit and the Trotskyites

The renegade Martinet, a well-known commiserator of the counter-revolutionary Trotskyites finds space in *Esprit*.

Martinet's article, which bears the "personalist" title: "The Necessity for a New Individualism," shows the ease with which Martinet evolved to the fascist position.

Martinet contends that fascism arises from the "wants" of the "despairing" masses. While thus slandering the masses, unable to hide his fear of them, Martinet asserts that the masses themselves make efforts to "find" themselves a fascist leader, that they themselves "create" him. The fascist dictator, the executioner of the worker and peasant masses, is, in Martinet's opinion, an "emanation from the masses," linked with their "communal magnetism."

Martinet is not alone in *Esprit*. Trotskyism also has other champions in this organ, entirely worthy of its notice.

The Catholic priest Maritain, the White Guard Berdyayev, the anti-Soviet lie-monger Gurvich, readily refer to Trotsky.

Berdyayev directly establishes the link between Trotskyism and personalism, intimating that the "person" of Trotsky was out of place in the "revolutionary collective." If Berdyayev has in mind the proletariat and its party, then it is indeed true that there neither is nor can be any place in their ranks for agents of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

. . . Thomas Aquinas, Maritain, Berdyayev, Martinet, the German fascist "oppositionist," Strasser. . . .

Do not the editors of *Esprit*, and the staff of experts, brought in by M.

Mounier for consultation on the problems of the spiritual revaluation, already seem a bit too symbolic?

6. "The Problem of Action," or the Problem of Preparing Cadres for the "Spiritual Revolution"

The Catholic platform, on which *Esprit* takes its stand is, as it were, the basis for preparing the cadres of the spiritual revolution.

Mounier's favorite questions of whether Christianity and politics are compatible, whether it is permissible for a Catholic and a spiritual revolutionist to "go over to action" etc. are purely rhetorical questions.

Their answer is provided by the entire practice of the church militant. The believing people of *Esprit* follow in the footsteps of that neo-Catholicism whose business it is to adapt religious dogmas to "action," that is, of course, to the present requirements of the fascist offensive.

Mounier, and, in particular, the Catholic de Becker, come out against "peaceful" Christianity. They make fun of the Christian philistine, of the sleepy partitioner and exalt the type of the Christian fighter.

De Becker proposes a concrete plan for winning the masses, which envisages the following stages of work:

1. "Organization of the basic cadres."
2. "Organization of a minority in the masses," which must be formed by gradually "acclimatizing the masses," "but without organizing them yet."
3. "Mass action," which can only be undertaken "after a long preparation."

This stratagem reflects, first and foremost, a tremendous fear of the masses. Cautiously "indoctrinate" the masses with spiritual counter-revolution, systematically poison them with social-religious demagoguery—such is de Becker's plan.

At the same time *Esprit* does not hide the character which the activity of the "active minority" must take on.

Esprit tells an extremely interesting Christian anecdote, which is supposed to show the meaning of strength for the fighting cocks of neo-Catholicism.

"Once upon a time in a monastery there lived an ascetic famed for his holy life. The ascetic was about to die. Around him stood his disciples who proceeded to ask him to leave them some sort of 'testament.' The ascetic long kept silent, then, finally, when death was almost upon him, yielded to their entreaties and pronounced his testament, which consisted only of one exclamation—'Fire!' And from this word everything around took fire. (From Mounier's article "In Praise of Strength," No. 5, February 1, 1933.)

Fire—that is what the good little boys of *Esprit* are dreaming of!

In its religious fervor, *Esprit* begins to take an interest in the preparations of the fireworshippers far beyond the borders of France.

Thus, the issue of January 1, 1935 contains an article by Izvolski on the Russian obshchina and the kolkhozes.

Almost everything grows on his many-branched shrub, planted by the hands of White emigrés in the hospitable soil of *Esprit*—religious mysticism of the Larousse type, "revolution of the whole," and counter-revolutionary kulak drivel about the necessity of Christianizing the kolkhozes, utilizing the remains of religious prejudice for the transformation of the kolkhozes into kulak "obshchinas."

It is interesting here to notice how the subtle Catholic program for the preparation of the cadres of a chosen "minority" accords with the program of "mass action" of the orthodox Russian kulak class.

Whom is *Esprit* trying to prepare, anyway, and for what?

To whom does M. Mounier issue the command "Fire!"?

Esprit answers: the knights of the spiritual revolution must be people who, in the words of the evangel, know not "whence they come nor whither they are going."

Indeed, it would be hard to find better specimens of this type of people than the editors of *Esprit*.

However, one cannot play with fire. Fire, proceeding from the hands of Catholic and neo-Catholic activists, can go in one direction only—against the revolutionary people.

The February days showed what an answer the close set ranks of the proletarian front can give to the fascist fire-worshippers.

7. The Bankrupts Try to Launch a Counter-Attack

While awaiting suitable conditions for the development of "mass action," *Esprit* tries to intensify its activity in organizing an "active minority" among the intelligentsia.

Esprit writes: "Communism is a serious enemy. To fight against it with poisoned weapons, to employ miserable arguments, such as the bourgeois press does, is to use very frail means." (G. R. Duron, "On Communism and a Certain Inconsistency of Intellectuals." No. 21, April 1, 1934.)

"And the situation in the face of the threat of Marxism is all the more serious because we not only lack the least vestige of a philosophy which we can rely on, but because we scarcely know the adversary we are fighting." (M. Moré, "Notes on Marxism." No. 21.)

It is this very ideological breakdown, which both Mounier and his colleagues recognize, it is this very panic before the menace of Marxism, materially embodied in the ranks of the united front, that explains the efforts of this group to become active.

The bankrupts are trying to launch a counter-attack.

Under what circumstances?

The bourgeoisie is now making a convulsive exertion to halt the revolutionary process among the intellectuals.

One of the methods used in the struggle is that of moral terror, scaring the intellectuals who are breaking with capitalism. Free and unfree literary agents of the bourgeoisie try in articles, outlines and novels to depict in the blackest colors, the fate which supposedly awaits those intellectuals of the West who are going over to the proletarian camp.

Characteristically, we meet with attempts of this kind in such a liberal and "humanist" publication as *Europe*. The issue of *Europe* for October 15, 1934 contains Day Lewis' "Letter to a Young Revolutionary," translated from the English.

Lewis addresses himself to a young intellectual who has decided to join the Communist Party. While giving the courage of his young friend its due, the author of the letter also deems it necessary to warn him.

Lewis does not muster any objections to communism, to its principles and practice, except for one or two platitudes about the threat to the writer's "independence."

Lewis in the most vulgar fashion simply tries to "intimidate" the intellectuals. He scares them with the "dangers" and "risk" of the revolution; sometimes he openly contradicts himself, and he asks the intellectuals: "Have you the courage not to be heroes? If you want to be heroes, then don't go to the revolution, for you will have no opportunity to shine." (1)

People who want to join the Party of Lenin and Stalin, the Party which produced Dimitrov and Rakosi, are "warned," that in the revolution no "occasions" for heroism can present themselves. However, this is to be explained by the fact that heroism should here be understood as "kudos" in the strict bourgeois meaning of the term.

Lewis further tells his young friend: Many of your worker friends would prefer rather to follow you, as their great patron, rather than walk side by side with you as your comrades.

Choose, Lewis tells the intellectuals, between an enterprising career, as "friend of the workers" (that is where you can "shine"!) and the risk of the revolutionary struggle side by side with the proletariat.

As though the working class could need people capable only of wavering between these two poles!

In persuading the intellectuals not to break with capitalism its literary agents can find no arguments save appeals to the lowest feelings and prejudices (careerism, chauvinism, fear of the men in overalls and the direct threat of armed retribution).

The only positive slogan launched by Lewis in his "Letter" is:

"We must develop the will to obey . . ."

Esprit employs somewhat different methods.

As becomes the disciples of Father Maritain, the collaborators of *Esprit* regard the problem of the revolutionary trend among the intellectuals as a problem of "communist temptation" and try to fight using the methods of confession, calls to repentance, and along with everything else, slander.

In pain, *Esprit* tries to hold back those who are going over to the proletariat. They pleadingly cry: "A little intellectual sang-froid, gentlemen! What's it all about? What is the appeal of the communist temptation? What compels you to go over to the camp of the proletarian revolution? Hold on!"

Esprit writes: "Communism identifies itself with historical necessity or with social truth." It regards itself as being "the only thing capable of effectively conducting the fight." It does not recognize the rights of "those who do not adhere to its dogma and its party," to represent the interests of toiling humanity.

That is the worst part of it! This thought utterly discomfits the collaborators of *Esprit*. Thus, a certain Durond in an article "On Communism and a Certain Inconsistency Among Intellectuals," writes: "For many, the alternative is simple. Who is not for Communism is against it."

Durond admits this dilemma, "the realization that neutrality is meaningless, that by remaining in the camp of capitalism they themselves betray the interests of toiling humanity and this thought causes even the best to blush."

What is to be done about this realization, this awakening consciousness of the intellectuals?

Quite in the style of the Jesuit fathers, *Esprit* answers this question as follows: "We must salve the intellectual's conscience, try to persuade it that the dilemma does not exist."

And *Esprit* proceeds to persuade, without much diplomacy, however.

Esprit tries to prove that capitalism, although it is undoubtedly an "unjust social order. . . . in some respects open to condemnation," is, however, "in the very nature of things capable of revision and rectification."

Thus the slogan of non-existence of a dilemma leads straight to the camp of capital.

But perhaps the "rectifications," proposed by *Esprit* are truly capable of making capitalism more acceptable to the masters of culture?

The basic rectification consists in a return to the economy of the middle ages, to the

"Simple economy mainly artisan and especially peasant.

"Such was the ancient order . . . an order which was essentially orthodox and Catholic in the broadest sense . . . an order which was wise and enlightened, adapted to the needs of nature . . . which has not yet disappeared from our countryside." The feudal-Catholic order is the best order, the only one that men of art and science should dream about.

"Ancient occupations . . . occupations dear to France, wise, artistic occupations, what excellence has perished with you. . . ."

"One can never bestow adequate praise on these former occupations, on the economy which reigned over their harmony. . . . World based on traditions and on common sense, peasant world, humanist, Aristotelian world, whose memory Latin and Catholic countries have not yet utterly forgotten."

But after all, this is 1934! And supposing among the masters of culture there are none to be found who want to graze on feudal pastures, which were, incidentally spattered with the blood of peasant uprisings on more than one occasion. Supposing they somehow prefer the twentieth century, the communist temptation, the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order.

Neither is *Esprit* at a loss in this case. After Durond, arrayed in knightly armour, follows Gurvich, considerably more of a contemporary, issuing, as he himself declares, from a

"socialist environment. After having made short shrift of the USSR with the devastating proof that in 1921 the Soviet country went through a famine, Gurvich declares: 'Of all that is happening in the world today, Roosevelt's experiment is the only thing that offers any attraction.'"

Gurvich neglects to mention, however, that that experiment consists of economic fascization, and that it has undergone a shameful collapse.

Anything you like, economic fascization of capitalism, rural cretinism, medieval spooks and devils, any issue from the "dilemma" save the road which Romain Rolland, André Gide, John Strachey, have taken.

This shilly-shallying from one end of history to the other, all with that same paltry stock of restorationist and reconstructionist ideas, reveals all the hopelessness of the struggle against what Mounier terms "the communist temptation."

8. Rehabilitation of Art or Rehabilitation of Capitalism?

"It has occurred to us that the time has come to establish a rallying point for those artists who have rebelled against the oppression of human values and particularly against artistic values . . . who wish to safeguard . . . creative liberty." (Mounier, "Preface to a Rehabilitation of Art and Artists." No. 25, October 1, 1934.)

"The moral criterion of the old bourgeoisie has lost all prestige in our eyes." (Denis de Rougemont, *Preface to a Literature*.)

That outworn moral criterion spelled disaster for art and the artists. Hence arose the necessity for explaining who those truly responsible for the fall were and in this fashion rehabilitate art and its creators.

"Despite the conditions to which the modern world subjects the proletariat these conditions are no worse than those imposed upon the artist."

"We see fleeing from us . . . the liberty essential to a disinterested contemplation of the universe and the joy necessary to the sacred idylls of fantasy.

"This situation is manifest in every field of art." In the field of literature: "All the degradation of modern 'literature' can be summarised in a rather coarse formula: it is a literature which likes to talk in order to say nothing."

In the field of the theatre "Without poetry, without style the French theatre is

becoming more and more a photographic portrayal of a society that has neither glamour, glory nor illusions. . . . Commerce has invaded the set and the auditorium."

"The monied world is doubly hostile to art: it either sterilises or rejects the artist. It sterilises him and causes his public to lose interest in him."

This gloomy picture in many respects corresponds to reality. *Esprit* does not spare the colors in drawing a fairly complete picture of the degradation of art in a society which has forfeited truth.

What does *Esprit* propose in the way of an issue from the catastrophic crisis which bourgeois art has fallen prey to?

"Art must become in the factories and fields, around the hearth and in public buildings, what it was in the church and in popular festivals; it must again merge with the everyday life of every man. May the peasants again wish to celebrate the harvest festivals with singing and dancing, may the workers be seized with the desire to make their factories beautiful, that faith . . . may again be sung in artistic imagery."

What popular festival does Mounier have in mind?

General factory meetings of unemployed, decorated with artistic portraits of Schneider-Creuzot?

Peasant choruses in honor of the landlords and tax collectors?

What a magnificent program of action for "rebellious artists."

This program in no way differs from the fascist methods of utilizing the theatre, books, music, painting for purposes of social deception.

What is the meaning of the criticism to which Mounier subjects bourgeois art?

Isn't it simply anathema against "the sinners" who forget that art is nothing other than "faith, expressed in artistic forms." (According to Mounier's definition.)

It turns out that *Esprit* is looking for the way out of the various crises (of literature, the theatre, etc.) in order to impart to contemporary bourgeois art that strength, which, according to Mounier's conviction, enabled ecclesiastical art to spread its influence over the masses.

The practical measures for the "rehabilitation of art and artists" are fully determined by the same premises as the social philosophy of *Esprit*.

Esprit proposes "an exodus of men of art from Paris," under the pretext that this measure would "snatch them from the money trusts" and "bring them closer to the people."

It further proposes to form special kinds of brigades, made up of artists for the assistance of theatrical administration, and especially in order to free the "overloaded theatre directors" from the duty of reading manuscripts.

In substance, this program for the organization of a sort of social work, is a program for the creation of "corporative" nuclei, wherein the energy of the rebels, i.e., of the dissatisfied artists, could be utilized in transforming the theatre into a weapon of "faith," that is, of course, into a weapon of the spiritual counter-revolution.

Indeed, even *Esprit* admits that in the theatre, capital holds undisputed sway. But do not the rebellious men of art also have to serve this theatre?

What else is the project for the exodus from Paris of men of art, if not an imitation of the capitalist way out of the crisis, the system of shifting the unemployed to the country! Indeed the capitalists resort to these measures in order to take the unemployed far away from the urban centres and so supposedly to free them from the corrupting influence of the city, the money trusts, etc.

The esthetic theories of *Esprit* grow out of this practical program.

These theories received their best expressed formulation in Lacroix's Epilogue which crowns *Esprit's* declaration on the problems of art.

In substance Lacroix's article poses the question of what type of artist and creator is needed by art, which must, according to Mounier's terse definition, be "faith expressed in artistic forms."

The question has already been touched upon in *Esprit*, and the collaborators of that paper once reached the conclusion that the artist is, first of all, a "primitive" being, the artist is a semi-animal, who only sees things half clearly. Artistic creativeness is fed by the emotions and not by the mind.

Lacroix carries this thought through to the end.

"The artist," he says, "does not really know his idea until his work is completed. Furthermore . . . he arrives at a knowledge of himself only through his work, by his work. Art consists not in imagining, but in doing, so it follows that the artist is first an artisan, who understands a given material." (J. Lacroix, "Art as the Instrument of Communion.")

In other words, the artist must renounce the right to think, must renounce art which comprehends and transforms the world.

Since the idea of the production is hidden from the artist and is, as it were, spontaneously generated, the artist is after a fashion the servant of an elemental cult, a creator who "does not control what he creates."

What type of artist is this?

This happens to be that type of artist which is needed by the bourgeoisie at the present time as a means of social demagoguery—the blind artisan.

Along with the mystical features, the emphasis on artisanship and technology in art is extremely interesting.

It shows how formalist worship of "things" and "material" in art, is naturally linked with mysticism, with the denial of the significance of ratio in artistic creation.

As is evident, exaltation of material form does not prevent either mystics or formalists from being faithful worshippers of reactionary idealism.

For both the first and the second reject art as a means of knowing and transforming the world.

In rejecting these two tasks of art, they substitute for them first knowledge of form as such, and second, the purely subjective "transformation" of reality as the artist's "material."

For the reactionary artist the task is not to understand reality, or, as Lacroix says, nature, but to disclose in nature an unknowable beginning, i.e., God.

"To have the feeling of nature is to feel more or less confusedly that nature is divine, or at any rate divinely created, and this is doubtless where artistic feeling is close to religious feeling, and leads to it."

This religious art must be a means of acting on the masses, or, in the terminology of *Esprit*, a means of "communion between people."

It is, however, extremely interesting that in placing before the artist the task of creating "mass" art (required for the organization of those slaves' carnivals mentioned above) Lacroix demands solitude of the artist.

"The price of genius is loneliness. Invested with too high a mission, the artist can no longer communicate with humanity."

Is this really an ivory tower raised above the interests of classes. Is this a lofty loneliness? No, this is the loneliness of the artisan removed from art, who is the servant (or captive) of bourgeois demagoguery, who is compelled to remember that in reality he is not the formulator of the hopes of the masses but the slave driver going along at their side.

Objectively this is the road of the artist who serves the cult of social deception, which trains people not to know "whence they came or whither they are going."

Subjectively it is the road of extreme loneliness, of darkness and doom.

One should not underestimate these "esthetic" elements of *Esprit*, for they reflect certain essential features of the ideology of *Esprit* taken as a whole.

Esprit was born, by the very admission of its founders, under the sign of deepest despair in the face of the "existing disorder."

One of the early numbers of *Esprit* contained the exceedingly characteristic letter of some young man, sympathetic to the ideas of M. Mounier. The young man declared himself to be a "revolutionary from disgust." ("... there are several kinds of revolutionaries . . . the bitter, the discontented, the mystics, the romantic. We are the disgusted.") (*Esprit*, No. 3, 1932.)

No matter how the people of *Esprit* try to give their writings the ring of inspired and purposeful propaganda, it often sounds like a confession, full of pessimism and scepticism.

In the above quoted article on the intellectuals and communism, the author, having exhausted all his arguments against the going over of intellectuals to the proletarian camp writes:

"Furthermore is not the time for optimism over? What conception of life is more childish and less enlightened than that which presumptuously believes it is paving the way to a golden age of liberty, justice and happiness . . ."

"Do we still believe in the legitimacy of a conception of human life which is linked only with the notion of happiness? Do we still believe in the possibility of a harmonious development of instincts and society? . . ."

It is not surprising, that in calling on the artists with the appeal to unite on the platform of the spiritual revolution, *Esprit* was unable to counter Romain Rolland's magnificent farewell to the past with anything save the slogan of farewell to life and renunciation of reality as symbols of the artist's creed.

Has it not occurred to some of the collaborators of *Esprit* that such manifestoes are unlikely to prove capable of uniting the "rebellious artists," who really aspire to the liberation of human values and artistic values from capitalist slavery?

For the men of art who really reject the service of the bourgeoisie, hunt other roads and set themselves other tasks. These roads and these tasks inevitably link the revolutionary movement of the working class.

The last numbers of *Esprit* carry, in the form of an announcement, a short declaration to the effect that the *Esprit* group has decided to organize a trip of its collaborators and readers to the USSR this autumn.

There is nothing remarkable in itself about the announcement of a desire to visit the Soviet Union. The magnificent development of the land of socialism attracts tens of thousands of people.

However, the motive is worthy of attention: it is stated in the declaration that as a result of this trip, members of the group "may perhaps rid themselves of certain prejudices or, on the contrary, of certain illusions of the imagination." (No. 28, January, 1935, "*Esprit* Organizes a Trip to the USSR.")

This formulation makes *Esprit's* declaration rather ambiguous, since it appears that the idea of the trip is the product of two directly opposite intentions.

As regards "prejudices" (as *Esprit* softly couches it), undoubtedly, after excursions to the dead world of the middle ages, and the imaginary delights

of a personalist heaven, a trip to the land of socialism might turn out to be fruitful for some of the *Esprit* collaborators. Namely for those whose membership in the *Esprit* group is to be explained by the fact that they, because of "prejudices" or for other reasons were led astray by the "revolutionary" phraseology of Mounier and his friends (If indeed there really are such people in the *Esprit* group).

Having visited the USSR they might convince themselves, among other things, that the Soviet intelligentsia attained the honored place it holds in socialist society not as a "third force," but in consequence of the fact that that intelligentsia went over to the side of that class force which is represented by the power of the proletariat and its vanguard the Communist Party.

It is quite possible that the talk of "prejudices" is intended for just this category of people connected with *Esprit*.

However, along with prejudices, the declaration of *Esprit* mentions "illusions."

And here we must not forget the admission made by *Esprit* last year.

"The situation in the face of Marxism is all the more serious because not only we have not the least vestige of philosophy to lean on but we scarcely know the adversary with whom we are fighting." (M. Moré, "Notes on Marxism." No. 21, March 1, 1934.)

What was it anyway that dictated *Esprit's* desire to visit the USSR?

Is this the conclusion which the editors of *Esprit* reached as a result of the realisation of their ideological bankruptcy and of the desire to find a true exit from their confusionist roamings?

Or is their desire to go to the Soviet Union connected with the thought of "learning to know the adversary?" Among the people who want to visit the USSR there are some of this sort.

This question is all the more apropos because along with the declaration concerning the trip, the very same issue of *Esprit* contains, in the news section, an item where *Esprit* actually comes out in defence of the White Guard Zinovievist remains.

By this, the editors of *Esprit*, despite their doublefaced reservation about not wanting to align themselves with anti-Soviet circles or give any assistance to them, in reality come out in unison with the fascist camp and its literary hirelings!

As long as such literary outbursts find room in the pages of *Esprit*, all declarations about desire to "get rid of prejudices" since they come from the editors of *Esprit* and from the *Esprit* group as a whole, must be regarded merely as a new form of ideological subterfuge, placed in the service of reaction.

Translated from the Russian by Edmund Stevens

The World Congress of Writers

Writers of All Countries Meet In Paris

That the first World Congress of Writers was held in Paris on June 21-26, 1935, and that it was a most impressive gathering of famous and to a large extent world-famous figures, is an important bit of news, a fact interesting in itself. More than a hundred persons, including André Gide, Heinrich Mann, Ilya Ehrenburg, Louis Aragon, André Malraux, Henri Barbusse, Waldo Frank, Martin Andersen-Nixö, E. M. Forster, and Aldous Huxley, representing some thirty-eight nations and peoples, were assembled for five days in the Palais de la Mutualité where scores of carefully prepared papers were read. Many hundreds of invited guests filled the auditorium. More than sixty reporters sat at the long, crowded press table.

But why a writers' *congrès*, it will be asked; or, repeating with a more precise emphasis, why a *writers'* congress?

The announced name of the assemblage answers this question, in part, though it raises others: It is the Congrès International des Écrivains pour la Défense de la Culture. The book-burning and book-banning in half a dozen countries, and the tendency to suppression of freedom of thought and expression in most of the democratic countries, had brought the scholar out of his cloister and the artist down from his ivory tower. The creators of literature found themselves in debate with the rulers of states. The Congress, in other words, was primarily political, rather than literary.

The Problem: What is the Danger? And, What is to be Done About It?

It would be unnecessary to describe the imprisonment of writers and of artists of every kind in Italy and Germany; to tell the thrice-told facts of liberties mocked and crushed, and the consequent almost dearth of important works of art in those lands. But it is important to note the new facts about imminent or actual fascism among colonial and remote peoples, and especially important to analyze the phenomenon of fascism in its relation to the work of writing and to culture generally.

The British public will be interested to learn, for example, that the Australian delegation formally protested against the official censorship there, which bans even such books as Huxley's *Brave New World*, and that an Indian speaker denounced British rule as a gross obstacle to cultural advance in India. Negro delegates from the French colony, the Antilles, advocated world sovietism as the only means for the liberation of oppressed minority nationalities. Shelley Wong of China described the frightful measures visited upon Chinese intellectuals by Chiang Kai-shek and his Japanese collaborators. Del Vayo, fresh from the scene of brutal fascist pacification in Spain, called for immediate unanimous action by all intellectuals against fascism. A German writer, Alfred Kerr, discussed the role of the exiled anti-fascist writers, artists without a country, forced willy-nilly into the struggle. Another German, Alfred Kantorowicz, pointed to the menace of the German nationalist writers, who with their formula, "learn to die well" instead of "learn to live well"—a supposed heroic appeal—are making the literary preparation for the coming war; he called upon the

anti-fascist writers to "oppose the fantasies of the nationalists with *reality*; their metaphors, by *analysis*; their militarist fury, by *creative ardour*."

The mad spectacle of fascist repression as a whole, so incomprehensible otherwise, can be understood, as John Strachey said, only by considering the inherent madness¹ in the present socio-economic process: "If we sought a textbook example of unreason," he remarked at the Congress, "what more perfect one could we find than, for instance, the recent economic activities of the American government, such as the burning of the wheat, the ploughing-in of the cotton, the slaughtering of hogs, at a time when, according to the last official figures, no less than 22,600,000 American citizens are existing in destitution upon public funds." A procedure such as this doesn't bear thinking about for long, he goes on to say: "The human mind revolts against a system of this degree of irrationality; and the revolt of a man's mind is the beginning of the revolt of the whole man."

Hence, the attack by fascism, sooner or later, to the extent of its power, upon all thinking and all interpretation. Hence the danger to literature, and the need for its defense. Said Henri Barbusse: "The intellectual workers, repositories of the culture which belongs to all, must themselves defend that culture." But they need not defend it alone, he continued; they can and must ally themselves with the great mass of workers who, also, are the enemies of fascism.

Politico-Literary, After All, Rather Than Purely Political

This intensely political approach, implicit in the Congress from the start, could not but evoke political speculation and political avowal, especially in view of the fact that communism is at present the only important alternative to fascism. E. M. Forster, who gave the opening speech at the first session, declared that were he a younger and more courageous man he would probably be a communist, but as it was, though he agreed with communism's ultimate aims, he supported the British constitution and would fight for at least the retention of the liberties it at present allowed. André Gide, who was the chairman of the first session, saw in a proletarian land such as the Soviet Union, eventually, "a social state which will render possible the full blooming of every individual, the glorious dawn of all his possibilities."

On the other hand, Julian Benda questioned the theoretical and metaphysical basis of the "communist conception" of life and art, and called upon communists to explain clearly whether communism *destroyed* the "western conception" of life and art or merely extended and developed it. The Zionist, Max Brod, wistfully sought for a way to bind together (If I may exaggerate, slightly) religion and revolution—"by the simple word *and*." He suggested: "Dream *and* Reason; Night *and* Day; Profound belief in God *and* collaboration, rational and active, with the Five-Year Plan."

Thus all—opponents and proponents of sovietism, and doubters—took none the less and inevitably a political approach to the problem of the defense of culture.

But not only and purely political. The anti-fascist orientation required

¹ Cf. title of a recent satirical sketch by Ilya Ehrenburg in *New Masses*: "Now They Are Madmen."

a complete re-examination of esthetic and even technical doctrine. Not only a new examination of our cultural heritage, as made by Forster, Waldo Frank, Egon Erwin Kisch, and Barbusse; not only a re-consideration of the relation of the individual to society, as by Gide; not only a re-defining of humanism by Paul Nizan, and of patriotism by the exiled Anna Seghers. But also the relationship of man and machine, by Georges Friedmann, and by Luc Durtain; of tradition and invention, by Jean Cassou; of the effect of historical materialism upon the historical novel, by Gustav Regler; of the meaning of socialist realism, by Panfyorov and Ehrenburg; of the "return to realism," by the former "surrealist" Louis Aragon.

An Estimate of the Congress

There can be no doubt that this Writers' Congress has had a considerable effect on the public thought, and that this effect will be extended and deepened by the expected publication of the various papers that were read. But more important is the equally indubitable effect that the Congress must have had upon its participants. To throw so many writers into each other's company and into direct debate with each other's ideas, both literary and social, could not have other than a profound influence upon their later thinking and writing.

Of the British delegates, Aldous Huxley, for example, though aroused by the fascist danger, believed that writers could do comparatively little about it. Forster was convinced that they must do something, but because his program included chiefly a defense of "English liberties," it implied more waiting than action. Strachey was outspokenly in favor not only of anti-fascist struggle, but of struggle in alliance with the working class. Such differences showed more or less among the delegates of most of the countries, with perhaps a greater proportionate number, at least of French delegates, in support of Strachey's general position.

Notable at the Congress were the German delegates, all of them—Heinrich Mann, Ernst Toller, Egon Erwin Kisch, Anna Seghers, Johann Becher, and the rest—exiles from their homeland. Their simple presence, and the obvious fact of their courage, raised both the enthusiasm and the solemnity of the Congress.

The Soviet delegation likewise profoundly influenced the Congress,—some fifteen of them, including the novelist, Theodore Panfyorov; the woman writer, Anna Karavayeva; the product of Tadjikistan's new culture, G. Lakhuti; and the satirist of bourgeois society, Ilya Ehrenburg. Their immediate and certain knowledge of the actual cultural achievements of the Soviet regime gave them an obvious confidence in contrast with the academic uncertainty of British spokesmen.

The significance of this Congress lies first in the fact that *it was held*—that so many writers of such quality actually met for the purpose announced. Second, it lies in the extent of the effect, impossible as yet to estimate, which the Congress has had upon the thinking of the writers themselves. Third, it lies in the future of the united anti-fascist front of intellectuals and workers that, at least for the term of its existence, the Congress established.

AGA INST FASCISM



Andre Malraux, French author of Man's Fate and other books, speaking [at the Congress; to the left, the noted German writer, Heinrich Mann



Ernst Toller, German author and playwright, with N. Tikhonov, a member of the Soviet delegation attending the Congress

AT THE PARIS CONGRESS



Henri Barbusse, great writer, a leading figure in the world wide struggle against fascism



Andre Gide presides at a session of the Congress; at his right, Heinrich Mann, Germany, and Michael Koltsov, Soviet writer



Romain Rolland, strong supporter of the Congress, being greeted by Soviet workers on his arrival in Moscow

New York Theatre Front: 1935

"How do you like New York, Doctor?" I was asked at least ten times a day even by intelligent people, and during my seven weeks' stay I had to answer some five hundred times, "Thank you, damn it, yes and no!" And yet I fully understand the New Yorkers' pride in their city; I too admire this athletic metropolis with its clean-cut giant buildings, bare of any ornament. But blood rushes to my head when I see how a poor Negro peddler is brought before the judge in a night court by a Negro detective. It is admirable that one can live there for years without the police wanting to know my name or the name of my grandfather—or that on Sunday hundreds of thousands lie on the grass in huge Central Park right in the middle of the city. But I was astonished to see Negro and white, rigidly separated along color lines, staring at me from their cage-like cells in the model women's prison in New York, although even Hitler hasn't yet introduced race differentiation, at least in the jails and concentration camps. Frightful the flood of yellow weeklies and movie magazines—astonishing and welcome the fact of the *New Masses* and the *New Theatre*. Nowhere does one see the relativeness and the unity of contradictions as clearly as in the centre of highly developed capitalism.

Particularly along the theatre front.

Everything takes place here in the most concentrated form: the tempo of life, eating, business, the concentration of the skyscrapers on the tiny island of Manhattan; and the twenty to thirty big theatres and movie palaces are likewise squeezed together into the four or five blocks along Broadway along Times Square. Even in theme, style, and genre a single winter season—1934-35—comprises everything we went through in a period of ten to fifteen years on the German theatre front. I saw twelve different plays in the theatre district, which can be covered on foot in less than twenty minutes: star plays of the boulevard hit or London comedy of manners type, costume plays like those put on by the Rotter theatres in Berlin, naturalist *milieu* plays, plays of social criticism à la Ibsen, Strindbergian psychoanalysis—and then right off Broadway a Proletcult play admirably staged by the collective of the Group Theatre. Finally down on Fourteenth Street the revolutionary drama *Black Pit* played by the actors of the Theatre Union to enthusiastic audiences of workers, intellectuals and middle-class groups. This spiritual Wild West of the New York theatre, this multiplicity and anarchy, is no "esthetic" matter high up in the clouds. In its structure and pace it is rather the exact reflection of the tempo of the crisis and the economic anarchy of this continent in which there are piled high inconceivable quantities of capital, wealth, and misery.

The first thing we Europeans must do in New York is to forget the concept of the "Theatre," of the theatre as an institution, possessing a tradition, such as the Lessing Theatre or the Deutsche Theatre in Berlin, the Comédie Française, the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt, not to mention the Meyerhold, Tairov or Vakhtangov Theatres. Here the producer, that is the entrepreneur, who provides the money for a given play and hires the director is the "theatre". Noted producers work in one theatre today, another tomorrow, today with this director, tomorrow with another; the stars change even in the production of a single play. The program for *Tobacco Road*—the play of the Southern farmer, excellently staged by the young director Brown—informs you that

the leading actor was changed three times in a single year, because the leading man was snatched up by Hollywood every time. That is—or was up to now—the best recommendation for a play, for the director, for the star.

It was an act of revolutionary courage three years ago when young Left actors formed a collective and started playing as the ensemble of the Group Theatre . . . and they have been able to keep going these three years with increasing success. But the "Group" did not remain an isolated phenomenon. Three years ago the Theatre Union started with a clear-cut classconscious program, with another acting company. The Theatre Union group has gone through more than one ordeal by fire. Its chief contribution was the organization of its mass audiences, giving them high-class performances at the lowest prices and registering one success after another during these first three years of struggle. The third ensemble that was formed in defiance of all the commercial traditions of the New York theatre is the Artef Theatre, a Jewish theatre that began with worker-actors, who today, however, have quite attained the standard of good professional acting. Today these Artef actors still work in shops during the day, playing at night without salary. The Theater of Action has also just produced its first full-length play and is establishing itself as a permanent acting company.

This break with the forms of the existing commercial theatre took place at a tempestuous rate, and only within the last two or three years. Bourgeois critics told me that the next theatre winter season would be even more "Left"; most of them are not indignant about it because they are already "fed up" with the present day theatre. Equally symptomatic is the work of the film studios. "Social themes" are more and more in demand. One of the most highly paid Hollywood actors is Paul Muni, who essayed the role of an anarchistic miner after his excellent performance in *I Was a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*. *Phantom President* and *42nd Street* were in the same genre. True enough, the posing of the problem and its solution are false but the theme simply cannot be evaded today.

The Star Play: Katharine Cornell, Elizabeth Bergner, Kathrin Maren, Tallulah Bankhead

When the first night of *Flowers of the Forest* with Katherine Cornell was advertised, I was told I simply had to see "America's greatest actress," but that it would be difficult to get tickets. We went to the premiere at six in the evening . . . the theatre was hardly half full. My friends said that would have been inconceivable a few years ago; when Cornell played, she could have recited the ABC and the public would have come to see her. What has happened in these few years? She still wears wonderful gowns and has a "magical" stage presence. Can the public have grown more critical? Can it be that it no longer wants to see these hypocritical, moth-eaten plays—even when they dabble in saccharine pacifism like *Flowers of the Forest*? Katharine Cornell, who in the past played to packed houses for months now announces that she is leaving for Paris after the play had been on for only three weeks, and not even going to play Shaw's *Candida*.

I saw Elizabeth Bergner in *Escape Me Never*, a sort of English *La Bohème*. The first scenes, in which she played the role of an eighteen year-old in short skirts, with socks on her ephebic legs, were well suited to her. But later on, when she had to play the great lover, she was through. And when she had to hold her child in her arms in the role of a mother, the "make believe" became so unendurable that not only I but ten others started for the

exits. But strange to say, two ushers blocked the exit doors, because "Frau Bergner does not want people to leave." This star play is also beyond discussion in point of content and form. Here too the public turned away from Bergner, its favorite, because of the miserable play and her falsetto tones. The public doesn't let itself be fooled so easily any more. If it is to be fooled, it demands plays for its stars at least, such as *Lady of the Camelias*, *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabbler* or *Saint Joan*.

A typical example is furnished by the endeavor to star a little Viennese actress Kathrin Maren, in an empty bit of trumpery *The Day To Night* (*The Trip to Pressburg*). The endeavor was a one-hundred per cent failure despite millionaire "angels"; the play closed after a two-week run. The foundation of the commercial theatre is beginning to totter.

Something Gay, with the celebrated Tallulah Bankhead, was also not very gay, as a critic remarked, because of the poor play. Today stars alone aren't enough; the actress' road "through the bed" no longer leads to success. Today the public is an active factor—it demands an answer to certain questions that trouble it.

The Negro Problem: Green Pastures

This Negro play had been running uninterruptedly for five years; in 1930 it received the Pulitzer prize. The program begins by saying that it took in 17,200 dollars, even in the last hot week of August 1931, but unfortunately it is not a good play none the less. Largely because it is a false play, because it shows Negro life as certain whites imagine it or would like to think it is. All the actors in this play are Negroes; their acting is often excellent; they sing their spirituals wonderfully well, and yet the play is thoroughly false. It is false all the way down to the foundation, from the problem it poses to the treatment of the theme. The play is really a *Biblia pauperum*, a set of Bible pictures like those printed in the Middle Ages for illiterates. All the history of the world and of humanity down to our day is treated in biblical style; the problem is posed thus: has humanity grown "better" during this period? Must it not return to the innocence of paradise, after having eaten too much of the tree of knowledge? The (reactionary) answer is clear cut: we see in the play how the ten thousand years of humanity's development have not helped, but have only harmed the human soul, how man only becomes "worse," more dissatisfied, more a beast of prey, with too much knowledge, technique, cities, and culture. We are told there is only one salvation: return to the "Green Pastures" of Paradise.

The play, with its thirty scenes, is definitely "epic theatre," a didactic play of the first order. To a certain extent it emphasizes this by beginning the first scene in Sunday school. Negro children, learning the story of Creation, ask their Negro teacher embarrassing questions, which he is finally unable to answer. Then "the Lord," or as he is called in Negro dialect "The Lawd," takes a hand in person—as God. In the second scene Heaven is in a state of turmoil—should a new star, i.e., the Earth, be created or not—and now "The Lawd" enters with a fat "ten-cent cigar" in his mouth, provoking tremendous enthusiasm among the male angels and smiles among the spectators. There you have it: even in Heaven the ideals of these poor devils, the Negroes, picture a ten-cent cigar as the compass, the symbol of divine perfection. "So that is the phantasy world of these Negroes, these children who still live as illiterates in childhood dreams," is what the white spectator must feel. They must feel themselves to be a higher, ruling race when they see the

Negroes in the *Green Pastures*. This is the clear-cut tendency of this Negro play written by Marc Connelly, a white; this is also one of the reasons for its success. "Look at these dumb Negroes—how they still imagine the world to be! Are we to let ourselves be placed on an equal footing with them?" The numerous witty parodies, the anachronisms ("The Lawd" sitting in his modern office), and the interesting production might deceive many spectators as to the value and character of the play. But many Negroes told me that this play is a libel on the Negro, a play that tries to make the gulf between the Negro and white still deeper. No, millions of American Negroes are no longer children!

Tobacco Road: *Farmer Distress in the South*

Neither the American film nor the American theatre can evade the major social problems, such as the Negro question and the farmer problem, in their selection of themes. In *The Green Pastures*, the Negro question is dealt with in a thoroughly class manner from the standpoint of the ruling class, as a didactic play.

In *Tobacco Road* the tendency breaks through, but unpremeditatedly in an opposite direction. This play, "situated on a tobacco road in the back country of Georgia," was adapted by Jack Kirkland from the novel of the same name by Erskine Caldwell. With uncompromising naturalism down to the last detail it pictures the dreary decay of a poor farmer's family, slowly degenerating as a result of hunger, drought, exploitation by speculators and nymphomaniac cultists, as a result of all sorts of delusions, diseases and impotence. The value of the play lies in the excellent, sober production by the director Brown. He has not only caught the milieu and the atmosphere of this ghost-like rainless area of the South, almost cut off from the civilized world, down to the dry air, the floury brown sand, the dried out bodies, and the so much more wildly flaming lusts. What is more important: he shows how man is the cruelest force of nature—these carefully groomed gentlemen, these respectable landlords and speculators, who after having sucked the small farmer dry through high rents take from him the last things he has, his bit of earth to which he clings with animal terror. Jeeter Lester, this poor Georgia farmer, is the last one to die—after all the others are either dead or have fled—letting a handful of the dry brown sand run through his fingers.

This grim play of farm distress in "God's own country", this hopeless naturalistic play without a happy ending played in one of Broadway's commercial theatres, became the biggest hit of last season and has now been running without interruption for two years. Why? Some seek a simple explanation for the success in the play's strongly erotic scenes; but all this eroticism ends in despair, death, flight, destruction. The value of the play and, above all, of the production, lies in its anatomical objectivity, in its content of truth. This fills the public with shivers; it feels that it is not being "hot air" but a portion of reality—a tiny incomplete portion yet reality none the less. A section of the world is shown true to life, naturalistically, staring at nothingness, poverty as a phenomenon of nature.

But this play wholly lacks perspective, a way out, the conscious man who is able to change the world. And yet big farmer revolts have taken place in the Southern States precisely during the last three years, and mere possession of the *Daily Worker* is punishable by hard labor and the chain gang. A realistic play on the South would have to show this side as well; the endeavor to shake off the chains and poverty

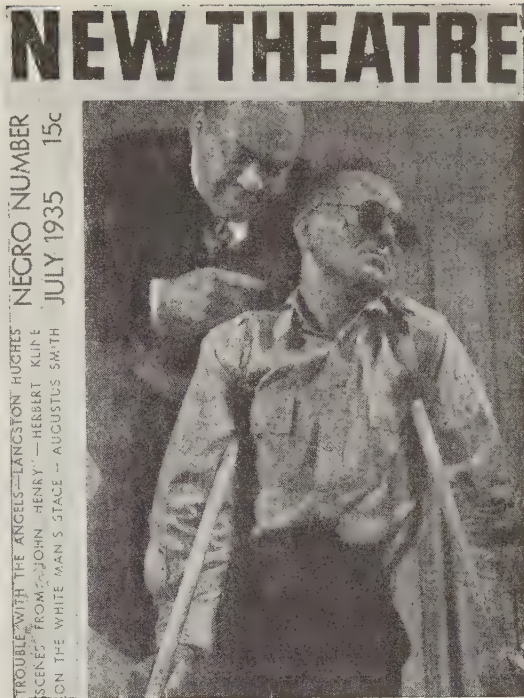
The naturalistic play says: "Well, well, that's what the world is like, that's what it was and that's how it will remain!" The realistic play shows or implies the process of development: "That's what this bit of the world is like today, but this today already bears within it the germ and the prerequisites of tomorrow; this is what the world is like, but we shall change it!"

The Children's Hour: *The Problem of Bourgeois Morality, "Justice," "Personality"*

First of all, brilliant staging by the best, clearest, most precise New York director, Herman Shumlin. Of all the plays I saw during these seven weeks in New York, I felt the firm hand of the director in only four: *The Children's Hour*, *Tobacco Road*, *Awake and Sing!* and *Recruits*.

The Children's Hour deals with a pathological boundary-line case in a fifteen year old girl, a blend of *pseudologia phantastica* • and *Frühlings-Erwachen*. Overhasty punishment by a young teacher in a boarding school gives rise to a desire for revenge and phantastic webs of lies in the sexually excited child, turning into false charges against two teachers and the attending physician. The influential grandmother to whom the girl has fled believes the lies. Her morality and her "sense of justice" are profoundly injured and she forces the institute to close. The two young women teachers have nothing to look forward to; one of them commits suicide after confessing in the last act to the other that the girl's testimony is insane, if for no other reason than that she has lesbian feelings for her.

The theme of the play is that of Strindberg's plays and of the early works of Wedekind, but Strindberg's and Wedekind's works are taller by two heads than this psychoanalytical essay by Lillian Hellmann, the author. Here, as in *Tobacco Road*, the value and success of the play lay in the production and in the eagerness of the public starved on a fare of the shallowest Broadway plays. Here too, the hypocrisy, rottenness, crumbling, helplessness of present day society were demonstrated in a tiny "link," thanks to the director's magic art . . . perhaps without his even intending to do so. The masterly drawing of the corrupt, weak and helpless types of this stratum of society, worm-eaten—"Qvermoulu" is what Alvin says in Ibsen's *Ghosts*—itself becomes first-class social criticism. Again we get what Karl Marx pointed out in the great realist Balzac: his portrayal of the social class to which he himself belonged



Cover of the Negro Number of New Theatre, a magazine which has done much towards the development of the American revolutionary theatre. On the cover, a scene from a production of a newly organized Negro Peoples Theatre in the Harlem section of New York

and which he wanted to interpret becomes, almost against his will, the damning indictment of his own class. Or as Lenin once said: there are portrayals in which "things begin to talk their own language" . . . against the author's intentions. In spite of the weakness of the play and the eccentricity of the theme, *The Children's Hour* is one of the most valuable productions I saw in New York.

Recruits, or *So It Has Been*, by A. Resnick, is, as the subtitle indicates, a "historical" play, a play depicting the class fronts in a little Jewish village in Poland in 1827. The theme is the compulsory recruiting of young Jewish workers. The term of service was . . . twenty-five years. They were sent to the most distant garrisons of Russia; never did one of these recruits ever see his home village again. The plot of this play is the love story of Nachman the poor young journeyman tailor, and Frumele, the daughter of Pinches, the rich man. This plot is based on the old reliable theatre foundation of happy and unhappy love, with moonlight sonatas, balcony scenes, window rendezvous at night, expulsion of the "adulterers," with false rendezvous and love letters as love traps. All this is very nice but unimportant. What is important however, in this naturalist milieu play is the sketching of the environment, the minor figures, the social background against which the action takes place. Even in this little village, cutting right through this "homogeneous race," we see class lines. We see Chief Rabbi Motele doing a profitable business with his blessings, the poor Jewish artisans breaking into the Synhedrin of the well-to-do philistines to seek protection—in vain—from the tsar's recruiting officers, and finally Aaron Kluger, the money dynast of the village, directly deceiving poor Nachman and delivering him to the tsar's henchmen.

These episodic figures, this precise portrayal of the milieu, is the best thing in this excellent production and—like *Tobacco Road* and the *Children's*

Hour—it is due to the director Benno Schneider. He has learned much from Stanislavski and Vakhtangov; the production has atmosphere and background; the types and characters are drawn with considerable plastic effect. The danger inherent in this production is the over-precise outlining of detail, the director's love for this Jewish, musical milieu. Here the clear dramatic line suffers—the play threatens to fall apart into little episodes. But that is the danger inherent in all Jewish folklore. Schneider must test his strength and talent on modern material with taut action. Lyricism is a perilous blandishment for him and for the highly talented Artef acting company.



A scene from the Theatre Union production of *Sailors of Catarró*, a play by the author of this article

Awake and Sing: Decay of the American Petty Bourgeoisie

Awake and Sing by Clifford Odets—a play by an actor in the Group Theatre—was a great triumph for the "Group." In dozens of penetrating and

well-drawn episodes this play shows the undermining, the rotting away, the "living lie" of this petty-bourgeois family in the Bronx. If this accurate portrayal of environment were all this play has, it would be a throwback to the naturalism and petty-bourgeois social criticism of Ibsen and Shaw. But in *Awake and Sing* there are two figures who stand with one foot outside the declining middle class, their faces turned to the arising working class and the doctrines of Karl Marx. These two—the grandfather and the grandchild give the mosaic of many episodes a purpose, a point, a perspective. Whereas the ably written naturalistic plays like *Tobacco Road* and *The Children's Hour* fill the spectator with the tired echo: "Well, well, that's life!" *Awake and Sing* begins to activate the audience: "Out of this decay, lie, self deception! Cost what it may, out towards a new clarity, a new purpose, a new life!" Of course, the old man who plays Caruso records at night, reads Karl Marx, and is full of anarchist revolutionary romanticism, is a scurrilous figure, resembling Ulrik Brendel in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*; but after the old man dies the young grandson takes over his books, with a clearer perception. It is he who gives the play and also the spectators—a definite direction. And because the audience at last feels itself being led again, deliberately led, this play excites it, activates it, awakens it to stormy applause.

Waiting for Lefty—Till the Day I Die

A strike play and an anti-Nazi play. Both of these are occasion plays. *Waiting for Lefty* was originally written for only one Sunday evening performance last January, a benefit performance for the striking taxi drivers of New York and for the family of the murdered strike leader "Lefty". The program of the Broadway theatre (the Longacre Theatre) in which this revolutionary agit-prop play was produced contains the following note by the "Group": "To the author's and actors' surprise the performance ended with an ovation; the audience remained standing after the curtain fell, clapping, stamping their feet, highly excited." Later performances met with similar success. The "Group" wanted to test this success before a working-class public by a production on Broadway; but *Waiting for Lefty* was only a short one-act play that could not fill an evening. So Clifford Odets had to decide to write a second play, post haste, similar in style and content to the first that could fill a regular theatre evening of two hours on Broadway together with *Waiting for Lefty*. This second play was *Till the Day I Die*; he wrote it in five days and nights, basing it on a letter from a Communist Party worker in Hitler Germany printed in the *New Masses*.

Only when we know these antecedents can we make a correct appraisal of these two plays written and conceived as agit-prop material. They were written by the same young actor Clifford Odets who wrote *Awake and Sing* for his "Group". These two one-act plays were also performed by the "Group" acting company, so that the twenty-six actors of this Left collective are now playing their plays, the plays of their own author and actor Odets, in two big Broadway theatres every evening—the first time this has happened in New York theatre history.

Waiting for Lefty deals with a meeting during the 1934 taxi strike in New York. According to the excellent pattern of our former agit-prop plays, the stage is the platform and the audience the strike meeting with hecklers, speakers and opposing speakers . . . everything that we have seen in at least as good productions in a dozen similar French, German, Russian (Proletcult) agit-prop plays. Nothing out of the ordinary for a European spec-

tator; on the contrary, Brecht's *Massnahme* and *Mother* and Wangenheim's *Mausefalle* are on a wider and higher plane artistically and ideologically. But for the American spectator, the treatment of proletarian problems on the professional stage is such a sensational surprise, the agit-prop form displayed by a disciplined company is such a novel impression, in fact a discovery, that he enthusiastically hails the "new" form and the exciting content. A discoverer's joy for the public and a surprise victory for the author and the collective! A tremendously important and merited success! But it must not deceive us—and least of all the Group Theatre—into believing that the next successes can be achieved with the factor of surprise. They will have to be gained by a profounder posing of the problem and handling of the theme.

This applies above all to *Till the Day I Die*. I have already pointed out that criticism of these two one-act plays must make allowances for how these agit-prop plays arose. The author and the company were themselves completely astounded by the unexpected success of the first one-act piece. In order to turn this success to account, the author had to write the second one-act play in five days "like a machine gun." Unfortunately he chose a subject he did not know and could not know: Hitler Germany. This most difficult theme—written in five days, from a letter—for a one-act play! I am convinced that with Odets' talent, he would have handled a theme from the American labor movement of today just as successfully as *Waiting for Lefty*. In *Till The Day I Die* not a single figure and scarcely a single situation is really correctly drawn; such Storm Troopers and Nazi commissars exist really only in certain comic magazines. If the Storm Troopers had actually been such fools and their officers such noblemen or stupid rascals, one would be justified in wondering how these Nazis ever triumphed. Unfortunately these German Nazis were and are much more complicated, both in their own structure and in their struggle against the workers. And a tested illegal fighter such as Ernst Taussig is never liquidated by the Party unit merely on suspicion. Here the stool pigeon problem enters, which does not exist to this extent in Europe.

Despite these serious objections to Odets' anti-Nazi play, Odets himself and the Group Theatre have this to their credit—they have made an important breach in the Chinese Wall of Broadway, this wall of empty or psychologising, tickling star plays.

Black Pit... *The Miner's Play*... *The Theatre Union*... *The First Workers' Theatre*

The play and the executive board of the theatre are identical in The Theatre Union even more than in the "Group." Except for my *Sailors of Catarro* all its other plays were written by the dramatist members of the theatre's executive board . . . I refer to the plays of Sklar, Maltz and Peters. But the real basis of this workers' theatre is the audience, the *organized* audience. It consists of workers, clerks, students and intellectuals. Some of the performances are bought out in advance by trade unions and organizations of the middle classes, office employees and professionals. The magnitude of this collective theatregoing depends of course on the quality and success of the play. The first play of the Theatre Union, *Peace On Earth* by Sklar and Maltz, ran for sixteen weeks, playing to 125,000 spectators; the second play *Stevedore* played twenty-three weeks to 200,000. This mass theatregoing by the workers in a professional theatre of New York is only possible with good

organization of the audience and, above all, with unusually low prices. The cheapest seat in the Theatre Union costs thirty cents, that is cheaper than most seats in the big movies. The next best seats cost forty-five cents and the most expensive a dollar fifty. This is supplemented by a system of individual subscriptions for the dollar and the dollar fifty seats. Free tickets were issued to about 25,000 of the unemployed for every play.

It is obvious that this theatre, which is wholly supported by the toilers of New York, neither can nor will pay varying star salaries to its actors. The actors also work for collective salaries; no actor gets more than fifty dollars a week. And there are excellent actors such as Millicent Green, Martin Wolfson, Allen Baxter, in the ensemble, actors who played up to now in big commercial theatres, and who left their highly paid jobs to put themselves at the disposal of this workers' theatre. What is more, the ideology of the plays demands from each of these actors knowledge of the problems of the modern labor movement, participation in discussions, training courses and studio work. The ideological and artistic development of the acting company is a tremendous task, since a play based on the struggles of the present-day labor movement—a play portraying the complicated process of fascisation, the NRA mask, the Negro problem, the militarisation of the young in the conservation camps makes wholly new demands of the director, the actor and the scenic designer, demands hitherto unknown in America. It also makes demands upon the spectator, who has been spoon-fed with the psychologising, dialogue plays of Broadway, or with the Greta Garbo magic and gangster films up to now.

In spite of all difficulties, the past four plays of the Theatre Union: *Peace On Earth*, *Stevedore*, *Sailors of Cattaro* and *Black Pit* were big hits. For the first time hundreds of thousands of workers were brought face to face with the problems of their own lives in a professional theatre. Problems of imperialist war, strikes, of race solidarity were shown on the stage in creative form. Discussion of these problems, of these plays, continued in public symposia of the spectators, and in the columns of the Left magazines such as *New Masses* and *New Theatre*. And here for the first time, the problem of workers' and soldiers' councils, unknown in America in practice, the problem of bourgeois and proletarian dictatorship, was for the first time the subject of lively discussion after the performance of *Sailors of Cattaro*, even by the middle class and white collar groups.

A pro and con symposium has also been held regarding *Black Pit*. *Black Pit* deals with the condition of the miners in West Virginia; it portrays the beginning of a strike. But the basic theme is the problem of the class consciousness of the workers. In *Black Pit* the central figure—the "hero"—is the worker, Joe Kovarski. He was sentenced to three years imprisonment for participation in a strike; he comes back to his young wife, to the family of his brother who is crippled in a mine accident. He looks for work in the mine again, but in vain—he's blacklisted. He leaves his wife, looks for work in other states, but the blacklist follows him—he's fired again everywhere. He has to return—extreme poverty at home where his young wife is expecting her first child . . . no bread, no doctor, no work. He can get work only as a spy, as a stool pigeon. After long and desperate struggle, he succumbs to the torture of poverty, of anxiety for his wife, and to the blandishments and threats of the "super," the mine manager. The strike begins; the secret strike committee is arrested upon his information. But the crippled brother spots the traitor, the spy, in his own brother, his own family, to save which he committed treason, drives him forth. The strike begins none the less.

The play is well worked out dramatically; it is full of tension, with sharply outlined characters, colorful episodes. The scene in the boarding house in the Pennsylvania coal area, with its grim humor and its tragedy, is one of the best realistic scenes in recent drama. Another question for me, knowing the European miner as I do, was whether this figure of Joe—the stool pigeon—is a sufficiently typical figure to have been made the central figure of a workers' play, a strike play. Can this Joe be raised to the level of a negative hero around whom all the spectator's interest revolves? Is labor spying in the United States really so central a problem in strikes, whereas in Europe *the* problems in a strike are the betrayal of the reformist trade union leaders and the fighting united front of the working class. Moreover, can a proletarian of as good stuff as this Joe never redeem himself after betrayal committed in a moment of despair? Can't he return to the class front, say by joining the picket line himself at the last moment?

Just after the premiere, and on many another evening later on, I talked with Albert Maltz on the importance of how the problem was put, precisely in his valuable play. He told me that for him the stool pigeon was only the dramatically clearest and most conspicuous representative of class treason, and by no means a central problem of strikes. He added however, that the figure of the hired stool pigeon played a tremendous role in strikes, both in point of numbers as well as in tactics. This was confirmed on April 24, in the big symposium on *Black Pit* and Muni's *Black Fury*, by several miners from the Pennsylvania coal mines, among them one who had worked in the German coal area of the Ruhr. What is significant is how the serious and profound discussion initiated by this play continued for weeks in the press, in meetings and in private conversations. I was reminded of the best period of the Left and revolutionary German theatre: 1928-32, when a performance by the Piscator theatre, by the Young Actors' Group or by the Troupe 1931, was the subject of conversation and discussion for months among the Left German theatre public. More important than anything else is that this lively discussion should not remain confined to the educational work of the Left New York theatre, but should succeed in establishing the practical basis for the united front of all toilers and anti-fascists even through the theatre, so that the American workers may be spared an American Hitler.

It is also of the greatest importance that today the Theatre Union and the Group Theatre already form a strong basis for Left groups in the provinces, which have never seen a professional Left theatre up to now. Thus *Peace on Earth* and *Sailors of Cattaro* were played in the Contemporary Theatre of Los Angeles. *Sailors of Cattaro* will open the next season at the Cleveland Playhouse, one of the biggest theatres in the city, while *Stevedore* was played in Chicago. *Waiting for Lefty* was accepted and forbidden in Boston and Philadelphia, but then released for performance after a mass protest. It was put on and won the Yale University prize. A professional "Negro People's Theatre" has now been formed in Harlem, its acting company including most of the original cast of—*Green Pastures*.

The Theatre of Action: Transition from the Amateur to the Professional Theatre The Young Go First A Play of the American Conservation Camps

This agit-prop group. The Theatre of Action, has worked for five years under the leadership of its director, Alfred Saxe. The group of more than

twenty trained actors showed us a cross-section of all their plays, of their five years of work. We saw various stages of development: from the old Left Prolet style through the biomechanics of *Free Thaelmann* and revue-like musical comedy scenes with master of ceremonies and group dancing, to two complete scenes of Molier's *L'Avare*.

The group possesses quite a number of performers who can match the actors of the professional stage in quality and technique. His includes several excellently suited for songs and dance: together with the individual performance of Saxe in the role of the miser, the cabaret scenes were the group's best achievement. What is lacking here again, is the repertory play, the play poetically created; up to now this group has been writing its plays itself. These short scenes do not meet the requirements of our European agit-prop troupes nor even the central line of development of this group itself, which is really much further advanced. The group is now working on a very important full-length play on the fascist effect on youth; the shipments of American youth to labour service camps, the so-called Civilian Conversions Camps, entitled the *Young Go First*. The Theatre of Action made its debut with this play as the beginning of a professional theatre.

Summary and Forecast: The Left American Theatre—One of the Most Important Theatre Outposts in the Capitalist World

I had a talk with a well-known bourgeois theatre theoretician, who is also one of the major critics of a big bourgeois magazine. He interviewed me regarding the Soviet Theatre, while I interviewed him on the last ten years of the New York theatre. I asked him, "Do you think that the plays of these last two years, such as *Recruits*, *Awake and Sing!*, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Till the Day I Die*, *Peace on Earth*, *Stevedore*, *Sailors of Cattaro* and *Black Pit*, are phenomena of mode or chance, a change in genre?"

"No," he answered. "They were too heavy as plays for that; our initial resistance to them was too great, and their success despite our resistance was too great and enduring. That is no thing of fashion."

"Do you think that there is something else behind these plays? Something that makes these plays and the work of the collective possible?"

"Yes. There's something new behind it, of course, but you couldn't have done that with your Communism alone!" he explained.

"Isn't it significant that all the good dramatists, all the dramatists who are also artistically worth while are Left, to put it mildly?"

"Of course, because they have a fixed *Weltanschauung*, and because this *Weltanschauung* is new and young."

"Do you think that the next season will lead to a relapse?"

"I believe," he concluded excitedly, "that next season will be even more Left, *faut de mieux*. This is actually expected of the few talented young dramatists. If they were to retract their steps or merely remain stationary, it would be interpreted as weakness and their work up to now would be considered as sentimentality and phrases! There's is no turning back in the near future."

That is not an isolated case. I heard everyone say that if the Left theatre—such as Group Theatre, Theatre Union and Artef, has plays as good as, and even better than those they have had up to now, if these theatres keep on working consistently, they will attract the New York theatre public, starved during the past two years. Even more, they will be able to extend and deepen their influence.

The Left theatre in New York has a special function. In view of the intellectual emptiness of the daily press and of most of the magazines, and the stupidity of the film, the theatre can become a rallying point in this city of 7,000,000, a real cultural centre of all those who labor: all the workers, intellectuals and middle classes. The Left Theatre has seized its first chance to surprise the slumbering old theatre public and to win a new audience. It must now maintain its gains, in the face of rising demands by its own mass audience, and the inevitable competition of the commercial theatre with quasi-Left plays. What is needed is the sharpest kind of self criticism, and alongside the new generation of actors, new directors who emancipate themselves from the naturalistic psychologizing method of painting details, and who try to realise what the realistic dramatists have just begun in America: the portrayal of "typical characters in typical conditions." In the Group Theatre and The Theatre Union the professional theatre has already moved close to the line of fire of the central problems of our time. It is really of decisive importance that here, at the beginning of the dramatic process, at the very start, the problems are posed correctly, that the arrow hits the bull's eye exactly. Political training of the acting collective and the dramatists, comradely discussions of common theoretical and organisation problems, of theme and problem, have already taken place, with actors and dramatists taking part. They are to be held regularly next season. The Left theatre in New York has a very good start in the two years already behind it. The responsibility it bears is gigantic. The Left New York Theatre today is not only one of the foremost battle fronts of the toilers of New York and America—it is without exaggeration the strongest and most outstanding outpost of the Left theatre in all the capitalist countries of the world.

Translated from the German by Leonard F. Mins

SCENES FROM THE NEW YORK THEATRE



From Stevedore, by Paul Peters and George Sklar, produced by the Theatre Union



From Tobacco Road, based on the novel by Erskine Caldwell



From They Shall Not Die! a play on the Scottsboro case by John Wexley, produced by the Theatre Guild



A scene from Black Pit, a play on the Pennsylvania miners by Albert Malz. Produced by the Theatre Union

Thinking Aloud

Random Observations About Various Writers

A. Gide: "A hut entirely made by hand, like a vase, not by a mason, but a potter" (apropos of the clay-modeled houses of a Negro village). A perfect phrase and a perfect description. A perfect description because it fully presents a singular subject. A perfect phrase because it gives the essential, and "beauty" appears as a necessary consequence of this essentiality.

A perfect phrase because it is a perfect description.

A. Gide is refined—but refined to the point where refinement is transformed into simplicity.

To him all "trimming" by now appears a vulgarity. His diary and his travels are written in unusually unembellished language. In his work, form is destroyed by thought. When I read Gide, I see the plain, serious-minded West, not the France for foreigners, but the France that Frenchmen themselves love.

The naturalness of his expression is most striking. His thought seems written just as he thought it, without the intervening process of fitting thought to style. A. Gide knows how, without sacrificing anything, to remain himself—perhaps the greatest faculty an author can possess. A rough comparison would be as with a photograph. The result is successful in the case of him who acts natural before the lens, or, we might add, in the case of him who has learned to pose effectively. Indeed false reputations in literature are often due to this latter quality.

And so the comparison is not wholly accurate. It would be more correct to compare him with a well-placed voice. Well-placed, means that the singer is able to sing with his own voice (freely, without straining) and lose the habit of singing unnaturally. Alexei Tolstoi has a well-placed voice. That is why he seems to write so easily and so unerringly, with certainty, as unpremeditated as breathing, walking, gesticulating.

A. Gide's voice is of a different timber, but equally unhampered. He knows how to be original, without posing. This faculty appears so simple and is nevertheless so difficult.

The range of Gide's interests is very wide. Take his trip to Africa. There you will find observations on the flora and fauna of the tropics, on the houses and technique of the Negroes, on their music and life, on their work and character. You say: "that is exotic"? Perhaps. But only as to subject-matter. Compare this, for instance, with the letters of Flaubert (on the East) and you will see how much less decorativeness and love for the unusual they contain, how much simpler they are, how much more workaday and human. Gide deals with phenomena which, in their totality, by general acceptance are called exotic, but he treats them not as though they were exotic, but like a new series of facts which he wishes to understand in their particulars. He moves with ease in the most widely different realms of culture. In his comments you always find some characteristic turn of thought, something proceeding simul-

taneously from the careful observations of the scholar and the keen perceptions of the artist. Examining the thickets he observes that a number of the waterside tropical plants apparently imitate or take the place of corresponding plants of the temperate zone: willows, forget-me-nots, plantain, willow-herb; "the actors have been changed, but the roles and the play are the same." Tracking hippopotomi he comes to the conclusion that large animals need less sleep, and he is delighted, when he later finds confirmation of this thought in the work of some other author. He likes the technical refinement of the simplest native contrivance for irrigating the fields. He points out the variation in the construction of the Negro huts according to the character of the construction material (pure clay, or clay and sand). He jots down the melodies of the Negroes and ponders the scale that they are based on, and their characteristic many-voiced choruses, not to speak of literature, which continues ever to occupy A. Gide when traveling, when sick, or while observing unfamiliar countries. He rereads Milton, Goethe, Corneille, Chekhov—and his comments upon them are not merely clever and subtle, but astonish with a certain quality of reader's artlessness, immediacy of perception, the absence of "mummery," self-importance and intricacy one might have expected from an old recognized *maitre*.

And that same man observes with penetration the condition of the "natives," enslaved by the colonial administration and the industrial concerns. Loudly, to all France, to all the world, he decries the inhuman exploitation of the Negroes, the exhausting labor of gathering rubber and cutting roads which are often utterly unnecessary, the shameless fraud practiced with their wages, the barbarous punishments to which they are subjected, how they perish by the hundreds, and flee to the woods. His letter to the governor calls forth an investigation, which corroborates the observations and conclusions of the writer. His book becomes the cause of inquiries in the Chamber of Deputies. Defenders of Campagne revile him in the press. In a word, Gide's travel diary becomes a social matter.

It is not hard to find weak spots in it. A. Gide still believes that the shortcomings he has discovered do not depend on the system as a whole and that they may be remedied by good will, the existence of which in the government he does not doubt. He soon loses this belief. The process of his subsequent political maturity is both characteristic and instructive. But I want to emphasize something else: The breadth of his cultural interests, his live interest in the social, in life, in the plight of millions. For A. Gide culture is not a Sunday garment that people wear on holidays and put aside on week days, but working clothes, which people wear everyday to work; as far as he is concerned it is, indeed, the very skin he grew up in.

Many of our writers have a stronger social "instinct," and a more defined political horizon than A. Gide. But few of them have such breadth and integration of cultural interests. Try to compare A. Gide's travels with the corresponding works of our other writers. Nowhere indeed is the difference in intensity of the pulse of culture more perceptible than in diaries, travel outlines, comments on things observed. For Gide a new country is a fascinating book which he seeks to decipher and read as fully as possible. For him it contains no empty pages. Wherever he directs his attention he detects the music of life. For others of our travelers the world is a huge mirror, where they see only themselves; or, if it be likened to a book, having barely glanced at it, they are sure they know its contents by heart. And that is why they often find nothing but commonplaces.

But the ability to be observant is also a consequence of culture. And André

Gide is interesting not only because he is a great artist, a serious and original thinker, but because at sixty, when men are usually set in their ways and views, he is undergoing a spiritual evolution amazing in its youthful daring. André Gide embodies a type of artist whom we need, who feels at home in a wide sphere of culture.

André Gide expresses very uncommon thoughts in a modest and simple form. But our "literati," do the opposite: They try to embellish any platitude that occurs to them, with the help of dressy or eccentric phrases. The whole of their effort is put into style.

But does "style make the man?" Yes, if we regard style as a concrete manifestation of the principles underlying the writer's work, as the embodiment of his world view and feelings. But if we understand style as sheer language, then we should apply Turgenev's words, likening style to health, which is good when you don't think about it. This means that the phrases must be unobtrusive and toned down, it further means that all its elements must be subordinate to the thought content, and not come forward independently, drawing attention to themselves like a new pair of galoshes on a country bridegroom.

The most projecting, conspicuous and accented metaphor is justifiable, if it has a thought behind it. Then by its means attention is focused on the thought. Such is the case with Heine. The example of the opposite is to be found in the prose of our "westerners." That is to say, empty and idle metaphor that does not proceed organically from the text: the new pair of galoshes, which, when it starts raining, the wearer takes off and carries by hand in order to keep them from getting muddy, a piece of foppery, and not an article of necessity.

When I come across prose that is very showy and cocksure (especially if it deals with facts or observations) I feel a certain diffidence. I am wary of aphorisms that are too sonorous, comparisons that are too picturesque, contrasts that are too striking. I do not like the self-certainty of the author who, after spending three weeks in Spain or Czechoslovakia, thinks that he has learned all there is to know about those countries, and knows the people inside out, with all the simple mechanism of their thoughts and actions. All this may be clever, keen and full of feeling—but a certain ring of truth, which it is dangerous to lose, is wanting here. One must not wax too exuberant over facts. And to these monotonously brilliant fireworks I prefer A. Gide's reserved and modest expositions. His opinion is clear before me. It is not present in a categorical and absolute form. True, I can not verify it, but I can feel its weight, its comparative gravity. And that means that I believe him.

Are we not heading towards a new realisation of literary form? If, up to now, despite all the differences in contemporary styles and settings, an eccentric and ornate way of writing was considered "good taste," especially among the writers of the so-called "young prose;" if bold metaphor, associated contrasts, medley of thought content, have been regarded as the marks of literary skill, is not the time at hand when the ability to speak about things concretely and simply will be deemed the writer's greatest merit?

The demand for simple prose is fully as old as the urge for elaborate prose. Pushkin wrote that precision and brevity are its chief merits and that "flashy expressions" serve no purpose. But does not simplicity, if elevated to a universal rule impoverish literature? If Pushkin is made the law, does not Heine disappear? Pushkin and Heine are indeed the two poles of prose, be-

tween which all the remaining types can be placed as transitional. Pushkin carried out his theoretical propositions in practice. His prose is precise, bare and brawny, it avoids all frills and spangles. Its metaphors are infrequent and subdued. Heine's prose is eloquent, moving, full of irony and sarcasm. It is so thickly strewn with metaphors and the metaphors are themselves so bold that they leave far behind the "effusions" of contemporary prose writers. But the difference here lies in the fact that Heine's metaphors are organic, they function within the system of his style (in the thought) and are not simply ornamental.

However, if Heine's prose differed from Pushkin's only in richness of metaphor, then its specific qualities would not necessarily be highly valued. Actually the difference is more many-sided and profound, and the very use of metaphors is merely one of the manifestations of a common underlying cause. Alongside of Pushkin's clear-cut genre, restraint and deliberate "prosaicness," it stands out like a fusion of publicism with poetry, as the combination of all genres in one universal form, diary, lyric, pamphlet, wherein is expressed with greatest freedom and clarity all that agitates the social sphere of man.

In that sense we value Heine's prose no less than Pushkin's. And we can venture the prediction, without much risk of being mistaken, that we shall widely develop this type of prose. It is already noticeable in cultivated essays, diaries, notebooks, even though we are little satisfied with the results of this work so far. And it so happens that Heine's metaphor is not of such a nature as to attract us to him in the least degree. Although in *his* work it is legitimate and justified.

Heine need not vanish before Pushkin's impressive simplicity and concreteness. Simplicity is not the demand for monotony of style, but for the sovereignty of thought, the law of the working parts, the functional connection of all elements in a piece of work.

To demand simplicity in literature is nothing new. But every time it is voiced, this demand has a different meaning. For us, aside from all else, it contains the solution of the dilemma: popularity vs. art.

Pathos in Romain Rolland is serious, passionate, proceeding from the heart. It overwhelms us in *Les lours*, in *Danton*, in *Jean Christophe*. But it is extremely strained. In Heine we never have this feeling of overexertion. Flights of pathos come perfectly naturally to him. Where does this ease proceed from? From the varied intonation. Pathos is a dangerous medium. One needs something in the way of counteraction in order to employ it with impunity. Heine supplies this with his irony and sarcasm. His intonations are rich, free and natural. They support and balance his pathos, when necessary they set it off. Rolland lacks counteraction. He almost never allows himself to smile. For the most part he "sings" in one key. One should be astonished not at his breaks, but at their infrequency. To keep pathos from destroying, from consuming his great construction he required profound, convinced serious mindedness, the strong will of an artist.

In André Gide simplicity of expression accords with great refinement of syntax. His *Counterfeiters* seems to have a double bottom. It is a novel of people and a novel of a novel; a book and the history of a book. The author is brought into the game, and is likewise one of the characters. He writes a novel which unfolds before our eyes and himself takes active part in the making. The form is extremely cataclysmic, paradoxical, indeed it is more complicated than in the case of Dos Passos. But we do not feel his paradoxes

as sharply as we do those of the American writer, because the manner of the narrative is simple, soft, and the author seems to be doing his thinking along with us, we become participants, observers of his work. It is a revealing experience, whose circumstances and course he openly shows us.

This is not the simple simplicity of the bible, of Homer, of the last tales of Tolstoi. In Gide's case, as with Anatole France, it is full of cunning, paradoxes, the unexpected.

With Gide or with Dos Passos, paradox is not obligatory. It passes with the conditions that gave rise to it. We are moving towards better balanced, stronger, loftier forms. But this also will not be the simple simplicity of the bible. For us the latter is both inaccessible and unnecessary. It is possible only under the conditions of primitive society or is else conventionalised (as in the case of the last tales of Tolstoi).

Simply expressed complexity, that is all we can demand from art at the present. "Grown-ups cannot turn to childhood without running the risk of being ludicrous" (Marx).

Translated from the Russian by Edmund Stevens

With Foreign Writers in the USSR

The Impressions of a Soviet Writer

They are traveling as though the country was some vast university, traveling from city to city like from class to class, leaving the industrial faculties of Kharkov and Baku for the verdant laboratories of Kabardino and Adjaristan.

There are eight of them. Past their carriage window flies the USSR.

Thoughtful, round-headed Plivier has been glued to the window since we left Moscow. I have been telling about my old plan of writing a "guide book for travelers," such as would tell them about everything they see through the windows of trains. Plivier jumps at the idea.

"Make sure to take me along with you when you go to write the book."

Plivier is a great lover of things. He is interested alike in the metal rods of oil cisterns and the trees lining the railway bank. He wants to know what reddish crops are those over there; what factory is that whose chimneys loom in the distance; where that train with marble which has just passed us is going; how machine tractor stations work; whose tractors, petroleum barrels and workshops are those that have now appeared. He has a keen eye for things, this man who was a sailor.

His compartment is arranged like a cabin: everything is tidy, with its own allotted place.

"Mein Freund Seryozha," I hear the Bavarian accents of Oscar Maria Graf in the corridor. He has finished unpacking his suitcase. He comes out of his compartment, massive, stout and sweaty; he is wearing his Bavarian leather shorts, supported by a pair of leather suspenders that look more like saddle girths than anything else. He is disappointed to hear that we passed Yasnaya Polyana during the night. Graf takes little interest in the things that attract Plivier. For Graf the first stop on this strange line was the place where the shade of old Tolstoi rises. Graf knows Russian literature well. He has derived much from Leskov, loves Axakov and knows his Herzen, Tolstoi and Turgenyev.

Better, I should say than most Soviet writers do. It is this knowledge that permits him to write me from abroad, after the journey, a letter with these words:

"One like me, who knows something about the literature of pre-revolutionary Russia can feel more sharply the things I did feel than one who is ignorant of that literature. Why, my dear friends, it is an incredible distance from Oblomov to the active shock-worker.



*Maria Teresa Leon, Spanish Writer,
Ernst Toller, German Playwright, and
Rafael Alberti, Spanish Poet*

What a distance, what a radical change in the very soul of Russia!

"Just compare the poor, melancholy, down at the heel doctors in Chekhov's tales with the doctor I met in Livadia, or the modern kolkhoznik, so full of life and free from sentimentality, with the muzhiks à la Tolstoi or Leskov."

I recall how Graf was told off by Erenstein, one of the eight Austrian writers, for not taking notes of his observations.

Graf was convulsed with Falstaffian laughter, slapping his bare knees till they were red.

"My dear Misanthrope," he said, imitating the taking of notes by making little scratches on his palm. "Your miserable little figures won't help you in the least—why, you hear nothing. You are so afraid of catching the flu that you stuffed up your ears with cotton wool. You are a depressionist—that's what you are."

"Depressionist,"—and I have Erenstein's own authority for this -- is a nickname

given to him when he was one of the leaders of German expressionism. He afterwards went in for translating ancient Chinese poems and adapting medieval Chinese novels, since when his fame as a Sinophile has not departed him.

Graf is a cantankerous person. He is now pecking at Plivier.

"The sea! I simply can't stand your sea. (It should be explained that it was while in the Soviet Union that Graf first traveled in a steamer and went up in an airplane.) What is the sea? A conglomeration of waves with no life except for a few little fishes and some still smaller birds. Now look at *that*."

He began to extol the landscape.

Plivier takes a stick of charcoal and in ten minutes a portrait of Graf with his wide shoulders of a farm laborer is hung up in the corridor. Vying with this portrait, a second one, also of Graf, is soon hanging up next to it.

The poet-Artist

The second drawing comes from Spain. Spain, it should be explained, is situated in Plivier's compartment. The author of the portrait is the poet, Rafael Alberti. His are strange drawings, it is as though wet black threads were skilfully arranged on the white paper.

Neither Rafael nor his wife, the writer, Maria Teresa Leon, are a bit like the fiery coal-black Spaniards we see in *Carmen*. For one thing they are both blondes. This couple is a live literary collective. One often hears the clicking of the typewriter. The Germans sullenly retreat in the face of such productivity.

But in Spain you hear singing oftener than the sounds of the typewriter. An invariable partner in the singing is Plivier, whose Spanish, forgotten since the time of his wanderings in South America, is now coming back to him. Together they sing a prison song:

*E, viva Roma
Roma.*

The song ends with whistling and the cracking of finger nails. That's the way prisoners kill lice.

After singing comes poetry. Plivier recites his "Stokers." After him Rafael recites. His poems are so characteristically his own that it is impossible, they say, to translate them.

But the Spanish peasants understand his poems quite well and love to recite them in the village squares. Rafael can read his poems without end. But if you ask him to make a speech he waves his hand and points to Maria Teresa. "Try her. That's her business."



Theodore Plivier, German author of The Kaiser Went, But the Generals Remain and other Books

He is right. If Rafael is the heart of this talented couple, then Maria Teresa is the intellect. She is an excellent organizer, the editor of *Octubre*; it was she who was arrested after their first trip to the USSR.

She certainly knows how to speak. She chooses words as one would choose flowers for a bouquet. She says little but that little sticks in the memory.

In Baku she said:

"The Spaniards have not seen Baku but they know the city. There is something of Baku in the puffing of every automobile on the roads of Spain."

In Kabardino:

"I have seen your harvest and I wish you as good a harvest of grand men and women."

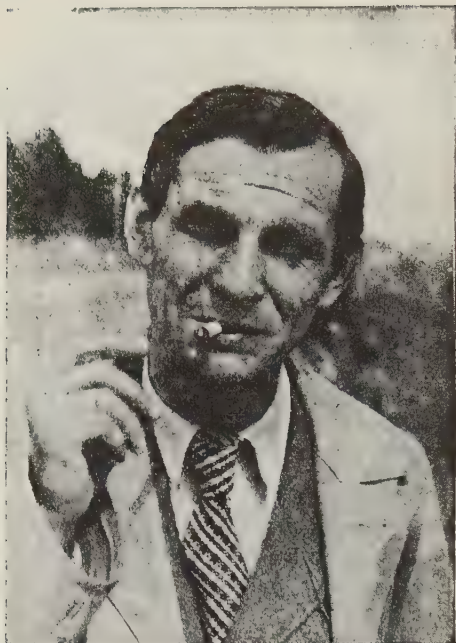
And here is what she said to young Pioneers in a Crimean sanatorium:

"The children of the Spanish workers are in a bad way but their fathers are fighting to win them places for their recreation like you have."

After each of her observations there is a chorus of approval dominated by the rich voice of Oscar Maria Graf:

Magnifico:

It is the only word of Spanish he knows,



Gustav Regler, German Revolutionary Writer

just as *spasibo*, *karosho* is all he knows of Russian.

But Graf cannot be enthusiastic for long: he must be picking at someone. He now singles out Adam Scharrer, first getting him to leave his "dug-out" as Scharrer, who spent a long while at the front, calls his compartment.

Peasant-Writer

Scharrer's grey hair rises above his determined brow like a rooster's crest. In a company of writers it would be impossible to find a more precise person. He studies everything connecting with the peasantry, particularly, the German peasantry whose daily life and psychology he knows inside out. He comes from a family of dour Bavarian peasants that has toiled much and seen much hardship. His sharp meticulous sense of justice rises up as from the crack of a whip, at every manifestation he encounters of fascist insolence or charlatanism.

"Our Adam Adamovich is so grumpy that when he wants to laugh he runs to the cellar to be alone."

Adam smiles. The Bavarian Adam pardons the Bavarian Oscar his loud jesting.

But when Scharrer looks at you sullenly and cross questions you in his monotonous tone I begin to understand why the fascists

detest his books. He will track down a crime and then write everything up until there is not even a comma to add.

Scharrer speaks in low, solemn tones, always after long thought. There is no straining after effects.

Graf obviously will cut no figure in twitting Scharrer so he turns his attention to Ernst Toller.

"Friend Ernst! Why do you brush your hands through your hair and stare at the moon that way? Are you composing a poem? Your eyes look so lyrical."

Toller bites at the mouthpiece of his long straight pipe and chuckles. He and Graf are friends since the days of the Bavarian Soviet Republic.

"Hello Toller," exclaims a worker in a Kharkov Tractor Works who fought with him for Soviet Bavaria.

"Toller, your play has been showing for five years in our theatre," he is told in Tiflis.

His plays are all on one theme—the human intellectual who at a crucial moment in the revolution hesitates at the sight of bloodshed and lives to see even worse bloodshed with the victory of reaction.

The theme is taken from his own biography.

This explains a note of bitterness which sounds in all his speeches:

"Glory to you who created the Red Army, who guide the revolution with an iron hand. You have conquered and people rejoice. But we fought the enemy with kid gloves and now we have fascism, torture and bloodshed."

Balder Olden is another pacifist, a humanist and nonresister. Where has he not been? He was a long time in Central Africa. He fought there. He was confined for four years in a British prison in India. He has traveled all over the globe. With all the passion of his personal honesty Olden turned his back on fascism, hater that he is of all violence.

Olden is the most bright-eyed and artless of all the eight. Just like a baby! Whenever he sees anything wonderful he says "Ah-ah" with all his breath—one would think that he has just awakened in his cradle and seen the sun.

That is exactly what he has done—awakened! In Tiflis while proposing a toast he said:

"I am a bourgeois-democrat, opposed in principle to all violence, and that is why I am an anti-fascist, but now declare that your Bolshevik road is the only right one and that on that road I am your soldier to the end."

*Translated from the Russian by
Padraic Breslin*

LETTERS FROM WRITERS

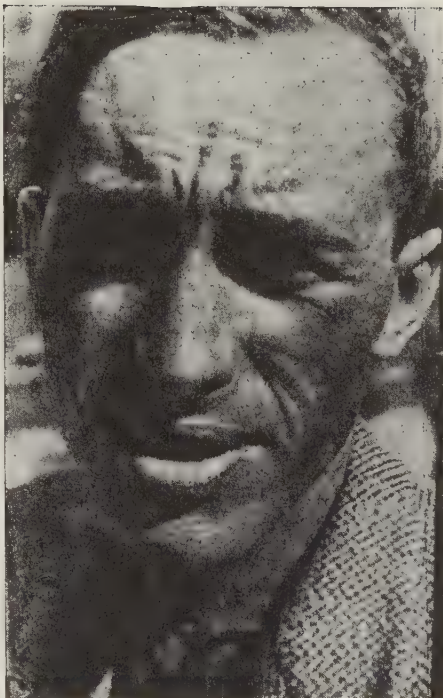
HOLLAND

The Growth of Revolutionary Literature

In the year 1909 Lenin supported in the International Socialist Bureau at Brussels the Marxist left wing of the Dutch movement, which had broken with the reformists and founded its own party, the S.D.P., afterwards a section of the Communist International (the KPD). In those days the Dutch Marxist group had already a remarkable history behind it. Its paper *De Nieuwtyd* belonged to the advance guard of international Marxism, and such well known theorists as Pannekoek, van Ravesteyn, and Gorter wrote for it. *De Nieuwtyd*, however, was not only the first literary socialist monthly in Holland, but was remarkable for its Marxist attitude against the growing reformist tendencies in the Socialist Party (the SDAP). Its editors and contributors, Herman Gorter, Henriette Roland Holst, Herman Heyermans, van Collem and Augusta de Witt, have been recognized even by the bourgeois critics as the best which Holland produced in this period.

Socialist literature in Holland began rather weakly at the end of the 19th century with the Froedian poetry of the politician Pieter Yelle Trogistra and the Dutch poems of his brother Dirk Trogistra. A novel by Cornelia Huygens, *Barthold Meryan*, had a certain historical significance in so far as it deals with the beginning of the Dutch workers movement. But artistically it is of little importance.

The situation became quite different, however, when such well known authors as the critic Frank van der Goes and the poet Herman Gorter (1865-1927), who had taken an active part in the renaissance of the Dutch bourgeois literature of the years 1880—1890, went over to the side of socialism. Gorter's pantheistic poem *May* was generally recognized as the most beautiful that had been written in the Dutch language for a hundred years. It was a big blow to capitalist art that precisely this poet went red; but the bourgeois critics revenged themselves by unanimously condemning every new work he wrote. Looking back today on the socialist poetry of Gorter, we are still astonished that in such a backward country as Holland such wonderful heights of beauty could have been reached. Never again has any poet of our country sung with such a serene language the socialist ideal as Gorter did in *Pan*, *Klein Heidendichr* and other poems. And still Gorter's poems never became popular among the Dutch laboring classes. Although he was a



Jef Last, well known poet and prose writer of Holland

socialist, Gorter remained a typical intellectual and his language could only be understood by a small group of people. Moreover, in the year 1921 Gorter broke with the Third International and took an extreme leftist position. By doing this he isolated himself completely from the masses, and in the year 1927 he died almost forgotten.

Next to Herman Gorter we must remember Henriette Roland Holst van der Schalk (born 1869). She also took an active part in political struggle between the reformists and the Marxists. Some of the theoretical books she wrote, *Capitalism and Labor in Holland*, for example, *Revolutionary Mass Action*, and *Communism and Morals*, have been of great value in the development of the working class movement in Holland. Her *Life of Garibaldi* is one of the best specimens of socialist biography. Her plays, *Children*, *Thomas Morus*, *The Rebels*, and her many volumes of poetry, *De Nigung Ashoort*, *de Vrouw in*

heb Wond, *Opwaartsche Wegen, Feest der Gedawenis*, are very popular especially among the workers, intelligentsia and the petty bourgeois youth. In *Heldensuge* she wrote a brilliant history of the Russian Revolution. Still Mrs. Roland Holst, who in the year 1916 became a member of the SPD (later the Communist Party) always remained in her heart an individualist and almost always wrote about her personal relation to socialism. In 1925 she left the Communist Party, and since that day her attitude has become more and more religious and pacifistic. She wrote a biography of Tolstoi, a pessimistic volume of poems, *Verwer ven Lenden*, and concluded her literary career with two pacifist plays, *Mother* and *We Won't*, which are even played by the members of the Christian Students' Association.

In the same springtime of socialist literature when Gorter and H. Roland Holst published their first revolutionary poems, we find at their side—Frederik van Eeden (1860-1931). The first part of his book, *Little John* (translated into almost every European language), became as famous as Gorter's *May*. When, however, the second and third volume of this novel showed a positive socialist tendency, they were in the same way completely condemned by the bourgeois critics as Gorter's later poems. The socialist tendencies in Van Eeden's poetic and prose works did not last very long. After the big railway strike of the year 1903, he tried to help the victims by founding a cooperative society in Amsterdam and a utopian colony called Walden. Both very idealistic but rather unpractical experiments ended in a catastrophe in which Van Eeden lost almost all his money. After this he lost courage and tried to find his way, through spiritualism, theosophy and religion. He died in the year 1931 as a good son of the Catholic church of which in his youth he showed himself a bitter enemy.

The insurrection in the Dutch colonies in the year 1927 and its bloody suppression by white terror aroused the conscience of the Dutch proletariat. The colonial poems of Jef Last (born 1898) had a great success among the communist and left socialist workers. In Holland the army of the unemployed increases from day to day, the profits from the colonies changed for the first time in the year 1931 into a loss. The radicalization of the

masses brought also a radicalization of literature. In the year 1930 the group called the *Links Richten* was formed, which on the 15th of May, 1931, became a section of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers. Original members of this group were Nico Kust, one of the best known Dutch newspapermen, Freek van Leguwgu, a young unemployed proletarian poet, the textile worker, Gerard Vanter, author of two novels *de Voorsten*, and *Baanbrekers*, the poet and prose writer, Bertus Moyer, and Kluas Smelik who wrote a book about the Dutch colonial army and myself. At the end of 1932 the review *Links Richten* appeared for the first time and since this day the group has increased constantly in influence and importance. Maurits Dokker, a well known author of psycho-pathological novels, entered the group and wrote his first revolutionary book *Bread*. Sam Goudsmit became a member and published a new revolutionary novel *Marriage*. Several authors from the *Nieuwetyd* group such as Alex Booleman, Eduard Coenraads, Ning van der Schaaf, de Kunthel enlisted again in the new communist literary movement. Theorists, critics and playwrights like Dr. Jan Romain, S. van Praag, Alex Wins, supported the review. The well known author of psychological novels, Mauriss de Vries, became a member and many colored and white worker correspondents sent their prose and poetry to the new monthly. In the last month some Flemish authors, such as Goert Grub and W. van der Aker contributed their poems.

Naturally the review *Links Richten*, is still far from what it ought to be. Compared with German and American revolutionary literature, the Dutch one is still miles and miles behind. Time, however, is going on. The *Zeven Provinsien* has raised the red flag of mutiny. With this red flag as its banner the Indonesian and Dutch proletariat will surmount every difficulty. It will march on to liberty and Communism; and in the ranks of the Dutch proletariat the revolutionary artists will fight the class struggle with the weapon of their art.

JEF LAST

Amsterdam, Holland

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

GERMANY

KLAUS MANN

I was born on November 18, 1906 in Munich. Went to school in Munich until I was fifteen years old. I then spent a few years in *Freien Schulgemeinden* (Free School Committees), most of the time in the Odenwaldschule near Heidelberg. I was scarcely eighteen when I joined the staff of the Berlin *12-Uhr-Mittagsblatt* as dramatic critic. My first books were printed at this time: a volume of short stories, a novel and a play. I appeared myself in my play in 1925-27 together with my sister Erika, Pamela Wedekind, daughter of Frank Wedekind, to whom I was engaged at the time, and Gustav Grundgens who was married to my sister at the time and who became the "coordinated" director of the Berlin State Theatre since then. In 1927-28 I went on a trip around the world together with my sister (America, Honolulu, Spain, North China, Russia).

During the years that followed I lived as a writer publishing several books (S. Fisher, Berlin, and other houses). I traveled a good deal especially in France.

I was not a political writer but I always abhorred fascism and have always written against it. I emigrated in the spring of 1933. In the autumn of the same year I founded the literary monthly *Die Sammlung*, in Amsterdam. I visited the Soviet Union for the second time in the summer of 1934 as guest of the Soviet Writers Congress. In the autumn of the same year I was "deprived of my nationality" by the present German government. I continue to live and work in the service of a future Germany.

KLAUS MANN



*Matthew Josephson, American Writer,
Author of Zola, Robber Barrons and
Other Books*

USA

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, Feb. 15, 1899, the son of a printer who later became a businessman. One of a family of four. I studied in the public schools and high schools of the city of New York, then attended Columbia University, receiving a B. A. I was too young (18) to enter the war; at that time 1917-18 I was affiliated with left-wing Socialist groups opposed to the war, as a student. Graduated in 1920 I became a journalist for a year; in 1921-23, I lived mostly in Paris, but also in the Austrian Tyrol, Italy and Ger-

many (Berlin). I wrote poems and criticism: I was influenced by knowing in Paris the group later known as Surrealists. In 1922-24 I was associate editor, then editor of *Broom*, an international review of art and letters, publishing reproductions of modern art, literature, etc., also some of the first young Soviet writers. In the U.S. 1924-26, I earned my living for two or three years as an economist for a financial institution. Published *Galimathias* (poems) 1923. In 1926, December, I returned to writing, this time works of a social character, having reacted very early against the influence of the Surrealists. *Zola* appeared in 1928, including a long history of the Drey-

fus Case; then *Portrait of the Artist as American* (1930); *Jean Jacques Rousseau* (1932); *The Robber Barons*, (1934) *The Brown Darkness in Germany* (1933) pamphlet, etc. In 1931 and 1932 I was on the staff of the *New Republic*. In 1933-34, I visited Europe, chiefly the Soviet Union and Spain, having won a fellowship for literature from the Gugenheim Foundation. In the fall of 1932 I was one of a group of American writers who supported the campaign of the Communist Party and collaborated in writing a pamphlet *Culture and the Crisis* on their behalf.

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON

Gaylordsville, Connecticut—USA

JACK CONROY

Jack Conroy was born December 5, 1899, at Moberly, Missouri, U.S.A. Spent many years as a migratory worker, working for the labor press, and intermittent periods of unemployment, which at last convinced him that as long as Capitalism endures, workers will be oppressed and defrauded. Co-editor of three annual anthologies of so-called "revolutionary" verse: *Unrest*, 1929-30-31, which seem rather pallid now, but were rather strong for their day. Editor of *The Rebel Poet*, now *The Anvil*, which was the pioneer American magazine of revolutionary fiction. Author of *The Disinherited* which has been published in England and appeared serially in *L'Humanité* of Paris in French translation. Four editions in the Russian, Ukrainian, German and English languages in the USSR. Japanese, Portuguese, Italian and Yiddish translations have been completed. A new novel *A World*



Jack Conroy, American Writer, Author of *The Disinherited*, and *A World To Win*

To Win, a title derived from the famous words in the *Communist Manifesto* has appeared in April, and several more are in process of gestation.

NORWAY

SELMA LAGERLÖF

Born on the estate of Marbacka, in the Östtar Emterwik Parish, Province Värmland, on November 20, 1858, Selma Lagerlöf is a descendant of an old Värmland clerical family Lagerlöf, whose members have played an important part in the cultural history of the Province for three centuries.

Her life may be divided into three distinct periods. First, the period of her childhood and youth, which she spent on the small estate in Värmland. She was taught at home by governesses, took part in all domestic work and almost without realizing it, gathered a great amount of poetical material both from the people around her and from nature. This material was used by her later on, notably in the *Gösta Berlings Saga*. Almost from the very moment when she learned how to read, the urge to write poetry awakened in her and during the last years of her stay in Värmland, she made a few attempts at writing poetry. Since, however, her little poems did not find any response, she left home in 1881 and went out into the world in order to procure the knowledge which she considered necessary to win recognition for her talent.

The second period began with diligent studies in Stockholm, first during one year at the Sjöberg Girls' High School, and then for three years in the High College for Women Teachers. During these years her literary activity was suspended, only a number of poems, most of them in sonnet form, were written by her during this time. However, she was convinced that the education she thus received was of great value to her, and when, in 1885 she took up a job as teacher in the Girls' School in Landskrona, she hoped to get time to seriously devote herself to writing poetry, the more so since she intended writing a book.

However, it proved that the teaching job demanded almost as much of her time and energy as her studies before. The few hours she was able to spend at her writing desk were spent in a helpless seeking for form and style, and only in the summer of 1889 she succeeded in creating a few chapters which were satisfactory to her.

During the winter of 1890 once chapter after the other were added to these, and in August part of the book was submitted by her, under the title *Original Saga of Gösta Berling* to the magazine *Idun*, as an entry in a competition. In November she received first prize

—500 kroners—and with the active assistance of good friends, Selma Lagerlöf was enabled to devote herself wholly and exclusively to the completion of the book.

The part of *Gösta Berling* premiated by *Idun* was published in February 1891 and very favorably received by the critics and in literary circles. The public on the whole, showed more astonishment than satisfaction, its interest being aroused by enthusiastic reviews such as the one by Helena Dyblem in *Svensk Tidskrift*. At the same time these favorable reviews encouraged the poetess in her strenuous work. Indeed, the book was completed in August, and by Christmas of the same year it was published by the Idun Publishing House.

During the next few years she only wrote a few short stories, which were published in the Christmas Numbers of magazines. She worked on a cycle of poems *Queens of Kungahalla* but she lacked the courage to publish them. On the whole, her activity suffered from the cool reception of *Gösta Berling*, and she feared she did not possess sufficient talent for the profession to which she wished to devote herself.

Gradually, however, conditions became more favorable. In 1892 *Gösta Berling* was published in Danish, and the Danes praised it highly. Slowly but surely the book also found appreciation in Sweden. A collection of short stories, *Invisible Ties*, brought out by the Bonnier Publishing House, was favorably received and in 1895 a second edition of *Gösta Berling* was issued. During that same year Selma Lagerlöf received an encouraging gift from King Oscar and Prince Eugene and a small stipend from the Swedish Academy.

With this recognition she finally left her teaching and decided to devote herself exclusively to literary work.

She made a trip to Italy, during the winter of 1895-96, in the company of Mrs. Sophie Elkan. The year following this trip was devoted to the elaboration of the novel *Miracles of the Anti-Christ*, the action of which takes place in Sicily. It was warmly welcomed by the critics, but neither at the time, nor later, did the book acquire a wide circle of readers. In 1898 Selma Lagerlöf did not publish any books; in 1899 however, two appeared: one a selection of tales entitled *Queens of Kungahalla* and the other a small novel, *A Saga of Hergard*, going into several editions. At the time of publication *Queens of Kungahalla* had no success; later on however, it won a large number of readers.

As early as 1897, while she was working on the *Anti-Christ*, Selma Lagerlöf heard that a group of peasants of Dalarna had emigrated to the Holy Land for religious reasons, and

she conceived the idea that the adventures of these emigrants should be splendid material for a novel. This thought did not leave her and she made a trip to the Orient visiting the Dalarna peasants in their new fatherland. During the next year she published the first volume of her novel *Jerusalem*, which deals with the cause for the emigration and the departure from Dalarna.

Though it may be said that on the whole Selma Lagerlöf's books had found a kind reception, *Jerusalem* was her first real success. The book was hailed both by the public and the critics. Its second volume, however, was not as successful. This may be due to the fact that like the *Miracles of the Anti-Christ* the action takes place in an environment foreign to Selma Lagerlöf herself.

After *Jerusalem* Selma Lagerlöf published the following books: *Legends of Christ* (collection of legends) and *Mr. Arne's Treasure* (novel) in 1904, *Nils Holgerson's Strange Journey* (Reader for the elementary School) in 1906-07, *A Fragment of a Biography* (short stories) in 1908, *Ligecron's Home* (novel) in 1911, *The Carter of Death*, in 1912, *Jan's Home Sickness* (The Emperor of Portugal) (novel) in 1914, *Trolle and People* (short stories) in 1915, *The Holy Life* (novel) in 1918, *Sacharias Ropelius* (biography) in 1920, *Marbacka* (reminiscences of my childhood) in 1922, *The General's Ring* (novel) in 1925, *Charlotte Lowenskold* (novel) in 1925, *Anna Svard* (novel) in 1925, *The Days of My Childhood* (Marbacka II) in 1930, *Diary* (Marbacka III) and *Autumn* (short stories, memorial speeches) in 1933.

While being read more and more widely in her own country, Selma Lagerlöf's works have also acquired an ever greater circle of readers abroad. Her works are now printed completely or partly, in about 37 languages.

Selma Lagerlöf's growing popularity has led to a great deal of honor being bestowed upon her. In 1907 she was promoted *Doctor Honoris Causa* at the Upsala University, in 1928, in Greifswald, in 1932 Doctor of Theology, etc. In 1909 she was given the Nobel Prize and in 1914 she was the first woman to be elected to the Swedish Academy.

Among other extensive travels, she made a trip to Russia in 1912 visiting Moscow and Leningrad.

At the time when Selma Lagerlöf began her literary career her parent's estate Marbacka, passed into strange hands. Since then she always wished to re-acquire the old property. The Nobel prize enabled her to do this. At the present time, therefore, she is a farmer, like her father and her grandfather were before her and she cultivates the same piece of land as they did.

IN THIS ISSUE

G. Ryazheski—is a well known Soviet painter whose work is shown in all leading galleries. More of his work will appear in a forthcoming issue of *International Literature*.

Ernest Ottwalt—German revolutionary writer, is author of *Quiet and Order* and other novels and collections of short stories. Exiled from his own country he is now at work on a new novel in Moscow.

Ramon J. Sender—Spanish novelist and playwright, is author of *The Magnet*, *Seven Red Sundays* and other books. Although one of the most popular Spanish writers, since taking a Communist position, he finds it almost impossible to have his work published and is considering emigrating to Argentine.

A. Fadeyev—Soviet writer, is best known to the English speaking world for his novel *The Nineteen*. He is now completing the trilogy *The Last of the Udegei*.

Lydia Seifulina—Soviet writer, her father a Tatar, is author of *Breakers of the Law* and a number of other novels and collections of short stories. *Virineya*, which we are publishing serially, has appeared in all the European countries. This is its first publication in English.

C. H. Rowe—is an English illustrator and painter, member of the British Artists International. His work has been shown in London and Moscow.

N. G. Chernishevski—(1828-1889) was called "the great Russian scientist and critic" by Karl Marx. Lenin has written on a number of occasions about this "revolutionary democrat." *Life and Esthetics*, a classic we are printing serially, appeared in 1853.

G. Suskhievich—G. Orlov—A. Romodanovskaya—B. Gutentog—J. Sakhnovskaya—are five Soviet artists whose work can be seen steadily in Soviet publications and in various galleries. Their drawings of the Moscow subway in this issue are from the book *Metro*, a beautiful edition, in which workers and engineers themselves tell the story of how they built the subway.

Z. V. Pesis—is a Soviet critic, whose work appears in all leading critical journals.

Oakley Johnson—American critic, was expelled from a New York university where he was teaching, for his Communist views. He has contributed steadily to many American journals. He attended the Paris Congress of writers, which he reports in this issue, and is now at work in Moscow on a book on Education.

Friedrich Wolf—German revolutionary playwright is author of *Doctor Mamloch*, *Floridsdorf* and other plays produced and published in many countries. His article in this issue is born of a trip he made to New York recently where his play *Sailors of Catamaro* was produced by the Theatre Union.

A. Lezhev—is a Soviet critic whose work appears for the first time in *International Literature*. He is a frequent contributor to Soviet newspapers and leading critical journals.

Sergei Tretyakov—Soviet writer and playwright, while best known for his play *Roar China*, and the bio-interview novel *Den-Shihua* (appearing in England and the USA under the title *A Chinese Testament*) is author of a number of other books and pamphlets, works steadily in the cinema, photography, gramophone records, and in other fields "On the border of art."

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Editorial Assistant WALT CARMON

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