Workers of the world, unite!

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The Workers Take to the Streets — *by FRANZ MASEREEL*

Charles Vildrac

The Pocketbook

Excerpts from a New French Novel

At the intersection of two trenchways stood a logwood shelter half buried in the clay and covered with bags of earth and sheets of corrugated iron. It was our first aid station.

There you were protected from a "75" shell, provided it didn't land in front of the door, which was made of boards roughly nailed together. A torpedo, however, would have demolished the hut together with its occupants.

At that period, in 1916, almost the entire front line had at last been equipped with deep dugouts. Not far from us the battalion commandant occupied comfortable, wood-lined quarters six meters underground. But he had not bothered to better the first-aid post.

The wounded were no longer counted among the fighting forces; on the other hand a company doctor had no authority to obtain material or the assistance of a petty officer of the fortification service.

We made out as best we could. Six of us slept in the first aid post, on two horse-stall partitions, one above the other.

The furniture included a bench, the medicine closet and a small makeshift table consisting of a board on four stakes which held the acetylene lamp and the major's kit.

There was still room enough to bring in one wounded man on a stretcher, one only; the stretcher bearers who brought him, had to go out immediately, straddling him, before we could cut off his clothes and dress the wound.

If other wounded arrived, they waited outside in a line; moreover they must not interfere with traffic. Accordingly the trenchway had been widened at this spot. Alongside the first aid post was located what we facetiously called the clothing store. There, exposed to the weather, lay a heap of rusty guns, bayonets without their sheathes, rusty helmets, shreds of clothing, scarred blood-stained boots: all the horrible rain-soaked bric-a-brac of the devasting war. At dawn, when the front line was quiet, thrifty souls, after their hours at the parapet, would come and poke about the rubbish, looking for coat buttons, a breach-bolt, a gas mask, still intact inside its box, or an old model cartridge belt which would bruise your sides less when you wore it around your waist.

It was along the length of this dreary depot that the dead of the day were laid out. The division stretcher bearers would come to carry them off in the night.

I mentioned that six of us slept in the first aid post. There was the doctor, the corporal orderly, and I myself—the corporal stretcher bearer. The stretcher bearers, three crews of four men each, occupied some hollowed out cubbyholes across from the post where odd pieces of wood held back the dirt from caving in.

After long trench artillery duels, that stopped suddenly and as though by common agreement, there would follow five minutes of deathly silence. Then, as though speaking of a storm, someone would say "I think it's over." And we could come out of our trance and our anxiety, gasping because of our stomachs, that had been contracted for so long.

Then we would hear the noise of footsteps on the dry earth, or in the mud. A man would come running from the central trenchway. He would push back our latchless door, which was kept shut by a big shell fragment attached to the end of a string, and would breathlessly announce: "There is a dead man and two wounded in the fourth, they're at the other end of the trench. Be careful, the parapet has caved in." I dashed outside and called the stretcher bearers. Sometimes we received calls from all sides and we paid attention only to the wounded, postponing the dead until later. It sometimes happened, that there was only one dead man and one wounded.

Through the rubble, and the narrow tortuous trenchways that sloped sharply, a dead man was much easier to carry than a wounded man. You did without the stretcher in the case of a dead man; you strung him on a pole. You were not afraid of bumping him or raising him above the trench at arm's length when turning a corner. And then it was enough to deposit him outside the first-aid post.

With a wounded man you did not hesitate to bump or expose yourself in order to spare him from being jarred, especially if he was conscious. It was a matter of personal pride, of sentiment, of tradition.

And once his wounds had been dressed, he had to be carried a kilometer to the rear through impossible trenchways, or in the open, over ground that was gouged by the shells and the rain. That is why the two crews whose turn it was to go out quarrelled over the dead man.

"The dead man belongs to us! You've already had one this morning!"

"He died along the way!"

"A wounded man who died along the way has never been counted as a dead man."

'That depends on where you are when you discover that he is dead. Certainly not, if you have already reached the shelter."

I settled the dispute, less on my corporal's authority than on the authority of a man who himself had carried both dead and wounded.

The evenings were often calm, both sides were at work restoring the parapets demolished in the course of the day. The purveyors arrived sweating, their arms laden with bottles, loaves of bread suspended from their waists, canteens slung over their shoulders on leather straps. The meal was quickly consumed and afterwards we pulled out *gniole*. It was a foul alcohol which smelled of ether. We poured it into a bottle which contained orange peels and tried to fancy we were sipping a kind of curacao, while chatting endlessly around the acetylene lamp, or before a small charcoal fire.

For more than a year our regiment had been holding the line at this end of Vauquois. We were plunged in the war, submerged by the war.

I sometime witnessed with a twinge of terror how strong is force of habit and the instinct of adaptation.

I have seen men too seriously wounded to be suffering. I remember one of them who had had both legs shot off and who while he was being dressed, made a minute inventory of his sack. Nature had provided a local anesthaesia; the affected nerve center had been temporarily put out of commission.

In what was doubtless a similar manner we had become almost insensible to certain sights, incapable of visualising the future beyond a bombardment or a relief, carefree from long anxiety—amid the worst dangers, deprived of all conception of danger.

I sometimes felt myself monstrously hardened. Today I keenly feel the loss of a certain companion who fell by my side. However, the day it happened, his death occupied my mind for an instant only, and the fleeting sor-

row which it occasioned was cancelled by the horrible joy, likewise fleeting, of realizing my own luck and of feeling myself safe. After the explosion of a shell, I have heard, mingled with the shriek of a dying man, the bestial and triumphant laugh of his comrade, lightly grazed in the arm:

" There we are," he shouted, "I have my wound, let us be off."

And everyone congratulated him.

But at least those were reactions of a sort. There were others, especially among the coarser spirits who were reduced to their barest instincts, to a heavy indifference towards everything not connected with eating and sleeping. Men would eat hunched over beside a dead man of their squad, and they would snarl, like animals when we had to budge them in order to remove the body.

Sprawled on the ground or sitting, plunged in tobacco smoke, we enjoyed long evenings in our shelter into which all the strecher bearers, who were not asleep or on the road, would also crowd. We told each other stories of the beginning of the war, which was already a long way off. We discussed the military operations just like all the gentlemen in the cafes, but with a bit more competence and far less optimism.

We listened in on the argument of two peasants over a certain breed of bulls, or that of two Parisians over the best way of conquering women, and of pleasing them.

"What they like most of all," one asserted, "is cleanliness."

"Not so much," retorted the other. "What concerns them the most is that you take contraceptive measures."

"A woman is a bundle of nerves," declared a pretentious orderly, a pharmacy clerk in civil life.

The doctor had his say on the subject and willingly entertained the uninitiated audience with certain revelations of a physiological order. But everyone liked most of all to talk of what he had done in the other world before the war, and made up for being nothing more than a military number now, by exaggerating his civil importance with touching whimsy or the impudence of an adventurer.

The least notary's clerk gave himself out as a lawyer. An obscure performer in cheap cafes struck confusion into all the uninformed who up to now had not known his glorious name and dazzling successes.

The corporal orderly, Aubertin, claimed to combine the important functions of administrator, house-manager, chief overseer and even of electrician at an old men's home.

Peasants who at home had lived on soup and raisin water and had gone to sleep exhausted at nightfall, sought to recall only the holidays, and boasted of their table, their wine cellar, and the amorous zest of their wives.

Finally the humble boy who honestly admitted his profession as delivery-man at a photographic supply house would add with pride: "We cater to the Navy; we deal with Spain and Italy."

Truth or falsehood, it mattered little. Huddled around a lamp and a bottle, we recalled a kind of lost paradise. The delivery man would tell us: "In the morning I jump on my three wheeled bicycle." And I would promptly visualise a clean peaceful street in the quarter du Marais in Paris, and I would hear the muffled bumping of the small vehicle and the tinkle of its bell.

It was enough if Aubertin informed us, as he puffed at his two-cent cigar, that it was he did the marketing for the old men's home, for the spectacle of a suburban market, with its housewives, its noises, its smells of pears and

apples, to rise in my memory. And I eagerly sought from Aubertin the details which he made up.

Who knows whether he lied from mischief, or whether after two years of war, he did not to some extent confuse what he had been with what he dreamed of being?

The conversation often dealt with politics. Sometimes it reached the level of philosophy. There was a young Christian Socialist, a notary's clerk from Orleans, with whom I held long discussions on the perfectibility of man, and the immortality of the soul. The others listened in and contributed their own comments.

Someone murmured, "If there is a god, he must be some brute!"

A peasant stopped picking his teeth with his knife in order to declare: "Men will always be the same; you can't make them be any better."

Between ten and eleven at night all the batteries of the neighborhood, both the French and the German, fired some listless shots. It was a question of the artillerymen using up their stock of munitions in order to make room in the shelters for the daily supply of shells furnished by the administration, and delivered to them around midnight.

We would break off our conversation in order to ask:

"Who's firing now? The Barricade or the Braniere?"

And when, punctually, the Germans sent a couple of dozens of shells flying over our heads into the valley where there was no longer a single shrub left to kill, someone would remark with a yawn: "Well! There goes Cheppy: it's already ten-thirty."

Before going to bed, provided it wasn't raining bucketsfull, although the regulations did not require it, I always went out for a few minutes, the way a passenger goes out on ship-deck to take a look at the state of the sea.

I liked suddenly to find myself alone in the dark and the cold to breath the wind.

At night the war did not interrupt its tasks, but it performed them at a more leisurely rate, in a state of semi-drowsiness.

Since its countenance was veiled at last by darkness, its noises lost some of their reality; the imagination could distort them. A gun that was firing a long way to the rear recalled the barking of a huge watch dog. The smooth whizz of its shells, passing high overhead harmonized with the twinkle of a star.

The rifle shots, which were less frequent, echoed far and wide in the space of real silence, with less brutality than pathos.

It was mainly at night that one could rediscover Nature, in spite of the war. Once the leprosy and mutilations of the earth were shrouded, a deep clear sky shone overhead, scarcely marred by the flares, the same sky as always, with its constellations and its crescent moon.

If the sky was overcast you could enjoy the tricks of the wind and the fine patter of the rain for their own sake, dissociated from everything else.

There was indeed one thing in the war which I liked, and for the sake of which I went as far as the first turn in the trench. It was a small illuminating rocket, which went up from the German trenches and invariably headed in my direction. It did not glide, like those parachute rockets that illumined half the hillside; it described a graceful trajectory which ended so near me that the first few times I recoiled. But the rocket always fell a few meters from the parapet and only spent itself after having hit the ground, and the noise of its sizzle reached me confidentially, like a huge insect in its death agony.

For me it wasn't a war rocket; it was a small graceful shooting star which

the night always renewed. It was like a sigh of hope or despair; the suddenly rediscovered assurance that I could still sing or cry.

One evening when I had left the post, my nose to the wind sniffing the freshness and awaiting the departure of my little rocket, ever to the right, I stumbled against something which I had no trouble in identifying: it was a limp and muddy leg. I had reached the place where they deposited the dead.

"Oh yes," I thought, "it's Fraut."

There had been only one casualty that day, and that was Fraut! As I continued on up the trenchway I began thinking of him.

I had known him well. Before becoming a stretcher bearer, I had been in the same section with him. He was a fellow from the Briere country, well to-do, with the manners of a cart driver or a trooper. He jested or offered you a drink in a sneering tone and was not lacking in a certain toper's finesse.

He received money orders of five hundred francs and innumerable parcels of victuals. His opulence and his prodigality were enough to make his society much sought after, but he had chosen as his boon companions two or three blades of his own sort, from his own country, with whom he wined and feasted and, in particular, with whom he played poker for money. On the front line, or during rest, Fraut and the lads of Fraut's gang, as they were called, second class infantrymen, members of the same squad, were not only broken in to the routine of war like the rest of us, but bit by bit they had accomplished the prodigy of acquiring a passionate interest in gambling, an interest which in their daily lives half shut out the war.

For them, going on line with roast chicken and three two-litre canteens apiece, chiefly meant continuing their game down in a dug-out, after having played on a table corner.

Doing two hours regulation duty in the open, sometimes twenty yards from the enemy, was less a matter of launching hand grenades and exposing oneself as their target, than of being prevented from playing for two hours.

Indeed a rich peasant like Fraut never doubted, surely, that the privilege of money could influence death itself.

He said aloud what many thought:

"The others may get themselves killed off, but you won't see me doing the same!"

I had stopped at the turn in the trenchway to follow the flight of my little rocket, when two men came running up from the front line.

"What's the matter, boys?" I asked, "somebody wounded?"

"Oh, it's you, corporal," one of them said. "Tell me, where did they put Fraut?"

"Fraut? Why he's over there, where the trench is, a bit further on, why?"

"We've come to look for the deck of cards which the four of us bought together. Maybe you've already emptied his pockets?"

"No, not yet, besides that's not my job; the corporal orderly does that. Hurry and get your cards."

"Fine, come with us, corporal. Have you got a flashlight?"

A moment later the two members of Fraut's gang and I were hunched over the corpse. Fraut, his coloring barely bleached, his features barely contracted, a tuft on his eyebrows, his chin and cheeks armed by eight days growth of beard, seemed immersed in peaceful sleep.

A shell fragment had struck him full in the chest.

"It was that lousy Zim-Boom which is always trying to rake the trench

lengthwise. It doesn't succeed more than once in three months, and it had to choose this particular night, when it hit our chum."

"The cards aren't in his coat pocket," said the other, who was hunting.

"Of course they aren't there! Before my very eyes he put them in his inside vest pocket. Unbutton him."

"Let you take the cards? I ask you! He sure was obstinate! He didn't want us to play without him. Take the time when we played without him. with someone else. This other fellow cleaned us out and wouldn't lend us back our money. So we could hardly go on playing. . . . Talk about a gash! He sure bled! He couldn't have suffered any, poor fellow."

The coat and vest were unbuttoned, disclosing an enormous red stain. A pocketbook appeared, and was extracted dripping with blood. They pulled out some banknotes, which were miraculously intact. The one who extracted them explained:

"Those are the three hundred francs he won from us this evening. There must be two bills of a hundred francs and two of fifty. You see, there they are. He won them, they're his. We'll leave them with him."

"Obviously," sighed the other, "he won the three hundred francs, we'll leave them with him, it's only right!"

There was a short interval of silence, after which they repeated in turns:

"We'll leave them with him."

"You see, corporal, we're leaving them with him, put them back in the pocketbook yourself."

Afterwards the suspicion dawned on me that the two of them had come together in order to keep an eye on each other because of the three hundred francs; and further, in thus reiterating "We'll leave them with him," they were perhaps hoping for some suggestion on my part or even for some sort of a confidential deal with reference to the notes, which were not stained with Fraut's blood. But at the time, I only thought their insistence a bit overdone.

However, they utterly forgot the money once they had found the deck of cards down inside the blood-soaked pocket. The deck was almost intact on one side, but badly stained on the other. And the two of them bemoaned the fact, while one of them wiped his fingers off on his breeches and then held up one of the cards that was fringed with dried blood.

"Well, they're clean!"

"They won't deal any more!"

"Too bad! We'll have to go on playing with them until we're relieved!"

"That's at least eight more days?"

"Go on back now," I told them.

"Yes, let's go. Wait a minute, I'll make sure we've got all of them."

It was a wise precaution, there was still one card left in the pocket, stuck to the lining, it was so thoroughly saturated with dried blood that he could only pull it in pieces.

"Damm the luck!" he shouted, "the game's up! Look! the jack of clubs! I can't even get it unstuck from my fingers."

He shook his hand in anger and disgust.

"Yes," moaned the other one, "there's nothing to do but to throw it away. There's nothing to be done from now till we're relieved. Serves us right! We should have known better than to let Fraut carry the cards. Let's go! Thanks just the same, corporal."

Once they had departed I replaced the pocketbook, which I held between

my thumb and forefinger, and to which I had restored the three hundred francs. I rebuttoned Fraut's vest and overcoat.

As I had said, the duty of going through the pockets of the dead fell to the orderly corporal. Everything he found was wrapped up in a handkerchief and sent to the registration department, which transmitted it to his family.

Aubertin did not allow anyone to take over his functions, for, he would say, "I am responsible."

I re-entered the first-aid post. The major was reading the magazine *Fantasia*. The others were discussing the quality of articles bought on credit at Dufayel's.

I said to Aubertin:

"Do you know you have a dead man to go through?"

"Ye gods, that's right!" he muttered, stretching himself. "I had forgotten about it. Has he been there long?"

"No, it's Fraut."

"Fraut? The fellow who shouted: 'Pass your cup?'"

"Yes."

"Oh! The poor fellow!"

And Aubertin, suddenly became energetic, he made a grab for his helmet, snatched up a huge soldier's handkerchief and rushed outside, his unlit flashight in his fist.

Aubertin did not return till ten minutes later. I was sitting on my cot, and half undressed, I was getting rid of some of my fleas. The major, next to me, was also cleansing his breeches and shirt.

The corporal orderly, having provided himself with a sheet of paper and a pencil, opened the handkerchief with its mournful contents, on the little table, just as he always did.

"Hell! it's full of blood," he said, and he began his inventory, surrounded by two or three of the curious.

I heard him enumerate the articles half aloud, as he wrote them down.

"Military notebook, a pipe, a silver watch, a knife."

He came to the pocketbook and the purse, and ostentatiously emptied first one and then the other.

A woman's photograph was handed around.

"Let's have a look," said the major.

"She's nothing to write home about," announced the man who handed it to him.

It was at this point that Aubertin, in a tone which seemed to me both false, and lacking in assurance shouted;

"It's a bit strange, all the same. Say a fellow like Fraut, who was certainly well off at home, and who spent money like nobody's business; you know how much money I found on him? Twenty-three francs and thirty centimes! Twenty-three francs and thirty centimes in his purse. Not one bill in his pocketbook."

I stifled a cry of protest and felt myself blushing, blushing on Aubertin's account, for it seemed to me that none of those present could be taken in by his lie.

Aubertin had certainly found the three hundred francs, there could be no doubt about it The two members of Fraut's gang could not have had time

to return and clean out their comrade. In the flare of the rocket, I had seen them stop for an instant on a rise in the trenchway, fifty meters from me, and then vanish to the left in their trench.

But an orderly promptly remarked:

"Why man, when a fellow with plenty of dough is killed, you may be perfectly sure that there is always some chum of his around who'll relieve him of his money, so he won't be so heavy for the stretcher bearers to lug." They all started laughing, including the major. I myself very much felt like talking of the deck of cards, of the deck of cards that had never come in contact with the pocketbook.

Aubertin didn't give me the opportunity. He hastened to finish up in a hearty tone which this time was quite natural.

"No, not always, but it must happen now and then, no doubt. In any case, I wash my hands of the matter. It's none of my business."

And grabbing a pack of cigarettes, which was barely opened and which he had found on Fraut, he added:

"A pack of cigarettes, not worth the trouble of sending it to the family, eh, Mr. Major? It's not a souvenir. Take some, whoever wants some."

I refused to help myself from the package of cigarettes which was offered me. But eight days later, at Vraincourt, where we were resting, I couldn't deny myself when Aubertin undertook to treat the entire sanitary squad—a score of men—to five bottles of sparkling wine at three francs each.

An old family friend had sent him a postal order, so he said, asking him to treat his comrades on his behalf.

We were pleased that the corporal orderly complied with this wish with such good grace. From the way he explained this largesse and from the impersonal and vague portrait he drew of his old friend—an eccentric and wealthy bachelor—I could not for a moment doubt that it was Fraut who was paying for our drinks for the last time.

Undoubtedly Aubertin sacrificed the fifteen francs to certain slight pangs of remorse mingled with uneasiness. Or perhaps he wished to appear just and considerate in his own eyes by making us share his plunder even though to such a meager extent.

He was one of those many people who lack scruples, but have principles.

As for me, astonishing as it may appear, during this rest period at Vraincourt, I was continually worried and uneasy over the theft of the three hundred francs.

I had reproached myself in the first place for not having scrupulously reported to Aubertin the incident of the deck of cards, at the same time mentioning the presence of bills.

"Then it suddenly dawned on me that if I were not Aubertin's accomplice, I at any rate ran the risk of being compromised and of being accused in his stead, of being accused by Aubertin himself.

All that was required was for ill luck to bring together in a conversation the members of Fraut's gang and stretcher bearer or orderly, who had witnessed the inventory, and for the conversation to switch to Fraut, his prodigality, and his wealth. It did not take much effort on my part to imagine one of our people saying to the poker players:

"Well, fellows, you sure picked your chum clean before he was bumped off!"

There would be protests and an appeal to my testimony. The three hundred francs had been placed in my own hands. On being questioned, Auber-

tin would deny having found them. And in spite of all my protests suspicion would point more to me than to him.

I did not neglect to imagine the twenty different circumstances under which the dreaded incident might have taken place. The two fellows who had come to hunt for the cards and who certainly had coveted the money, themselves might, out of suspicion, make inquiries as to what had been found on their comrade.

Fortunately we occupied a barn on the outskirts of Vraincourt, and the company, which had been Fraut's company, was quartered at the other end of the village. I blessed the rain and the cold, which kept everyone from going about. I even blessed our colonel, who imposed a program of drill by companies on his regiment, for he thereby kept the two men whom I would gladly have seen in hell, at a distance in the countryside, during the whole morning, and I could exercise my sanitary brigades unfearingly across the encampment.

However, none of my apprehensions were realized. The enemy bombarded the village and left us neither the time nor the desire to go visiting. He attacked along sector 263 obliging us to go to the shelter encampment. Finally we had to go back to the line sooner than we had expected.

All this took my mind away from the affair of the pocketbook and I no longer thought of the members of Fraut's gang when, fifteen days later, they were entombed along with almost the whole of their section. A German mine, had exploded in the western sector of Vaucuois. It was luckily possible to save almost everyone. After a night of work and worry when I recognized among the wounded lined up upon the stretchers my two card lovers, bruised and half suffocated, the thought returned to me of the danger they had constituted for me, but I judged this thought shameful and childish, and made efforts to dismiss it.

At the moment Aubertin was zealously pinning a medical tag to the buttonhole of each of the wounded. While so doing he would invariably repeat the same exhortation:

"Don't worry, old fellow, it is nothing at all."

At the time I had no feeling of dislike for him, a man who by turns, with the course of circumstances, gave the measure of his best and his worst instincts, a measure that had nothing out of the ordinary about it.

With its cruel flares the war might well illumine the depths of your nature but it could change nothing for better or for worse. The greatest dangers and even the approach of death rarely distract men from their trivial cares.

Under the bombs of Vauquois neither more nor less than in peace time, probably, Aubertin did not neglect the wretched petty grafts of his office. And I, myself, eager to be distracted from monstrous reality, clung with all my imagination to personal reveries and worries.

And those two members of Fraut's gang, now that their sufferings were over, would doubtless be thinking of the possibilities of getting up a game of poker. It was, perhaps, in this fashion that we all allowed the war to continue.

After the evacuation of the men who had been entombed, listening to Aubertin talk, or watching him make his inventories, now and then I had occasion to recall the story of the three hundred francs, but I was far from believing that it might have a sequel.

I was, nevertheless, destined to hear the subject of Fraut's pocketbook brought up again.

It was in May, after a night when we had been relieved. Drenched in perspiration we were emerging from a dark wood that was under bombardment, where we had been trotting and stumbling over endless footpaths. Before us now stretched the clear and peaceful road: before us lay the sweet fragrant prairie, where the companies were re-forming before the halt.

I found myself at the tail of the column, with the doctor and four stretcher bearers.

At the whistle blow I threw my knapsack on the ground and stretched out among the daisies which were damp with dew.

I was very thirsty. I still had half a canteen of water so I got up to get my cup out of my kit.

Standing before me was a man who watched my activities and asked me:

"You don't have half a cup of water for me, do you, corporal?"

I recognized him by his voice. He belonged to my old company.

"Pass your cup?"

He drank and then sitting down by me said:

" 'Pass your cup,' that reminds me of Fraut. You knew Fraut?"

"Yes, yes," I muttered.

"With poor old Fraut you could always count on a swig during rests. And it was more often wine than water. He found ways of getting Linard to the front line through the quartermaster. Why with his means he could just as well have gotten it through the colonel's orderlies!"

There was an interval of silence, and a cricket started chirping near us. I thought of the three hundred francs.

"Apropos of Fraut," resumed my companion, in a confidential tone, "they didn't find a fortune in his pocketbook, eh?"

Was it a case of telepathy? I was not all prepared for such a question, and answered awkwardly:

"Oh, yes, I don't remember, it was the corporal orderly who . . ."

"He must have found three hundred francs," said the man.

"Yes! It's quite possible, but how?"

"I'll tell you how, corporal, and let this remain strictly between ourselves. When he was killed, Fraut had eleven hundred francs in his pocketbook, but two of the soldiers boys, Frene and Ricard, the two ring leaders in his gang, relieved him of eight hundred francs before your stretcher bearers got there. They were wounded the following month in the mine explosion—the lice have all the luck—the night when Fraut was killed I was lying beside them in the shelter. They were discussing their affairs in low tones, but without much worry, because they thought everyone was asleep.

"Well, would you believe it, it wasn't out of greed they took the money. It was in order to gamble with it. In fact, they nearly went crazy afterward, because they didn't have the cards. As for the cards, Fraut had . . ."

A whistle-blow interrupted him. He got up while finishing:

"Fraut had 'em."

Five minutes later, in the light of day-break, I was marching alongside the doctor, who was telling me some story or other about the humiliations inflicted on him by the commandant. I was not listening. I was again seeing the little German rocket rising towards me.

I was again seeing the bloody shirt of Fraut in the rays of my flashlight and I heard the two cronies:

"We'll leave him with three hundred francs. It's only right."

"Why are you smiling?" the major suddenly asked in astonishment.

Translated from the French by Edmund Stevens

King of the Gangsters

A Story of Pre-Revolutionary Russia

The wedding over, the rabbi sank into an armchair. Then he left the room and caught sight of the tables running the whole length of the yard. There were so many of them that their tails stuck out beyond the gate into Hospital Street. Velvet covered tables wound about the yard like snakes with patches of all colors on their bellies, patches of orange and crimson velvet, singing in rich, full voices.

The apartments had been turned into kitchens. Through the smoke grimed doors beat an obese flame, a drunken, swollen flame, Through its smoky rays glowed the faces of ancient crones, quivering, shaking chins, dirty chests. Sweat as bright as blood, rosy as the foam on a mad dog's jaw, trickled down these heaps of overgrown, human flesh that gave off a sweetish stink. Three cooks, not counting the dish-washer, were preparing the marriage feast. Tiny, hunch-backed, eighty-year-old Reisel, looking as worn as an ancient parchment Torah, presided over them.

Just before supper a young man unknown to the guests pushed his way into the yard. He asked for Benya Krik, and led the latter aside.

"Listen, King," said the young fellow, "I have a couple of words to say to you. Aunt Hannah from Kostenzki Street. . . ."

"Well, alright," replied Krik, known as the "King." "What are the couple of words in question?"

"Yesterday a new police inspector was sent to our district—Aunt Hannah told me to tell you. . . ."

"I knew it the day before yesterday," replied Benya Krik. "What else?"

"The inspector collected all the district police and made a speech."

"New brooms sweep clean," observed Benya Krik. "Getting ready for a raid. What else?"

"And when will it be, King, do you know?"

"Tomorrow."

"Today, King."

"Who told you that, boy?"

"Aunt Hannah told me. You know Aunt Hannah, don't you?"

"I know Aunt Hannah alright. What else?"

"The inspector collected all the district police and made a speech. 'We've got to strangle this Benya Krik,' he told them, 'because where there is an Emperor there can be no king. Today, while Benya Krik is marrying off his sister, and they're all gathered together in one spot, today we've got to make a raid.'"

"What next?"

"Then the sleuths got frightened. 'If we make a raid today,' they said, 'while he's having a wedding, Benya will get mad and there'll be a lot of blood shed.' But the inspector said, 'I value my self respect more. . . .'"

"Alright, you can go," said the King.

"And what am I to say to Aunt Hannah about the raid?"

"Say to Aunt Hannah: Benya knows."

Then he went away—that young man. Three or four of Benya's friends

followed him. They said they would be back in half-an-hour. And they were back in half-an-hour. That was all.

The people took their places at the supper table, where precedence was not given to age. Foolish old age is no less pitiable than timid youth. Precedence was not given to wealth, either. The lining of a heavy purse is made of bitter tears.

The places at the head of the table were occupied by the bride and bridegroom. It was their day. The second place was occupied by Sender Eichbaum, the King's father-in-law. It was his right. The tale of Sender Eichbaum deserves to be told, for it is no ordinary tale.

How had Benya Krik, the house breaker, the king of the Odessa underworld, become the son-in-law of Eichbaum? How could he have become the son-in-law of a man who owned sixty (all but one) milch cows? It was purely a matter of house breaking. Only a year previously Benya had written Eichbaum the following letter:

"Monsieur Eichbaum:

Kindly leave Rbls. 20,000 (twenty thousand rubles) under the gate of No. 17 Sophia Street tomorrow morning without fail. If you do not do this, something awaits you such as you have never yet heard of and all Odessa will be talking about you.

With my compliments,
Benya Krik."

Three letters, each couched in plainer terms than the previous one, remained unanswered. Then Benya took steps. One night nine men appeared with long sticks in their hands. The sticks were wound about with tow dipped in pitch. Nine fiery stars lit up Eichbaum's yard. Benya knocked off the locks of the shed and led out the cows one by one. A young man with a knife was waiting. He felled each cow with a single blow and plunged the knife into her heart. In the pools of blood the torches blossomed like fiery roses; shots rang out. It was Benya firing to frighten away the milk-maids who came running out to the cow-shed. Following his example, others of his gang fired—into the air, because it was enough to kill someone if you fired anywhere else but into the air. When the sixth cow, lowing in her death throes, rolled over at the King's feet, then Eichbaum ran out into the yard in his drawers and inquired:

"What's to come of all this, Benya?"

"If I don't get the money you lose the cows, Monsieur Eichbaum. Two and two make four, see?"

"Come inside the premises, Benya."

They went inside the premises and came to an agreement. They divided the slaughtered cows equally between them; Eichbaum was guaranteed perfect security and given a stamped certificate to that effect. The miracle occured later.

That terrible night, while the stabled cows lowed in anguish and calves slithered about in their mother's blood, while the torches danced like coal black damsels, and milk-maids scattered and squealed before the muzzles of not unfriendly Brownings, that terrible night old Eichbaum's daughter, Zillah, ran into the yard in a low cut nightgown. And in that hour the conqueror became the vanquished.

Two days later, without any warning, Benya returned all the money he had taken from Eichbaum and called on the old man in the evening. Benya was dressed in an orange suit; a diamond bracelet glittered under his cuff. He murmured the usual conventional greetings to Eichbaum as he entered

the room, and asked for the hand of his daughter Zillah. Upon this the old man had a slight paralytic stroke, but he was soon up and about again. He had still about twenty years of life before him.

"Listen, Eichbaum," said the King, "I'll bury you when you die at the very gates of the First Jewish Cemetery, and put up a tombstone of pink marble over you; what's more, I'll make you the elder of the Brodsky Synagogue. I'll chuck up my profession, Eichbaum, and become a partner in your business. You shall have two hundred cows, Eichbaum. I'll kill all the other dairymen. No thief will ever dare to set foot on the street you live in. I'll have a country cottage built for you. And remember this, Eichbaum, you were no rabbit yourself in your youth. Who forged the will—tell it not in Gath? . . . And you will have a King for a son-in-law. Not any cat-muck, mark you, but a King, Eichbaum. . . ."

He got his way, did Benya Krik, because he had a passionate nature, and passion rules the world. The newly wedded couple spent three months basking in rich Bessarabia among luscious grapes, abundant food and passion's perspiration. Then Benya returned to Odessa to marry off his forty year old sister, Dvoira, who suffered from opthalmic goitre. So now, having told you the tale of Sender Eichbaum, we may return to the wedding of Dvoira Krik, the King's sister.

At the wedding feast there were turkeys, roast chickens and geese, stuffed fish and fish soup in which lemon lakes gave off a pearly sheen. A rich plumage of flowers swayed over the dead heads of the geese. But the foaming breakers of the Odessa sea washed up something else besides.

All that was noblest in smuggling, all that had made the earth glorious, did its deadly, its ravishing work that blue, starry night. It was wine of other climes that warmed the stomachs of the guests, sent a sweet languor through their lower limbs, fuddled the brain and evoked the belch that rang out like an imperious bugle call. The black cook of the *Plutarch,* arrived from Port Said three days before, had smuggled in fat bellied bottles of Jamaica rum, oily Madeira, cigars from plantations owned by Pierpont Morgan, and oranges from the outskirts of Jerusalem. These were the things that were washed up by the foaming tide of the sea at Odessa, the things an Odessa beggar can sometimes obtain at a Jewish wedding. They had been given Jamaica rum at Dvoira Krik's wedding, and now, thoroughly soused like non-kosher swine, the Jewish beggars kicked up a deafening row with their wooden legs and crutches. Eichbaum sat with his waistcoat open watching the rowdy party through one screwed-up eye, and hiccupping amiably. The band struck up a flourish. It was reminiscent of a military parade.

The house breakers who sat huddled together, a little embarrassed at first by the presence of so many outsiders, gradually felt more at their ease. Leo-the-Goy smashed a bottle of vodka over the head of his beloved, and Monya-the-artillery-man fired his revolver into the air. But the greatest heights were touched when, according to the time honored custom, the guests began to present gifts to the newly wed couple. The schamesses from the synagogue jumped on the tables and chanted to the strains of the flourish the number of rubles and silver spoons given to the bridal couple. And at this point the friends of the King showed what blue blood really meant; the flower of Moldavian chivalry was not yet laid in the dust. With careless gestures they flung gold coins, rings and coral necklaces on to the silver trays. These aristocrats of the Moldovanka quarter were squeezed into raspberry red waistcoats, their shoulders encased in tan jackets, their fleshy feet straining to its utmost fine leather of a heavenly azure. Drawing themselves up to their full

height and sticking their stomachs well out, they clapped to keep time to the music, shouted: "Kiss her!" and threw flowers to the bride. The sister of the King, Dvoira, forty years of age, horribly disfigured by her disease, with a huge goitre and eyes protruding from their sockets, sat on a mountain of cushions beside a puny boy who had been bought with Eichbaum's money and looked frozen with misery.

The ceremony of gift bearing was coming to an end, the schamesses had chanted themselves hoarse and the bass could no longer get on with the violin. All of a sudden a slight smell of burning seemed to pervade the yard.

"Benya," said his father, the old carter known even among other carters as a coarse, uncivil fellow. "Benya, do you know what it seems to me? It seems to me, Benya, that the soot in our chimney must be on fire."

"Papa," the King replied to his drunken parent, "drink your fill and eat your fill and let not such foolishness disturb you." And old Krik followed his son's advice. He ate and drank. But the cloud of smoke became more and more poisonous. Somewhere over the horizon the sky was reddening. And a tongue of flame narrow as a sword shot up into it. The guests rose and began to sniff the air. Their women squealed. The gangsters exchanged glances. Only Benya, who had noticed nothing, was inconsolable.

"They are ruining my feast!" he cried in despair. "Dear friends, I beg you, drink and eat."

Just at that moment the young fellow who had called on Benya at the beginning of the evening, appeared in the yard once more.

"Listen, King," he said, "I have a couple of words to say to you."

"Alright, say them," replied the King. "You always have a couple of words in stock, it seems."

"Listen, King," began the unknown young man, with a snigger. "It is funny, but the police station is burning like a candle."

The shop keepers were struck dumb. The gangsters chuckled. Sixty year old Manka, the progenetrix of the local underworld, stuck two fingers into her red mouth and gave such a piercing whistle that her neighbors started and staggered.

"Manya, you're not at work now," Benya observed. "Try to have a little more sang-froid, Manya."

The young man who had brought this astonishing news was still giggling.

"Forty of the sleuths left the police station," he went on, his jaws quivering, "to make a raid; and before they've gone fifiteen yards or so, the station's on fire. Come and have a look, if you want to." But Benya forbade his guests to go and look at the fire. Instead he took two friends with him and went himself. The police station was blazing cheerily from all four sides. The shaking backsides of the police could be seen as they ran up and down the smoky ladders and threw boxes out of the windows. Prisoners were making their escape from the cells in the confusion. The fire brigade was endeavoring to show its zeal but the near-by tap would not run. The inspector, that new broom that had intended to sweep so clean, was standing on the pavement at the opposite side of the road, biting the ends of his moustache which kept getting into his mouth. The new broom now stood idle. Benya saluted in military fashion as he passed the inspector.

"Good evening, your honor," he said in a commiserating tone. "What have you to say to this misfortune? Why, it's a regular nightmare. . . ."

He stared at the burning building, shook his head sorrowfully and made a sucking sound with his lips.

"Ai - - ai - - ai!"

When Benya returned home, the lamps were guttering out in the yard and the dawn was mounting in the sky. The guests had left, the musicians were dozing with their heads resting on their fiddles. Dvoira alone had no intention of sleeping. With both hands she was pushing her panic stricken husband towards the door of their nuptial chamber while she gazed at him with the lascivious eyes of a cat that holds a mouse in her mouth and tries it delicately with her teeth.

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

Lydia Selfulina

Virineya

Final Installment of a Soviet Novel

Synopsis of the first two installments: In his forty-ninth year Saul Magara had a vision and began prophesying. He foretold that there would be a great war. The second plowing came round and the men of the village were still spending their strength in the Tsar's service far away; and Mokeikha, the midwife, was considered lucky when her tubercular son Vassili came home, even if he brought the beautiful Virineya to live with him out of wedlock. But under the old woman's jeers and seeing her lover become more and more unhealthy, she became disgusted and left the house, seeking shelter with Anissia, herself a "loose woman." For a time she got work on a neighboring farm, but when she was looking around for some thing else the engineer on the railway that was being built through the mountains, who had had his eyes on her for some time, came and asked her to do his washing.

God continued to talk to Saul Magara, and finally he received a message that he was going to die. He retired to bed and called all the villagers to watch him. But when a whole day had passed and nothing happened, they began to jeer. He got up from his bed, cursing the Lord for having deceived him, and went out to become the worst drunk in the village. Virineya started her work at the engineer's. When, however, she saw him with lustful eyes hanging around the bath-house, she sent him away with harsh words. But on Whitsuntide, drunk with the strength in her own body, she went to him and together they walked out into the steppe. While they were sitting on the ground Vassili, trembling with anger, came up to them. Virineya stayed behind for a moment to quiet him, but then went on with her engineer, leaving Vassili on the ground. When drunken Saul Magara came along, he was still lying there. Vassili urged him to kill the engineer, and when the old man came upon him some time later in the woods, he attacked him, and in a final drunken blow killed him. Suspicion fell on Vassili, and he was taken off to prison where he died. Meanwhile Virineya got work with the railroad.

VIII

The snows on the steppes were still white and hard. In the village and the barracks beyond the village the snowdrifts stood high and blocked the windows.

But the sunshine was growing warmer and lingering longer each day, and a thirsty wind blew from the warm side and drank the snows. Though they did not melt yet, they lost their crisp brightness. The sparrows bustled more noisily. The stalled cattle lay down less, moved impatiently, restlessly and made their voices heard. And human eyes turned oftener to the sky, longingly, searching for a touch of blue in the swollen grey clouds.

Candlemas fell on a warm, bright day. Everyone was tempted out of doors. Very few stayed in for a nap after their early dinner. Just before noon the lean, overworked horses from the district offices drove up with a tinkling of bells and drew up outside the meeting house. It alarmed the village folk. The elder rose grunting, from where he had been sitting outside his house.

"I can't make out, looks like someone from the district town. They'll be driving the folks into the meetings. Fancy, disturbing people of a Sunday and never giving them a bit of peace."

He brushed the snow angrily from his sheepskin cloak and moved reluctantly. After a short time the little boys were running from house to house under the windows. They tapped cheerily at the panes and called out in ringing voices:

"Uncle Silanti, come to the meeting!"

"Aunt Matriona, send the men to the meeting in the school. And come yourself. The women are to come too, they say."

"Come to the meeting in the schoolhouse. . . . ."

"Come quick to the schoolhouse. There's a big fellow come from town and he's going to tell us all about everything."

One sharp-eyed, cheerful little fellow, dressed in a torn bodice of his mother's even looked in at Mokeikha's.

"Granny-y—hey! Are you asleep? Come on to the meeting. I'm calling all the women. We've been told to call them, so why shouldn't we do it! And the old folks have to come as well."

"Ah, what a fright you gave me, curse you! Has someone else come or what?"

"Yes,—and he's going to tell us about the war, maybe. And show pictures, for all we know. Hop over to the schoolhouse, Granny,—quick as you can!"

"Do you think you'll make me hop over this very minute, you pop-eyed little fool, you! What do I want with your pictures and your idle town talk. Shut that door, will you,—freezing the whole house! I'll give you a slap on the back of the neck that'll warm you for good in a minute. As if I wanted you to come telling me anything."

Nevertheless she dressed herself and went. Grumblingly and seemingly reluctant, she went to the school. It was full of people. Since it was Sunday, one might as well listen and stare. The Kerjaks came and the rabble from the barracks crowded in. Virineya pushed her way in to the place by the window. She did not speak or glance into the faces of the people she met.

The closely packed crowd swore at the newcomer from the district offices, who stayed a long time in the elder's cottage. But the swearing had no heat or liveliness in it. They were growing used to being disturbed by strangers from the town. At the beginning of the war such visitors were only seen in the big important villages. But nowadays they tried to visit even remote places like Akgirovka more than once.

Only old Fedot went on with his mumbling and bitter complaints, long after the rest had finished.

"There's a heap o' bosses nowadays! It's sump'n crool. And all different sorts, you can't get 'em straight no matter what you do. Before—all we knew was the police and the Rural Magistrate. If it was a thing they had to talk to the peasants—well, it didn't take long to talk about. And now—that's a turble chatty fellow in the district office. And everyone has a special job to do. The agronomist there, for instance, and the cattle doctor, and the women that go round vaccinating—and as for the moujik, what he had to do was to carry them in his cart. Why a moujik should have to do this is more'n mortal man can tell! Now they read you out of books and tell you about the war—more bosses—all separate again. You can't say either oh or ah nowadays without a boss. It must be the war that's turned everybody into bosses with learning."

He shook his head sadly, leaned heavily on his staff, and sank into the long dreams of the old—dreams about the past. Therefore, when, a thin newcomer with the untidy locks of hair falling over his worried brow came and talked to the people in a loud voice, Fedot listened to him mechanically, but his mind was running on his own affairs and he often sighed heavily. In outlying villages life was so much simpler in the old days. Village folks were far removed from townsfolk, or big officials, or the Tsar. From all such disturbing visitors they were divided by hills, hollows, forests, rivers without bridges, stretches of low but dense woods and miles of treacherous steppe. Only the police and the rural magistrate braved the jolting of the summer roads and the sudden fury of the winter blizzards on their rare visits. So the various peoples, speaking divers tongues lived for the most part under the rule of small officials like the police sergeant, the village elder and the clerk. True, their very smallness made them all the fiercer. Even the carefree Bashkirs kept in mind the day when it was time to take a bribe to the head

village. The Mordvinians had sore eyes, but still they learned to recognize the clerk from a distance. Even the long bearded, pompous Kerjak gave way when necessary and suffered tobacco, obnoxious above all things to the nostrils of an Old Believer, to be smoked by the officials visiting his village. Not but that he took it to himself as a mortal insult when they did smoke, as he sat staring sulkily at the opposite corner of the school room. One had to put up with these things. Officials were something one had to bear not to enjoy. But the burden was one the people had grown used to, like a well worn yoke. Nowadays since the Tsar had taken to war, his long arm reached everywhere, scooping in the peasants. Unheard of confusion had ensued. And, of course, a whole lot of new officials had been set up. There were so many meetings now—the folk were bothered out of their lives with them. It was a deal more bothersome than even the visits of the police commissary, who would simply give a fellow a crack over the ear, receive something out of the peasant's stores for his pains and drive away. It was all as it should be. Your head would hum for a while afterwards and you might find a tooth or so missing, but that was all. Still, you got it over with at once. These fellows nowadays cost you a lot more and there was such a deal of talking. They came to persuade you to go and fight. Listen, how this one did go on: Serbia —Belgium and all the rest of it. It was as much as you could do to get the better of your own troubles. And here he was going on about somebody else's. Strung his words together very neatly, too. Och—och—och! Lord God, you made a power of different people in your time, but you didn't make land enough to go round, that's plain. People fighting over it everywhere. Friends and kings all trying to get the land from each other. And then the plagues. Three great epidemics had happened within Fedot's memory, but still there was not enough land to go around. And what about all the men who had been killed in the war. If you were to count how many had been killed in this district alone or had died from wounds, or the unknown who had died without being counted among the brave—it would be a pretty long list. Here was that fellow with the big locks of hair spinning a yarn about how brave the Russian soldier was. Brave he was, you may be sure, but people got tired of being brave, too! The Tsar should have pity on them, and try to patch up some sort of a peace. But no, the fellow didn't seem to be saying anything about peace!

Then as if in reply to the old man's thoughts, a woman's shrill, indignant voice interrupted the lecturer with:

"This is I don't know how many times you've come palavering about prisoners in Germany—and showing us pictures of them. Better tell us how we can get our men back again out of Germany. Isn't there any way?"

The lecturer, interrupted just as his voice had reached a tremulous emotional note, looked around at the faces in bewildered silence. He collected himself quickly, however, and went on in the same emotional voice:

"Just a moment, I'll—Someone asked me a question, I believe. . . . I'll reply in a moment. You see, lads—a woman has just asked something—the question comes straight from an aching heart! It is woman—the wife and mother—who bears the burden of our holy war upon her shoulders. But when this war is necessary for the defence of. . . ."

The audience moved nearer. Virka's question had roused them. Something that was either an indignant sigh or a buzz of conversation passed through the room. Fedot pushed his way nearer to the speaker, and interrupted him, gently this time.

"That's a giddy young woman, but she said the right word this time, your

honor! It does sometimes happen like that. It does, so. A child or a woman will blurt out something from downright silliness and it'll turn out just the thing you want at that very minute. What I want to say is—don't get vexed, your honor—what I want to say is: the folk would like to know if there's anything been heard said about peace? Did you hear tell of anything in the town about it?"

Then, all talking at once, the crowd moved in a body towards the speaker.

"Maybe they'll give us a little rest?"

"Mitka, my eldest, was killed and now there's been a letter to say Vasska's been wounded. It's getting too bad, the way things are turning out."

"Listen here, young fellow, I don't know what to call you, tell us, where can we find out about why the pension's not being paid. Here's my man laid up since he came from the war, can't use his legs or arms. . . ."

A thin, yellow-faced woman with a terrifyingly large stomach advanced on the speaker and asked in a wistful, persistent way:

"When he came home on leave, he wrote down his address: 'On Active Service, the Two Hundred-and-Seventh Regiment of. . . .' and Grishka the Caulker's just come back and he says my man's not there at all. . . Where shall I look for him? I've sent round to all the inquiry offices. Where shall I write to now? Eh?"

The anxious buzz grew louder. The speaker could no longer distinguish the questions. Separate words leapt out of the confusion to his ears.

"Peace!"

"The Germans, tell us, what's-his-name. . . ."

"How do you address a parcel to a prisoner?"

"Our Vanka never got the rusks we sent him. . . ."

No one asked about the victories, the defeats, the size of the army or its strength. They talked of smaller things. Everyone of his own interests. Their inquiries divided the army into 'Mitries, Ivans and Vassilies. But the great whole was something beyond them; their minds could not grasp it. It was the business of their superiors and the Tsar: the war, the army, victory, defeat. For them—Vanka's death, Petrukha's wounds, and the end of the war were the chief concerns. These were their very own, their flesh and blood that they had given to the war and had each kept count of. The lecturer was at a loss. A different mood prevailed in the towns where people understood that the war must be fought to a victorious end. But all these villagers could do was to shout stupid things like—peace, peace, and count the holes in their own shirts.

What devil had brought him to this village, anyhow? He had been warned that the people were Mordvinians and in general a wild lot. He mopped his perspiring red face with his handkerchief and began to plead in an embarrassed tone:

"Wait a minute, brothers. . . . Wait, I can't answer you all at once. The country is groaning beneath the burden of war, but. . . ."

He did not know how to wind up the meeting and get to the door.

Anissia's ringing voice sounded in his ear at that moment.

"Aye, if only the tsars would fight it out between themselves, man to man. Whoever wins can come and be our tsar. It's all the same to us, we won't go against him."

The speaker war startled. Things had got to a pretty pass, indeed, hadn't they, when people voiced opinions of this kind. He had got into a mess and no mistake. His superiors weren't likely to praise him for this.

"Hold on. . . . Just a minute, please. Where's the elder! Elder! Call the meeting to order, please. . . ."

But in place of the village elder, a tall, broad shouldered fellow named Anisim Kojemyatov came to the rescue.

"Stop your noise there," he barked. "The idea of bawling at a meeting! It wouldn't be surprising if the women did it, but to see men getting out of hand and talking out of their turn! Let the gentleman finish what he's got to say."

The crowd, accustomed to give way before authoritative tones, gave way now.

"Be quiet, will you! Stop pushing!"

"What are you shouting right in my ear for?"

"Wait! Stop! Hold on there! Easy, I tell you!"

"What am I doing anyway? I only wanted to ask a fellow what knows. . . ."

"Don't mind us, your honor, if everything isn't just as it should be. We're only a rough, ignorant lot of people."

The noisy, passionately sincere questions and declarations died down to a murmur.

Anisim Kojemyatov smoothed down the front of his Sunday jacket and said reprovingly:

"If you come to think of it, nobody's particularly fond of war. But there's nothing to be done about it but to pull yourself together and beat the enemy. There's not a bit of use pestering people wanting to know when there'll be peace and when it'll all be over. They'll let us know when it's over. That's what a moujik was born for: to plough the land and to fight in war time. We must pray and sacrifice; all this shouting won't do no good; it doesn't look well, either."

The lecturer, thus encouraged, continued in the submissive silence that ensued:

"The sufferings of our soldiers are great but the heroic spirit of the army is invincible. And victory is near at hand."

As soon as he had taken his leave of them and gone, the buzz of conversation started again in the school house and the street outside. As she was going home, Virka flung back angrily over her shoulder to the refugee women:

"He talked enough for three and said nothing at all about what we want to know. And then, if you please, you're not to ask about your own business. That got my back up! He needed a good kick to remember us by. Let him have a taste of our fists if he hasn't had a taste of bullets! I don't suppose he's ever been a soldier nor ever lain in the trenches."

A man's short laugh behind made all four women turn sharply. A tall man with a light moustache and a clean shaven chin was walking behind them and laughing at them. He was in a soldier's uniform.

"Well, and have you lain in the trenches such a lot then?" he asked Virka with a not unfriendly jeer. "How do you know, maybe it's nice lying there?"

"Nice for the folk like you, if you haven't had to do it. A fellow with a smooth, shaven face like yours hasn't been anywhere except perhaps at the bootmakers in the town—or maybe you were an orderly and saved yourself that way. First time I seem to have seen your ugly mug. You're not from our village, that's plain. Get along about your business. What are you poking your nose in here for?"

"Oh, ain't you proud! And impudent! You've no sense, either. I was looking at you in the school just now—what a row you kicked up! What was the

use of kicking up a row for nothing? It isn't the like of that chatty fellow does the business."

"Well, if it isn't him, what's he coming here upsetting folk for, and making fun of the peasants? Ah, if I had my way—"

"You'd be Tsarina yourself and making things hum, wouldn't you? Whose family do you belong to, anyhow? I don't seem to know you. Those women with you aren't from our part of the world, but you look as though you were and yet I can't remember who you are."

"What are you sticking to us for, there's getting rid of you! Go about your business. And don't hang round me. I'm telling you. I don't care for lazy folks like you. Other soldiers are wearing themselves out at the front, while your sort hide in nice soft jobs. Pooh! It's a pity both you and that talking fellow wouldn't break your legs!"

The soldier laughed and turned into a lane. Virka abused him and the lecturer the whole way home to the barracks. The women refugees were downcast and unusually silent as they walked along. They were oppressed by their own work. How soon would they be sent back to their own country?

That evening the soldier strolled round to the barracks. Virka was dancing and embracing the Akgirovka blacksmith, a man of very bad reputation. The soldier looked at them for a moment and then went away. Virka's good humor left her at once. She pushed away the blacksmith.

"Get away with you, you carrot-headed devil! I'm sick of you. All you want is to paw a woman! Your own wife's lame and can't manage you properly. What you want is your ugly popeyed mug bashed in. What do you carry on with other women for, tell me?"

The fellow's eyes popped out even further. "But look here, Virka, you were ready for it yourself . . ."

"Well, maybe I was, but now I'm not, see? There's always plenty like you hanging round women's skirts. Don't you come after me any more with your great red face. Find someone else to lark about with!"

She stuck her fist almost up to his teeth, freed herself from his arms and left the street. In spite of the lateness of the hour, Anissia was waiting for her in the barrack. Anissia's eyes looked as though she had been crying and her face was as long as a fiddle.

"I was just thinking of going after you in the street. But I haven't the heart to look at people enjoying themselves just now, so I waited for you here."

Virka gave her an unkind, unwelcoming look and asked:

"What have you been blubbering about today? Did your fellow beat you?"

"Ah, don't talk about him, it goes to my heart. Och, Virka, I'm in such trouble. My poor husband's wounded very badly and lying in a hospital in the town. They've sent for me to come for him."

"What town is he in? How'd you get to know?"

"Pavel Suslov came back today and gave me the order to go for my husband. He says they were in the hospital together in Moscow. The doctors, they cured Pavel so as you can't tell to look at him he'd ever been badly wounded, while my Silanti's just ready to peg out, hardly breathing, they say. He's been let home because he'll die in any case. They fetched Pavel from the town but they need a separate cart for mine. They told me to come for him myself. Och, my head! Och, how my heart aches! There was I waiting and waiting, and hoping and praying! Maybe I'll only be in time to close his eyes and no more . . . "

She broke into a storm of sobs. Soon, however, she wiped away her tears, swallowed her sobs and plunged into hasty, jerky explanations.

"I've got to go as soon as it's light tomorrow and who'll take care of the house and farm? Where shall I put the children while I'm away? And someone's got to have an eye to the sick cow and all my goods. I've come to ask you to oblige me, Virka, and look after the house while I'm away. I heard that on the railway folks are only taken on by day now."

"There isn't work at all now. They're clearing us out of the barracks, very few people are wanted now, and they don't take any women—only men. I hear the railway's not going to be finished this year. They haven't got the means—all a'cause of the war."

"Yes, I heard that, too. I knew you had nowhere to go, though I didn't say so straight off."

"They asked me to come and serve in the tea room down on the railway section . . . "

"Oh, for the love of Christ, Virka, oblige me this time. Though you're a bad woman, you're a grand housekeeper. And although I'm in trouble and all—still I can't help worrying about my home. Come look after it for me, do."

"The men'll get impudent. Supposing they were to come and break your windows for you, all because of me?"

"Oh, I'll speak to the neighbors and they'll keep an eye on things. The sick cow's the chief thing, and you're a good hand with cattle. Get round your blacksmith or whoever else you fancy, if you're nice to them and ask them—and they'll stand up for you."

Virka laughed.

"Oh, you needn't teach me what to do! I can stand up for myself. Alright, I'll come at daybreak tomorrow, since things are that way."

"No, come home with me now. That's why I've come for you. Come along now, dearie, my heart's aching fit to burst with grief. We'll just run in to Pavel's on the way and find out properly how I'm to get to my man in the town. Look sharp, get your things together and let's go."

"What things have I to get together? I've nothing to pack and no trunks to lock. All I've got is what I stand up in. Hey, Ulana, I'm going to the village, d'you hear, so I won't be going out to work with you tomorrow morning."

They walked quickly towards the village. On the way Anissia alternately cried, wiped away her tears, heaved mournful sighs and gave Virka business like instructions about the house.

A couple of houses away from her own Anissia turned into a yard.

"I'll just run in and see Pavel for a minute, and you go along to my house. The children are all by themselves. I don't know whether they're crying or sleeping. I turned the Austrian out today."

Virka looked after her and suddenly remembered something. So that soldier was Pavel Suslov, was he? She had never seen very much of him at any time and he had been away for years, that was why she had not remembered him at once. He had served his time in the army and then the war had come. Four years compulsory service and then nearly three in the war. He hadn't been back home for seven years altogether. Yes, that was the fellow. His wife had died that summer, and the children had waited alone in the house for their father to come home. So that was it! He belonged to these parts and came off a poor farm, and yet he held his head so high.

"Must have kept in a quiet spot in the war," she thought with sudden spite. "I'm sure I don't know where he could have been wounded, a pampered looking fellow like that."

IX

The week was coming to an end and still Anissia did not return from the town. Virineya did all that was to be done in the house and the farmyard single-handed. She got very tired by the evening. Her legs grew heavy and her back ached. But she lay down to sleep with a kind of bitter satisfaction. Although the children she was mothering were another woman's, although the farm she was looking after was not her own, still she managed the familiar labor alone as if she was in her own house. The first few nights the village lads annoyed her. They called her out by obscene names, threw stones and broke one of the windows. But the second night Pavel Suslov came out. It was Anissia he was standing up for, not Virka.

"A man's been away at the war and is dying now, and you blackguards come and ruin his house? I'll call you up at the meeting and make the elders punish you before the whole county! What about that? They'll listen to me, I can tell you! You there, the tousled headed fellow, I mean you were roaring songs out of you and courting the girls when Silanti and I were thinking every day would be our last. Don't you dare to disgrace his yard! If you want that woman, try and catch her in the street, and don't come shaming the house. Else I'll tell the other soldiers and they'll pay you back for Silanti's sake."

So the lads, uttering long obscene curses, left the neighborhood of Anissia's house, and made no more disturbances of a night. Virka got rid of the blacksmith herself. He came to the house one night and made a row. Next morning she went down to the smithy, and not in the least embarassed by the people standing about, said in a loud, firm voice:

"Look here, Nefed, I'm a loose woman. Every good, respectable body can insult me wherever they meet me, and can spit in my shameless eyes and disgrace me with filthy jokes. I'd bear any insult from a good person and do no more than bow my head and go away. But I don't ever see any good folks, somehow. They're all a filthy, loose-living lot. And so they can't expect anything good of me either. When I wanted to carry on with you, I did it. And now I don't want you any more. So don't come bothering me! I'll throttle you with my teeth and tear the face off you with my nails if you do. I'm not afraid of death but I'll teach you to leave me alone. Better do it peaceably! I sleep with an axe beside me and I give you my word, this hand'll raise that axe if need be. I'm not afraid of anything. All these folk'll be witnesses. What I've said I'll do!"

Her eyes glowed like molten gold. Her lips and cheeks turned white. The blacksmith, who had bristled with delight when he had seen her coming, now recoiled. Who had ever heard of it!—a woman coming to say such things to a man—in public. To threaten a moujik like that! A timid soul dwelt in Nefed's big, powerful body. He only bullied the weak, but he shrank before the pressure of the strong. Now he spat out expressively and said in a gloomy tone:

"What do I want with you, anyhow? You must be shameless to come here in broad daylight. Clear out while you have a whole skin on you!"

"I'm going, but remember my words."

"Be off, I'm telling you! It's you yourself who come throwing yourself at the men! I may have carried on with you myself when I was tight but if I did it's gone clean out of my head. Now then, be off with you!"

Virka tossed her head and went away. Then the men broke into indignant protests.

"Fetch her back, the hussy!"

"She wants a good beating for daring to threaten a man, the strumpet!"

"In the old days they knew how to deal with her sort: they'd beat them within an inch of their lives, step up their skirts, tie them up to the cross in the graveyard and leave them to die in their shame."

"So that's the kind of offspring the Kerjaks breed—with their old style prayers and the rest of it!"

"You wouldn't find another such brazen piece in the whole district if you were to search it with a candle in the daytime."

But Virka's fearlessness had its effect. The entire absence of any desire to cling to life involuntarily subdues people. Admiration, mingled with awe, disarmed the moujiks. No one pursued her, and no one ventured to annoy her in Anissia's house any more. Virka was never seen now in the streets of a night.

She met Pavel once down by the river. She had been for water to the ice hole and he was just coming towards it. She was passing him with an indifferent glance when he called out:

"Just a minute, I want to ask you something!"

Virka stood still and inquired in a leisurely, indifferent tone:

"Well, what is it you want?"

These days while she was resting from the hard drinking, the cursing and noise of the barracks, and was engrossed in the happiness of labor she regarded as her own, Virka had forgotten about men and about Pavel. That was why she responded now without a trace of spite or welcome or challenge.

"What are you thinking of doing when Anissia comes home? Going back to the barracks again?"

"I haven't bought a place in the barracks. I got fired. Maybe I'll go and work on the section where the big bosses are, or maybe I'll get work in the town. I'm not forbidden now, I've got a passport of my own and all. What do you want to know for?"

"And you don't fancy coming to live at my place?"

Virka looked attentively straight into his clear, quiet eyes.

"Couldn't you find a decent woman for yourself? You ought to get married, you've got children and a farm to be looked after."

"I'll get married when I find someone that'll suit me. It isn't such a powerful farm I've got, either. A horse and a cow, that's all. The folks round about fed them while I was away. I've paid for the fodder and driven them home again. That's all the farm I have."

"Well, then, you can manage it—you and your girl—between you. You haven't got so much that you can afford to keep a servant."

"It's hard to manage without a woman in the house."

"But you've got a big girl. She must be nearly twelve years old now. You can surely get along with her. Girls of her age can manage a house by themselves. Aye, you're setting yourself up to be a lot, aren't you? You must have earned plenty of money. Send the girl to school indeed! If it was one of the boys I could understand it, but a girl—what sense is there in it? No matter whether she gets any learning or not, when she's married her mind's not her own."

"That's my concern. I'll do what I think fit. You'd better talk about yourself and tell me what I want to know. You don't fancy coming to me, then. You'd rather go traipsing about?"

Virka frowned.

"I'm not hankering after the morsel of food you'd give me. I've seen a thing or two in my time, you know. I know you aren't asking me to live in your house just for the sake of the day's work I'd do. You'd make me sleep with you at night as well, I suppose. Well, although I carry on with men—I do it when I like, and not for the sake of a bit to eat or a present. You can't buy me that way. Find yourself someone else. I'm not coming."

She settled the yoke with the buckets across her shoulders and moved away.

"Wait!"

"Well, what now?"

Pavel waited a little, glanced at her and then said in a simple, straightforward tone:

"There's no sense in the way you behave, woman—cutting off your nose to spite your face. I've heard all about you. I don't care much for talking, but I just want to say this: you've got a lot in you yet, you can work hard. Why not come and do the work you're born to. I'm no gentleman nor rich shopkeeper, I won't feed you for nothing, you may be sure. I'll keep you for the work you do, and you'll eat the same food as myself, such as I can get. As for bothering you and—all that business of sleeping together—well, I won't swear to anything. I'm young still and so are you. Living under the same roof, we're likely enough to flare up. How else could it be? But I can tell you I won't force you. If you don't want, you needn't. Only—I'm telling you the truth—I won't allow any carrying on with other men while you're under my roof. Keep yourself to yourself, if you want to. I shan't press you."

"Your own dirt doesn't smell then, and other folks' stinks."

"That's another thing. I shan't let you misbehave yourself with anyone else that's all. If you can't stand it, you can go, you're not tied to the place. You should have a rest from all this gadding about. I can't do without a woman—anyhow. You're kind to children, I've noticed. Don't say 'no' straight off in a hurry. Think it over today and tell me tomorrow."

Virka shook her head emphatically, and then said softly:

"Folks'll make fun of you. There's been an awful lot of talk about me here."

"It's your own fault; you make so much talk about yourself. If you lived quietly, people would be quieter with you. After watching you a while I can see you make more noise about your sins than they're worth. Have you done such a terrible lot of carrying on then?"

"No. With one of the refugees, but it was only to show off before folk, out of spite, as you might say. I didn't let him touch me, though. Then there was the blacksmith, of course. But I was rowdy; I used to lie down tipsy in the street and act shameless like with the men, before people. But what am I telling you all this for—as if you were my father confessor? Pooh! And me letting my tongue run away with me like a fool. Get away from me, don't come nosing round with your kindness like a dog after a bitch. You're just the same as the rest of the men, you all want me for the same thing, only you put in a bit of talk first. Pooh! Be off, curse you, I declare you're the dirtiest blackguard of them all!"

With that she went quickly up the river bank, scarcely feeling the weight of the full buckets. Her heart beat fast and tears, very rare for her, welled in her eyes.

She cried that night.

Anissia came home at last, pale and unusually quiet. She unharnessed the horse, and carried her purchases into the house. Then she made some in-

quiries about the farm, and only after this sat down on the bench and called the children to her. She carressed and stroked them and broke into the customary wailing and lamentations.

"Oh, my poor orphaned children, your poor, dear father, the light of my life, Silanti Pakhomovich, has left us alone! Oi—oi—oi! And me never looking for this, never guessing, till it came down like a dark night on my soul. Oh, my white dove, my love, my falcon, my own dear spouse, Silanti Pakhamovich! There's my feet going walking, and my eyes looking out everywhere but my feet'll never take me to you, and my eyes'll never see you, never light on you more. You've left your spouse, you've left your own little children, you've gone and you'll never come back no more. You're laid in the damp earth, mother earth, in a strange place, far away, in a strange graveyard, not our own. You're laid deep down and covered over with earth and weighed down with a cross—you'll never get up, nor look at me nor shout at me, nor fondle me any more. The feet that were so light will walk no more, the bright eyes'll see no more. Oh, it's sick I am and weary of this world, weary of looking out at God's world. Wrap me up in my shroud, too—close my eyes and lay me down beside him in the cold earth. Oh, it's not the birch tree in the field trembling and shaking and bending in the wind, but your wife, your heart-broken widow, beating her poor head on the ground, calling to her bright-eyed falcon, and waiting in vain for the sound of your voice. But your dear voice she'll never hear again."

She lamented for a long time in rich, picturesque language, in doleful wails, in copious tears she poured out her grief and enumerated the cares and trials of a widow's life. All the village women ran to the cottage. When the floods of tears and words had dried up, Anissia gave a detailed account of Silanti's death, of what she had seen in town and of the rumors she heard concerning the war. Then she mixed the dough for the wake, and bustled about the house.

Virineya was watering the cattle in the yard. Her thoughts dwelt on Silanti's death and she sighed.

"The hour of death'll come for every one of us, and no one knows when. Tomorrow it may come to me."

And all of a sudden, the sounds of the farmyard were borne in upon her in a new way; the lowing of the cattle, the lively stirring of the pigs in the stye hard by; she sniffed the smell of the snow and of the manure. She felt her own hot, live body. Then like a chilling black wind across her mind came the thought of death. How could it be that the blood would grow cold in her veins all at once, and all living things vanish from her sight? And the cows would low and the pigs would nozzle unceasingly in their trough and the sun would rise day by day and warm everything and everyone, while she Virka would be lying in the cold earth.

She was shaken from head to foot with sudden horror. Flinging down her bucket, she rushed out into the yard where it was still daylight. She breathed quickly, greedily, as if she had only just escaped from death. Right up to the close of the day she felt, clearly and gratefully, a tremendous satisfaction in her own strong body. That night as she lay down, she thought to herself:

"Cattle and folks and grass—everything on earth is born to die; but cattle and grass don't worry themselves thinking, while folks are always thinking and trying to make everything strong and lasting. It's a short hour of life people have and there we go worrying and forcing ourselves to do things we don't want and breaking our hearts."

Early next morning she tapped at the window of Pavel's cottage.

X

Pavel walked into the house as if he was tipsy. His face wore a vague bewildered smile and his eyes looked drunken. Virka was astonished. She had been living under his roof for a month now and had never seen him drunk once. People had told her he never drank.

"What's up, Pavel? Have you had a drop too much?"

"No. The elder's brought such news from the head village that all those who've heard it are going about like as if they're drunk. The Tsar's gone."

"Gone? How's that? Have they set up another one or what?"

"No. He's gone for good. We're not going to have any more Tsars."

Virka sat down on a bench.

"You were never one for joking, Pavel, but . . ."

"It's no joke, I can tell you. The elder's brought over a letter from the office. They sent for the school teacher—she's going to read it out at the meeting just now. There's no more Tsar for us! One's given up the throne, another's said he doesn't want it and before you know where you are—they're all knocked out. I'm off to town tomorrow to find out properly about everything."

Then as if joy had made him frank, he added:

"I knew it. . . . We were expecting this. We got wind of it back there in the town. Yes, and then I used to have talks, on the quiet, with a couple of fellows here. And listen, Virka, the peasants weren't a bit frightened when they heard. I was surprised, really. They weren't a bit frightened—only surprised to think that the people could have got the better of the Tsar."

"Yes, but this is an out of the way spot, it's all the same who we've got to live under. In other places, I don't doubt but that they're frightened enough. What you've got to tell our folk—me, for instance—is not about the Tsar, but the commissary of the police? Is he to stay? Will we have the same people over us we've always had?"

"Not a bit of it! The police commissary's run away and the sergeant's been caught hiding in a cellar."

"No—o! You're lying! You must be! That's something new. Pavel, how can it be? Oh, where's my shawl? When are they going to read the letter?"

The school house was packed closer than it had ever been before. People crowded up the windows and the passage and overflowed into the street.

The youthful, anemic looking teacher read out in a weak voice, trembling with nervousness:

"—We have resolved in the interests of our people to abdicate from the throne of the Russian Empire."

Only scraps of words reached the ears of the crowd. The peasants stirred restlessly, and at last one called out:

"We can't hear anything! We can't tell what you're saying! Better let a man read it!"

The crowd echoed his words.

"Let one of the men read it that can!"

"Yes, of course. What sort of a voice could you expect of a woman. They can only squeak, but as for speaking out clearly—they're no good."

"If it was even one of our women here from the village. But it's all 'ti-ti' with this one."

"These town folks do have thin squeaky voices, to be sure!"

"Hey, is there anyone here who can read?"

"Where are the soldiers; they'll be able to read. Here step out in front, soldiers!"

"They're in front as it is. Where else would they be?"

"Let Pavel Suslow read it! He's a good reader."

"Hey, Pavel! Pavel! Where's Suslov?"

"Come on out here and read it to us. We're sure to hear him alright, he's got a big throat!"

Pavel, with a stern face and shoulders slightly raised, began to read in penetrating tones the long delayed manifestoes and newspapers. It took a long time. There was profound silence in the classroom. For over an hour the peasants and their wives stood there—a solid wall, in silence. Even in church they had never stood so silently. They were unusually quiet when they dispersed, they exchanged opinions in low, subdued tones. Only a young soldier with a hairless face like a girl, ran from one group to another, stuttering and choking in his eagerness to speak.

"We aren't going to be called privates any more. 'Soldier' is a title of respect now. You can't say 'private.' Who's your superior now? Aye, I'm going to Romanovka, that's where I'm going to go. You know that son of Alexei Petrovich Kovershin's who got to be an ensign? We were in the same coach coming home on leave and I says to him: 'Hey, Stepa,' I says, 'give us a cigarette.' And he up and says to me: 'Not so much of the Stepa,' he says, 'I'm an officer now and you're only a private; you don't know your place!' Right before everyone in the coach—Well, I went as red!—I'll go and see him on purpose. 'Well,' I'll say, 'who am I now, eh? Just a private, eh?' And I'll show him this (making a derisive gesture). I'm a private no more from now on!"

That night Pavel and Virka could not sleep for a long time. They slept in the same bed. When she had first come to live under his roof, he asked her as they were getting ready for bed:

"Well, what do you think about it? Have you come just to mind the house or will you live with me same as I was your own man?"

Virka did not answer for some time. Then she said simply and quietly:

"It's all right. We live under the same roof, we might as well sleep together. Only—it's not nice before Aniutka. She's a big girl already."

"She's asleep."

"Still it's not nice. When I was a little girl and noticed my father and mother together for the first time, I remember I felt ashamed, somehow, it took my breath away. And here am I, a stranger in the house and with a bad name into the bargain. She'll be upset to think of her father—The first grievances hurt most. Wait a while, until she gets used to me."

But Aniutka would not respond to Virka's kindness. There was marked hostility in the eyes that watched Virka, and to her questions she either refused to reply or replied with abuse. When her father was taking her away to the town, she turned round in the sledge to look at Virka, who was seeing them off. It was a look of such intense, unchildlike hatred that it sent a pang through Virka's heart for long afterwards whenever she remembered it. Aniutka's childish spite was the most painful punishment for her sins that she had ever suffered and she took it to heart. But Semka and Panka, aged five and three respectively, soon grew accustomed to her, and ran about clinging to her skirts as they had clung to their mother's. The other women were surprised at the way she tended them and petted them. Anissia laughed at them when she met them and remarked:

"We were just saying that widowers shouldn't marry again but hire some barren, loose-living woman like yourself to look after their children. There's certainly some that do their best."

But the sneering and jeering at Virka did not continue for long. Pavel was a man of few words, but his words carried weight. He silenced one woman after another and they held their peace. Virka began to look calmer; yet she seemed as if she was fading, pining away quietly. She spoke little and not often, looked thoughtful and moody. Why is it that in some people the heart is insatiable, and no matter what they are given, they are very rarely joyous? Nothing is quite right, there is always something lacking, joy is always poisoned. Pavel was a quiet chap, and not lazy. He could read and write very well too. That was why, although he was poor, people did not dare to boss him about. They were afraid of him. He was sorry for Virka. The first night, as soon as Aniutka had left them, Virka slept with him. She wondered at his gentleness. Even Vasska had not proved as careful or as capable of approaching her in this bad business in a good way. Pavel never used endearing words. Only once, that night, he exlaimed, with a passionate sigh: "My own love!" He behaved to her as if she was a wedded wife whom he had begged and prayed to marry him and was sleeping with for the first time, instead of a loose woman who had been pawed by many hands. It both gladdened and embarrassed her and the embarrassment swallowed up the gladness. From that time on she felt guilty, as if she had secretly dressed up in clothes that did not belong to her, and was afraid someone would see her and tear them off her and heap insults on her head. It made a barrier between her and Pavel. Once, it grew too much for her; she flew into a rage and got tipsy as she had done in the old days. She was rowdy that night and bawled at him for some time.

"What are you holding your head up so high for before everybody—as if you were the Tsar himself? You think I can't see it, I suppose? You think I'm terrible glad you keep me here, do you? I hate the sight of your brazen face, and your humble ways of going on. I'll clear out tomorrow morning, see if I don't. I'm sick of the sight of you."

He quietly unbuckled his belt and threatened her with it.

"That'll do! Hold your tongue, else I'll whip you like a dog. I can't stand the sight of drunken women, they make me want to vomit. Lie down, on the stove shelf and mind!—not a sound nor a stir out of you! When you're sober we'll talk things over. Maybe I'll chuck you out myself yet."

He did not raise his voice but he spoke sternly and distinctly. Their eyes met. His light eyes darkened, but they did not sparkle as Virka's did when she was angry. His look was hard and lusterless. Virka was the first to lower her eyes. She dawdled about the next morning and seemed as if she was intending to go, but she did not go in the end. Pavel spoke to her as usual about the affairs of the farm. That night Virka wept for the first time on the man's shoulder.

"I don't know myself how to live with you. There are times—like now—when I'm ready to wash your feet and drink the water. And then again I get so sick and weary—I feel I'd like to run away and never see you again."

"Don't try to be clever and don't act the fool. Live and let live. Do your work, look after the children and do the best you can for yourself. Now I want to go to sleep. That's enough of talking. I've never wasted so much time on a woman in my life. Go to sleep."

So they lived together. They were friendly but not close to one another. They did not indulge in long conversations in the daytime, and at night they never spoke at all. His kisses were hot and affectionate, but he said little as a rule. The night of the meeting, however, they talked for a long time—Pavel much more than Virka. He told her about the town, and the bad Tsars, and

what he had learned in the town. And he told her about life in general: why it was hard for the poor and frightful for the lowest of all. He spoke about the peasants. Virka listened attentively to his talk and it sounded to her like a song in some kindred tongue that was yet her own. The sound and the rhythm touched her, but the sense eluded her. She wanted to hear more and to grasp the meaning. But again in the daytime, he spoke little to her. Then he left for the town and stayed away a whole fortnight. He spent all his money and they had to sell the sheep they had recently acquired. Virka was vexed, but she did not dare to reproach him. After all, she was not his wife, she thought to herself, but only a housekeeper hired for a while. Let him do as he liked. Once more they seemed to be drifting apart.

XI

The confusion lasted well on into the spring. Ordinary village gatherings became political meetings, and people had to be addressed as "comrade" or "citizen." Strange words came out with a new ring—words like "instructions," "resolutions," "constituent assembly." At first people came readily enough to the meetings and were noisy and eager. Then they got tired. Elections and meetings were all very well, they said, but the land had to be got ready for ploughing. Little by little they began to neglect the meetings. After all, nothing had changed except that people had been elected to be responsible for all sorts of duties. The goods in the shops on the railway section had even risen in price. There was a scarcity of things the peasants needed. There were no nails to be got anywhere in the district, and salt was very dear. The distribution of land remained as it had always been: some had a great deal, others—very little or none. And the talking in the meetings would drive anyone cracked. Old Fedot declared, thumping his stick on the floor for emphasis, at one of the meetings:

"What are we gathering here every Sunday for, as if it was the Holy Communion we were going to take? And week days as well they often call us. And there's the carts to be seen to. The ground's getting clear of snow already. A moujik's itching to get to work on his land, if he's the right sort, and instead of work, we're doing this, that and t'other, electing deputies, if you please. The soldiers are home in the villages again but there's been nothing said about peace. Supposing they drive the lads back to the war just before plowing time. Now listen to my advice, old folks. It's this: we've elected and collected all manner of committees. Let Pavel Suslov act for all of us, like the elder used to do, and write the papers to the town. And see that the soldiers aren't driven back. If he wants deputies for the big meetings let him find them among the idlers, folk who haven't got to think of their land and their farming. No sensible folk can afford to waste time."

So they flung it all on Pavel's shoulders. He spent the whole day in the school. People from the town still continued to come, but the meetings were poorly attended. Only the soldiers came for a short time to demand "peace" in a friendly way of the people from the town who were now called "orators." Even the soldiers hardly ever stayed to the end. The refugees from the barrack and the poor from Lower Akgirovka collected every Sunday without any previous arrangement, at the smithy. They chattered long, foolishly and obscurely about the land, about wealthy farmers with big farms, about how the poor peasants in other places had taken the land by force from the rich landowners. It was not like that here, though. You were not allowed to touch anything, not even the estate belonging to the Rural Magistrate. A

guard had been sent to watch it. Although Pavel Suslov had no more than they had, the smithy crowd began to look askance at him. Well-to-do folks like the Kerjaks, visited him now and asked him back. He looked dark and thin, and returned home ill humored. He only ground out a few words through his teeth to Virka now and again, and he was cross with the children. Then one Sunday he got up very early, collected a number of little boys and sent them round to summon the folk to a meeting.

"Don't leave them alone until they come," he exhorted the small boys. "Tell them Pavel has something very important to say."

When there was a fair, though not a full gathering—he announced in loud, decided tones:

"Now here, comrades and citizens of the honorable community, are all the papers, explanations, and rules for you! And here's our village clerk along with them: he'll stay in his place as he was before the Revolution and as he was in my time. So you can let me go. I don't want to have anything more to do with this business."

They protested loudly and begged him to change his mind, but he firmly refused.

"We've got other ideas, me and the rest of the soldiers."

An old Kerjak grunted and asked out loud:

"You're going to try and take the land with guns in your hands, are you?"

"We'll see about that, but anyhow—I'm not everybody's friend and leader. I'll go with whoever suits me best."

To that the Kerjak replied angrily:

"No matter what changes and trouble may come about, some sort of order must be kept. See the folks at the smithy don't talk you round and get you into a mess. I've heard a thing or two. The fellows you're in league with are hiding here from the war. Their leave's up long ago—with many of them—I know, and there's some that haven't got proper leave at all."

"Maybe you'd like to inform on us?" shouted the soldiers. "Clear off to the war yourself, old croaker, if you're so damned fond of it."

"We've shed enough of our blood!"

"If you do any dirty tricks you'd better look out, we'll pay you back."

The shouting lasted a good while, then all the soldiers went out at once. The Kerjaks put a man of their own in Pavel's place, and Pavel returned home radiant.

"Now I've got rid of one job, I'm ready to start another," he said, giving Virka a friendly slap on the back.

Virineya laughed. "You're always itching to be at something. You want to make a noise. And I—I look at things in my stupid way and think to myself—what sort of freedom is this? They don't put a stop to the war and they don't give us any land, and the rich fellows shove us out of the way with their great bellies. If you're going to shake a thing why—shake it to the roots. I met a relation of mine, Uncle Antippe, the other day, and I couldn't help saying to him: 'Better be prepared uncle, we'll be coming to take away your property soon. We're all equal, they say—well, then let's make ourselves equal.' "

"Did you say that? Well, and what did he say?"

"He said some bad words, and his eyes were like a wolf's. But he didn't dare touch me. And you know, it strikes me that although you'd hardly notice any changes in our life here, still, it isn't what it was. Time was, he'd have grabbed me and shaken the life out of me. And now he stepped out of the way pretty quick."

They both laughed. Pavel looked into Virka's eyes with new affection and said:

"I think you're going to be of help to me in other ways besides housekeeping in the future."

More and more frequent became the visits of the teachers, agronomists and even learned ladies from the town to explain about the Constituent Assembly and all the different parties, and to distribute leaflets and pamphlets. The peasants brought the books to Pavel.

"We can't make head or tail of it all! Just have a look and tell us what it says in here about the land."

Pavel took up the matter with enthusiasm, began to entice people into the Bolshevik Party. He collected a good number including nearly all the soldiers and even some of the well-to-do farmers. The men working on the railway line came in crowds. The poorer peasants of Akgirovka were divided into several groups. Some were for Pavel, some had joined the Social Revolutionary Party headed by the teacher at the school. There turned out to be more of these than of Bolsheviks. Kojemyakin had a fair following too, of those who were drawn to the party of the gentry. They were called Constitutional Democrats. Heated arguments arose between the different parties in the village. Once the argument even ended in a serious quarrel. It was Virineya who started it. She took it as a personal insult to Pavel that the men who had once crowded round him now deserted him. When she knew some of them to be in the school she ran there impulsively, and in ringing, passionate tones began to shame them.

"Where do you think you're going? Aren't you sick of fighting yet? The soldiers have only had just a rest, and there's I don't know how many crippled for life. Tsar Nicholas was the foremost fighter and he's been shoved out of the way, and here you want to put the yoke round your necks again only with a different band.

"It's easy seen you didn't suffer enough yet. You're holding tight to the land, are you? But who'll till the land if the war isn't over? Who wants the end of the war? Only the Bolsheviks, they're the only folk who're trying to stop the war. You're all talking about fighting it out till you win! Wait, you'll get 'win.' You think you're clever, but you're only going to be corpses."

She had touched them on the raw, but that only made them the more indignant. They were getting used to women with schooling and men who explained public affairs to them, but that a woman from their own village, a woman, moreover, with a disreputable past not very far behind her, should come and try to teach men—

"Aha, it's you hussy. . . . What do you know about it?"

"It's because the Bolsheviks are making everything common property—you know. The women'll be common property, too, and that's what she's after, same as she always was."

"What are you wasting time talking to her for? Grab hold of her and give her a lesson!"

Three men went for her. She fought off the three men with extraordinary fury and strength. She scratched and bit and although she got a black eye and her mouth was bleeding and her sides ached, she got away alive and with no bones broken. Then the peasants, thoroughly roused, went off to the smithy, where a desperate fight took place.

Pavel scolded Virineya roundly and then burst out laughing.

"Look at the orator! Been and had her face smashed in. They certainly

used their hands on you—why the whole meeting must have set on you at once."

"You stop your jeering! Although I've been beaten, I'll go for you. What if I am only a woman, I've something else in my head besides housework. And my heart's just boiling. Ah, what fools they are! Off to the war with the others. . . ."

The village women teased Virka for a long time afterwards about her attempt to teach the men. Anissia even spat heartily when she encountered her.

"I did think you had some sense, and you weren't as bad as all that. But now I can see you're a downright bad character. If it isn't one thing, it's another: you don't seem to be able to get along with respectable folks at all."

Virineya laughed. "Yes, it was a disgrace to be beaten, I own. My face feels as hot as fire when I think of it. But all the same, you'll remember yet what I was beaten for. It was for telling the truth, because, I'm sorry for the state our peasants are in. And although I've a hot temper, my anger didn't last long this time. They beat me out of downright ignorance. You wait, you'll be wanting to marry again yet, and if the Bolsheviks don't get the upper hand, you'll lose your second husband to the war same as the last."

"Oh, stop croaking, you witch; don't try to frighten me. The soldiers are all coming home. They're running away one after the other as fast as they can and everything will get settled without your rowdies that want everything to be equal. Even children of the same father and mother aren't born equal. If some live better than others, it only shows they've worked more. Pooh! I'd like to spit straight in your shameless eyes for you, so I would. You think you're fine, and the way you stick your nose in where it's not wanted. There are some moujiks cleverer than the others, and they don't want to hear about any party at all. It's all empty talk. And fancy a woman setting herself up. My compliments. . . ."

As she passed by she fired a succession of spits towards Virka's side. But soon afterwards she came to the conclusion that Virka was really a witch. Shortly after this conversation new police were sent from the town to drive the soldiers in the outlying villages back to the war. But the police returned secretly that same day without the men they had come for. And the unrest continued.

The time came when the land demanded all the peasants' time and attention. Arguments and talking lost interest. Changes were forgotten in strenuous labor. Those who owned little land and those who owned none went out as of old to sweat and toil in other men's fields. Pavel alone neglected to sow his meagre portion of land. He had agreed to go to the Peasants Congress in the county town as a representative of the outlying villages. Life went on in Akgirovka in the old way, right up to harvest time.

In the autumn the confusion broke out again. There was a great deal of talk about the Constituent Assembly. Pavel was away from a long time in the market town. He gave up farming altogether, and they sold the horse. They began to make inroads on their last stores of grain. Virka went out to work by the day again in order to get enough to feed the children. And although people said nasty things to her, they were always ready to hire her. As they expressed it, they would hire Satan himself at a busy time as long as he was a good worker. Pavel went off to the election meetings again, to collect the nominations for the Constituent Assembly. Almost everyone in the village knew this new word now.

The leaves grew rusty on the trees, the earth cooled. Though the sun still shone and gave warmth, it was not the warmth of summer, but a mild sun-

shine without fierceness. There was a sadness in the air. The grain had been gathered and the fields looked melancholy in their autumn bareness. Pavel came home from the chief village and brought some papers with numbers on them; a great many, more than anyone could remember, there was even a Bashkir candidate. These voting slips had to be taken to the chief village on a certain day and placed in a box. At first the peasants made a clamorous protest and said they were not going to worry themselves taking the slips back. But again the unrest got into them. The war was not over yet. A dispute arose with the Bashkirs over the land. Akgirovka was built on land rented from the Bashkirs, and that was why the village bore the Bashkir name, Ak-gir, which means a white horse. The village should have been called White Horse. The lease of the land was up now, and the Bashkirs were threatening to take it back, divide it up among themselves and do away with the Russian village altogether. The harvest was gathered in with a sore struggle. The questions of land and of the end of the war were to be decided, it was said, by the Constituent Assembly. That was why they grew nervous as the time of the elections drew near. They began to sort out the ballot slips. Only one paper could be put into the box, so one had to choose which. The women ran in to Virka to find out from her which slip to drop into the ballot box.

"Do tell us, there's a good girl! Never mind, let bygones be bygones and help us. At first we were downright ashamed to poke our noses into this business—women like us. But now our own husbands make us do it, without telling us which of the voting papers is which."

"Virka, which of these papers is voting for the end of the war? Tell us, do!"

"Listen here, my husband told me to drop in this one, number one. He says we're well off so ours is number one. He doesn't know I've come to you. I came on the quiet. My son hasn't come home from the war yet. Tell me which paper is voting for the Bolsheviks and I'll drop it in without anyone knowing."

"It's number five. That's right, you drop number five in. It's going against your own sort but still—drop it in. It's for the end of the war."

"What do I care if it is against our sort. I want my son back, that's all. Fathers have hard hearts, but a mother gets so heartsick and weary—that neither a paper nor a sharp knife has the power to frighten her. Let them do what they like so long as my son comes back alive."

The women bemoaned the fact that they could not understand the figures.

"Which is number five? How can we remember the look of it when we're not used to it. And if we tear up the others and leave this one, my husband will shout at me. Here you are, Virka, put a tiny drop of oil on this slip, the one you said was number five. I want to put this one in."

"Pavel said they'd throw out any that were marked."

"I doubt if they'll do it, though. There aren't so many folks can read and write: they all mark their papers. Just make a very little mark, one that wouldn't be noticed when they're taking them out in a hurry. Here—somewhere up in the corner."

So Virka marked it with a tiny drop of oil in one corner.

It was a clear, serene, golden day when the procession set out from Akgirovka for the head village. All along the road stretched a chain of carts occupied by peasants and their wives, the women in their holiday shawls with their babies in their arms.

The office was in a wooden house approached by a high flight of steps. It

was situated outside the village, almost in the fields, and was now surrounded by carts. The scene was as gay and noisy as a caravan of gypsies. The porch of the house was gray with soldiers' coats.

The voting took place in a big room, the walls of which were hung with the empty frames that had contained the portraits of the Tsar and Tsarina, a large, dusty icon in one corner and the new orders. The middle of the room was occupied by a long table. To one side of it stood a painted wooden box, evidently sent from the town. Around the table, their faces wooden with tension and importance, sat the men who formed the commission. The local school teacher was the chairman. His left eyebrow kept twitching. But he spoke forcefully, and gave concise instructions as to how to approach the box and how to drop the papers in. He cut short all unnecessary questions.

"You should have listened properly to what was said at the meetings."

Pavel sat by the box. He was red and perspiring but assured. A buzz of conversation, broken by exclamations and bursts of laughter came from outside. There was tense silence in the room where the box was. It was broken occasionally by people going up to the box to vote. The men went up with hasty strides, and dropped in their slips in silence, frowning heavily; the women burst into giggles, confused, and invariably prefaced their voting with some remark. First of all, they would say a prayer before the icon in the corner, then they would eye the box suspiciously and push the paper slowly, with trembling hands, through the slit. Practically every one of them inquired of all:

"Where have I to put it? In this here? How shall I do it?"

One lively soldier's wife, after dropping in her paper, cried with sparkling eyes:

"Women have got to be reckoned with nowadays. Now, girl, don't do us dirt, drop in number five!"

At this the school master shouted angrily:

"Propaganda by the ballot box is strictly forbidden! If you've dropped your paper in, be off with you."

"What are you bawling about? Don't you do so much bawling, my lad, the time's gone by for that now and number five's the right paper to drop in."

At that moment a boy with dark, oblique eyes burst into the room. He wore a black hood and a rusty skull cap covered his shaven head. He rushed straight up to the table swinging a long knout in his hand.

"What do you want, kid? Where are you trying to get to?"

"Give us Bashkir paper—number two! We don't want any others. Here are yours!"

He pulled out a bundle of crumpled papers from the breast of his coat and flung them down on the table.

"Here, pick them out, please, quick—our people are waiting. I galloped here quick. I whipped my horse all the way."

The chairman swore and made a gesture of despair. The clerk who was sitting beside him rose, took a sheaf of paper out of the cupboard and handed them to the young Bashkir.

The boy's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. He grabbed the papers and ran out.

The schoolmaster sighed, mopped his perspiring brow and shook his head. The people kept on coming. The hubbub in the street grew louder. The soldiers gazed in through the windows and made audible guesses about the voters.

"That fellow with the red face is sure to be for number one. Hey, Pavel, shove him away from the box."

An angry voice came from the street.

"It's only the blackguards and the lowest scum that's voting for number five. I seen that horse thief we beat up—he was coming with number five in his hand. I seen it."

"Stop this agitation, will you!"

A new hitch occurred at the table when a tousle-headed, bow-legged little fellow thrust half a dozen slips into the chairman's hands.

"Which is number three? Eh? I got them mixed up in my hurry. I put them apart from one another and now they're all mixed up again and there you are. Come on now, show me which is which!"

"But it's got to be kept secret, don't you understand, dead secret! It's forbidden to show anyone anything."

"Ah, there's no secret about it at all. Everybody knows. I wanted to put in number five at first but they told me to put in number three. Which is the best?"

The chairman clutched his head in despair.

"It's imposible! It was all explained to them, we went round all the villages! Well, what's to be done now!"

Suslov laughed and rose from his place. He took the little peasant by the shoulders and led him out of the room. After that things went smoothly except for the hubbub in the street.

Suddenly a penetrating voice rose above the noise.

"Makrushkin's brought a whole cartload of folks in from his farm and they're all voting number one. They've got three horses to fetch them. Don't let him in."

But the crowd made way for Makrushkin as usual. His sharp black eyes bored like gimlets into anyone who happened to come within his range, as he protested in his pleasant tenor voice:

"Nobody saw whether it was number one or not, did they? It's number two I've brought with me. I'm voting for the Bashkirs, they're easy folk to get on with, more after my own heart than the Russians. It was through them that I first got a start in life. I'm for the Bashkirs. Number two—I'm voting—number two, see."

A tall, gloomy soldier interrupted him angrily with:

"Aye, but wait, we'll clear it all up yet and get the land for those who till it. We'll take it away from you—you with your fifteen laborers."

"I'll go over to the Bashkirs altogether and join their faith. Folks are free to change their religion as they like nowadays. And the Bashkirs will give me more land still. There's enough simple folks to last our time. Yes, I'm going over to the Bashkirs for certain."

The elections lasted two days. Passions flared up throughout the whole district. On the day the slips were counted the soldiers crowded round the table where the commission sat, and throughout the process eyed the slips greedily, bawled and cursed. The counting was finished notwithstanding. Mounted volunteers of various persuasions escorted the ballot box for fear of anything untoward happening.

The elections had roused the people. Every day that dawned turned out more disturbing than the last. People whose voices had never been heard before were now raised. The poor and the railway workers demanded land

and peace. Pavel Suslov became their leader. By the end of the winter, when the Bolsheviks had seized power all over the country, Pavel was the first in the district. The unrest had spread throughout that big country inhabited by so many different nationalities.

"You'll come to a bad end. You've taken that kind of a road. I can feel it—you'll end up badly," said Virka to Pavel.

"What should I do then? Lie down and doze on the stove and hide behind your petticoats."

"If you did, I'd put rat poison in your cake for you. What you've started, you've got to stick to. It's your job. Only sometimes I feel scared for you and my heart's heavy."

"Don't scare yourself and worry. Look after my children. Looks like as if you and me were going to grow old together. I've got used to you. I never got so used to any woman, not even to my first wife, as I have to you. You're my wife now, my own woman—till I'm old—till I'm dead. There's just one thing though, you ought to have a child. Why don't you have one?"

The light died out in Virka's eyes, and her head drooped as if she felt guilty.

"I'm barren, it seems," she said with a heavy sigh. "I blamed Vasska for it, but it must have been me that was barren all the time."

She sat for a long time after that with bent head.

The unrest in the county spread. The Cossacks were following a policy inimical to that of the Bolsheviks. They had got the Bashkirs over on their side, and made them all sorts of promises. There had even been an attack on the head village, but it had been repulsed. In the winter, however, a serious war broke out.

Pavel Suslov came home from the front once for a whole day. He was very gloomy. He and Virineya lay talking softly all the night. Next morning she looked very yellow when she got up, and her lips were tightly shut. There were lines around her mouth and they did not disappear even when she timidly announced to Pavel in the middle of the day:

"Listen, Pavel, I'm in the family way. I was afraid to believe it at first, but now I'm certain."

He looked into the big, anxious eyes, the pleading face and chuckled:

"All right. Have your baby and when we've finished off the Cossacks, I'll come home and be glad to see my new son. Well, come on, give us something to eat, will you? I've got to go."

He was just preparing to ride out of the yard when Magara entered it. His hair was very grey now, but still as powerful and tousled as ever. Virka gave a startled cry and turned pale. Though by nature not a nervous woman, Magara's unexpected appearance brought back the past to her. She had a presentiment of evil.

"Take me along with you," said Magara to Pavel without any preliminaries. "I'm still strong and I'd like to fight for truth. Where's your troops at just now?"

Pavel knew Magara and had heard a lot about him.

"What is there for a holy man like you to do in our troops?" asked Pavel with a chuckle.

"Where have you come from?"

"Prison. Just been let out."

"Was it for that fellow—the engineer—you were in prison?" asked Virka. Her voice trembled.

Magara did not so much as turn to look at her. His blood-shot eyes never left Pavel's face, but it was her question that he answered.

"No. For blasphemy and disrespect to sacred things. It was before the Revolution. I spat on the icon in the church and blasphemed. There was a saint in the icon looked like the one who first came to me in a vision and drove me to praying . . ."

"God won't leave me alone," he went on in a deep hollow voice. "Now I want to fight for truth for his sake again. I'd like to go and fight for the poor, I'd strike a blow for our moujik breed. They went and disturbed the moujik but they give him no chance. If a moujik's rich, he can go into trade, while the poor man hasn't enough land. I want to help alongside of you. I'll go with you in God's name. It was for God's sake I sinned and killed a man. He laid it on me as a duty, so I must go out and kill for the sake of right."

Pavel sighed.

"You're a bit touched in the head, I think. There's no doubt but you've got God on the brain. Still, you can come with us if you like. I don't suppose you'll stay long, but you'll be useful just now. You're able to fight well. I'll see if I can get you a horse."

So they went away together. Magara was killed soon afterwards through his own foolhardiness. With wild yells to his horse he rode, alone, straight at a Cossack patrol. Pavel told Virka about it when he came to spend a brief hour with her for the last time. Virka sighed.

"You know, Pavel, there's many a one here in the village gone queer in some way or other. Here they've sat in the same place come-day, go-day, till they've started to rot from sitting here so long. Some are cursing all this upset and saying: why should the moujik bother? But what I think is—it had to be: the time's come when the moujik can't go on living any longer in the old way."

Pavel did not reply. He rose and got ready to go and kissed the children. Virka fell on his neck and clung to him silently. He gave her a quick kiss, as if he was snapping at her, pushed her gently away and strode up to the door. At the threshold he halted, and without turning his head, said:

"Look after yourself well. I've got terrible used to you. Behave yourself properly, don't go wrong again. When your babe's born take pity on it and care for it. I keep thinking about it, somehow. I'm sorry I couldn't wait to see it."

Then he turned his head and said with a little sad, tender laugh:

"Keep your eye on your work as well; I'll be sending messages through to you. Well, that's all, I'll be going. Give us another kiss. Goodbye."

He went away. She gazed after him. And as she did so, one of those sudden flashes that come so seldom to the dull, half-blind eyes of humanity, lit up her life with Pavel. It passed before her eyes in that second just as it had actually been lived and as she had never seen it before. While they had lived together, she had often been cross, often felt dissatisfied and hostile to him She had regarded him as her own, her chosen husband and even grown accustomed to him. But never once had she embraced him with such a choking pain and such intensity of feeling as she now felt when she looked after him. It was only now when he could not hear her and she could not overtake him and, for all she knew, she might never see him again, that she felt how dear he was to her. Dear as only one human being can be to another.

"Pavel . . . Pashenka . . . "

All day she went about as if in a dream, tormented by the words she had

not said to him—words that scalded her heart now. Oh, if only she could bring him back. For one little hour. . . If she could only tell him!

XII

All her pent-up passion and longing for Pavel Virka put into his work. Over this she took a great deal of trouble. Akgirovka was an out of the way place. The Cossacks had not yet appeared to work their will on it. But the Kerjaks from the hill along with Kojemyakin and about five more rich men, took Pavel's followers firmly in hand. They traveled in their carts to the Cossack camp, and brought back warrants for arrest. Ten of the poorest Akgirovka moujiks and eight men from the barracks were taken to town to prison. About ten others were mercilessly flogged in the head village. Virka herself was dragged away there to be questioned. She answered all the questions in a reserved, submissive tone, so as not to give Pavel away. But she kept her eyes averted.

"I don't know anything about him, I'm sure. I'm not his wedded wife when all's said and done—I'm only living with him like that. He went and left me. I suppose he's amusing himself with someone else now. I've never even heard tell where he is. Here am I in the family way and with the two small children he's left to me to look after. If I knew where he was I'd say, just to punish him for leaving me like this. I wouldn't keep it back for a minute. I'd give him up. 'Tisn't likely he'll ever come to live with me again, anyhow."

The newly appointed chairman of the head village office banged his fist down on the table and shouted:

"You're lying, you strumpet! Folks noticed the way you were seeing him off."

"I was begging and praying of him not to leave me all alone with the children to feed and not a bit in the house. But he never told me where he was going."

They kept her three days in a cold cell adjoining the office. Then the men questioned her again, not about Pavel this time, but about his associates and those villagers who were in favor of the Bolsheviks. Virka persisted in affecting ignorance, however, and only complained of Pavel's treatment of her—how he had left her destitute with the two children. They badgered her a little longer and then let her go.

She grew heavier with every week but it did not prevent her secretly meeting the people she needed in dark corners, going quickly about her business earning her bread. Then Pavel sent two secret orders. One was to take a letter to a faithful supporter in a village ten versts away, and the other—to hide a certain peasant for a whole week. When the first order was passed on to her, she gave a weary sigh. Then she said to the thin old man in refugee's clothes:

"I'll go myself. Who can you send!You need someone pretty sharp for a job like this and then—the main thing's not to be afraid."

So she tramped the ten miles herself, pretending she was going to the hospital. There happened to be a hospital in that village. She could hardly drag her legs home again over the uneven snowy road. But she did eventually get home, and contrived to cover the traces of her mission well.

The other task was more difficult to carry out, but still she managed it so that even the women who were her neighbors scented nothing. The more she tried, the more attached she became to this second secret political life of hers. It was with real faith and conviction now that she said to her co-workers when they met:

"Even if we're done for, we've got to help those who are for the poor."

It was no easy matter to see Pavel's supporters. In a village like that every sigh was heard, every new chip of wood in a yard was noticed. Then the rumor reached them that Pavel's detachment was advancing on Akgirovka. Pavel sent a message through a young fellow who, although his moustache had not yet begun to grow, had stern eyes.

"It would be a good thing if you could attack them from the rear—start some kind of a rising, say."

Virka carried this news to the barracks. Though the building of the railway had been given up long since, the refugees and other homeless folk who had formerly worked on it still lived in the barracks. Virka walked quickly, her ears were straining to catch every sound and her eyes watching the road. She got to her destination without encountering anyone. In the big barrack lived three single peasants and four with families. They were all on the side of the Bolsheviks, so Virka went in fearlessly. She did not speak of her errand straight away, however.

"Good evening. Is Aunt Daria in?" she began.

"Yes, here I am," Daria called out from the stove. "What do you want, Virka?"

"I wanted to ask you about myself. Here, feel me, will you? You're a midwife, you know all about these things. I seem to get out of breath very easy lately. Am I near my time or not?"

"There's no need to feel. Anyone can see you won't have to carry it more than a week. Now talk business. There are no outsiders here. I'll just call the men in from the yard."

When they had all collected, Virka began in an unsteady voice:

"It's come to this, moujiks, we've got to start and fight."

She cleared her throat and then in a steadier, calmer voice, told them Pavel's message.

The moujiks did not give their reply at once. They remained thoughfully silent for a long time. The first to speak was a snuffling, anemic looking fellow named Vasska Derguntsov.

"No, comrades, we can't do anything like that. People are pretty well frightened now, you can't work them up to a fight. No matter how much they have to put up with, they'll put up with it and say nothing."

"There's no use even thinking of it," said another, a man with greying, badly-cropped hair. "They'll catch us like fleas."

"We've got to wait. Maybe when Pavel's men are close to the village, then we can start. But now it's out of the question."

Virka stood up. She scowled at them and demanded:

"And is that all you've got to say?"

"Well, what else can we say?"

"There's nothing more to be said."

"Nothing'll come of it."

"Our folks have troops. Let them try to get through to us somehow or other and then we'll help them. But it's no use doing anything just now."

"Aye, what a pack of dirty dogs you are, to be sure! Fancy that a woman, a bad woman like me into the bargain, should have to teach you and tell you you're wrong? And still I have to do it. You talked plenty but when the time comes to do something, you're shaking in your boots. That's no good. You can't behave like that, my boys! What sort of a life have we got—how much longer will you be able to stand it? Who was it said: we'll fight to the last? What poor, mean little souls men have to be sure, when they're frightened.

You backsliding cowards! Well, if you don't want, then don't. I'll find some other people. If they don't believe me, they'll believe their own lives and see that we can't wait any longer."

Her eyes lit up, and pleaded with them, but her voice was steady as she said firmly:

"Our fellows'll come back one of these days, and then what will you do? Now you turn your backs on them and when they come you think you can look them in the face, do you?All right, then. I'm all alone, a woman near her time, but I'll get things going myself. That mangy dog growled once that his heart itched and gave him no rest to be up against the Kerjaks and their treatment of us. And now you're going to wait for the Cossacks. It's no use, they'll have no mercy on you for all that, not even if you lick the very boots off their feet. They've had their eye on you a long time. As soon as they know our folks are close at hand, they'll put you out of the way pretty quick. Oh, well, I suppose there's no use my talking to you."

She was just going to the door when the men all began talking at once. They swore at her, argued and shouted, but eventually decided to do as Pavel had told them.

Virka hurried out radiant, as if there was some great pleasure awaiting her instead of a difficult, dangerous task. The man with the cropped grey hair remarked with a laugh:

"Looks like as if you're our commander and our regimental priest as well. Got a fine lot off your chest that time, didn't you? A whole sermon, I declare."

The "commander" could hardly get home. Her pains started on the way. Still she managed to call in at Koslikha the midwife's.

"Come quick," she said. "Seems like I'm going to have the baby tonight."

But once home, she would not lie down for a long time. She walked up and down the room with her teeth clenched tight.

"Scream, woman, scream!" cried old Koslikha. "What are you keeping your mouth tight shut for? I declare it's the first time I've ever seen such a stony creature. She's going to have a child without a sound out of her, she thinks. Well, well."

Virka gave a little, pale smile. Then she winced and gasped out:

"I want him to come into the world in gladness. I've waited so long for him. I don't want to scream, I want to have him with a light heart."

So she only cried out once. A short, fierce cry with less of pain in it than of joy. Then she felt an incredible lightness of body, and heard the surprisingly lusty cry of a new born infant.

"Oho, what a throat it has, this youngster of yours! It's a fine, big child, too. Looks like its father. What do you want? You aren't going to faint, are you?"

"No, no. Show me. . . . It's a boy!"

"How d'you know? You're a knowing one, aren't you? Now then, let him lie by you while I look after you."

Not for long did Virka enjoy her motherhood. She had been expecting news of her husband's affairs and five days later there came a soft, anxious tapping at the door. It was night. Virka went up to it and asked in a whisper:

"Who's there?"

A frightened woman's voice replied:

"Open the door quick and let me in!"

It was Daria. She would not come inside the room, but asked softly from the little passage:

"Is Koslikha here with you?"

"Yes, she's come for the night. Why?"

"Where is she?"

"Asleep on the stove."

"Wake her quick and let her take the child and you run away as fast as you can. Go down through the garden to the river. Someone's waiting for you there."

"What do you mean? How can I leave the baby?"

"The baby—and supposing they do for you? You've got to send Pavel word in time, else he's done for. Come on, hurry up and wake Koslikha. What are you standing there for?"

"But why—all of a sudden, you—"

"The Cossacks have come. They're at Kojemyatov's this minute. Kojemyatov's hired man came with them. He heard that they'd smelt something out. Anissim found out all about us and drove to the Cossacks settlement to inform on us. But he only named you and my husband. Mine's hidden. Come on, fly, I tell you! Oh, if they should catch me here! Run through the garden down to the river . . .

She dived away into the darkness. Virka took the child out of its cradle.

"Granny, hey, granny! Here, take him!"

"What's up with you now? You want to put him on the stove with me? Alright, give him here."

A shudder ran through Virka, as if she was tearing the warm live bundle from her own body. She handed it to the old woman. She did not utter a sign nor shed a single tear, but with an alert expression on her face, flung her shawl over her head and her short winter jacket round her shoulders and ran out of the house.

"Virka-a? Virka, where are you off to? What's up? God Almighty, has she gone cracked or what?"

She only grasped the situation when the Cossacks and peasants rushed in through the door Virka had left unbolted. She understood, glanced at them calmly and began to soothe the crying child.

"Now, now, that'll do you. The idea, setting up a roar and the night coming on. Sh-sh-sh."

"Listen, old bitch, where's the woman of the house?"

"She's run out somewhere. I didn't ask her, why should I? I thought she'd be back any minute. What could I do? I couldn't run after her, could I? I'm not so young as I was."

A Cossack with a red moustache threatened her with his sword.

"Speak out, now, else you won't be able to keep your head on your shoulders very long, I warn you."

"I find it hard to keep it on as it is. What can I tell you? She ran out without saying a word to me. If you were to wring the guts out of me I couldn't tell you a word more. Keep away from this child, you great brute. You'll be smothering the poor innocent soul next."

Anissim Kojemyatov spoke to a dark, swarthy officer.

"You won't find out anything that way, your honor. She wouldn't be likely to tell the old woman the truth anyhow. It would be better to keep an eye on the house."

Then Antippe the Kerjak, a lean, grey-headed stern-faced man who resembled an archaic drawing of a saint in an icon, spoke up:

"Let the old woman stay with the infant. The mother'll come of herself. Her milk'll draw her back to her child."

They decided on this course, and set men to keep watch, hiding them in the

pigsties. They searched for her in the day-time without result. For three nights they kept watch. It was well after midnight—the darkest and most silent hour—on the fourth night, when the Cossack with the ginger moustache, caught sight of something that put him on his guard. He craned his neck. A dark figure, obviously a woman's, was stealing through the garden towards the house. The Cossack held his breath, like a hunter sighting his prey. Virka came on with the light, stealthy step of an animal, like a she-wolf making her way to her young. She seemed as if she was on its scent, her neck outstretched, sniffing the smell of the blood drawn from her own veins: an animal coming to feed or to rescue its young.

She was at the door when the ginger moustached Cossack warned his helpers hidden in the darkness with a sharp, peremptory shout:

"Catch her! Hold her! Aha, got her, have you? Run and call his honor here, Sichev!"

Virka uttered a prolonged, piercing shriek and struggled in the powerful hands of a short, thickset Cossack.

"Hold on! Hold on there! Ugh, what a slippery one! Ah—ha—so you bite, do you, hussy! Hold on!"

Virka tore an arm free and struck the Cossack on the bridge of the nose with all her might. Then she kicked him in the groin. The Cossack gave a yelp of agony and let go of her. But just at that moment the man in the red moustache rushed up and twisted her arms behind her back. She struggled, swaying the Cossack from side to side. He turned awkwardly, tripped over the step and fell, dragging Virka down with him. She gave another piercing scream and was silent. She had struck the back of her head on the sharp-edged iron scraper nailed to a board just by the steps, where anyone coming in from the dirty yard could clean their boots on it. And as the imperious wail of a hungry infant came from the house, a last spark of life flamed up in Virineya's eyes and died out.

Translated from the Russian by Anthony Wixley

Edwin Rolfe

The Sixth Winter

There still is coal in many houses,
I know, watching the chimney-smoke
the bitter wind drives south. There is
much gayety, banquets told of in The Times,
parties thrown by Lady So-and-So
at her Florida estate, where prattle
the shallow debutantes, the debonair and groomed
and empty young men who lounge around the pool,
their correctness reflected in the correctly-heated water.

Receptions, too, are a daily occurrence:
at the Waldorf, at the Plaza, at the City Hall,
for the lady novelist, for the visiting politician,
for the captain of industry and the general
who beams good will, friendly understanding,
closer ties between these two great nations,
his sword dangling at his side.

These things I read in the papers and
between the lines I reconstruct the scenes:
the tinkling of silver on translucent porcelain,
warm, buttered morsels of spiced food, poised
on forks, conveyed
to stomachs less delicate; the champagne
bubbling in fragile thin-stemmed crystal,
popping against sated lips, lips moist,
lips drooling, lips accustomed
to the curve of the silver spoon,
the afternoon teacup's edge,
the tilted wineglass.

And from some unseen somewhere,
music; and soft, subdued, indirectly—lights;
and invisibly but always—warmth;
and cushions; and in the safe-deposit vault
the bankbooks, the jewels, the securities,
the cash, the gilt-edged bonds.

And the other day
my blood-brother Bill
died frozen in Central Park
asleep with The Times
wrapped around his legs.

This is the sixth winter.
This is the season of death
when lungs contract and the breath of homeless men

freezes on restaurant window-panes, seeking
the sight of rare food
before the head is lowered into the upturned collar
and the shoulders hunched and the shuffling feet
move away slowly, slowly disappear
into a darkened street.

This is the season when rents go up.
Men die, and their dying is casual.
I walk along a street, returning
at midnight from my unit. Meet a man
leaning against an illumined wall
and ask him for a light.
His open eyes
stay fixed on mine. And cold rain falling
trickles down his nose, his chin.
"Buddy," I begin . . . and look more closely
and flee in horror from the corpse's grin.

The eyes pursue you even in sleep and
when you awake they stare at you from the ceiling;
you see the dead face peering from your shoes;
the eggs at Thompson's are the dead man's eyes.
Work dims them for eight hours. But then—
the machines silent—they appear again.
Along the docks, in the terminals, in the subway,
on the street,
in restaurants—the eyes
are focused from the river,
among the floating garbage
that other men fish for,
their hands around poles
almost in prayer;
wanting to live,
wanting to live!
who also soon
will stand propped by death against a stone-cold wall.

But there are other streets and other men.
I have seen them at work, I have heard their voices
cutting the winter air, the words
like knives through ice;
standing on boxes at street-corners, talking on the square,
halting the scorning men, gathering crowds
to listen to remember what they mean.

"The rifling of the city's treasury," one says,
"must end. We must have funds
to feed the foodless, rescue the rotting
men without roofs asleep along the rivershore
in summer; in winter lying frozen in doorways
in the snow in public parks at night . . .
Funds for children, for milk to replace

the dry, withered breast—beauty killed,
sought no longer in passion by lover's hands,
in hunger by hungry lips.
WE DEMAND!"

And while he speaks, we listen in the square.
We are prepared for his words, we are stronger than to cry.
we are burdened with hunger but our eyes are dry.
We can see the blue-clad gunmen where
they stand, their hands on machine guns, mounted
on roofs surrounding the meeting place: police
like steel-blue vultures perched; and we brace
ourselves. They, not we,
are the hunted now and the haunted
by spectres not of want, but fear
festering in the brain.

In the committee room
committee men measure
the city's treasure,
determine for whom
this million; for what
that sop. They sign
the dotted line,
determine ways and means to rid
the city of vermin. Calculate
new budgets, minimum sums to sate
the hungry mouths, the populations
starved by the official rations
of previous administrations.
Will buy. Will sell. Large dividend
promised to hunger-contractor who will rid
the city of anger.

At last a bid!
Sold to the gentleman with the silk hat!
He is a former governor, a member of all
the uniformed fraternal orders. He agrees,
he sees the situation as we see it—
mayor, members of the board, the committee
of civic leaders and financiers.

For the stipulated millions he will feed
(he signs the papers) all the unemployed.

Whose hand is this which lifts the receiver,
dials the number? Whose the hand
tapping out signal? And whose voice
calls car and armored cycle to the scene?
We shiver on the square.
The north wind blows,
driving the snow
raging over roofs.

The wind like a sword
cuts to the bone.
We are ten thousands,
bottled on all sides.
But we are not alone:
In a hundred other cities
men gathered on stormy squares
shout also
WE DEMAND!

Knowing our words are more than words,
knowing in our heart their truth,
feeling in our limbs the need to transform
word to action, oration to living deed
knowing these
stirrings to be true, the seed imprisoned
straining to be free, to grow
to flower in freedom
we do not mind
the guns at our massed bodies aimed, nor fear
the terror awaiting us at night
on empty streets, cold dark lanes,
who have nothing to lose but our chains.
Night thickens and the cops withdraw.
They—we—return to our homes,
I to mine.
The dark streets again,
muffled with piled snow,
leading to black hallways: stairs
that creaking caution: Careful now, careful!
Stairs that bear the body's weight only
if you are careful!
just as carefully
as tenderly as governments keep men
precariously alive who groan for death.

Up five long flights (we who have homes)
with two companions, invisible but tugging
downward, dead weights on the skeleton:
Hunger the one, the Landlord the other,
his one hand clutched before my eyes;
his other like a leech at my lapel.

How many others climb the stairs to hell?
and fall upon the bed not to sleep
but lie awake to keep
the memory fresh until tomorrow
of ten thousand faces
legs, arms, brains,
enough to maintain
life for millions,
move mountains, create
where nothing was before;

ten thousand men
lying also on beds
those who are fortunate

trying not to sleep but to remember,
not to dream but make plans,
never to forget
tomorrow, always to remember
tomorrow, to set
the clock's alarm at the appointed hour before
we sink to restless slumber.

G. RYAZHESKI: SOVIET PAINTER

Bank Crash

Harvest

Svanetian Scene

G. Ryazneski: Self-portrait

LETTERS and DOCUMENTS

N. G. Chernishevski

Life and Esthetics

Continuing a Russian Classic[1]

"Beauty in reality is associated with either a group of objects (a landscape, a group of people) or some individual object. Evil chance always spoils the group which seems beautiful by introducing into it irrelevant objects marring the beauty and unity of the whole; it also mars the seemingly beautiful individual object, affecting some of its parts: careful analysis will always show that some parts of the real object which seems beautiful are not all beautiful." Here we again have the idea that beauty is perfection. But this is only a particular application of the general idea that the only thing that satisfies man is purely mathematical perfection. Practical life, however, convinces us that man seeks only approximate perfection which, strictly speaking, should not even be called perfection. Man only seeks the *good* not the perfect. Only pure mathematics is satisfied with approximate calculations. To look for perfection in any sphere of life is the work of an abstract, morbid or idle mind. We wish to breathe pure air—but do we ever notice that the air is nowhere and never absolutely pure? We wish to drink pure water—but not absolutely pure water: absolutely pure water (distilled water) is, in fact, unpleasant to the taste. Are these examples too grossly material? We can take others: did anyone ever think of considering a man lacking in learning only because he did not know *everything*? We only require of a man of learning that he know what is important and that he should know a great deal. Are we dissatisfied, for instance, with a book on history when it does not touch upon absolutely all questions, does not enumerate all details or when even not absolutely every word and opinion of the author are just? Not at all. We are satisfied, and even highly pleased, when the book solves the *main* problems and gives the most essential details, when the main opinions of the author are just and there are *very few* incorrect or unsuccessful explanations in the book. (Later we shall see that in the field of art we are also satisfied by only approximate perfection).

Following these remarks it can be said without fear of violent contradiction, that in the province of beauty in real life we are also satisfied when we find the very good and do not seek the mathematically perfect, lacking *all* minor defects. Would anyone really even think of denying the beauty of a landscape only because at some point of it there are three bushes and two or four would be better still? I am sure no lover of the sea has ever even entertained the thought that the sea could be better than it is, and yet, if one were to look at the sea with mathematical severity, it has many defects—

[1] This is another installment of an historical Russian classic, written in 1853, which both Marx and Lenin had written about on a number of occassions. Their comments, with the authors own introduction to his work, appeared in *International Literature* No. 6, 1935. The publication of the book began in No. 7, continued in No. 8 and is followed by this installment. It will be concluded in our next issue.—*Editor.*

the first of them, that the surface is not flat but convex. True this defect is not apparent—it is discovered not by the eye but by calculation; but this only proves that it is ridiculous to speak of defects one cannot notice and can only *know* about. Such however are most defects of beauty in reality. They are not seen or felt and are revealed only by investigation. We must not forget that the sense of beauty is a matter of sensation and not science: what is not amenable to the senses does not exist to the esthetic sense.

But are the defects of beauty in reality really inappreciable to the senses in most cases? Experience convinces us that this is so. There is no one gifted with an esthetic sense who does not come across thousands of faces, objects and phenomena in life which seem to him irreproachably beautiful. And what if there are imperfections appreciable to the senses in the beautiful object? They must verily be unimporant if in spite of them the object still seems beautiful—if they were important the object would not seem beautiful but ugly. And the unimportant is not worth bothering about. In truth, an esthetically healthy person pays no attention to it.

To anyone not specially prepared by a study of later day esthetics it will seem strange to hear the second proof it offers that so-called beauty in reality cannot be beautiful in the full sense of the word.

VII

"A real object cannot be beautiful for the very reason that it is a part of life and the real process of life with all its rudeness and all its unesthetic particulars is reflected in it." A higher degree of fantastic idealism could hardly be imagined. So a live face is not beautiful while the same face on a portrait or daguerrotype is beautiful? Why? Because on the live face there are always material traces of the process of life; because if we should look at a live face through a microscope we shall find it covered with perspiration, etc.! A live tree cannot be beautiful because there are always small insects on it which feed themselves with its leaves? A truly odd opinion which does really not require refutation. What business has my esthetic sense with things it does not observe? It even seems utterly superfluous to mention, in refutation of this idea, that it would be odd to seek such people as do not eat, drink, do not have to wash and change clothes. It is perfectly futile to expatiate on this. It will be more profitable to examine one of those ideas out of which such a strange reproach to beauty arose, an idea which constitutes one of the fundamental precepts of the ruling esthetics. This idea amounts to the following: "Beauty is not the object itself but its pure surface (*die reine Oberfläche*) its form."

The entire untendability of this view on beauty will become apparent when we investigate its source. In most cases we appreciate beauty with our eyes—and the eye generally sees only the shell, the contours, the exterior of an object and not its interior structure. From this it is easily deduced that beauty is superficial and not something inherent in the object proper. But there is beauty not only to the sight—there is heard beauty (song and music) which has nothing to do with any outer surfaces. In the second place it cannot be said that the eye always sees only the outer shell: in transparent objects we see the *entire* object including its interior structure—thus transparency is precisely what lends beauty to water and precious stones. Finally, the human body, the most beautiful thing on earth, is semi-transparent and in man we see not only the mere outer shell: the body radiates through the skin and this lends many great charms to human beauty. In the third

place, it is odd to say even in totally untransparent bodies we see only the surface and not the object: sight is not a matter of eyes only—the memory and associations of the mind always accompany it, and reason always fills the empty form presented to the eye with something material. Man sees a *moving* object although the physical eye by itself is not capable of seeing motion; man sees objects at a distance although the eye proper does not see distance; similarly man sees the material object when the eye perceives only its outer surface.

Another basis for the idea that "beauty is purely superficial" is the supposition that esthetic pleasure is incompatible with material interest evinced in the object. We shall not enter into an analysis of how the relation of esthetic pleasure and the object's being of material interest to us should be understood, although such an analysis would convince us that, though esthetic pleasure is distinct from material interest or the practical utility of the object, it is not opposed to it. It will be sufficient to refer to the evidence of experience that a real object can seem to us beautiful without awakening in us any material interests: what self interest is evinced when we admire the stars, the sea or a forest (must I necessarily think of its utility for house lumber or firewood when I look at a forest?)—what self interest is awakened when we listen raptly to the song of the nightingale or the rustle of leaves? As far as man is concerned we often love him without any motives of self interest, without the least thought of ourselves; he can the more readily be esthetically pleasing to us without awakening any material *(stoffartig)* considerations about our relations to him. In the end, the idea that beauty is pure form is most intimately connected with and a consequence of the idea that beauty is a mere phantom. And this in its turn is a necessary consequence upon the definition of beauty as fullness of realization of the idea in an individual object and falls down together with this definition.

After a long series of objections to beauty in reality, objections becoming more general and stronger, we now reach the last, strongest and most generalized reason presented why beauty in reality cannot be considered really beautiful.

VIII

"An individual object cannot be beautiful for the very reason that it is not absolute, while beauty is absolute." A proof truly incontrovertible within the circle of conceptions prevailing in the philosophic schools which gave rise to it and which consider the absolute a criterion not only of theoretical truth but also of the active endeavors of man. These systems of thought have fallen apart giving place to others which, by virtue of their internal dialectic process, have developed out of them but understand life differently. Limiting ourselves to this hint of the philosophic untenability of the view out of which this comparison of all human endeavor with the absolute has arisen, we shall adopt a different point of view, closer to purely esthetic conceptions, and claim that man's endeavor as a rule does not aim at the absolute and knows nothing about it, having in mind purely human aim. In this respect man's esthetic sense and activity is completely akin to his other senses and activities. In reality we never come in contact with anything absolute. We cannot therefore, tell from experience what impression absolute beauty would make upon us. We do know, however, from experience that *similis simili gaudet* and that therefore we, individual creatures that cannot step out of the limits of our individuality, admire very much individual

beauty which cannot step beyond the limits of its individuality. Further refutation is superfluous. It might only be added that the idea of the individuality of true beauty is developed by that very system of esthetic views which sets up the absolute as a criterion of beauty. From the idea that individuality is a most essential property of beauty it logically follows that the criterion of the absolute is alien to the province of beauty—a conclusion contradictory to the fundamental view on beauty of this system. The source of such contradictions, which the system we are dealing with cannot always escape, is the mixture in it of highly gifted observations from experience with just as highly gifted but innerly inconsistent attempts so subject them all to an a-priori view which often contradicts these observations.

We have thus analysed all objections raised against beauty in reality and can now attack the problem of the essential meaning of art. According to prevailing esthetic conceptions "art has its origin in man's endeavor to free beauty from its defects (the defects analysed above) which prevent beauty as it really exists in life from being fully satisfactory to man. Beauty created by art is free from the defects of beauty in reality." Let us see to what extent beauty created by art is actually superior to beauty in reality with respect to freedom from those defects attributed to the latter. This will make it easier for us to see whether the prevailing view on the origin of art and its relation to life is correct.

I "Beauty in nature it not premeditated." In art beauty is premeditated—that is true; but is it so in all cases and in all details?We shall not dwell on the point as to how often and to what extent the artist and poet are fully aware of just exactly what will be expressed in their works—the unconsiousness of creative work is a much discussed generality. Perhaps it is more necessary nowadays to emphasize poignantly that the beauty of creative work depends on the conscious endeavors of the artist than to dwell on the proposition that the work of really great creative talent is instinctive. However it be, both points of view are well known and it is unnecessary to dwell on them here. But it will not be superfluous to say that even the premeditated endeavors of the artist especially (the poet) do not always warrant the statement that the aim at beauty was the true source of his artistic work. True, the poet always endeavors to "do the best he can." But this does not yet mean that all his will and thought were dictated solely or even primarily by considerations of the artistic and esthetic merit of his work: just as there are many tendencies in nature struggling constantly and killing or marring beauty in this struggle, there are many tendencies in the artist and poet which, in influencing his endeavors mar the beauty of his work. Among such tendencies come, first of all, everyday cares and needs of the artist which do not permit him to be only an artist and nothing else. Then there are his intellectual and moral convictions which do not permit him to think only of beauty while working. In the third place, the idea for the work of art usually comes to the artist not as a result merely of his endeavor to create beauty: a poet worthy of the name is usually bent on conveying his thoughts, feelings and aspirations and not merely the beauty created by him. On the whole, beauty in reality develops in the struggle with other trends in nature, and beauty in art also develops in the struggle with other tendencies and requirements of the individual creating it. If in reality this struggle mars or kills beauty, the chances are hardly less that this will be the case in the work of art. Since in reality beauty develops under influences alien to it and which do not let it be *only* beautiful, the work of the artist or poet also develops under a great

variety of tendencies which must give similar results. True, in beautiful works of art there is more premeditation to create beauty than in other beautiful works resulting from other human activities and it is altogether indisputable that in nature there is no premeditation whatever; it would therefore be meet to concede that in this respect art could be considered superior to nature if this premeditation were free from the defects of which nature is free. But, while gaining by premeditation, art at the same time loses by it. The thing is, the artist, intending beauty, often designs anything but beauty. It it not enough to wish for beauty—it is also necessary to be able to conceive it in all its grandeur—and how frequently does the artist go astray in his conceptions of beauty! How frequently he is deceived even by artistic intuition, not to speak of reflective conceptions, mostly biased! All the failings of individuality are in art inseparable from premeditation.

II "Beauty is rare in reality." But is it any more frequent in art? How many truly tragic and dramatic events occur daily! But are there very many really beautiful tragedies or dramas? In all of Western literature some thirty to forty, in Russian literature—unless we are much mistaken, not one—excepting *Boris Gudonov* and *Scenes of Knighthood*—which could be regarded above mediocre. How many novels life holds! And can one enumerate many really beautiful novels? Perhaps a dozen or so in French and an equal number in English literatures, and five or six in Russian. What does one come across oftener —a beautiful landscape in nature or in painting? And why is this? Because great poets and artists are very rare as genius of any kind is rare among men. If completely favorable circumstances for the creation of beauty or the sublime are rare in reality, the favorable concatenation of circumstances for the birth and unhindered development of a great genius are even rarer, because the number of such necessary favorable conditions is much greater. His reproach to reality falls with even greater force on art.

III "Beauty in nature is fleeting." In art it is often eternal—that is true, but not always. A work of art is also liable to perish or be spoiled by chance. The Greek lyrics are lost to us, the paintings of Apelles and the statues of Lysippus have perished. But not to dwell on this let us consider some other reasons why very many works of art are short lived unlike the beauties of nature. Take fashions and the aging and decay of materials. Nature never gets stale—it is always creating afresh and replacing what has faded. Art is deprived of this faculty of regeneration, renewal, and time does not spare its works. In works of poetry the language soon becomes archaic. Even more important is the fact that in the course of time much in poetic works becomes unintelligible to us (ideas and turns of speech borrowed from contemporaneity, allusions to events and persons); much becomes colorless and lacking in taste. Learned commentaries cannot possibly make everything as clear to us as it was to the contemporaries: besides, learned commentaries and esthetic pleasure are conflicting things—not to speak of the fact that with them a poetic work ceases to be readily accessible to all. What is even more important, the development of culture and altering ideas sometimes rob a poetic work of all its beauty and sometimes turn it into something unpleasant or even distasteful. We do not wish to name examples except the eclogue of Virgil, most modest of Roman poets.

From poetry let us go over to other arts. Musical works perish together with the instruments for which they were composed. All ancient music is

lost to us. The beauty of old musical compositions wanes with the perfection of orchestration. In painting the colors fade and darken; the paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries have long lost their pristine beauty.

But great as the influence of all these circumstances, they are not the main reason for the transitoriness of works of art; here we have only the influence of the tastes of the period, almost always a matter of fashion, always onesided and often false. Fashions have made half of each one of Shakespeare's plays unfit for esthetic enjoyment in our time; fashion reflected in the tragedies of Racine and Corneille make us not so much enjoy them as laugh at them. Neither painting nor music, not even architecture can furnish us a single work created some hundred or hundred and fifty years ago which would not now seem either stale or ludicrous regardless of the power of genius stamped upon it. Modern art will also call out a smile fifty years hence.

IV "Beauty in reality is not constantly beautiful." This is true. But beauty in art is immovably dead in its beauty—which is much worse. One can look at a living face for many hours—a picture tires one in a quarter of an hour and it is a rare dilletante who will stand an hour before a painting. Poetry is much more alive than painting, architecture or sculpture, but even poetry palls on us quickly— it would certainly be extraordinary for anyone to reread a novel five times in succession, while life, living faces and real events are fascinating in their variety.

V "Beauty in nature comes to it from our looking at it from one point of view and not another." This idea is almost never justified—but to works of art it applies accurately in most cases. All works of art not of our period require that we transpose ourselves into the period, into the civilization, which created them—otherwise they will be unintelligible, strange but by no means beautiful. Unless we transpose ourselves into ancient Greece the the songs of Sapho and Anacreon seem to us expressions of unesthetic pleasure, something akin to these works of our times which are an offense to print; unless we transpose ourselves in spirit into patriarchal society the songs of Homer will offend us with cynicism, rude voraciousness and the lack of moral feelings. But the world of the Greeks is too far removed—let us take a period much closer. How much there is in Shakespeare and in Italian painting which one can understand and appreciate only by going back to the past with its conceptions of things! And, for example, even closer to our times is Goethe's *Faust*. This will seem a very strange book to anyone unable to transfer himself back to that period of trial and doubt of which *Faust* is an expression.

VI "Beauty in reality includes many unbeautiful parts or details." But is not this also true of art, only to a greater extent? There is not a single work of art in which one could not find faults. The novels of Walter Scott are too long drawn out, Dickens' novels are almost always too sweetly sentimental and often too long, Thackeray's novels sometimes (rather, too often) annoy one with their constant pretensions to wickedly-ironic artlessness. But later day genius is not much loved by esthetics—it prefers Homer, the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare. The Homeric poems lack continuity, Eschylus and Sophocles are too dry and severe, in addition Eschylus lacks dramatics, Euripides is lacrymose. Shakespeare rhetorical and pompous. The artistic structure of his plays would be perfect if they were slightly made over as

Goethe has suggested. Take painting—and we have to admit this is equally true. Only against Raphael one rarely hears any caviling—in all other painters many weaknesses have long been found. But Raphael even is accused of a lack of knowledge of anatomy. It is, of course, the same with music: Beethoven is too unintelligible and often wild; Mozart's orchestration is poor; the new composers indulge in too much noise and racket. Connoisseurs find only one opera sans reproach—*Don Juan,* but laymen find it a bore. If there is no perfection in nature and in living man, there is even less perfection in art and in the works of man: "the effect cannot contain what was absent in the cause, in man." To anyone that should wish to prove how weak all works of art are generally there is vast opportunity. Of course, such an undertaking would show great acidity of mind rather than lack of bias: anyone that does not admire the great works of art is to be pitied. But when exaggerated praise compels, it is pardonable to point out that if even the sun has spots, man's "earthly deeds" cannot be without them.

VII "A living object cannot be beautiful for the very reason that in it the heavy, rude process of life is taking place." A work of art is a dead object—so it would seem that this should not apply to it. Such a conclusion, however, would be superficial. Facts contradict it. A work of art is the creation of a living process, the creation of a live man who produced it not without a hard struggle and the heavy, rude traces of the struggle are impressed upon the work. Are there many poets and artists who work playfully as it is said Shakespeare wrote his plays—playfully and without corrections? And if a work of art is not created without hard work, it will carry the "traces of the lamp-oil" by the light of which the artist worked. A certain heaviness can be found in almost all works of art, however light they may seem at first glance.

I do not mean to say that all the faults enumerated in this analysis are always crudely apparent in works of art. I only wish to point out that beauty created by art cannot by any means stand up against such caviling criticism as is directed at beauty in reality.

It is evident from our analysis that were art to originate in dissatisfaction with the faults of beauty in living reality and the endeavor to create something better, man's esthetic activity would be entirely futile, and man would renounce it very quickly seeing that art does not justify such hopes. Generally speaking works of art suffer from the same deficiencies that can be found in beauty that is a living reality. But, if art in general cannot have any pretensions to superiority over nature and life, perhaps some particular arts possess peculiar advantages which lend their products superiority over similar phenomena in living reality? One or another art, perhaps, produces something to which living reality has nothing that corresponds? These questions have not been dealt with in our analysis and we must now look into some special cases in order to discover the relation between beauty in particular arts to beauty in reality produced by nature independently of man's aspirations to beauty. Only such an investigation will give us the final answer to the question whether the origin of art can be attributed to living reality being unsatisfactory from an esthetic viewpoint.

The series of arts usually begins with architecture, as of all the various activities of man directed to more or less practical ends, construction alone is raised to an art. It is unjust, however, to so limit the field of art if we are to understand by "works of art" all such "things produced by man in his aspirations to beauty." There is such a degree of development of the esthetic sense in a people or, more precisely, in the higher circles of society, when

almost all objects of human production are made under the predominating influence of this feeling: things necessary for home comfort (furniture, chinaware, decorations), clothes, gardens, etc. Etruscan vases and the haberdashery of the ancients are acknowledged by all as "works of art." But must we really consider the art of furniture making a branch of architecture? To what department of art shall we refer flower beds and gardens—primarily intended for walks and rest, and which must serve as objects of esthetic enjoyment? Some books on esthetics call this a branch of architecture, but this is evidently somewhat strained. If we call every activity which results in producing objects dominated by an esthetic feeling an art, the field of art will be broadened to a considerable extent, and we cannot but admit the essential kinship of architecture, the furniture, and fashioning arts, landscape gardening, sculpture, etc. It might be said that "architecture creates something new, something that did not previously exist in nature, it completely transforms its material while other branches of human activity leave the material they work on in its original form"—but this is not so: there are many branches of human activity which, in this respect, do not differ from architecture. For instance flower raising: field flowers are nothing like the luxurious flowers which are the product of flower gardening. What have a wild forest and an artificial garden or park in common? Just as architecture dresses stones, gardening cleans and straightens trees, lends each tree an entirely different form than it has in the primeval forest; just as architecture combines stones into regular groups, gardening unites the trees in a park into regular groups. In other words, flower or landscape gardening transforms, reshapes "crude material" just as much as architecture does. The same can be said of industry which, under the dominating influence of aspiration to beauty, creates, for instance, fabrics to which the original material is altered even more than is the stone in architecture. "But architecture as an art obeys more exclusively the dictates of esthetics than any other practical activity and completely refuses to satisfy the demands of practical life"—but what demands of practical life do flowers or artificial parks satisfy? And on the other hand, did not the Parthenon and the Alhambra serve useful purposes? Gardening, furniture making, jewelry work and the fashionable arts serve practical ends much less than architecture. Yet treatises on esthetics do not devote special chapters to them. The reason why construction, out of all practical activities, is singled out and termed a fine art, is, we think, due not to its essence but to the fact that other branches of activity that rise to an art are neglected because of the "lack of importance" of their products while the work of architecture cannot be neglected because of its importance, costliness and, finally, its massive bulk which strikes the eye more than anything else produced by man. All branches of industry, all crafts, which aim to satisfy "taste" or our esthetic feeling, we acknowledge as "arts" just as much as architecture when its products are designed and executed under a prevailing endeavor to attain beauty and when all other aims (which architecture also always has) are subjected to this main aim.

To what extent the products of practical activity, designed and executed with the predominating endeavor to produce something not so much useful or necessary as elegant, deserves attention, is an entirely different question. The answer to this question does not enter into the province of this treatise; but whatever its solution, it will apply equally to the question as to what attention the creations of architecture deserve in a sense of pure art and not as practical activity. The thinker must contemplate a cashmere shawl worth

10,000 francs, a clock worth 10,000 francs and an elegant pavillion worth 10,000 francs in the same light. He might say that all these things are products not so much of art as of luxury. He might say that true art abhors luxury because most essential to beauty is simplicity. What then is the relation between these products of frivolous art and inartistic reality? The answer is to be found in the fact that in all the cases mentioned we are dealing with products of man's practical activities, activities producing useful or necessary things but have still retained their essential trait of producing something nature does not produce. There can be no question therefore in these cases, of the relation between the beauty of the products of art to that of the products of nature: there is nothing in nature with which one can compare knives forks, cloth, clocks—just as there is nothing in nature with which one can compare houses, bridges, columns, etc.

Thus even if we consider everything created under the predominant influence of an endeavor to create beauty to the field of art we shall have to admit that either architectural works retain their practical nature and then they cannot be considered works of art or, if they really are works of art then art can be just as proud of the products of the jeweller as of the architect. According to our conception of art the mere aim to produce a beautiful thing in the sense of its being elegant or graceful is not yet art. For art, we shall see, more is necessary. Consequently we can by no means consider architectural products works of art. Architecture is one of the practical activities of man, and one of these activities is altogether stranger to beauty of form. Architecture, in this respect, differs from the craft of furniture making not in its essential nature but only in the magnitude of its products.

A defect common to all works of sculpture and painting which makes them inferior to products of nature and life is—their immobility; this is universally admitted, so it would be superflous to expatiate on this point. Let us rather investigate the supposed advantages of these arts over nature.

Sculpture depicts the form of the human body: everything else in it is merely accessory—hence we shall deal only with the way it depicts the human figure. It has become a sort of axiom that the beauty of outline of the Venus of Medici or of Milos, of the Belvedere Apollo, etc., is much superior to the beauty of living people. There is neither a Venus of Medici or a Belvedere Apollo in Petersburg, but we have the works of Canova; hence we, residents of Petersburg can judge to some extent the beauty of sculpture. We must say, there is not a single statue in Petersburg that is not much inferior in beauty of face to a host of living peoples' faces and one only has to take a walk along any crowded street to meet several such faces.

Most people that are accustomed to judge for themselves will agree that this is so. But we shall not offer this more or less personal impression as proof. There is another, much better one. It can be shown with mathematical precision that no work of art can compare in beauty of outline with a living human face. It is well known that in art the execution is always immeasurably inferior to the ideal that the artist has in mind. But this ideal cannot be superior in beauty to those living people the artist chanced to see. The powers of "creative imagination" are very limited: it can only combine impressions received in experience. The imagination only varies and extensively exaggerates the object but we can not imagine anything more intensively than we have observed or experienced. I can imagine the sun much bigger than it is in reality; but I cannot imagine it any brighter than I saw it. Similarly I can imagine a man taller, stouter than I have seen; but faces more

beautiful than I have happened to see in reality I cannot possibly imagine. That is beyond human power. The artist can only do one thing: he can combine into an ideal the forehead of one, the nose of another, the mouth and chin of a third beauty. Perhaps artists really do so, although we doubt it—in the first place, because it is unnecessary, in the second place, I doubt whether the imagination is capable of these parts when they really belong to different faces. Such a procedure would only be necessary if the artist happened to come across only such faces as had only one beautiful feature while all its other features were ugly. Usually, however, all the features of a face are almost equally good or equally bad so that the artist, if satisfied, say, with the forehead, should be equally satisfied with the outlines of the nose or mouth. Usually, unless a face is actually disfigured, all its features so harmonize that to disturb this harmony is to mar its beauty. Comparative anatomy teaches us this. True, one often hears such an exclamation as: "What a beautiful face that would be if the nose were only tilted up a little and the lips a little thinner,"—but, though a face may be beautiful in all its features except one, we think that such dissatisfaction usually, or rather always, is due to either inabilitiy of appreciating harmony or to capriciousness which borders on a lack of any true, powerful capability of and need for enjoying beauty.

The parts of a human body, like those of any live organism which continually regenerates under the influence of its unity, are closely tied together, so that the form of one part depends upon the form of the other parts and they in turn depend upon it. This is so much the more true of the parts of one organ, of different parts of the face. The mutual interdependence of the features is proved by science, but even without its aid anyone having sense of harmony can easily see it. The human body is an integral thing; it cannot be torn apart and one part called beautiful and the other not. As in many other cases, mosaics, eclectism, selection leads to absurdities. Either you take all or nothing—only then will you be right from your point of view. A certain measure of eclectism is proper only to the deformed—who are eclectic creatures. And they surely were not the models for the "great pieces of sculpture." If the sculptor had taken for his statue the forehead of one face, the nose of another and the mouth of a third he would only have shown either his own lack of taste or an inability to find a beautiful face for a model. Based on these considerations we think the beauty of a statue can by no means be superior to the beauty of a live individual—because a photograph cannot be better than the original. True, a statue is not always a good portrait of the model; sometimes "the artist embodies his ideal in his statue"—but we shall have occasion later to speak of how the ideal of the artist, unlike his model, originates. We must not forget that, in addition to features, we also have grouping and expression in sculpture. But these two elements of beauty we find more fully expressed in paintings than in statues. Hence we shall analyse them when we speak of painting.

From the point of view just mentioned we shall have to divide painting into depiction of separate figures and groups—into paintings depicting the external world and paintings depicting figures and groups in a landscape or, in more general terms, in a setting.

As regards the outlines of the human figure painting is inferior not only to nature, but even to sculpture. It cannot draw the figure as fully and definitely. Having color, however, at its disposal, it depicts man more nearly as he is in living nature and can lend to the face more expressiveness than sculpture.

We cannot foretell what degree of perfection mixing of colors will in time reach. At present painting cannot render well the color of the human body especially the complexion of the face. The colors in paintings are a pitifully crude imitation as compared with the natural coloring of the human body. Instead of delicate flesh, painting shows something greenish or reddish, and regardless of the fact that even for this greenish or reddish depiction of the human body unusual "skill" is necessary, we shall have to admit that dead colors cannot depict the live body satisfactorily. Only one nuance does painting succeed in showing tolerably well—that is the dry color of the aged or roughened face that has lost its animation. Sickly faces or faces covered by pock-marks also come out much better in paintings than fresh, youthful ones. The best is least satisfactorily rendered by painting, the worst—most satisfactorily. The same can be said of facial expression. Best of all painting succeeds in rendering spasmodic distortions of the face or destructively powerful affects—as for example, expressions of anger, horror, fierceness, riotous revelry, physical pain or moral sufferings becoming physical. This is because in such cases the features of the face change sharply under such circumstances and fairly crude brush work can cope with them as small inaccuracies or unsatisfactory details disappear in the broad strokes—the roughest hint is here understood by the beholder. More satisfactorily than other nuances of expression, painting also renders madness, dull-wittedness, or blankness of mind—because there is almost nothing to show here, what has to be shown is disharmony—and disharmony is not spoiled but improved by imperfect rendition. All other expressions of the face are rendered very unsatisfactorily by painting because it can never achieve that delicacy of line, that harmoniousness of all the minute changes in musculature upon which the expressions of quiet joy, silent thoughtfulness, light merriment, etc. depend. Human hands are crude and can do only such things satisfactorily as do not require too fine a finish. "Rough hewn" is the proper term for all the plastic arts as soon as we begin to compare them with nature. But more than of the depiction of the human figure painting (and sculpture) takes pride over nature with its groupings. Only *this* is even less reasonable. True, art occasionally succeeds in grouping figures irreproachably, but it vainly prides itself on this rare achievement. In real life there is *never* any failure in this respect: in every group of live human beings each one behaves in accord with—1) the essence of the scene taking place among them, 2) the essence of the individual's character and 3) the given circumstances. All this is always automatically achieved in real life while in art it is achieved only with great difficulty. "Always and automatically" in nature, "rarely and with great effort" in art—this is what characterizes nature and art in almost every respect.

Let us now consider painting which depicts nature. The outlines of objects, again, cannot be drawn by the hand or even imagined better than one finds them in nature—the reason for this was given above. The imagination cannot conceive anything better than a real rose; and the rendering always falls short of the imagined ideal. The colors of some objects painting succeeds in showing, but there are many objects the coloring of which painting can not convey. Generally dark and crude colors and sharp shades lend themselves to painting; lighter colors, less so; the coloring of sunlit objects still less. Painting is not very successful in rendering the blue of the noonday sky, the light rose and gold nuances of color of morn and evening. "But is is precisely overcoming these difficulties that great artists achieved their fame"—*i. e.*, by overcoming them a great deal better than other painters. But we are not concerned with the relative merits of paintings—we are comparing the best

of them with nature. Just as much as the best of them are better than others, they are also inferior to nature. "But painting can compose a landscape better?" We doubt this. In any event, at every step one comes across pictures in nature from which nothing can be taken away and to which nothing can be added. Very many that have made a life study of art but left nature out say differently. But the simple natural feeling of anyone not affected by artistic or dilletante bias will agree with us when we say that there are many situations and spectacles in nature which one can only admire and in which one can find nothing to condemn. Take any fine forest—not to speak of the great forests in equatorial America—but a forest such as has already suffered from human hands, our European forests—and what ails it? Who, on seeing a fine forest ever thinks that something should be changed in it or something added to it for complete esthetic satisfaction? Take a trip of two-three hundred miles along any country road—we will not speak of Italy, Switzerland or the neighboring parts of Germany—but even in Central Russia which, it is said, is poor in views—how many landscapes you will find even on such a short trip which will fascinate you and the idea will never enter your mind that "if we should add this or that here, and take away something else there, the landscape would be more beautiful." With an unspoiled esthetic sense one enjoys nature fully and finds no deficiencies in its beauty. The idea that a painted landscape can be more majestic, more graceful or more beautiful in any respect than nature itself is partly due to the preconceived notion which is nowadays being satisfactorily ridiculed even by those who have not altogether parted with it—the notion that nature is crude, low, dirty, that it must be cleaned and decorated to ennoble it. This is the principle underlying pruned gardens. Another source of origin of the idea of the superiority of painted landscapes over natural ones we shall analyse a little later when we turn to the question as to what exactly constitutes pleasure in contemplating works of art.

We must consider the relations to nature of still a third sort of paintings—those depicting groups of figures on a landscape. We have seen that groups and landscapes shown by paintings cannot be superior to what we find in reality and in execution are always far inferior to reality. But it is justly claimed that in a painting a group can be placed in surroundings more affective and even more appropriate to its essential content than the usual natural circumstances (joyful scenes often take place in rather squalid and perhaps even sad surroundings; great, majestic scenes—in circumstances often, and even most frequently, far from majestic; and the converse—a landscape often lacks the figures which would be appropriate to its character). Art very easily corrects this and we admit that in this respect art has an advantage over reality. But, while we admit this advantage, we must consider, first of all, to what extent this is important, and in the second place, whether it is always really an advantage. In a picture showing a landscape with a group of figures in it, the landscape is either just a frame for the group or the group is only a secondary accessory while the main thing in the picture is the landscape. In the first place, the advantage of the picture over reality is limited to having found a gilt frame for the picture instead of a plain one. In the second case art has added a beautiful, perhaps, but still, a secondary accessory—again a gain not very great. Is the inner significance of a picture really enhanced when the painter endeavors to lend a group of people surroundings corresponding to the character of the group? In most cases this is very doubtful. It would be rather monotonous to always present scenes of happy love in radiant sunlight among joyous green fields and always in the

spring, when "all nature breathes love," while scenes of crime always lit by lightning and among wild cliffs. Besides, does not the usual disharmony of the surroundings and the nature of the scene as they occur in reality rather strengthen the impression produced by the scene itself? And do not the surroundings almost always affect the character of the scene, lending it new nuances and freshness and more life?

The final conclusion about sculpture and painting reached upon such considerations is: we can see that works of both of these arts are inferior to life and nature in many respects (in beauty of outline, in absolute perfection of execution, in expressiveness, etc.), while excepting one small, unimportant advantage of painting—just analyzed, there is nothing in painting or sculpture that is in any way superior to nature or real life. We must now turn to music and poetry—the highest and most perfect arts, in which, as prevailing esthetic theory claims, exaggerating a thought which, in its moderate form, is perfectly just, both painting and sculpture disappear. But we must first call attention to the question as to the relationship between vocal and instrumental music and under what circumstances vocal music can be considered an art.

Art is an activity by means of which man realizes his aspirations to beauty —such is the usual definition of art. We do not agree with this definition—but since we have not yet completely expressed our criticism we cannot deviate from it and, substituting later the definition we consider more just, we shall not have to change our conclusions as to whether singing is always an art and when it becomes one, even if we use the definition as here stated. What is the first need under the influence of which man begins to sing? It seems to us that this need is entirely distinct from the desire for beauty. A person undisturbed may be reserved and silent. A person under the stress of feeling joy or sorrow becomes communicative: he cannot refrain from giving expression to his feelings—"feelings seek expression." How are they expressed to the outer world? Variously, depending on their nature. Sudden, shocking sensations are expressed by a cry or exclamation. Unpleasant sensations, verging on physical pain, are expressed by grimaces and gestures. A feeling of strong displeasure—also by restless, destructive gestures. Finally, feelings of joy and grief by words, when there is someone to speak to, and by song when there is no one to talk to or when one does not want to talk. This thought will be found in every analysis of folk song. What is strange is that no attention is paid to the fact that song, being essentially an expression of joy or sorrow, does not at all originate in our aspirations to beauty. Is it conceivable that while laboring under the stress of emotion a person will still bother about achieving charm, bother about form? Emotion and form are contradictions. From this alone we can see that song, which is a product of emotion, and art, which concerns itself with form, are two entirely distinct things. Song primarily and essentially is—like speech—a product of practical life and not of art. But like any other "ability" song requires practice, exercise, in order to achieve a high degree of perfection. Like all organs, the organ of song—the voice—requires cultivation, training, in order to make it an obedient instrument of the will—and thus natural singing becomes, in this respect, "an art"—but only in the sense in which the ability to write, figure, plow the ground or perform any practical act, is called "an art;" but not at all in the sense of the term "art" in esthetics.

But in contrast to natural singing there is artificial singing which tries

to imitate natural song. Emotion lends everything produced under its influence a special, high interest; it even lends things a special charm, a particular beauty. A face animated by grief or joy is much more beautiful than a cold emotionless face. Natural singing, as an expression of emotion, while a product of nature, and not of art which concerns itself with beauty, nevertheless possesses great beauty. That is why the desire arises to sing apurpose, to imitate natural singing. What is the relation between this artistic singing and natural song? It is much more labored, organized and embellished with everything that the genius of man can furnish: what comparison is there between an aria from an Italian opera and the poor, monotonous tune of a folk song. But all the lore of harmony, all the elegance of development, the wealth of embellishment lavished on a great aria, all the flexibility, all the incomparable riches of the voice performing it, cannot replace the lack of that genuine feeling which permeates the simple tune of a folk song and the unbrilliant, little cultivated voice of the person who sings, not from a desire to scintillate and make a show of his voice and skill, but out of necessity to express his emotions. The difference between natural and artistic singing is like the difference between the actor who plays a merry or sad character and a person actually merry or sad—the difference between the original and the copy, between the genuine and the imitation. We hasten to add that the composer may really be filled with the emotion which his composition should express; then he can compose something superior, not only in external beauty but also in internal merit, to the folk song. Only in such a case his composition will be a work of art or "skill," only on its technical side, only in the sense in which all human work created with the aid of a profound study, deep consideration and meticulous care to produce something "as good as only possible," can be called works of art. Essentially, however, the work of the composer produced under the stress of involuntary emotion will be a product of nature (life) generally and not of art. In exactly the same way a practical and emotional singer may so enter his role, be so permeated by the emotion which his song is to express, that he may sing it in the theatre, before a public, better than another person singing it from an excess of emotion and not in the theatre before the public. Only in such a case the singer ceases to be an actor and his singing becomes natural song and not the work of art.

We have not the least intention of confusing this stress of emotion with inspiration. Inspiration is a specially favorable state of being of the creative imagination. The only thing it has in common with stress of emotion is that in people gifted with poetic talent inspiration may turn into stress of emotion when the inspiring object disposes to emotion. Between inspiration and emotion there is the same difference as between dreams and impressions.

The prime and essential purpose of instrumental music is—to serve as an accompaniment to singing. True, later, when singing became primarily an art for the higher circles of society and the hearers became more strict in their requirements as regards the technique of song, instrumental music, due to the lack of satisfactory singing, was substituted for it, and became independent. True, also, that with the perfection of musical instruments, the extraordinary development of the technical features of instrumental performance and the ruling bias towards performance rather than content, it has the full right to pretensions at independent importance. Nevertheless the true relation of instrumental music to singing is retained in the opera which is the fullest form of music, as an art, and in some other branches of concert music. And one cannot but notice that in spite of the artificiality of our tastes,

at the refined bias to difficult and clever technique, everyone continues to prefer singing to instrumental music. As soon as the singing begins our attention is drawn away from the orchestra. The violin is preferred above all instruments because it "comes closer than all instruments to the human voice." The highest praise to a musician is that in his hands the instrument acquires "a human voice." Thus instrumental music is an imitation of singing, the accompaniment of and substitute for the latter. Singing as an art is only an imitation of and substitute for natural singing. Hence we have a right to say that in music, art is only a poor reproduction of phenomena of life which are independent of our artistic tendencies.

Translated from the Russian by S. D. Kogan

(To be continued)

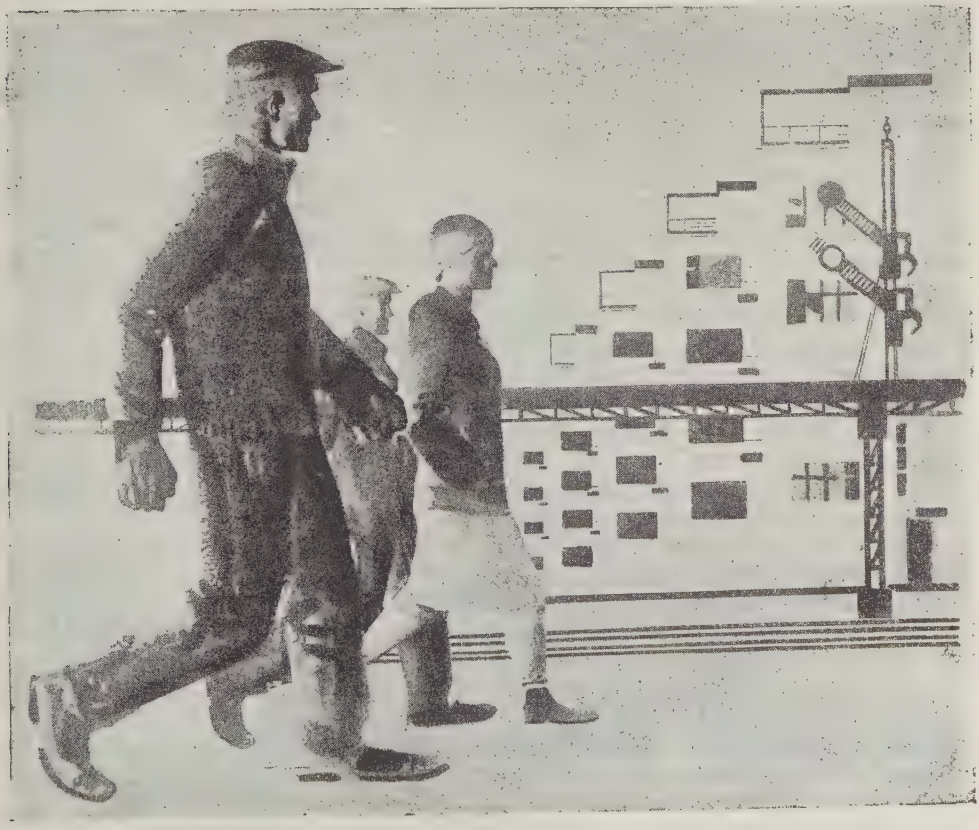
FIVE PAINTINGS by A. DEINEKA
A SOVIET ARTIST

Builders of Socialist Construction

Roar China

Kolkhoz Meeting

Civil War Scene—A Communist Being Questioned by the Whites



The Proud Step of Soviet Workers

ARTICLES and CRITICISM

Leonard Spier

Walt Whitman

> Those who see rigid entities before them and have rigid concepts of them in their heads will find it impossible to understand how the same thing can possess contradictory determinations or change into its opposite. But to those who regard both things and their reflection in our minds as *processes,* it will not seem strange that a process should have contradictory tendencies, sides, elements which conflict with one another, penetrate one another, and change one into the other.—L. Rudas *(Dialectical Materialism and Communism)*

I. "Sanity," according to Santayana, "is madness put to good uses," but the terms are relative, and even to the casual reader of history it must soon become evident, for instance, that the atmosphere of America in the early part of the nineteenth century was laden with a good deal of sanity (or what passed for such with the populace at large) possessing a very dubitable utility. It was a crazy age, to put it bluntly, which could be likened to a nebulous mass of nondescript stuff whirling in space, of which nothing could be certain but its formative, evolutionary character—a grain of insight, it might be added, that was restricted to a few intellects.

The industrial revolution like a new locomotive was triumphantly puffing and roaring along the upgrade of "Progress." To alleviate the tense situation developing in the industrial centres, the Republicans offered western territory to the people for next to nothing, which act in turn invited land speculation and all that goes with it. New towns and small business establishments sprouted with proverbial mushroom rapidity.

The mental life of the period reflected its turbulence with a candor and simplicity characteristic of the American mind. The spirit of democracy, in a Jeffersonian sense, was still very potent, and "average man" walked proudly bearing a perennial chip upon his shoulder. Relatively speaking, the worker was freer than he had ever been anywhere before, and he seemed very conscious of the fact. Excessive individualism reigned. Everyone was determined to "show his stuff" as we now say.

There was of course no radical movement as we now know it, though there were radicals, the majority of them German socialists, who brought over with them their ideas of socialism. But these ideas seemed to lose a good deal of their potency somewhere amid the interminable expanses of the West. As late as 1892 Engels wrote to Sorge that the socialist movement could not hope to plant a firm foothold in America as long as the native-born workers might expect anything from land-speculation.

In the place of such organized labor activity, a virtual blight of petty social and religious movements swept the land, indefinite in number and apparently indiscriminate in their choice of a "cause." Emerson described it as an age of "madmen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-Outers,

Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-Day Adventists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Unitarians, and Philosophers," (quoted by Beard).

Young Walt Whitman was one of these madmen.

He was born in 1819, of sturdy Dutch and English stock. His maternal grandfather was a well-to-do farmer and his father was also a farmer although, it appears not so well-to-do. At the age of eleven, Whitman's formal education terminated and he became in turn office-boy, typesetter, school teacher, and editor of various newspapers.

He was of a broad, wholesome and positive nature, and, like his country, ready to justify the existence of everything and anybody. In his youth he drifted along happily with the leaping current of the period and made no obvious attempt to buck the tide. "He plunged with extravagant zeal into the various reform movements that were sweeping the country in the 1840's, and excoriated the uses of even tea, coffee, and tobacco." (E. Hollaway, *Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Whitman Vol. 1)* He wrote a dime novel *Franklin Evans, or The Inebriate* supporting the work of the temperance societies, and ranting against drink, and he ridiculed free-love and Fourierism. He believed (at this time) that slavery might prove suitable for Cuba and Brazil but was against the principles of our country, and he opposed the institution mainly on the grounds that labor with a white skin could not remain free for long while labor with a black skin was fettered. He went so far as to imply that a race, if it tolerated it, deserved, was created for enslavement. Like a supersalesman, he boosted America at the least opportunity and spoke of it like a mother speaks of her last baby. His very blood bubbled over with *zeitgeist,* and the boundless receptivity with which he absorbed and then brilliantly effused the spirit of the age was truly occult. Nowhere but in America, and in the era of rising capitalism and incessant expansion, we are tempted to believe as we review his life-cycle, could such an individual as Walt Whitman come into being. A crack-pot reformer and temperance advocate, a Quaker, a Tammany man, an Hegelian mystic, a Jeffersonian democrat, an Emersonian critic, an ultra-nationalist, an enthusiastic internationalist, he finally wound up, to his own surprise, a social revolutionist. But we are rushing ahead of ourselves.

The greatness of a man rests not in what degree he has managed to conform to and reflect the ideas and movements which paraded predominantly and with most embellishment along the avenue of his era, for these are ever ideas generated by, and movements sponsored by, the ruling class. The nebulous state of class formation in America during Whitman's time did not, could not contravene this truth. For classes did exist. They constituted two streams running side by side, interflowing at times it is true, and difficult to distinguish one from the other, but two streams nevertheless. That the interests of the working-middle class and the middle-capitalist class were more interdependent than they were in subsequent decades to be, failed to alter the situation. The greatness of Walt Whitman must be measured, as indeed the greatness of every man must so be measured who has existed within a class society, in accordance with the degree of intensity with which he opposed the status quo and battled for the inception of something higher to supersede it.

It would be absurd to say that Whitman, one-time middle-class reformer, suddenly inspired walked abroad and became a poet and prophet of the working class. Throughout his life, as we shall see, substantial vestiges of middle class psychology clung, and obdurately so, to his mental fabric.

I believe that this process of growth and movement in Whitman has been

overlooked or greatly underestimated by his critics. Whitman, according to V. F. Calverton for example, was simply a chauvinistic enthusiast of petty-bourgeois individualism. (*The Liberation of American Literature*) Calverton was obliged to take such an attitude in order to attribute Whitman's outlook to the "frontier spirit," that nationalistic holy-ghost to whose "rugged" form the coat of every early American writer must be cut whether the result fits comfortably or not. He does not treat the poet as a man who evolved through stages, but as a single solid marble entity, quoting his earlier and more or less outgrown prejudices as his ultimate convictions, and taking no account of the time in which they were uttered. Calverton's lack of discrimination in this respect, and his mechanical approach, led him to falsify his portrait of the poet. "He was just as much a petty bourgeois individualist," Calverton writes, "in social philosophy, just as much a believer in private property, as were most of his contemporaries." Undoubtedly this contains truth, but not all the truth; Whitman was growing beyond this stage, even if he did not entirely emancipate himself from it.

2

A just understanding of Whitman's purpose hinges closely upon the definition of two words: Religion and Democracy. It can be said, in fact, that his work was an attempt to clarify, ennoble, and extend the scope of these two concepts.

It is essential to consider the poet's religious or metaphysical convictions, in order to appreciate their material implications and outgrowths.

That Whitman was religious who could deny?

> I say that the real and permanent grandeur
> of these states must be their Religion;
> Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur.

The word Religion, in the Hegelian sense, has reference more to a philosophic idea or group of such ideas infusing the mind of a given people, and less to the orthodox dogmas of a particular creed. The leading idea or system of such, comprising the main intellectual current of an epoch, denotes to the Hegelian the spirit of the age and its religious content. God manifests himself through the workings of this spirit. It was in such a sense that Whitman embraced Religion. Holloway tells us that: "By this time (1860) Whitman is a full-fledged Hegelian—pragmatic, transcendental, evolutionary."

Religion, as it is commonly conceived, in connection with the numerous ecclesiastical denominations, was loathed by the poet. "The churches are one big lie," he wrote Emerson, and jotted the following into his manuscript note-book (1847):

> "Not all traditions can put vitality in churches. They are not alive, they are cold mortar and brick, I can easily built as good, and so can you; books are not men."

Later in the course of many interesting conversations with Horace Traubel, he makes a more pointed assault upon organized religions, speaking of "The priests of commerce augmented by the priests of churches, who are everywhere the parasites, the apologists, of systems as they exist." (*With Walt Whitman at Camden*)

Hegel's mystical theory of historical evolution permitted Whitman's acceptance of the past, back to the "lethargic mist" when mankind unformed

existed dormantly in the state of "fetid carbon." All is justified as the manifestation of Divine Nature heading towards its Ideal which Whitman personifies as "the great Camerado, the Lover true for whom I pine." The validity of this metaphysical interpretation the poet optimistically imagined to be observed in the persistent amelioration of mankind, a belief which formed the common property of the majority of writers at the time. *Amelioration is the blood that runs through the body of the universe* Whitman noted, and his poems are permeated with similar exultations.

To put it less poetically, amelioration was the blood running through the youthful and prospering body of adolescent capitalistic America. In spite of periodic business crises, there seemed to be no end to prosperity, industrial expansion, material aggrandizement. Everything was on the up and up, and so it was natural for these writers, Whitman among them, to imagine that the universe itself was continually proceeding on the up and up. The evolutionism of Hegel fitted admirably into the American scene.

From the conception of historical amelioration to the Individualism for which Whitman is so famed, required but a single step. Individual man, not alone his material scaffolding, is ameliorating, evolving towards something higher than himself. From the "fetid carbon" to his present estate envelopes but a fractional part of the process. It does not stop here; Man constantly rises toward an entity of which Whitman himself seems very hazy (and admits it). Such a train of thought led the poet towards the glorification of the individual (not, as we shall see, the individuals of his time) but the ideal Individual; Men are becoming freer, more God-like, that is the core of it all.

> What do you suppose Creation is?
> What do you suppose will satisfy the Soul, except to walk free,
> and own no superior?
> What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred ways but that
> man or woman is as good as God?
> And that there is no God anymore divine than Yourself?
> And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally mean?
> And that you or any one must approach Creations through such laws?

Nietzsche's conception of Superman too had something of this Hegelian essence in it, but the Individual limned by Nietzsche was not Whitman's democratic "divine average;" it was the exceptional "man of History" (Hegel). It is interesting to see, nevertheless, how from an identical generality could be produced such divergent attitudes.

It may be said that these vistas of Whitman's were nothing more than superstructural appendages of the individualistic practices which rising capitalism encouraged, demanded in America at the time, and indeed such a statement is beyond refutation. But we ought not to over-simplify. From identical soil, there may and did spring up *species* of such individualisms, and here Whitman arrived a step closer to us than did certain other prophets of the ego. Whitman, due to his temperament, his early working-class affinity, or simply a faithful adherence to his interpretation of Hegel, could not picture his ideal as thriving outside the social frame. Therefore he was disinclined to accept Thoreau, whom he judged an escapist. The type of individualism represented by Max Stirner, he certainly would have rejected as unbalanced and therefore untrue. By blending Hegelianism and the democratic ideals of young America, he championed the cause of the ideal individual in the ideal environment, having ideal democratic relations with other individuals as perfect and as "fully equipped" as himself. In metaphysical terminology "morality is the identity of the *subjective* or *personal* with the

universal will." (Hegel) This notion Whitman expressed in various ways throughout his book. He observes in one place:

> The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme—myself
> Disintegrated, everyone disintegrated, yet part of the scheme.

And elsewhere:

> One's self I sing—a simple, separate person;
> Yet utter the word Democratic the word En-masse.

In a poem to youth, he says:

> Anticipate when the thirty or fifty millions,
> are to become the hundred, or two hundred
> millions, of equal freemen and freewomen
> amicably joined.

The individual, according to Whitman, is everything, and everything is for the individual; not the isolated individual in the abstract, but the ideal individual within an ideal society.

Somewhat aside we may observe here that the oft quoted statement of Whitman's regarding *Leaves of Grass,* "Who touches this touches not a book but a man," sounds fine and appeals to our sentiment. It is, notwithstanding, perhaps the least justified of prejudices which have arrived at a status of uncritical acceptance. Whitman's "I" is probably the most depersonalized in all literature since the religious writings of ancient India. It is the voice not of a limited mortal but of a *zeitgeist* (apprehended as the psychological superstructure of an era), revealing the spirit of a distinct phase of American history. It is the symbol of democratic mankind as understood by Whitman. In short, *Leaves of Grass* is an epic, a politico-philisophic epic, and not a group of spontaneous lyrics. The ostensibly "impersonal" art of such a writer as Poe gives us a more definite picture of the man behind the book than does *Leaves of Grass.* If we want to meet the poet Whitman, in flesh and blood, we must, paradoxically, go to his prose works or to his conversations with Traubel.

3

Together with concept of social amelioration, several other widely diffused opinions of his time found their way into Whitman's psychic laboratory and were well mixed into his work. One of these, springing from the same material ground as the above, the notion of cosmic harmony, unity, universal identity, and—branching from that—the belief in a benevolent destiny, both conspired toward the formulation of a kind of optimistic fatalism. *It is not chaos or death,* chanted Whitman. *It is form, union, plan.*

Social classes were yet in a fluid state; there existed the semblance of harmony between the possessors and the possessed; enterprise was at its height, God was in his heaven, all was right with the world.

The idea of Infinity likewise was taken as an axiom; no one thought of doubting it. Apparently everything appeared to be as infinite as American real estate and the potential acquisition of surplus value—capital was infinite, profit was infinite, labor was becoming infinite, time was infinite, space was infinite. Infinite satisfaction prevailed. "Ask Mr. Dwight about the highest numeral term known," Whitman scribbled into his notebook. And in *Leaves of Grass:*

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite:
I laugh at what you call dissolution·
And I know the amplitude of Time.
There was never anymore inception than there is now
See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that;
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

4

Perhaps Whitman's most conspicuously original contribution in the intellectual field lay in his extension of those abstract speculations noted above, and in his drawing the logical conclusions which their application in practical social life would entail. We have seen how his renowned Individualism was in reality, a material outcrop of mystical optimism. It was only by posing against the idea of individual amelioration its opposite counterweighing conception, *i. e.,* of Universal Identity, *that half which is adhesiveness or love, that fuses, ties, and aggregates,* that Whitman prevented his Individualism from becoming a grotesque and unbalanced anarchism, and instead, arrived at a very sane and satisfying synthesis, that of individualism within the social frame, freedom within limits.

As matter is attracted by matter, so a man is attracted by his fellowman. This conviction comes to form "the base of all metaphysics," and the word "comradeship" receives equal weight and sanctity as that of "amelioration," a fact which some critics obviously underestimate, and their picture of Whitman is therefore a onesided one.

Yet underneath Socrates clearly see—and underneath Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade—the attraction of friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife—of children and parents,
Of city for city, and land for land."
To hold men together by paper and seal, or by compulsion, is no account;
That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living principle, as the
hold of the limbs of the body, or the fibres of plants.

5

The ameliorative principle perceived by the poet, and which he imagined he saw successfully at work in particular individuals adumbrating a universal type to come, he believed also to be no less active as an architect of nations. America was the foremoset among the nations for the reason that it possesses the largest number of free individuals, the most ample opportunities for the creation of such, and because it was the greatest natural and voluntary union of diverse peoples the world had ever seen. If Europe had become a *stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,* America was the favorite child of progress; here the Spencerian formula of the advancing integration of wholes and the concomitantly abetted individualization of their parts could be best obseved.

America's first requisite therefore, as the poet saw it, was the creation of a national culture, based upon the history, geography and inner aspirations of this mass of people who had literally built a new world for themselves. Nothing could serve to weld the union more securely. "One of my dearest objects in my poetic expression," he confessed, "has been to combine these forty-four United States into one identity, fused, equal, and independent." (*Uncollected Poetry and Prose*) He was still proclaiming, in 1891, that "what are now deepest wanted in the States as roots for their literature are Patriotism, Nationality, Ensemble." (*American National Literature*)

What, one may ask, was the spiritual fount from which this new culture was to eminate? Whitman was convinced that it was the broad and deep democratic average, the American working middle class.

In "A Backward Glance O'er Travelled Roads," one of his better known prose pieces, it is declared, "without yielding an inch the working man and working woman were to be in my pages from first to last." More figuratively, though none the less decisively expressed, we find the same sentiment repeated in his notebook:

"I will not descent among professors and capitalists—I will turn the ends of my trousers around my boots, and my cuffs back from my wrists, and go with drivers and boatmen and men that catch fish or work in the field. I know they are sublime."

He was to announce again in *Leaves of Grass* the theme, which is both the source as well as the theme, of the new culture.

Away with themes of war! Away with War itself!
Hence from my shuddering sight, to never more return,
that show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses!
That hell unpent, and raid of blood—fit for wild tigers,
or for lop-tongued wolves—not reasoning men!
And in its stead speed Industry's campaigns!
With thy undaunted armies, Engineering!
Thy pennants, Labor, loosen'd to the breeze!
The bugles sounding loud and clear!

There is something new about this desire for a great national culture created for the worker, and based upon his Labor. Yet Calverton can write, "Whitman is a prophet of the past and not of the future." The poet showed keener insight when he asserted characteristically, "My volume is a candidate for the future."

6

The vision of a culture erected upon the basis of millions of free workers, which would finally guaranty the cohesion of the States as nothing else might, required first of all the *terra firma* upon which to work, and that was a somewhat stabilized political unity.

Consistently, with an inner eye ever upon that vision, he valuated all else as of secondary import to the preservation of the Union, when in 1860 the irrepressible conflict threatened to split the nation. Should the people tolerate the secession of recalcitrant states, who was there to prevent further subdivisions and ultimately the partitioning of the former republic into innumerable bumbledoms or kingdoms after the fashion of Europe? The only way to estimate the grandeur of Lincoln, he stated, was to imagine what America might have become had Lincoln not lived, not been president.

"Consider'd from contemporary points of view—who knows what the future may decide?—and from the points of view of current Democracy and the Union, (the only thing like passions of infatuation in the man was the passion for the Union of these States) Abraham Lincoln seems to me the grandest figure yet, on all the crowded canvas of the Nineteenth Century."

Like various thinkers of his time, Whitman considered the question of national unity to be one of more immediate consequence than the slavery issue. He saw no sense in jeopardizing the existence of the union in order to abolish one of its defects, and with Emerson, he became a freesoiler rather than an abolitionist. But he did not believe, therefore, as Calverton says, that Negroes were made for slavery; if this had been an approximation of an early prejudice, he later outgrew it, though to be sure, his most vehement argument against the institution of slavery lay in the latter's constant threat to the independence of the native American worker. Whitman's concern in regard to the extension of slavery over more and ever more territory was second only to his dread of the imminent splitting-up of the nation. His free-

soil stand was definite. Through it he lost one of the best positions he had the fortune to hold. The Wilmot Proviso was an amendment to a bill which appropriated money for the purchase of territory from Mexico during the Mexican War. The bill, introduced into the House of Representatives in 1846 by Wilmot of Pennsylvania, provided that slavery should never exist in any part of such territory. In 1848 Senator Cass "with his eyes on the presidential nomination," suggested that the principle of local self-government should apply to this new territory, thus ignoring the proviso. If Cass' suggestion was followed, the territory would have become slave soil. Whitman, then editor of *The Brooklyn Eagle,* drew attention to Cass' oversight. Isaac Van Andel, proprietor of *The Brooklyn Eagle,* and chairman of the Democratic State Convention being held at the time, was himself however, a "hunker" or slavesoiler, and it wasn't long before Andel succeeded in finding fault with Whitman, soon after having him discharged from the editorial staff.

Still another reason for Whitman's stand against the war-crying Abolitionists, was that he could not reproach the South, in exclusion to the rest of the country, for the guilt and crime of slavery. His writings on this subject throw some light on the temper of the times.

> As to slavery, abstractly and practically, (its idea and the determination to establish and expand it, especially in the new territories the future America), it is too common, I repeat, to identify it exclusively with the South. In fact down to the opening of the war, the whole country had about an equal hand in it. The north had at least been just as guilty, if not more guilty—the governors and legislatures of every northern State had been guilty, and the mayors of New York and other northern cities had all been guilty—their hands were all stained.

And again:

> I say that the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth terms of the American Presidency have shown that the villainy and shallowness of rulers (back'd by the machinery of great parties) are just as eligible to these states as to any foreign despotism, kingdom, or empire—there is not a bit of difference. History is to record those three Presidentiads, and especially the administrations of Fillmore and Buchanan, as so far our topmost warning and shame. Never were publicly displayed more deform'd, mediocre, snivelling unreliable, false-hearted men. Never were these States so insulted and attempted to be betray'd. All the main purposes for which the government was established were openly denied. The perfect equality of slavery with freedom were flauntingly preach'd in the north—nay, the superiority of slavery. The slave trade was proposed to be renew'd. Everywhere frowns and misunderstandings—everywhere exasperations and humiliations.

7

The hatred which Whitman held for the slave traffic was amplified by his adherence to a principle that postulated a steadily maturing world integration, which, if it was to modify the egotism of individuality, must exert a leavening influence over the destiny of specific nations as well. A national culture, though its foundation might be an indigenous one, did not imply the exclusion of other cultures, of blendings and incorporations with these, and this to an ever-increasing degree. Nor did patriotism, in Whitman's sense, include hatred and rejection of other lands and peoples; it involved rather, a genuine love of one's own as something distinct and worthy of such an emotion, yet remaining an inseparable unit of aggregate mankind. Whitman's attitude recalls Lenin's love of Russia, which did not prevent the revolutionary leader from being, at the same time, the most ardent internationalist the world has ever known. This matured view of the poet's, needless to say,

negated his former prejudices regarding questions both racial and, to a lesser degree, national.

While patriotism may remain Whitman's graveman, from the above remarks we can also valuate passages such as the following from *Leaves of Grass:*

What whispers are these, O lands, running ahead of you,
Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one heart to the globe?
Is humanity forming en masse?
It seems to me I can look over and behold them, in Germany, Italy, France, Spain—or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or India—talking other dialects;
And it seems to me if I could know those men, I should become attached to them,
as I do to men in my own lands;
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.
You, whoever you are!
You daughter or son of England!
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! You Russ in Russia!
You dim-descended, black, divine soul'd African, large, fineheaded, nobly formed,
superbly destined, on equal terms with me!
I see men marching and coutermarching by swift millions;
I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies broken;
I see the landmarks of European kings removed;
I see this day the People beginning their landmarks, (all other give way);
Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day;
Never was average man his soul, more energetic, more like a God.
Years of the modern! Years of the unperform'd!
Your horizon rises—I see it parting away for more august dramas;
I see not America only—I see not only Liberty's nation, but other nations preparing;
I see tremendous entrances and exits—see new combinations—I see the solidarity of
races.

Of unlimited importance to any appreciation of Whitman's intellectual development, in my opinion, is a passage contained in an article written in 1881 entitled "Poetry of the Future," a passage which should take its place as one of the most beautiful and profound in all American literary criticism:

Lately, I have wonder'd whether the last meaning of this cluster of thirty-eight States is not only practical fraternity among themselves—the only real *union,* (much nearer its accomplishment, too than appears on the surface)—but for fraternity over the whole globe—that dazzling, pensive dream of ages! Indeed, the peculiar glory of our lands, I have come to see, or expect to see, not in their products, nor military or naval power, nor special, eminent names in any department, to shine with, or outshine, foreign special names in similar department,—but more and more in a vaster, saner, more surrounding Comradeship, uniting closer and closer not only the American States, but all nations, and all humanity. That, O poets! is not that a theme worth chanting, striving for? Why not fix your verses henceforth to the gauge of the round globe? The whole race? Perhaps the most illustrious culmination of the modern may thus prove to be a signal growth of joyous, more exalted bards of adhesiveness, identically one in soul, but contributed by every nation, each after its distinctive kind. Let us, audacious, start it! Let the diplomats, as ever, still deeply plan, seeking advantages proposing treaties between governments, and to bind them, on paper; what I seek is different, simpler. I would inaugurate from America, for this purpose, new formulas—international poems. I have thought that the invisible root out of which the poetry deepest in, and dearest to, humanity grows, is Friendship. I have thought that both in patriotism and song (even amid their grandest shows past) we have adhered too long to petty limits, and that the time has come to enfold the world." *(Rivulets of Prose).*

8

It may perplex some readers to find the poet harboring such advanced revolutionary views on the one hand, and on the other, in truly petty bourgeois fashion, advocating extremely practical but comparatively inconsequential and limited social reforms in politics and in public opinion. But America was a complex of confusions.

Whitman remained a reformist to the very last. With equal fervor as that with which he advanced his now famous principle of healthier attitudes toward the human body and toward sexual relationships, he argued for the democratization of the military code; for woman's suffrage and the unquestioned prerogative of women to enter into industry if they so desired; for an improved "treatment of working-people by employers,—and all that goes along with it;" for a more equitable distribution of tariff revenues; for the continued exercise of unrestricted freedom of speech and opinion; for "the free action of the right of the states, within their own spheres;" and for "the rights of minorities—always in danger of being infringed upon by temporary willful majorities." It was in true Jeffersonian spirit that he declared, "The government should make no more laws than those useful for preventing a man or body of men from infringing on the rights of other men." Edward Carpenter records a conversation with the poet in which the latter was to have expressed the following middle-class platitude:

> The creation of a large, independent, democratic mass of smallowners is the main thing—though it is never once mentioned by our economists and politicians *(Day With Walt Whitman)*

Among his reformist notions may be listed, although it constituted a minor revolution in its own sphere, Whitman's break with poetic formalities; enough however has been written on this to make it rather superfluous for me to go into it at any length here. His newly devised literary form could hardly be called a form at all, but more accurately an escape from form, and particularly from the rigid patterns of fashionable verse which the poet found to be wholly inadequate for the burden of his new message. We realize that the grandeur and the sweep of the lines in *Leaves of Grass* spring directly from the invigorating sweep of the ideas articulated therein and from the inate grandeur of Whitman's personality.

9

Underneath this superficial petty bourgeois passion for reforms of relative worth and varying permanence, the germ of a great idea was breaking its tissue of quiescence; an idea, by whose inherent proportions Whitman was to gauge historic events and valuate significance. His manuscript notebook, dated 1847, eight years prior to the first printing of *Leaves of Grass* contains an inscription which, whether the result of a genuine "revelation" or otherwise, affords evidence that something more than petty bourgeois politics and idealism impelled the effort which ended with America's first original literary achievement.

> "Vast and tremendous is the scheme." it reads. "It involves no less than constructing a nation of nations—a state whose grandeur and comprehensiveness of territory and people make the mightiest of the past almost insignificant—and the people of this state instead of being ruled by the old complex laws, and the involved machinery of all governments hitherto, shall be ruled mainly by individual character and conviction: —The recognized character of the citizen shall be so pervaded by the best qualities of law and power that law and power shall be superseded from this government and transferred to the citizen."

10

The consummation of the "scheme" mentioned in Whitman's notebook lay wholly beyond the horizon of that America whose acquaintanceship

encouraged his vision but by no means actualized it. Traubel records the following:

Whitman: "Hugo points to the tramps, the poor, the ignorant peasant: 'these' he says, 'are not the people . . . these are but the mournful beginnings of the people' " . . .
I put in: "What he says there of the people you would say of our present democracy."
W. then: "Yes—oh, yes! that is what I have been striving to say for thirty-five years now." *(With Walt Whitman at Camden)*

His denunciatory comments appertaining to current institutions and their concomitant evils, refute any contention that Whitman imbecilically imagined America to be a utopian state. "We can never," he declared,

"Have a born penitentiary bird, or panel-thief or lowest gambling-hell or groggery keeper, for President—though such may not only emulate, but get, high offices from the proud and wealthy city of New York."

It was the age of "Boss" Tweed and Carnegie as well as that of Lincoln. The poet observed that "the best class we show, is but a mob of fashionable dress'd speculators and vulgarians;" he condemned their "mania for owning things."

The ignorant man is demented with the madness of owning things—of having by warranty deeds, court-clerk's records, the right to mortgage, sell, give away or raise money on certain possessions.—But the wisest soul knows that no object can really be owned by one man or woman any more than another. *(Manuscript Notebook, 1847).*

Whitman applied to America what we should now term, "bolshevik self-criticism," and he saw where many failed to see.

If the United States, like the countries of the Old World, are also to grow vast crops of poor, desperate, dissatisfied, nomadic, miserable-waged populations, such as we see looming upon us of late years—steadily, even if slowly, eating into them like a cancer of lungs or stomach—then our republican experiment, notwithstanding all its surface successes, is at heart an unhealthy failure.

"Our country," it is observed in one of his notebooks, "seems to be threatened with a sort of ossification of the spirit," and in *Complete Prose* from which all the prose passages herein quoted are abstracted unless otherwise stated, he enlarges upon the theme:

Are there, indeed, men here worthy the name? Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty, grotesque, malformations, phantoms, play meaningless antics. Confess that everywhere in shop, street, church, theatre, barroom, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed ,chigon'd, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood decreasing or deceas'd, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners, or rather lack of manners, (considering the advantages enjoy'd) probably the meanest to be seen in the world.

"A rich person ought to have a strong stomach," he slyly declares while discoursing on the genesis of fortunes.

As in Europe the wealth of today mainly results from and represents, the rapine, murder, outrages, treachery, hoggishness, of hundreds of years ago, and onward, later, so in America, after the same token—(not yet so bad, perhaps, or at any rate not so palpable we have not existed long enough—but we seem to be doing our best to make it up).

Already in 1879 he could jot an observation such as this:

I saw today a sight I had never seen before—and it amazed, and made me serious; three quite good looking American men, of respectable personal presence, two of them young, carrying chiffonier bags on their shoulders, and the usual long iron hooks in their hands, prodding along, their eyes cast down, spying for scraps, rags, etc.

To cap it all we present one of his "catalogues" of an average but hardly divine "Democratic Convention:"

Let me give a schedule, or list, of one of these representative conventions for a long time before, and inclusive of, that which nominated Buchanan. (Remember they had come to be the fountains and issues of American body politic, forming as it were, the whole blood, legislation, office holding, etc.) One of these conventions, from 1840 to '60, exhibited a spectacle such as could never be seen except in our own age and in these States. The members who composed it were seven-eights of them, the meanest kind of bawling and blowing office holders, office seekers, pimps, malignants, conspirators, murderers, fancy-men, custom-house clerks, contractors, kept-editors, spaniels well train'd to carry and fetch, jobbers, infidels, disunionists, terrorists, mail riflers, slave-catchers, pushers of slavery, creatures of the President, creatures of would-be Presidents, spies, bribers, compromisers, lobbyers, sponges, ruin'd sports, expell'd gamblers, policy-backers, montedealers, duellists, carriers of conceal'd weapons, deaf men, pimpled men, scarr'd inside with vile disease, gaudy outside with gold chains made from the people's money and harlots' money twisted together; crawling, serpentine men, the lousy combings and born freedom-sellers of the earth. And whence came they? From back yards and barrooms; from out of the custom-houses, marshals' offices, post-offices, and gambling-hells; from the President's house, the jail, the station-house; from unnamed by-places, where devilish disunion was hatched at midnight; from political hearses, and from coffins inside, and from the shrouds inside the coffins; from the tumors and abscesses of the land; from the skeletons and skulls in the vaults of the federal almshouses and the running sores of the great cities. Such, I say, form'd or absolutely controll'd the forming of, the entire personnel, the atmosphere, the nutriment and chyle of our municipal, State, and National politics—substantially permeating, handling, deciding, and wielding everything—legislation, nominations, elections, "public sentiment", etc—while the great masses of the people, farmers, mechanics, and traders, were helpless in their grips.

11

Like Browning's creation, it appears, Whitman

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph.

After reading Hegel, he wrote:

Roaming in thought over the Universe,
I saw the little that is Good
steadily hastening towards immortality,
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw
hastening to merge itself and become
lost and dead.

It is because of this mystical faith that the poet accepted America for what it was, convinced that what was good and useful to humanity would endure beyond the purely transient evils against which he declaimed. Next to the all absorbing power of the American drama then being enacted, the influence of Hegel's thought on the American poet cannot be overestimated, and in particular the great philosopher's evolutionary interpretation of history. Differing from Marx, however, the poet swallowed the method wholly and, it may seem, uncritically, mysticism and all. We can now see how this hampered his further development.

By 1860, says Holloway, Whitman was "a full-fledged Hegelian." In 1882

he still revered the German, though making the concession that "the brain of the future may add and revise, and even entirely reconstruct his system." At one time he claims:

> In my opinion the above formulas (of Hegel) are an essential crowning justification of New World democracy in the creative realms of Time and Space. There is that about them which only the vastness, the multiplicity and vitality of America would seem able to comprehend, to give scope and illustration to, or to be fit for, or even originate. It is strange to me that they were born in Germany, or in the old world at all.

In *Leaves of Grass,* a further indebtedness reveals itself:

> Now understand me well—It is provided in the essence of things, that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.

The philosophical approach which Pope trenchantly epitomized in the phrase "What is is right," Walt Whitman applied to America, viewing it as a prelude to the vision which never abandoned him. American capitalistic enterprise would engender from within itself the necessary contradiction whose sprouting would tend towards the blossoming of the ideal state he so faithfully contemplated and believed in. Just how this would be accomplished he did not know—Marxism was scantily diffused—but that it would happen somehow, sometime, of this he was convinced, as the following from "Democratic Vistas," his best known essay, might testify:

> For fear of mistake, I may as well distinctly specify as cheerfully included in the model and standard of these Vistas, a practical stirring, worldly, money-making, even materialistic character. It is undeniable that our farms, stores, offices, dry-goods, coal and groceries, engineering, cash, accounts, trades, earnings, markets, etc., should be attended to in earnest, and actively pursued, just as if they had a real and permanent existence. I perceive clearly that the extreme business energy, and this almost maniacal appetite for wealth prevalent in the United States, are parts of the amelioration and progress, indispensably needed to prepare the very results I demand.

Hegelianism supplied Whitman with a clue for his interpretation of the American panorama. Hegelianism induced him to accept the temporary sordidness which the nation's feverish activity of growth entailed, as an essential to a less sordid futurity. It was, however, the same Hegelianism which contrived toward hindering, in fact preventing, any further revolutionary development in the life of the poet. The mystical element upon which Hegel's system rests, and by which history is understood as the supernatural unfolding of Spirit (whatever that is) unwittingly tends to minimize the influence of man's volution, for the assumption is that the course of history is already determined and individual influence can be, in the main, of negligible avail. In consequence therefore, if the poet's interpretation of his nation's destiny was of a revolutionary nature, the poet himself never became a revolutionist, in the Marxist sense of the term. "I sit and look out" summarizes his attitude and is as near as he came to being one who not alone interprets but also transforms the world he lives in.

12

Life succeeds in that it seems to fail, it has been said. If Whitman never became an active revolutionist, he did achieve more toward formulating a militant working-class ideology and fixing a revolutionary goal for his

people, than did any other American poet. The goal he called Democracy for lack of a better term, and of the word's inadequacy he was very much aware.

> We have frequently printed the word Democracy, yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen and tongue. It is a great word, whose history I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted.

Under this Democracy, the government's most vital undertaking will lie, peculiarly enough, in training the people to govern themselves. Government itself will differ in form as well as in function from what today still passes for Democracy.

> I expect to see the day when the like of the present personnel of the governments, Federal, State, municipal, military, and naval, will be look'd upon with derision, and young men will reach Congress and other official stations, sent in their working costumes, fresh from their benches and returning to them with dignity.

"What, specifically," says Holloway, "did Whitman wish the young country freed from? For one thing, from class rule." The following description of the new "City of Friends" is the clearest exposition of the poet's conception of Democracy.

> Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of the orators and bards;
> Where the city stands that is beloved by these, and loves them in return, and understands them;
> Where no monuments exist to heroes, but in the common words and deeds;
> Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place;
> Where the men and women think lightly of the laws;
> Where the slave ceases, and master of slaves ceases;
> Where the populace rise at once against the neverending audacity of elected persons;
> Where fierce men and women pour forth, as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves;
> Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority;
> Where the citizen is always the head and ideal—and President, Mayor, Governor, and what not, are agent for pay;
> Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on themselves;
> Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs;
> Where women walk in public processions in the streets, the same as the men;
> Where they enter the public assembly and take places on the same as the men;
> Where the city of the faithfullest friends stands;
> Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands;
> Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands;
> Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands.
> There the great city stands!

If, as Calverton asserts, Whitman is a prophet of the past and not of the future, may we modestly ask to be informed where this City of Friends exists today or ever did exist?

It is not often that we may observe the actual transmutation of a psychology into an ideological program, or as near to such as historical limitations might allow, reflected in the mind of an individual. Yet such an opportunity has been preserved for us by Horace Traubel. In the role of a sort of mental obstetrician, he recorded the following conversation with "the Socrates of Camden" (dated 1889, two years before the poet's death); we quote at length in order that both the informal flavor of these conversations and the clarification to which they conduced, may be illustrated.

Whitman: "My general position is plain; the people; all the people; not forgetting the bad with the good: they are today swindled, robbed, outraged, discredited, despised: I say they must assert their priority—that they come first: not the swells, the parlors, the superiors, the elect, the polished; not them: the people, the fraternal, eternal people: evil and righteous, no matter; the people." "Do you think the class that has robbed the people will hand their loot back?" "I'm afraid not; I'm afraid the people will have to fight for what they get." "How will they fight?" "How do you say they will fight?" "There are several ways; Tucker suggests Socialism." Whitman: "I don't dispute with them. Why should I? I want the real things to get said and done whether they please me or please anybody in particular or not: the real things: the people's things. When I say I even include kings I wouldn't like to be understood as making a plea for king-craft: I include Carnegie but I would not make a plea for Homestead: God forbid!—yes, I say damn Homestead. But I can't get myself into a personal boil over the matter: I want the arrogant money-powers disciplined, called to time: I think I shall rejoice in anything the people do to demonstrate their contempt for the conditions under which they are despoiled." I exclaimed, "Hurrah! You are pretty radical after all, Walt, good bit more radical than you probabbly realize yourself—you've gone farther than you think." He assented: "It's quite possible: the growth of a man is so subtle; he sometimes goes along in entire innocence until he is reminded of his heresy." I asked Whitman: "Suppose the millionaires were abolished—that millionarism became impossible, would you feel unhappy over it?" "What? me? God no! Ain't that my program?" "That's what I'm trying to find out: I want to see if you do have a program." Whitman raised his arm and brought his hand down with a slap on the arm of his chair: "I say that if the people know any way to get rid of the millionaires, to get the old man of the sea off their backs (God knows they've staggered on under the burden long enough!): I say that if they know any way, let 'em embrace it: to hurl the nasty mess into oblivion!" His eyes flamed out. I exclaimed: "Why Walt, you're a damned good revolutionarist, after all!" He was amused. "Didn't you always know it? What could I be if I wasn't?" "I thought from what you said of Tucker and George that you were maybe a bit reactionary!" He fairly yelled at me: "To hell with your reaction! To hell with it! I may be dodging your doctrines: I'm not dodging your purpose: I am with you all in what you aim for: solidarity, the supremacy of the people: all the people in possession of what belongs to all the people but has been stolen from them: I'm with you in that: but I can't follow you in all the intricate involvements, theories, through which you pursue your fierce agitations. (*With Walt Whitman at Camden*)

13

The personality of Walt Whitman, it is very likely, may outlast all of his literary productions with the exception of a handful of poems and one or two prose essays. He was not a great intellect, but he was a great soul, a spirit whose intuition was as profound and more unerring, in the main, than the intricate reasonings of most recognized thinkers. His greatest contribution was himself. As Thoreau declared, he was the greatest Democrat the world had seen, and whatever of sanity and grandeur young America was possessed of was embodied in that resplendent individual, Walt Whitman. While the nation as a whole was frantically clamoring after wealth and wordly goods, bent on proving its equality with privileged classes of the past by accumulating junk or its gold equivalent, the poet "imperturb'd," took it all for granted and incidentally created the grand style in loafing. Indolence was raised to the estate of a fine art. And at such a time! It was no wonder that Max Nordau seriously called the man "insane beyond a doubt."

14

Whitman endeavored to make a comprehensive survey of the world from the point of view of the average working man. As we have seen, *Leaves of Grass* was written with that intention. His scattered fragments of literary

criticism, reveal the same affinity for the working man and a sincere concern for his welfare is always apparent. "It is certain," he wrote, "that a poetry of absolute faith and equality for the use of the democratic masses never was." Despite their limitations, the poet praises highly such men as Burns, Hugo, Heine, Jefferson, Ingersoll, and Dickens, all of whom in varying degrees cherished ideals similar to his own. "I could not stand before a Millet picture with my hat on," was his tribute to the great painter of France's peasantry. The historical position of Shakespeare, he summed up in a sentence: "He seems to me of astral genius, first class, entirely fit for feudalism," *(British Literature)*. Elsewhere, of Scott and Shakespeare he writes:

> Scott was a Tory and a high church and state man. The impression after reading any of his fiction where monarchs or nobles compare with patriots or peasants, is dangerous to the latter and favorable to the former . . . In him as in Shakespeare, (though in a totally different method,) "there's such divinity does hedge a king," as makes them something more than mortal—and though this way of description may be good for poets or loyalists, it is poisonous for freemen.

His estimations, in so far as he preceived the class element in literature, are significant, particularly when we take into consideration the fact that proletarian criticism was wholly non-existent. Robert Burns was to him "a man of the decent-born middle classes everywhere and anyhow," again reflecting that vague line of demarcation separating the working from the middle class. In another place he makes his point more lucid as regards the Scotch poet

> I think, indeed, one best part of Burns is the unquestionable proof he presents of the perennial existence among the laboring classes, especially farmers, of the finest latent poetic elements in their blood.

Whitman himself has been the centre of a critical squall which blew up with the first printing of *Leaves of Grass* and has not subsided since. To some moderns the poet takes on the aspect of a holy saint; they profess a religious faith in the new bible, *Leaves of Grass*. Others consider him a charlatan, or at best a well-meant shallowpate.

As might have been anticipated his work was condemned from the very start. The *American Journal*, 1876, printed the following:

> No established publishing house will publish his (Whitman's) books. Most of the stores will not even sell them. Repeated attempts to secure a small income by writing for the magazines during his illness have been utter failures. The *Atlantic* will not touch him. His offerings to *Scribner's* are returned with insulting notes; the *Galaxy* the same. *Harpers'* did print a couple of his pieces two years ago, but imperative orders from headquarters have stopped anything further. All the established American poets studiously ignore Whitman. (Quoted in *Notorious Literary Attacks* Alfred Mordell).

"We look in vain through your book for a single idea," wrote Henry James in a review of "Mr. Whitman." The puritanical Whittier destroyed the copy of Whitman's book submitted to him. "I have read a good deal of his (Whitman's poetry," Lowell confessed to Edward Carpenter, "but I can't see anything in it. . . . I can't see anything in it." (*Days With Walt Whitman,* Edward Carpenter).

There were however, a number of individuals whose perceptions evidently were more refined than Lowell's or James' and who saw enough in Whitman's work to win their admiration. Among them were John Burroughs, Edward Dowden, Rossetti, Robert Buchanan, Morris, John Addington Symonds. Edward Carpenter became a devout disciple. Robert Henri, the eminent artist considered him an inspiration to every creative worker (*The*

Art Spirit). Emerson, who greeted him with initial enthusiasm, later cooled down a bit toward him, slyly remarking of *Leaves of Grass* that "the book reads like a mixture of the Bhagivat-Gita and the *New York Herald.*

Others also saw something in it; especially so the "Society for the Suppression of Vice." The "Society" compelled Osgood and Company, Whitman's Boston publishers, on the grounds of immorality, to cease circulating his book. This society, formed in 1873 by such worthies as Parkhurst and Anthony Comstock was subsequently given financial assistance by such interested persons as John Gould, "Boss" Tweed, and John D. Rockefeller.

Among our contemporaries, Santanyana comments: "With Whitman, the surface is absolutely all and the underlying structure is without interest and almost without existence," a statement which I believe to be the very antipode of truth. W. B. Pitkin, in a study for which he has revealed a natural aptitude, declares with enviable conviction that "Whitman, being vegetable, created nothing; he knew neither noble rage, nor noble fear, nor noble love, and he had no vision" (*A Short Introduction to the History of Human Stupidity).* It was probably this last valuation which finally broke down all bourgeois scruples and admitted Walt Whitman to the Hall of Fame a few years ago. The reference to vegetables reminds us also that there exists a Walt Whitman Society which manages to consume an annual dinner in the "good gray poet's" memory, now that he is good and dead, with the intention, it may be, of appeasing their class conscience for having starved him while he lived.

It remained however, for a kindred spirit to give appreciative utterance to Whitman's important position in American life and literature. In a brief but profound essay called "Modern Poetry," Hart Crane wrote:

> He, (Whitman) better than any other, was able to coordinate the forces in America which seem most intractable, fusing them into a universal vision which takes on additional significance as time goes on. He was a revolutionist beyond the strict meaning of Coleridge's definition of genius, but his bequest is still to be realized in all its implications.

Russia, being the world's first working class republic, it is good to find that Whitman is held in high esteem there, and his book *Leaves of Grass* a best-seller (see "Walt Whitman in Russia" by Albert Parry in the *American Mercury,* September, 1934). "In 1918," writes Parry,

> "a poem by Walt Whitman, extolling struggle was translated into the Russian and published as a broadside by a local Soviet propaganda outfit in the small town of Totma, in Northern Russia. At about that time Red troops were passing through the town on their way to the Archangel front, to fight the White Russians and the American expeditionary force. The Whitman poem was distributed among the Red soldiers to inspire them in their stand against the invading compatriots of the Good Gray Poet."

Chukovski, in 1905 translated the poem "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" and for this act "was promptly tried by the Tsar's courts. Six years later, a Moscow court ordered the destruction of a book of Walt Whitman's poetry," as translated by Chukovski.

"In 1909," notes Parry, "Maxim Gorki wrote that Walt having begun with individualism had eventually reached Socialism. Anatol Lunacharski defined Whitman's position thus:

> Democracies, which we could observe till now, have been individualistic. The power and the grandiose beauty of Whitmanism were in principle opposite to such a democracy—they were in Communism, in collectivism.

In 1917 Vladimir Friche called Whitman "the singer of equal value and equal rights among men, of international solidarity."

15

In conclusion, Whitman was a great critic of his nation who essayed to probe its future and influence it. His major deficiency, however, lay in his recourse to a false or pseudo-dialectic, if such a term is not self-negating. He applied the correct method but used the wrong materials. In place of the dialectics of class struggle he believed that evolutionary history was motivated by the opposition of society to man's individuality, both of which being in a process of growth, continually collided. He tried to mitigate this contradiction. But the Individual he considered in the classless abstract, and Society he looked upon as a great undivided body. Although he was aware that individual expression was all but squelched by capitalist society, he failed to realize that, in the main, individual emancipation can only be achieved through class emancipation. His pseudo-dialectic indeed, in spite of its limitations, impelled him to draw revolutionary conclusions, for the individual's amelioration and the concomitant growth of freedom both implied and involved inevitable struggle. But the identical outlook, because of its limitations, left him without a method of revolutionary procedure. There was nothing left to do, as it were, but to believe in Progress and wait for things to happen.

Walt Whitman, the father of American poetry, may be called, with the possible exception of Emerson, America's only poetic voice of major proportions. Even the most eminent names of today in the poetic art, such as Elliot and Jeffers, however popular they may be for the time, "do not," as Mathew Arnold would have put it, "belong to that which is the main current of the literature of modern epochs," they are, essentially, reactionary.

In the preceding sections I have tried to sketch the confusion that still surrounds the criticism and appreciation of Walt Whitman, and by presenting an all-around view of his endeavor and achievement help toward ending or at least minimizing that confusion. It is attractive to be able to observe, and in all truth, that the best in Whitman belongs to the future and "the future rests in the hands of the radicals" (*Whitman to Traubel*). What gold there is in this mountain is ours.

Sergei Dinamov

In Quest of Lost Optimism

Some Reflections on Literature

Baudelaire, that most somber artist of ruin and collapse, at one time uttered the following dark and ominous words:—"Everything is rot; task, wishes, dreams, fame. Over my head, the hair of which is raised in horror, I feel the breath of the grave. Above, below and everywhere, in the depth, in the noise, in the stillness, I see the same inanity. I see through all windows in my mind's vision only the infinite, and, pursued by one and the same idea, I crave to submerge into a void." A real dread of life sounds in these shuddering words. The artist is ready to plunge into the deepest abyss in order not to raise to the heights of life. Death itself appears to him salvation and his salvation—only in death.

Baudelaire died, but the class which created him and which tied him forever to this black pillar of fear is not yet dead. That class which transforms the sunniest thing in the world—life—into ruin, destruction and death, is not yet dead.

Books and films filled with horror appear again and again in the West. In some of them horror is only commercialism, only an attempt to cash in by providing strong sensations. But there are great and sincere artists who are crushed by capitalism to such an extent that for them the world no longer sings and the sun no longer shines. Though they are opposed to the bourgeois system, these artists can only toss around in a blind alley and watch in a melancholy fashion the agony of their consciousness, which to them is the agony of the universe.

Lionel Britton, the creator of a vast novel *Hunger and Love* and of the play *Brain,* is such an artist with a darkened vision.

Brain! Consciousness! How they were formerly sung by bourgeois artists. But even Goethe's *Faust,* the poem in honor of consciousness, ended with the ruin of the hero, who wanted too much, who wanted to grasp the absolute truth.

In his play, *Brain,* Britton endeavoured to present a new Faust of the twentieth century, a Faust of the epoch of imperialism, of the epoch of decaying and dying capitalism. His hero, a professor, is dreaming also, and dreaming boldly:—

"Let us imagine that the individual activities and energies of all the people in the world, which are now disunited and haphazard, will be brought into an interconnection and interplay, thus forming one single consciousness."

The professor died, but his forgotten idea triumphed after one hundred and fifty years. A certain Brooks regenerated it; a society was formed for the building of an artificial and colossal brain in Sahara. The aim of the society was to struggle against the animal in man and against those who want new wars; the building of this brain was to act as a dam against the flood of barbarism.

Another two hundreds years passed and the brotherhood formed in the year of 2100 became a power. When the capitalists attempted to destroy it, they suffered defeat. Again Britton projects the action of his play several tens of centuries ahead. The brain has already been built. It rules the whole world.

It is only necessary to utter in any place on earth the words "Oh, Brain!" with a special intonation, for the brain to hear and to give an immediate answer. The brain is a colossal mechanism in which the most talented men are working and fulfilling the functions of separate cells of the brain, as it were.

Britton dreams this, pictures the men of the future as fully subservient to their master—the Brain. Fear, the most gruesome and insuperable fear in the whole history of mankind—this is what holds sway over these joyless men of a joyless future. They are afraid of their own creation, they shiver before this brain.

Britton attempted to picture a world which will have passed into its future without a revolution, but he only succeeded in presenting that horror which to him appears as happiness, and such "happiness" which is permeated with fear. Therefore, the end of his play is not accidental. The Brain says: —

"The end of life is approaching. . . . Night was all around when our nebula arose and night will clothe us after a violent flare-up of light. Night is infinite, night is dark—the ancient night, the night forever. That which created the world will also ruin it. . . . There was life, there were visions, there was a world; it grew up into a single consciousness and emerged from the darkness; it returns into darkness. Consciousness will die."

Britton is sketching with a trembling hand the fearful contours of his somber future world. He sees the destruction of everything and cries out:—"Woe to life! Woe to thought! It is the end of everything!"

Britton concluded his play with the following words;—"Utter darkness. Stillness. The world is no longer. Eternal night."

How fearful must the world appear to an intellectual, when before his very eyes even the future is painted in such deathly hues; even in the future he, crushed as he is by capitalism, sees only ruin and destruction. Lionel Britton's play is a clot of hysterical horror in the face of reality.

On the Contrary

Such hysterical outbursts are increasing in the life of the present-day West among those writers who see the inevitable doom of the whole capitalist system, but who cannot detach themselves from it and perish with it.

It is precisely in order not to doom themselves to destruction and in order to consolidate their forces for saving culture from bourgeois barbarism and decay that the best writers of the world gathered in Paris.

The outstanding French writer, Jean Richard Bloch, declared in *Monde:*

"The Congress must formulate and propagandize the slogans of an inexhaustible faith in life, society and man. These motives of faith did not lose their value in spite of the crisis. For this is a crisis not of mankind but of a class. In its agony the ruling class is striving, with the help of its interpreters, to render that agony a factor which defines our whole epoch. This is not the truth. This is the lie of a dying person who wishes to see around him other dying persons and who thereby finds consolation."

In his speech on literature, Jean Richard Bloch gave a very descriptive and powerful characterisation of bourgeois literature:—"Inasmuch as this dying person is still holding in his hands the keys to the coffer, many writers—adulators and court jesters—are striving to outdo the senile stupidity of this disgusting old man."

Jean Richard Bloch, a leader of the anti-fascist "Committee of Vigilance" which unites in its ranks many thousands of French intellectuals, declared

with the full force of his conviction: "The writers who take part in the Congress have been elected from among those, who from now on energetically and violently deny that this death is threatening all. No, this death interests only the dying, but certainly not the others—the living. . . . It is our task to go to him who lives, to be his herald and to help him assert himself. This is a Congress of life and health."

Magnificent words! Yes, this is a congress of life and health; this is a unification of living and cheerful forces of mankind. Bourgeois artists, too, make attempts to look healthy and vigorous. But they remind us of a dying prostitute, who paints her cheeks before her death.

The Japanese fascist writer, Fiuji Yoshikawa, is ready to give everything in order to create a robust literature. He organized the *Cultural Society of Japanese Youth.* The mouthpiece of the society, *The Sun of Youth,* declared as its aim "to create a lusty and healthy mood in the ranks of the peasant youth which suffers under the yoke of a hard life."

However, in an interview with a correspondent of the chauvinist newspaper *Yomiuri,* Yoshikawa disclosed soon enough that it is the aim of the society to have the Japanese rural youth, which is doomed to starvation "live and work on the basis of sound ideas in the Japanese spirit and through recreation to divert its mind from its misery."

The novel of the revolutionary Japanese writer, Kiroku Hirata, *Imprisoned Earth,* describes the appalling want existing in the Japanese countryside. There one's mind not set on recreation! Let us not lower the agitational and persuasive role of bourgeois literature, which does everything in its power to poison the consciousness of mankind, kindle the animal spirit in man, incite new wars and inculcate hatred for the most outstanding people in the world.

But this literature lacks genuine optimism.

Yes, capitalism is yearning for the long lost vigour of a healthy man. Instead it only acquires the "vigour" of a beast. Here is a classical portrait of such "vigour":—

> "He is full of hatred and contempt for man. He rejoices at the sight of man being contemptible. He enjoys his solitude. He is a wrecker, an enemy and a most anti-social person imaginable. He slaps everyone and is at the same time proud of his being the only one to inflict slaps. He considers it just. He needs no one and is proud of his not being in need of anyone. He maintains that a man must be so. He has contempt for everybody except himself."

You would think that such a portrait was painted by a revolutionary artist who strove to portray the disintegration and decay of fascism? No, this is the way the fascist writer, Hans Fallada, portrays his ideal heroes. He shows an animal instead of a man, he accepts brazen sadism as a human feeling, and the most despicable cruelty as courage (from the novel *We Too, Had a Child.).*

Edgar Allen Poe, that remarkable American writer of the last century, said in one of his novels about capitalism that it is "the most odious of all beings which ever burdened the earth: insolent, predatory and disgusting, with the gall of an ox and with the heart and brain of a peacock."

Just as a swine never raises its snout to the sun, so can capitalism never again retrieve true human strength and noble fortitude.

Literature and Revolution

Bourgeois writers are in a hopeless quest of strength, while writers who cast their lot with the revolution experience no trouble in finding it. The road

to optimism is hand in hand with the revolution. No matter how unbelievably difficult the conditions in which fate will place the artist, once on the revolutionary road he will be the poet of optimism, he will be a vigorous artist. It is precisely for this reason that the eyes of the foremost men are turned towards the USSR. The diary of André Gide, recently published in the *Nouvelles Literaires Française* is permeated with thoughts of the Soviet Union.

On June 23, 1932, he recorded in his diary that leisure and rest are enjoyed by all toilers in the Soviet Union, while in the capitalist countries they are "a privilege of the few."

At the same time the artist finds harsh words for the surrounding world:

"I have long since forgotten to be happy. My head is full of cruel waverings. Happiness, even the simplest form of happiness is given to so few. The plaints and indignation of the others are stifling the harmony of heaven and earth. And although I am telling myself that I am powerless to help them, still it does not hinder me from hearing them."

Having written these bitter lines on October 8, 1933, André Gide wrote on October 27th:

"Did I not for a long time benefit from the poverty of others without being aware of it? Was it possible for me not to experience want, because others were in want? I am sick of the privileges which blinded me and permitted me to remain indifferent. I am renouncing my destiny of being happy."

However, in these difficult moments of wavering André Gide did not cross that boundary beyond which hope ends and despair begins, because his faith was sustained by the great example of the toilers of the Soviet Union. Therefore there is a thunder of victory in his words:

"The example of October awakened the nations and brought them out of their state of degradation in which capitalist oppression kept them. The battle-cry launched by the Soviet Union revived all hope but it would have remained unanswered had it not been an echo to the cry of so many hearts; a reply to so many stifled groans and to so many minds shocked by the evidence of bankruptcy."

Yes, the great writer André Gide was right. In every corner of the world the Soviet Union is the mainstay and hope of the best from among the best people. Yes, in every corner of the world.

I have in front of me now a book. It begins with a hammer and sickle on the cover and ends with a large five-pointed star under the last few lines. Its journey to Moscow was a very long one, indeed. It appeared in a country the name of which means little to the majority of men. Equador, a South American republic not easily found on a map, is the fatherland of the writer Jorge Icaza. But even there, on the periphery of the world, far from the organized proletariat, a creative light was kindled, an audacious and passionate artist appeared who is imbued with true faith and unshakable energy. *Huasipungo* is the name of his novel, and it cannot be read without great emotion. There are pages which chill the heart, and scenes which fill one's whole being with a great compassion for the real owners of Equador, the Indians, who were made into pitiful and intimidated slaves.

Icaza describes the construction of a highway across swamps infested with millions of leeches and snakes. The Indians fall sick; this is how they are being "cured":

"Rodriguez covered the sick with hides, fur inside, tied them with a branch of pita around the necks and waists and ordered them to form a circle. He adjusted a

whip at his wrist, looked the shivering circle over with his one eye and suddenly began to lash them with the whip which seemed like a continuation of his hand, compelling his patients to run in endless circles . . . Bending knees shiver, feet which splash in the mud shiver . . . Shivering hands make feeble attemps to stave off the blows . . . Finally, they fall in the mud exhausted, without a sound, with froth at their mouths, broken down by fatigue and fever."

Swamps are sucking the men in. No pity for them. Again and again they are being driven to death. The writer describes the "saving" of Indians who fell into the swamp:

"The drowning man cried and raised his hands as if trying to grasp at the fog. The lasso made a knot in the air; it hit the aim at the moment when the head shook convulsively for the last time... the Indians who stood on the road continued to pull at the lasso . . . Finally they pulled out a piece of flesh soaked in mud with faint traces of life not yet gone. A formless spittle lay at the feet of the crowd."

With clenched teeth, without hysterics, without a cry, but with a great and cold hatred Icaza describes the unbelievable tortures and agony, inflicted upon the Indians by the "civilised colonisers."

The Indians are being starved, because it is considered dangerous to give them meat, lest they want it again after having tasted it once. They are made drunk on cane brandy seasoned with narcotics. They are whipped to death for the least infraction.

The eyes of every man are subject to the same physical laws. But one can look at one thing and see something totally different. The class nature of man directs his vision. And those artists are the most farsighted who are linked with the revolution, who look upon the world from the highest pinnacle.

It is possible that the culture of Ramsay MacDonald, the former prime minister of his majesty, is superior to the culture of Icaza. Once upon a time prime minister MacDonald betook himself to India, the British colony, where the real owners of the country—the Hindus—are not in a better position than their brothers in Equador. MacDonald "did not notice" that which Icaza saw. The conclusion of MacDonald was that India is a paradise, which has to be only somewhat adorned. But let us hear what MacDonald himself has to say and how he describes an English official:

"A majestic helmet on his head, an imposing cane in his hand, he is strutting about with his head high in the air—a superman in appearance and demeanor... He approaches most closely to the ideal official, whose typical incarnation is to be found only in paradise." *(The Awakening of India,* page 36.)

Do not imagine this to be irony, there is not even a hint of it. MacDonald very seriously admires the white colonizers and violently defends the thesis: "We are ruling India not at the point of a sword, but by our prestige." (page 33.).

Artists like Icaza are exposing these lying legends and are showing the naked, not the embelished life of a colony.

There is reason enough to lose one's bearings at the sight of such horrors. But in the revolution Icaza found his strength and his support. He shows the growth of consciousness of the downtrodden Indians and their revolt against their masters. In his article on the novel of Icaza in the newspaper *Movimiento* of May 1, 1935, Barbosa Melio wrote very correctly:

"The victorious construction in the Soviet Union and the horror aroused by the bloody and somber march of fascism, that evidence of the degeneration of the bourgeois order, are clearing the social horizon and rousing the toiling masses to strive for the speediest triumph of the revolution. The thought of conquering power is maturing

in the minds of the masses, which languish under the lash of hunger. This strained and stifling atmosphere around us is furthering the development of revolutionary literature."

Working in the most difficult conditions, revolutionary writers are inspired by the great example of the Land of the Soviets and create works which are full of faith in the future and confidence in the present.

I began this article with the play by Lionel Britton, which speaks of the most terrible fear—the fear of life and of the future. Therefore, I want to end the article also with a play—*The Secret*—by the outstanding Spanish writer Ramon J. Sender.

Sender lives and works in Madrid. He participated and continues to participate in the struggles of the Spanish proletariat. He was an eyewitness of the shooting and murder of workers, who rose in struggle. Spanish writers, friends of Sender, felt the bestial paw of counter-revolution and some of them fell victims to it, as for example, Louis de Serval, murdered by a Russian white-guard.

The thin manuscript of Sender's play *The Secret* is full of strength, energy and courage. The artist chose a gruesome theme—the torture of an arrested worker in the chambers of the secret police. The imprisoned worker did not have a drop of water for five days while a carafe full of water stands on the table and scintillates in the sunlight. The general pours some water into a glass; he splashes it like an acid which sears the parched throat of the arrested worker.

"Where is the printshop?"
"Water!"
"If you'll speak, you'll get water."
"I'll speak . . . whatever you want. Water!"
"Speak. Here we do not pay in advance."
"No. No."
"Then you prefer to die of thirst? Or of a bullet? I am giving you a few minutes to think it over. Think before it is too late."

With a masterful art Sender pits two wills, one against the other—strength against strength, stamina against stamina, arms against one disarmed, the armed against one preparing an uprising. Then they placed the arrested worker together with a half crazed inmate in whose cell a corpse is decaying. Still he is silent. He is unshakable. He seems to be hewn of granite. He takes his secret to the grave, while beyond the windows a strike breaks out. He—the dead—conquered; he—the tortured—was stronger than his tormentors; he—martyred by torture—showed his vast intellectual superiority.

Yes, the optimism which was lost and the noble courage forfeited by bourgeois literature have been retrieved. Real joy of life and great truth of reality are blossoming forth in the revolutionary literature of the West and East. These attributes have abandoned the bourgeois writers whose fiction has become emaciated, whose imagination is either pale or bloody and whose art is dying and putrefying.

The French writer, Jean Cassou, said recently—"In order to remain true to human culture we have cast our lot with the revolution."

The revolutionary literature of the whole world is breaking through into life with the mighty and beautiful strength of youth and is helping the working class to conquer a joyous future for the whole of mankind.

Translated from the Russian by Leon Epstein

Jean Richard Bloch

A New Art

Notes of a French Writer on Soviet Art

Decadent art calls out negative emotions in us, but not because it depicts the social and physical death of man or society. Our protest, the natural reaction of disgust and regret is called out by the consciousness that we see before us the premature and unmurmuring submission of the human intellect, senses and imagination to a morbid, decaying desire to die, rot, decay while alive.

Baudelaire's *Fleur du Mal* is not decadence. Just as Propertus and other lyricists and elegy writers of dying Rome were not decadents. But the lemon-sour, formalistic lyrics of many of our contemporary "ists" are decadent through and through, an odor of disintegration comes from them, they are permeated by internal, conceited self-satisfaction.

But there are things and phenomena in art which are subjectively more horrible than any decadence, although objectively there is nothing amazing or horrible in them. That is when art with all its ideas, thought and emotion says that the given social organism has already expended all its vital forces and reached a natural and inevitable borderline beyond which there is "nothing." Such spirit of natural death and social doom permeates the vast majority of creative works of modern bourgeois French literature (as well French art). There is no room here for indignation and all regrets are fruitless. This is death. This is genuine evidence, often banal, sometimes truly masterly, of the perishing, or rather of the natural demise of an entire social class.

Literature of Another World

These thoughts about Western art come to me when I try to sum up my impressions of life in the Soviet Union.

It appears to me that Soviet literature is being created at once by two generations: by writers who began their literary career in the years prior to the revolution and by those whose literary birth dates after October. This brings about the cross of two creative streams. One generation absorbed everything that was best in the pre-revolutionary culture of Russia; the younger generation fundamentally expresses its creative force elementally, considering its greatest good fortune: freedom from all traditions and the cultural luggage of the past generations. But Lenin has taught that Communist culture, consequently also all branches of socialist art in the Land of Soviets, do not by any means rise out of vacancy but by critically working over the heritage left by human culture during all the ages. The writers of the older generation are doing great work in laying a lasting foundation for the new socialist literature.

In any event, they are to the greatest extent the representatives of Soviet literature for the outside world. I express here mostly the impressions of the reader. There is Gladkov's *Cement*. This cheerful, powerfully written novel raised the curtain for us upon a new world. The enthusiasm of construction was revealed to us who have been accustomed only to enthusiasm for personal gain.

Babel justly enjoys the reputation of a master who owes a great deal to the best craftsmen of the French short story.

It would seem off-hand such a writer could offer us, French readers, little that is new, however great and profound his craftsmanship. But I cannot forget his "Mounted Army" and several other stories, because they revealed to me a new world, new truth, new love and a new heroism, all the grandeur and tragedy of the civil war.

An ineradicable impression was produced upon me by Yuri Olesha's speech at the Writers' Congress. His books are unfortunately not yet translated into French and I can't say anything about him as a literary craftsman. But there are people who on first meeting produce so peculiar and deep an impression, one may form an idea of the character and nature of their artistic talent by some insignificant retort, gesture, or perhaps, just an intonation. Such was the speech of a writer who wandered over the country, a writer faint with regret for a lost youth, coinciding with the passions and feeling of a receding world, who attained a new youthfulness in the young generation that surrounded him. The simple but lofty speech, lacking in wile but replete with profound meaning was so symbolic, lyric in the direct sense of this word, that it produced the impression upon me of a masterful work of art of its own kind.

Soviet Architecture

Many times I stopped to think over individual performances of Soviet theatres, individual structure of Soviet architecture. It

seems unquestionable to me that much of contemporary Soviet architecture comes from Corbussier.

In view of the imperfections of reinforced concrete as a building material, however, the work of this master craftsman, as of his followers, proved imperfect. Architectural purism does not signify actual poverty, but the aiming towards tremendous wealth of expression in form (play of planes and volumes) which reinforced concrete, however, proved incapable of transmitting. The house on Mokhovaya Street, built by the great master of Soviet architecture, Zholtovski, is evidently one of the instances of the searching for new forms and new possibilities on the part of those to whom the truth achieved by constructivism is unacceptable. This house is unquestionably a perfect work of art. But is it not a masterful transfer of methods and even ready made forms of past ages into our times? Is not this something of a tendency to go not forward but backward in creative seeking?! I am perfectly aware that seekings in art develop dialectically, zig-zag fashion, that steps aside and even back may prove necessary as a preparatory step for moving ahead. But there must be absolute certainty that the movement is in a progressive direction.

The building arts in Russia have their own grand old traditions. I have in mind the architecture of Greater Rostov and structures close to it in style. It seems to me more natural for young Soviet architecture to use this as a spring-board—this architectural tradition which is one of the most beautiful in the world. The new Soviet style in architecture should absorb (mastering critically) individual elements of this style.

Walking along Moscow streets, along the Armenikand streets of Baku, I felt the pulse beat of searching architectural thought. It stirred me not so much by its achievements as by its experimental seekings.

The Theatre

The main thing in art—and Soviet art is living through just such a period now—is the process of becoming rather than ready achievements which are sure to come in the near future. These thoughts came to me mostly when viewing performances at the Moscow theatres. I thought it strange to find in their repertoire Scribe, Duma-fils, etc. We, the revolutionary writers of France, are trying to go away forever from this sort of drama, from this theatre of externally formal brilliance ,wealth of nuance and miserable content. But perhaps with a different treatment, with absolute freedom for the regisseur not only with the text and stage accessories of the dramatist, but also with his ideas, other, radically different results may be obtained... Perhaps it is so. In any event —it is an experiment.

I experienced real delight when I witnessed at the First Moscow Art Theatre a performance of *Le Mariage de Figaro*. Such classic perfection one cannot find in the productions of Beaumarchais at the Paris theatres. This is genuine realism brilliant with wit, subtle irony, absorbing all the means at the disposal of the classic theatre—gesture, mis-en-scene, temperament. I also think the performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Second Moscow Art Theatre on a high level of theatrical culture. Only it seems to me too great a role is given the artist in this play. The artist proved a great craftsman, but the disproportion between the purely theatrical and the pictorial elements in this performance only became more evident by this.

My most vivid and freshest theatrical experience was the *Optimistic Tragedy* at the Kamerny Theatre. This is something new and grand, not only in the keenness of performance, expressiveness of dramatic manner, but primarily in its social expressiveness. The mass and battle scenes filled the audience (and myself among them) with enthusiasm.

In Conclusion

Here is the sum total of cursory thinking aloud, of individual thoughts, such as one conceives in conversation with oneself or some intimate friend: One thing is clear to me—and this is most important for all writers of my frame of mind—a new art is coming into being—the child of a new world. New fields are being wrenched from the unconscious, the unknown, the unrecognized, step by step in the new art which, I am confident, will conquer, together with coming revolution, all European literature, the reign of clear reason, purposeful and unbounded human will, new rhythms and new feelings will be unlimited and absolute. The new Soviet artists of the word, and their colleagues in the literature beyond their borders, will unquestionably produce works not less important than those of the modern Western masters, only without their morbid confusion, without their chamber-bound limitations and symbolic decrepitude of philosophic generalization.

That which I have observed in the USSR, in Moscow and other national republics, has convinced me most conclusively, that I am a close witness of the birth of this creative process, gigantic in its significance and scale, —the birth of Socialist art.

B. Ketlinskaya

An Interview With Sholokhov

Why a Soviet Author Went Abroad

"As we read this lengthy novel we see the Cossack, Sholokhov, leap to his steed, hunting in the wild passes of the Caucasus."

This appeared in an English newspaper, at the time when the British public was avidly absorbing large printings of *The Quiet Don,* (issued in England and America under the title *And Quiet Flows the Don)* and the success of the novel was arousing curiosity as to where and how its talented author lived. Thirst for sensation inspired these fantasies of "steeds" and "wild passes," an exotic touch which pleasantly tickled the imagination of the man in the street.

Sholokhov's journey to Sweden, Denmark and England aroused great interest. The newspapers featured detailed accounts, photographs, interviews; the reporters gave the author no peace. They were dumbfounded by the modest simplicity of the celebrated writer. They printed bold headlines:

FAMOUS AUTHOR ARRIVES IN COPENHAGEN AS QUIET AS THE DON. WISHES TO STUDY AGRICULTURE AND CALMLY SMOKES HIS PIPE. *(Extrabladet)*

"A Don Cossack in a grey suit. The young author of *The Quiet Don* has come to Denmark in order to acquaint himself with the life of the Danish peasantry," states the *Berlingske Tidende,* and describes in detail the appearance of the writer, informing its readers that Sholokhov does not at all resemble his hero, "Gregory," that he does not light a cigarette with nervous, trembling fingers and does not constantly drink tea, but that he does smoke a pipe with perfect calmness and patiently listens to the questions of the journalists.

Sholokhov relates the following incident:

"They buried me under an avalanche of the most varied questions: about my life, about the collective farms, about the remaking of the psychology of the Cossacks. During one interview with the journalists, a young man, out of breath, and with notebook held in readiness, fought his way through the group surrounding me and fired at me a question prepared beforehand: "What do you do with your millions?" I patiently explained the principles governing the payment of authors in the USSR, a policy which permits the publication of cheaply priced books for mass distribution; I explained that in the USSR the writer does not work in order to become a capitalist, but in order to serve his country and write good books. Then the young man's eyes grew big, and he asked me a second question: "Do you manage to get along?"

Sholokhov found it necessary to break away from the overly important reporters and all the sensational uproar, which could only interfere with the purpose of his trip.

Why Sholokhov Went Abroad

Intimately and continuously associated with the active struggle for socialism in agriculture, Sholokhov went abroad not in the capacity of a tourist, but as a builder and revolutionary.

"Even prior to my trip I knew very well about the crisis, about the degradation of agriculture in the lands of capitalism, about the processes of fascization, about the frightful unemployment. My interests lay elsewhere. I wished to learn about these countries' many years' experience in land cultivation, their method of cultivating the soil, their progressive methods of cattle breeding. It was my intention to study all those useful and valuable contributions of science and culture which are perishing now under capitalist conditions, but which can and should be utilized in our flourishing socialist economy."

Sholokhov visited villages, made his way into pigsties and cattle sheds, spoke with members of cooperatives, peasants, specialists; questioned, jotted down figures. . . .

"The technical level of their agriculture is very high, of long years' standing. Land is extremely dear. The poor peasants rent small pieces of land at an inordinate price, which they continue to pay on during the rest of their lives. But from this patch of land they manage to extract the highest possible yield. They take great care of the land and carefully fertilize it. In former years chemical fertilizers were widely utilized. But chemical fertilizers are imported from abroad; they are expensive; and hence their use has now been drastically reduced. Their place has been taken by natural fertilizers —the by-products of agriculture. I would go into cattle sheds: the floors were cemented. The urine runs through funnels into special vats and is later used for fertilizer. In the Scandinavian countries urine and manure are highly valued as a guarantee of a high yield; while we permit them to go to waste.

"It is impossible to compare the situation of agriculture in those countries with that

in ours. There a high technique has developed over a period of many years. Our collective farms, on the other hand, inherited an extremely backward, antiquated economy. We have only begun to master the technique of land cultivation and cattle breeding. But at the same time how far we have advanced. It was only recently that we learned of the existence of the tractor and the combine; in the Scandinavian countries they have been familiar with them for a long time. But how can their peasantry acquire such complex and expensive machines? And so they beat a retreat to the Middle Ages; they reject mechanization."

Youth in the USSR and Abroad

Sholokhov studied the living conditions of the Scandinavian peasants with great attention.

"I paid a visit to an extremely poor family. They had practically nothing—a piece of rented land and no hopes for the future. That, however, I only learned by degrees, when we had chatted for a while. They lived very decently and cleanly. The rooms were well kept. Their clothes were worn, but neat and pressed. And such is the general impression.

"In our country there is yet much dirt, untidiness, darkness. In our station, for example, we have not built a bath house to this day. Granted we have not as yet attained surface culture; granted much effort must still be expended in order that each house may be so clean and neat—but who in our country ponders over the possibility that his child may not receive an education?

"Our Komsomols were shocked to hear of what is such an every-day fact abroad—lack of teaching facilities for the children," relates Sholokhov. "But consider this simple calculation: The cost of a secondary school education for a peasant's son is 10,000 kronen, while the yearly income of a poor peasant is approximately 1,000 kronen. That is to say, a poor peasant would have to labor ten years in order to pay for his son's education. The youth comes of age without any prospects. Before it lies two paths. The one is that of hired drudgery in the service of kulaks; the other leads to the city—to fill the ranks of the unemployed."

The youth of Veshenski District, where Michael Sholokhov is at present working, has twenty elementary schools, two ten year and three seven year secondary schools and a pedagogical technicum. The youth studies, works, lives a cultural life. All have bright prospects; their future is in their own hands.

M. Sholokhov, Soviet Writer

"My hopes rest chiefly in the Communist youth," says Sholokhov. "It is the youth which should bring in agronomists and practically realize the ideal of progressive cultivation of the soil."

In eleven collective farms of the district the youth have considered Sholokhov's project, and have already begun concrete work —the cleansing sheds, the collection of manure, the selection of workers. Through Sholokhov's initiative, the regional committee of the Young Communist League called a production conference with agronomists.

The last pages of *The Quiet Don* are being brought to conclusion. A history is coming to an end—a history of events which are so recent, and yet have receded so far into the past of the Don Cossack. . . . And with the second volume of *The Soil Upturned* a new Don will stride powerfully into our literature, a Don where new men are arising—Udarniks and Bolsheviks.

I remember Sholokhov's answer to the question: What has your trip abroad done for your art? "I wanted to get to work again. That's why I hurried back."

Translated from the Russian by B. Keen

Heinrich Vogeler

FRANZ MASEREEL: Belgian Artist

«The place of the artist is in the front ranks of the fighters for the creation of a new system, which excludes both the exploitation of man by man and war. But the artist must not forget that he can achieve great art, worthy of this new world, only by relying on the beauty of the means of expression and that his creativeness under these conditions can be that stimulating driving force which is capable of shaking the human soul».

Nineteen hundred and seventeen. As the Verey lights, rising in the darkness of night, showed their surroundings and the advancing foe in glaring light to the soldiers behind barbed wire, so did Franz Masereel's woodcuts illuminate the minds of the doubting and despairing and increase the fighting strength of those who understood. His art expressed that which millions at this time felt.

The outbreak of war drove Franz Masereel into exile; and during it he lived in Switzerland. He was twenty-five years of age; his youthful joy in Flemish fairs, sailor dances and the allurements of the city quickly disappeared. He saw something beyond. His first political drawings Masereel did for the Geneva newspaper *La Feuille*; and an extraordinarily large number of drawings and woodcuts sprang from this war period; it seemed as though life were too short for him to be able to express all that which he felt.

Franz Masereel held himself aloof from the conflicting tendencies within bourgeois art; he struggled to reflect the realities of his time in a spirit of social criticism and by means of the simplest artistic language. We see that nowhere does he beautify anything for form's sake. Truth and reality in art embody his conception of beauty. He also has no love for caricature, but struggles always to convey the highest and deepest human expression. Here is the reason why his art has met with such wide international comprehension and why one returns continually to his work. He pictures the hell of the World War: headless men, bearing their own heads to the grave; men in a sea of flames, harassed by dreams of the fate of woman. He gives the passion of a human being, the evolution of a revolutionary up to the time of his shooting. Masereel's art takes nothing for granted. Since for the artist Masereel everything, every situation, every material truth becomes a deep experience, his art actualizes an unheard of range of the feelings of humanity, their longings and disappointments, their fights and sacrifices, their life and death.

Masereel is the founder of a strong, austere proletarian lyricism within the framework of plastic art. His means of expression are simple and clear. Masereel's pictorial language is wordless; it is filled with longing for a clear, creative world. Should he with his hunger for life throw himself into imagery, he needs no formal, esthetic symbols of expression; the reality of life, the dependence of the human race on the material facts of their surroundings, on nature for whose mastery they fight, and on the class struggle—all this supplies him with sufficient allegorical images to give spiritual events a pictorial material basis. Here Masereel has realized quite new possibilities for proletarian lyricism in plastic art. He takes the sun as a creative force, wants to unite himself with it, wishes that the seabirds would carry him to it; in another picture one sees how he opens wide an umbrella that the storm may bear him away; he lets the proletarians climb through the skylights from their cellars and tenements towards the sun, the light; or he himself climbs the highest swaying spring trees, to bind the sun in a leash. Sometimes fantasy goes astray and takes the lamp of a bawdy-house for the light and warmth-giving sun. Humor varies with disappointment. As the sun sinks in the sea, he springs after it, the aeroplane is shattered which should bring him to the sun, he must perish in its flames—but he lands as a tiny manikin on his worktable close to his woodblock, where the little imaginary fallen Masereel is met with hearty laughter by himself.

There are two things which form the subsoil of his artistic experience; the city street and the sea. With the street he shows the grinning, enticing, poisonous phantasy of the city hell, he draws the perverse types of decaying society, their luxury, their vice, the criminality of declassed elements, the glittering brightness shed over the miserable life of prostitutes. Masereel hates the town, he longs to shatter the tenements and go away to the sea! But then he is gripped by his whole love for the streets when they ring with the threatening tread of the revolutionary working masses, when they are dominated by demonstrations and when the fight against the old crumbling system begins. The sea allures him like the call of

the fabled sea-maid, the siren; he flings himself from the dunes down to the shore to follow the call—but the siren of the fishing boat shrieks, calling him back to everyday reality.

Franz Masereel passed his youth on the shores of the North Sea in Blankenberghe. His youthful impressions have never left him. His paintings are best understood from the point of view of this milieu. We in Moscow unfortunately know only the sketches for many pictures, hasty memoranda pinning down the motif from working class life. But his characteristically austere colouring shows itself here also: the sea and shore form the basis of his knowledge of color. The golden-white tones of the shore seek a synthesis with the heavy greenish-blues of the sea-waves and with the stormy grey color of the sky, torn only now and then by a hopeful beam of light. Such is the North Sea in its rousing strength. So he loves it. This is not the North Sea as seen by elegant bourgeois on hot summer days from comfortable shady basket chairs on the Blankenberghe shore —this is the mighty element with its allure and danger, from which the fishermen with heavy toil and risk of life must wrest its treasures. Such is his range of colors.

Franz Masereel has been in Soviet Russia, he saw the mighty construction, he lived to see the regulation of production planned in close connection with demand, which owing to the continual rise in cultural needs grows from year to year. Franz Masereel was also in the collective farms and recognized their economic rise—but what impressed him most was the rapid growth of cultural life in the Soviet Union, the value of man, the awakening and development of energies and talents of individuals, and above all he saw the new and inexhaustible possibilities for the development of its own plastic art.

Here he saw a wide future. He stated that art under socialism must have a dialectical character, in order to be able to express the dynamics of our time. Wall paintings must be the starting point for the new means of expression in painting. It was with the hope of some day being able to help in the working out of these problems that Franz Masereel took leave of the fatherland of the world proletariat.

Translated from German by Eve Manning

FRANZ MASEREEL

FIVE DRAWINGS

Towards the Sun

Railway Station

War

Execution

Revolt

LETTERS FROM WRITERS

USA

AMERICA IS WAITING FOR LEFTY

Many thanks for your comradely letter from the Soviet Union. It gave me a great thrill to have your letter. In fact I walked around the city showing it to friends all day. I took it backstage to our working actor comrades of the Group Theatre and read it to groups in the dressing rooms.

My three published books I sent to you two days ago. I hope you will enjoy reading them. We are all glad that *Waiting for Lefty* is playing in Moscow, and even happier to hear that it will be done in the Russian language shortly. (It is also being printed in an edition of 50,000—*Editor*)

Two of our Group Theatre directors Clurman and Crawford, have returned from the Soviet Union, having spent a month visiting the theatres there. I don't have to tell you that much of your technique has been a real guide and inspiration for our acting and production methods here.

As a playwright-actor I personally am a member of the Group Theatre, the nearest approach in America to an acting collective. These plays are my first writings. Much more to come. You might be very surprised to learn that these plays were extremely well received by the bourgeois critics, a pleasant shock to all of us. They have these critics, a soft liberal attitude about any work of a Left nature. But they are slowly being forced to admit that only Left culture here has any life or vitality to it. The workers' theatre movement is spreading like wildfire here. Imagine! *Waiting for Lefty* is playing in over sixty American cities at the same time. If you know this country you can see that our workers' organizations are hungry for culture and that the above mentioned fact is an impressive record.

Recently, at the first American Writers' Congress we formed The League of American Writers consisting of Left and leftward going elements. Representing this League, I'm going to Cuba at the end of this month, part of a wide delegation to examine terror conditions there. (Clifford Odets and his delegation were refused entry to Cuba, arrested, then forced to return—*Editor)*

For the present I won't be able to write more. In a few days I'll try to get in touch with some of the other writers and see if we can't broaden out this contact both by letters and printed works.

I wish it were possible to express to you with cold words what a great inspiration the Soviet Union is to us here. We will defend it with our words and actions when ever necessary.

With all friendly greetings,
CLIFFORD ODETS
New York, N. Y.

ENGLAND

WHY I CAME TO THE SOVIET UNION

Below we print a brief letter from a noted British writer and playwright as to his reasons why he made a visit to the Soviet Union. Lionel Britton's work is so well known in a number of countries that we feel his letter will be of decided interest to our readers.—EDITORS

This is my first time in Russia. If you ask me what specially interests me here and why I have come, I can only say as a writer and human being I want to understand and interpret the human mind, and that here in Russia civilization is taking a new direction and is being built afresh on entirely new foundations; and since the mind comes out of its surroundings and reacts upon them again I want to study this new mind, and see what it is going to do with the future of man.

You must understand that in the West people do not know what they are doing with their civilization. They live like animals and are forced by circumstances in all directions, because the civilization is Individualist and the individual mind is not big enough to grasp and cope with all the eventualities of man and nature. It is only when men act collectively that civilization can become conscious, because then when one man doesn't know, the knowledge is supplied by another, and there grows up an organized way of putting all this knowledge together. In this way the *meaning* of man in the world is slowly beginning to change, and if we could look into the future, if Russia became Collective and the rest of the world remained Individualist, we should find a new break-away in evolution, which would produce as great a difference as the old break-away some three million years ago between man and the monkeys. There would then be two races of men on earth, and we should only call one of them human.

But of course it is extremely unlikely that there could ever be such a complete

separation in civilization, and in spite of all efforts of the ruling classes in other countries Russia cannot be isolated from the world, and its influence is bound to spread and gradually change all the ideas of the world.

Because we must remember that nothing *begins* without an antecedent history, and there are already the beginnings of this collective growth of mind in the rest of the world; and it was in fact out of these beginnings that the new Russia came, because they existed before it.

What has happened is that in Russia this growth has quite suddenly become much bigger and more conscious, and has spread—to the rest of the world, quite alarmingly—into every corner and fibre of the social body.

And in this way there has come into the world, so suddenly as to be a phenomenon, something quite new and strange, of enormous significance.

But I do not say that even in Russia, to everyone and everywhere, this significance is fully realized; and I come here with the mind of an artist and a thinker, to look at it and be in it and make my contribution

LIONEL BRITTON

Moscow, USSR

(Author of the novel *Hunger and Love,* and *Brain* and other plays.)

Lionel Britton, British Author

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

USA

WILLIAM SAROYAN

I was born August 31, in the year 1908, in Fresno, California, but I hate to go into the matter again. I began to sell papers in that city when I was seven years old and I picked up a pretty good street education. Next to the effect of climate on people, I was interested in the effect of architecture, oratory, band music, and newspapers on people, and I found out plenty. I discovered that you could make people cheer with oratory, but that with a good jazz band you could go so far as to make them throw away their civilian clothes, get into uniform, practice shooting, cross the ocean, and be immediately smashed to death by a shell, or have the left leg carried away. I thought this was no way to use music, and decided to become a writer, so I could say so very often. I graduated from the sidewalk to the seat of a bicycle and looking into a store window actually saw myself in the uniform and cap of a Postal messenger boy, aged thirteen. I looked like hell and felt worse. In the first place it was very hot and I wanted to sleep. Instead, I had to pedal my bicycle all over hell on the hot tar of the streets of my home town and deliver and pick up love, death, and business telegrams. When winter came it wasn't so bad and my seat soon healed. This immediately changed my view of the universe, but only slightly. I was still sore about the food situation at our house. It seemed as if there was never going to be enough to eat. Then, in a fit of my customary foolishness, I spent a whole week's salary for a phonograph. My mother damn near killed me until she listened to the first record which was a song called *Sonia*, recorded by Paul Whiteman. She liked the song, and said we could manage if we didn't eat breakfast for a month. Well, God Damn it, breakfast is one of my favorite meals, next to lunch, and I put up a big beef. I don't know how we got around this problem, but we all lived and one of my sisters even went so far as to go to college one year. Then she had to quit and take a job in Woolworth's. From the third grade on, when my revolutionary instin began to get under way, I took first honors as worst-boy-in-school and was very often stood in the corner, rapped on the knuckles, pulled by the hair and ears, sent to the principle's office, strapped, lectured to, and completely kicked out of school. I

William Sarovan. American Writer

did manage, however, to learn to typewrite, which was all I wanted to know anyway, because I was always prejudiced and firmly believed I knew practically everything in the first place. This was a sorrowful exaggeration because I do not even yet know when to throw away three aces in poker and will always lose my last dime thinking I'm the best player of the five. I bought a typewriter when I was fourteen, a year after I began delivering telegrams, and decided to immediately change the world, which, of course, I did to a certain small and subtle extent. I don't want to brag, but I would like to know why it snowed the year I began to write when never before in the history of the San Joaquin valley, since 1856, had it snowed. I hardly ever wrote poetry because all the girls I knew at school could barely understand prose. For awhile I thought of being a cartoonist because anybody can understand a comic strip, but the correspondence course was too much, and I bought a harmonica instead. I learned to play one-eight of *The Rose of Tralee* and then only badly, so I went back to prose again. My stuff was always too revolutionary to be accepted by *Vanity Fair* or any of them other classy American magazines, but in the end they all succumbed and I have sold a story to *Vanity Fair* even. I use the jump into the river and start to swim immediately system of writing, and have a whole new grammar and system of punctuation which

perfectly fits the tempo and texture of my alleged thought. I stopped being a messenger when I was sixteen: I became a clerk. I nearly learned telegraphy and then they invented the teletype machine, and there was no use in the world for a telegrapher. I climbed the business ladder of success very swiftly and at the tender age of eighteen was made branch manager of a telegraph office in San Francisco. In addition to being manager I also delivered telegrams when necessary. Two of the messengers on my force were over fifty, four over forty, and the remainder over thirty. I felt like a fool. But what could I do? I was just superior, that's all. I was earning only seventy cents a month more than each messenger and this burned me up and irritated my capitalistic instinct for quick money. I began to write sarcastic letters to the head office, asking for more money and bragging about how business was picking up in my district since I was made manager. I was promptly fired and got a job in a department store selling sports goods. This was quite a blow to my young and ambitious spirit, and my prose began to be a little sour. I was sore at something or somebody, but I didn't know who or what. I suspected first this and then that, and finally decided it was nobody's fault but my own, and that if it I worked hard and was polite to my employers I would be financially secure at the age of seventy, if I lived. I got impatient, however, and forgot to be polite to my employers and was again fired. My next job was still lower in the capitalist category. I worked in a warehouse. The climate there was frigid, the odor soapy, the fellow workers dopey, the bosses pompous and fat, and in short I lasted a week. My prose got madder and madder, but nobody would buy it. I lost eighteen pounds from malnutrition and too much tennis, and then went even lower than ever before, accepting a job in a fruit and vegetable market. Here, strangely enough, I was most at home, and soon developed a warm Italian accent to go with the foreign appearance of my face. I discovered that it was much pleasanter being surrounded by spinach and green onions than the ledgers and fat bosses. My boss was a simple Italian peasant who sang dirty songs all day, generally about cheap bananas, two for a nickelo, don't you like, don't you buya, and so on. Business got bad and inasmuch as I was the only clerk who was not a real Italian, with no memories of Italy or garlic, I was fired. I walked the streets in a daze and finally wound up in the public library where I went on with Proust where I had left off six years before on a similar occasion, page 287. It was exactly the sort of thing I needed to put me completely in a state of sleep-walking. This sort of shilly-shallying kept up for years and years until I was finally twenty-five, and mighty sore about it. I never have been able to figure out just what happened about sixteen months ago, but *Story* accepted one of my stories and ever since there has been a theory abroad that I am a writer. I have always tried to expose this theory, but people persist in keeping it alive, so I am now in Moscow, a young American writer. Of course I have left out all the episodes of real importance, and especially my travels, but I hope this will somehow serve. I honestly believe writers for the most part are rats, but I know there is nothing you can do about it. The kind I hate worse are the kind who think they belong to some special tribe of humanity, and maybe they do, I'm not saying maybe they don't, but this tribe gripes me very much because I have the idea that a writer is exactly as important as the fellow who sweeps up horse-manure and dumps it into a can, and sometimes a lot less interesting. I think very little of most contemporary writing, but always imagine that my own stuff is invariably good, even when it is lousy, which is often, but, of course, that comes from having enough to eat these days and has nothing actually to do with my writing. Although the attached photograph is supposed to be one of me, it actually resembles another fellow, doubtless a dangerous criminal and a young man with a very mean disposition. Anyway, here is the goofy business, autobiographical note and photograph. I look forward to the day in the near future when *International Literature* will exert that world-wide influence which will perhaps help to bring about better balance between effort and accomplishment in the world.

BILL SAROYAN

New York, N.Y.

(*Author of* The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze.)

ERSKINE CALDWELL

I was born in Georgia in 1903. Living in most of the Southern States for varying intervals, I had little formal education. I attended the Universities of Virginia and Pennsylvania. At different times, I have been a cotton picker, a lumber mill worker, a newspaper man. I have published three novels, *Tobacco Road, God's Little Acre,* and *Journeyman,* the first two of which have been dramatized. I have written four volumes of short stories, one of which is not yet published,—*American Earth, We Are the Living, Kneel to the Rising Sun* and *You have Seen Their Faces.* I have also written several series of articles dealing with the drought area, labor conditions in Detroit, and sharecropping in the South. I now live on a farm in Maine.

MARGINALIA

It is necessary to leave behind the intellectual frontiers of fascist Germany in order to create a truly artistic work: the terrible fate of Hans Fallada, stricken by fascism as if by leprosy, testifies to this fact with sombre force.

The distinguished German writer, Bode Uze, an emigre from fascist Germany, noting the remarkable qualities of Bert Brecht's *Three Penny Novel,* writes that such mastery of the German language is to be found only among the emigres; that "fascist Germany cannot produce a literary work of half the esthetic merit of Brecht's novel."

Beyond the borders of their fatherland German writers create works of great artistic value, while those who remain can only chatter about it, for how is it possible to be inspired by the work of the executioner, or light the lamp of inspiration at the gallows tree!

The German literary emigres, as Anna Seghers splendidly declared at the World Congress of Writers at Paris, love their fatherland, and precisely for that reason they struggle against fascism. Their love consists in their hatred for the new barbarism. Their creative work is the aid which they render to their fatherland, while the activity of the fascist writers only serves the purpose of destruction and death. They who give birth to death shall die; they who bring destruction shall perish.

The honored cause of the struggle against fascism is not only served by the revolutionary part of mankind. Men who have never had and do not wish to have the slightest dealings with revolution enter the lists against fascism and expose its bloody crimes.The borders of the anti-fascist movement, possessing a firm revolutionary core, touch upon hearts which have never known the throb of revolt and struggle.

An excellent example is Stefen Lorant's book, *I Was Hitler's Prisoner,* published in London in the summer of 1935. Lorant never took any interest in active struggle; he tried to stand upon the safest, most neutral positions, mixing in "select society" and editing the innocent journal *Munchener Illustrater.*

But his profitable editorial post was needed by the fascists. Charges were fabricated against him, and Lorant was thrown into a concentration camp. Lorant is a bourgeois, but his back also felt the fascist lash. And today Lorant exposes fascism and his book objectively aids the anti-fascist front.

Capitalist literature cannot and dares not tell the truth. It must of necessity make out falsehood to be truth, and truth to be falsehood. For as the German revolutionary dramatist, Bert Brecht, very well said, "The great truth of our times is that the bourgeois world is sinking into barbarism." The servitors of capitalism—the capitalist writers—cannot depict the world about them as it is, for in that case their world becomes a wedge driven into the heart of capitalism. They distort, varnish, beautify, romanticize and lend dignity to the world created by capitalism.

And it requires great manhood to take up the weapon of veracious art and not lower it before any and all threats and difficulties.

In this connection Bert Brecht writes very well in the same article: "Five difficulties in the writing of truth:

"He who wishes to battle against falsehood and ignorance and write the truth must overcome at least five difficulties. He must have manhood in order to write the truth, although it be everywhere suppressed; intelligence—that he may find it, for it is hidden; he must be able to transform it into a weapon, find men in whose hands it will be effective; and finally, he must be clever enough to disseminate it among them. These difficulties are enormous for those who write in the land of fascism, but they apply with equal force to the exiles and those who have abandoned that land, and even to those who live and write in the lands of bourgeois freedom."

Our comrades in the west are beginning to understand that we have not the slightest intention of classifying lyric poetry among the "bourgeois genres" (as, for example, the detective story), which by their very class nature cannot be utilized for revolutionary purposes. Symptomatic in this respect is an article by Karl Lang in the German revolutionary journal *Die Neue Weltbuhne* (No. 20 for 1935), in which he clearly declares that "Lyric poetry has a living modern content." Karl Lang indicates the possibilities of utilizing lyric poetry in workers' cafes, at meetings, etc.

Granted that life under capitalism is frightful, that the fascist barbarians torture their prisoners; that suffering, ordeals are inevitable; granted all this, must one journey to the end of night, like Louis Celine, and abandon oneself to despair? No! The harder the blow, the more terrific the rebuff. The greater the danger of attack, the calmer should be the attacked, in order to later become the attackers. The proletariat is the proletariat precisely for the reason that it has torn beyond the end of night and has seen the day, sun and life; that it is storming the old and overthrowing capitalism. The artists of the proletariat reserve their courage and faith during the most trying moments, although being men, they feel their own personal misfortunes intensely. And when fascism tortures them—they also suffer pain; they also value their lives.

Of great interest, therefore, are the books of Bredel, Billinger and Langhoff, in which they relate their experiences in the fascist concentration camps.

The German revolutionary journal *Unsere Zeit* (No. 415 for 1935) with reason remarks that "these authors and their books testify to the bravery and unbreakable will of all German revolutionists."

A world without books is a man deprived of eyesight and hearing: colors, sounds die out, the speech of man grows silent. Yet this is what the German paper *Buchberzem Zeitung* writes:

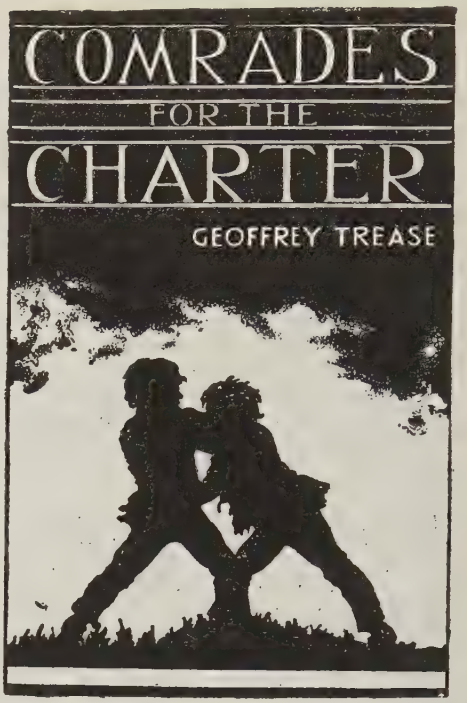
"The reader has disappeared. Gone are the days when people thronged the bookstores, and girls greedily leafed through the new books. Bookstores recall abandoned shrines. We live in a time antagonistic to books."

All this is correct, with the exception of the concluding generalization. The paper should have added that its remarks applied only to the capitalist world, in general, and to fascist Germany, in particular.

We shall remember the crimes, we shall not forget the criminals against the culture of mankind! We shall preserve in our hearts, sear into our consciousness the deeds of fascism, which has destroyed thought and genius. And therefore before our eyes should always blaze the flames of the bonfires which swallowed up works of mind, feeling and passion; works created by long years and then torn from the hands of mankind in order to be thrown into the fire.

In this connection the talented German writer, Bode Uze, in the *Unzere Zeit* has well said:

"Never have the flames of the bonfire cast light about them; their fiery brilliance has revealed, before all, the profundity of the surrounding darkness."



Jacket of the new book by Jeoffrey Trease, English writer, issued in Moscow by the Co-operative Publishing Society for Foreign Workers in the USSR

These gentlemen who have a penchant for incendiarism, who love to play with fire, have forgotten that symbolism is also subject to the law of the dialectic. They do not realize the significance of this list to which they have had the audacity to add, of books which have been burned in the world. This is mankind's roll of honor, the proud testimonial of a manly spirit which is ever struggling forward, a testimonial so powerful that all youth which has ever been capable of admiring true greatness has only dreamed of following the example of the burned and the scorned.

He who possesses no philosophy of life, who only possesses a rubber club, willingly abandons the road of ideas. He who always lies, cowers before the truth. He who orders, only desires obedience, and not conviction; he who oppresses, wants slaves, and not men. The burning of the books was a gesture of despair. The dim light of the bonfires illuminated the frontier of literature. At these frontiers stand on

guard the emigrant German writers. Their task is not to defend that frontier; they should regard it as a starting point for their sallies against Hitler. The writers' assignment is a responsible one. The burning of the books has again shown them of what significance is the word. The opponent fears it. It is a weapon!

Marcel Proust, the great French writer, lived for many years in a cork lined room so as not to hear the sounds of the external world, until death put an end to that death in life.

Today Henri de Monterlan is repeating this pathetic experience of a pathetic life, exchanging his former war trumpet of a political litterateur for the smugness of the onlooker. He writes in *Les Nouvelles Litteraires:*

"Whenever any well informed man explains to me what is actually taking place today, I am struck by the fact that each consecutive series of events, agitating the world at this moment, unfolds with a clas sic motion, which one could easily foresee, exactly like some ingenious disease which develops exactly as described in the text book. I am amazed that so many people take an interest in this infinite repetition. As far as I am concerned to meddle in any field of this activity seems to me the height of insanity, inconceivably ridiculous; if I only open my window upon this activity, I risk losing much more than I can gain."

We remember Monterlan's bellicose activity. We have become accustomed to his tranquillity; (the novel *The Celibates*). This is the tranquillity of the doomed, the calm of the artist on his way to destruction.

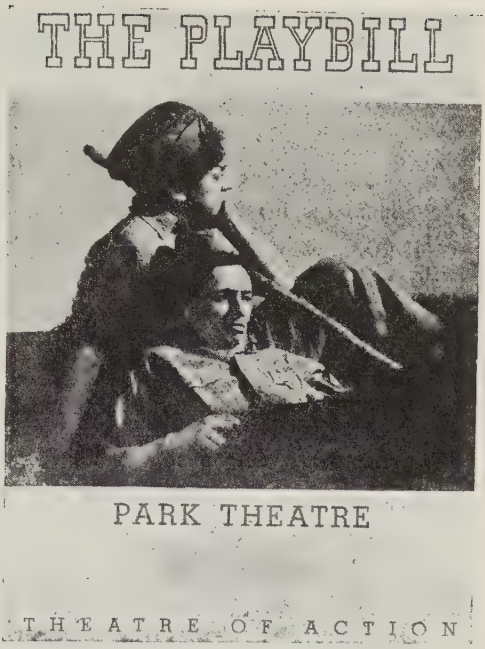
Those who went to their death used to hail Caesar. In our day yesterday's Caesars of bourgeois literature are beginning to hail death. Let them tread to the end their joyless path.

The fascist theatre does not wish to stage fascist plays. This fact greatly alarms Herr Goebbels. The *Neue Freie Presse* states that at a meeting called by the Imperial Theatrical Chamber, Goebbels declared that during the first year after Hitler's coming to power the repertory was composed almost entirely of national-socialist plays, while this season national-socialist plays were conspicuous by their absence. "Those who affirm that the ideals of our time do not lend themselves to artistic representation are mistaken." Goebbels went on to reproach the theatre with ignoring German writers and drawing its repertory chiefly from abroad. "Sometimes," said Goebbels, "our repertory creates the impression that Germany has no writers."

In conclusion, Goebbels called upon the heads of the theatres to be daring, to "risk" more and to introduce the "new" into the theatre.

There is no doubt that Goebbels can force the German unified theatres to stage whatever he desires. But it is equally clear that the spectator does not wish to see fascist plays—which explains the nervousness of the Minister of Propaganda. One can give orders to docile directors, but what can one do with intractable spectators who do not wish to waste their money on fascist rubbish!

S. D.



Cover of the program for the production The Young Go First, *new play presented by the newly organized New York Theatre of Action*

CHRONICLE

ICELAND

Activity of the Revolutionary Writers

At the present time the revolutionary writers group of Iceland includes twenty members, among them the best known writers of that country. The group has decided to publish in autumn of this year a large anthology, which will contain, in addition to selected works by Icelandish authors, excerpts from the revolutionary works of writers of other countries.

Recently two events of great political significance occurred in Iceland's literary life. The secretary of the revolutionary writers' group, Kristin Anderson, was invited to speak over the radio on the occasion of the jubilee of the seventieth anniversary of Iceland's most celebrated poet. The points of his speech were, however, found too "political," and he was requested to alter them. The writer refused. The jubilee ended in a fiasco, but Anderson delivered his speech in Reykjavik. The speech met with great success and was published.

The second event, took place on May 1 The well known writer, Kilian Lakeness, was to speak at a Social Democratic gathering on the United Front. The Social Democratic leaders objected to this, however, and threatened to withdraw the use of their large hall, which had been engaged by the "United Front" for the occasion.

The writer was compelled to declare that he would read a story. But since this story dealt with the United Front and the Social Democrats, he was cut short in the middle of his reading by one of the Social Democratic leaders. Lakeness and many in the audience demonstratively left the hall. That same evening the writer appeared at a meeting organized by the Communists. The hall was filled to overflowing, and Lakeness' reading was a great success. On the following day the story was published in a Communist journal.

CHINA

Revolutionary Theatre and Film

Notwithstanding the fact that since 1930 the Chinese Theatre has been under the strictest fascist surveillance, the revolutionary and progressive dramatists, producers and actors are continuing their energetic struggle for a new theatre.

During the past year the best Chinese dramatists (many of whom are now working illegally) produced twenty new plays. Several of these have been performed on the revolutionary stage. Particularly noteworthy is *Storm Over the Yangtse,* a play which deals with the workers' anti-imperialist movement, and which is undoubtedly a great achievement of the Chinese Theatre. Owing to the realistic character of its subject and the excellence of its production, *Storm Over the Yangtse* marks a gigantic step forward in the development of theatrical revolutionary art. In addition the following plays are worthy of praise: *Drouth, Buffaloes for Sale,* which reflect the impoverishment of the countryside, *Order to Retreat,* on the theme of the struggle between the anti-imperialistically inclined soldiers and their traitor officers, *The Street of Night,* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* both pictures of unemployment. All these plays enjoy immence popularity among the workers.

Unfortunately, under a fascist censorship, these plays cannot appear in printed form. Only after difficulties did some of them make their way into various journals.

As regards the film, this has in the last three years made literally gigantic strides forward. In 1934, in spite of all repressions, were filmed such superb pictures as *The Raging Waves of China, The Construction of a Road, The Song of the Fishermen, Tale of the Plum Village,* etc.

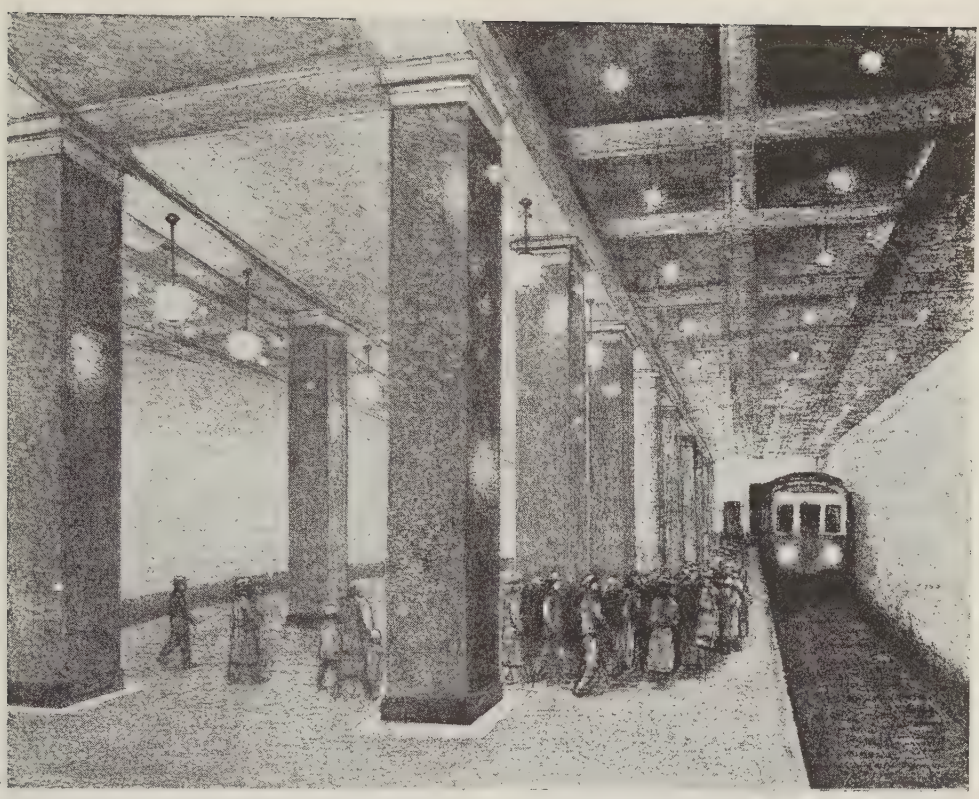
Especially noteworthy is the film *The Contruction of a Road.* This splendid picture utilized Chang Kai-shek's fascist slogan "Build Roads in Order to Fight the Reds." But the film workers turned this picture into a truly revolutionary one. It vividly depicts the enthusiasm of the workers, who construct roads in order to defend their country from the attacks of the imperialists.

In spite of the fact that the Union of Revolutionary art workers have been thrown into prisons, subjected to inhuman tortures, that many have perished by the executioner's axe, the new theatre and film of China not only continues to work, but moves on to ever more advanced positions.

JAPAN

Revolutionary Literature Lives

In spite of the fact that the Union of Revolutionary Writers of Japan was dissolved early in 1934, and that individual members have been subjected to all manner of re-



Moscow Subway Station-- a drawing by the Persian artist Muwizze Zade

pressions, Japanese revolutionary literature not only lives, but is broadening its influence, becoming more full-blooded and effective.

Already in the spring of 1934, when the journal *Proletarian Literature,* the organ of the Union of Proletarian Writers of Japan, was compelled to discontinue publication, our Japanese comrades had succeeded in founding more than ten new revolutionary journals in its place. As an example we may cite the *Cultural Collective,* edited by the revolutionary poet, S. Hashigawa, the writers Kan Eguti, Tamiki Hosoda and others. Beginning with January of this year, *Cultural Collective* became a mass political journal.

The well known revolutionary writer Hayashi has founded the journal *Literature and Art,* published by the great bourgeois publishing house "Kizo," which has found it necessary to take into its calculations the immense popularity of revolutionary literature among the masses. Naosi Tokunaga, a leading writer and author of the novel *The Sunless Street* and other works, has become editor of the new monthly *The Literary Critic,* which carries short stories and poems, theoretical articles and critical studies of Japanese revolutionary literature. Other Journals are: *The Social Critic,* which has a large literary section, *The Living Newspaper, Growth, The Literary World, Creator of Literature, The Spirit of Poesy, Bread, Actuality* and numbers of others. But, besides these journals published in Tokyo, practically in every district of Japan appear journals of revolutionary literature and art. Thus, for example in the city of Osaka, the industrial center of Western Japan, are published the journals *The New Spirit,* and *The Literature of Kausai.*

This great number of functioning journals sheds light on the new policy of the revolutionary literary movement in Japan, striving to utilize all possibilities for legal existence. The organization of revolutionary writers of Japan is taking the path of decentralization, so that individual groups, which were formerly allied with a single union, are now associated with one of the above mentioned journals.

The great number of books by revolutionary writers, published lately, likewise testifies to the development of Japanese revolutionary literature. These are *Captive Earth,* a novel by K. Hirata, dealing with

A portrait of Jacob Burck, American artist, by Esther Kriger

the condition of the peasantry in contemporary Japan, *The Prison*, a book of short stories by Kensaku Semagi, dealing with the experiences of imprisoned communists, *Peony Cottage*, a book of short stories by the woman writer Kubokawa, *On the Volcano*, a novel by Kan Eguti, former chairman of the Union of Proletarian Writers of Japan, the collected works of Takidji Kobayashi, outstanding revolutionary writer, killed by the Japanese police in the spring of 1933, *Our Achievements*, an anthology of the work of fifteen revolutionary writers in 1934, a volume of poetry, *Realism in Art and the Materialistic Philosophy*, by the poet Moryama, *The New Stage in the Literary Movement*, by the writer Yamada, at present in prison, *For Literature*, by the writer Hayashi, also in prison, *A New Start*, a collection of articles by the writer Tokunaga and others.

Many of these books were written during brief intervals between arrests. Thus, for example, the revolutionary woman writer, Yurike Tyudze, well known not only in the revolutionary movement, but in the Japanese literary world in general, who was released from prison half a year ago on account of illness, was recently again arrested for communist activity and thrown into prison.

GERMANY

The Fascists Boycott Bernard Shaw

When the council of the sages of the Third Empire was occupied with literary researches and drawing up lists of authors whose books should be without further delay consigned to the flames on the squares of Berlin, the name of the great English satirist, Bernard Shaw, caused some perplexity in the minds of the representatives of the Ministry of Propaganda. On the one hand, the edge of Shaw's satire is as keen as that of Heine and it is impregnated with liberal quantities of that poison for which the heralds of fascist culture do not, and cannot have any antidote.

Then Shaw departed on a voyage to South Africa. On his return his first statement was to the effect that the white population of South Africa should change the color of its skin to a darker hue.

What of the theory of the superiority of the white race? The Aryans are the lords of the earth. Had Bernard Shaw reflected on this fact? Certainly! "The Zulus," he declared, "are undoubtedly a superior type of human species, and all attempts to consign them to an inferior position are doomed to failure in the face of the fact that they are not an inferior race."

But Shaw went still farther in his expressions of opinion. "People say that Germany's colonies should be returned to her. You can parcel a country out among the European powers, but some fine day Africa will say: None of you will have Africa. The Africans, both white and black, will want Africa to belong to the Africans, and not to such a great number of competing European powers."

This was the straw that broke the camel's back of the fascist press. *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* opened the campaign.

"Cynicism! Irresponsible cynicism!" wails the paper. Shaw does not want Germany's colonies to be returned to her, but instead proposes mixed marriages with the blacks.

The double "crime" of the celebrated English writer called for severe punishment. An end was put to the liberal attitude towards Shaw's books. Henceforth his books will be banished from the windows of stores and kiosks, and not a single theatre will dare to stage the plays of the audacious heretic.

Goering's organ, *Nazional Zeitung*, explaining in a special article the reasons for the boycott on Shaw, furiously howls: "Shaw has absolutely no understanding of the principles of racial theory. This dotard wishes to draw England into the most heinous sin of mixing the bloods."

We are certain that the boycott instituted by the fascist government against him will bring the great English writer nothing but satisfaction.

"They Who Remained"

(Kurt Fersten on the Writers of Fascist Germany)

In the journal *Sammlung (No. 7, 1935)* appeared a short article by Kurt Kersten devoted to the work of those writers who remained in Germany after Hitler's coming to power.

In recent months, writes Kersten, a number of those writers who have decided to remain in Germany made their literary debuts in the era of the Third Empire. Formerly they belonged to the left-radical front of literature. After Hitler's seizure of power they remained there. They knew much, but they learned to keep silent. They strangled their past. . . . They attempted to squeeze themselves into new frames, to adapt themselves, to unify themselves. They lacked the manhood required for open opposition in emigration, but they considered it manly to suffer in silence—

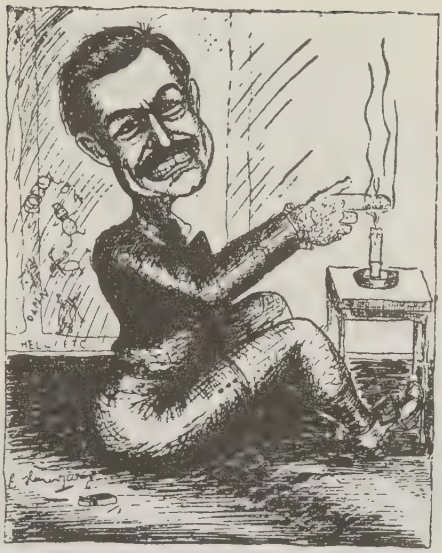
Are there any documents in which even one of these writers has precisely indicated the reasons which compelled him to remain and submit?—asks the author. No, they are careful not to make any such admission. Their novels are as uncertain and undeterminate as the positions of their authors. The actions of their books unroll in a time and place concerning which no details are given. In a hundred years it will hardly be possible to say when these books were written and what were the motives of their authors in writing them. These authors, especially Breuer, dream of departed love, which they unsuccessfully seek to resuscitate. In the books of Breuer, as in those of the others, the heroes fight duels over strange, wan-faced women. "They Who Remained" lay particular emphasis upon "personal happiness" but can this be considered an attack upon the principles of National Socialism? Personal happiness is the highest good. It even becomes incomprehensible how these authors can be satisfied with such banal themes, but still it is possible to read into these novels a timid oppositionist mood. Most important, perhaps, is the cloudy, vague character of these works which is, in the last analysis, a reflection of the mood of a certain part of the population. They suffer the dictatorship without recognizing it with their inner "I." and, futilely wandering in circles, they find no firm ground for opposition.

FRANCE

Exhibit of Anti-Fascist Artists

In the Parisian Home of Culture a second exhibit of paintings was shown, organized by the section of fine arts of the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists. In all, ninety artists were represented at the exhibition.

Louis Aragon wrote in *Humanité* that "its participants, in spite of the extreme variety of subjects and techniques, are united by one common feature, namely—antifascism, which today lays its stamp upon the work of all progressive artists. They do not all openly acknowledge this, in the degree that their revolt against capitalist exploitation is anarchist in character. But the evolution of society compels them to change their positions and transforms them into the artists of the future."



A caricature of the noted writer Ernest Hemingway, from The American Spectator

NEW BOOKS

Peace Through Revolution

Two new books by Romain Rolland have appeared: *Peace Through Revolution* and *Fifteen Years of Struggle.*

The first book contains: 1) "In the battle: Discussions and Letters with Bernard Shaw." 2) "Pirates of Peace." 3) "Discussion on Pacifism and Disarmament; Nonresistance and Organized Struggle." 4) "An Appeal to the Intellectuals."

The second book is a collection of the anti-war articles written by the author during the last fifteen years.

The Thirteenth Tree

A new one-act play by Andre Gide *The Thirteenth Tree,* had its premiere in May at "The Gray Curtain" theatre in Marseilles.

Problems of Soviet Literature

The chief reports delivered at the Congress of Soviet Writers, August 1934, here published in full in English for the first time, cover a tremendous field of ideas—literary, political and social.

The main discussions of the last Soviet Writers Congress—another new volume issued in English by the Co-operative Publishers in Moscow

This little play is quite unusual. The action takes place in a chateau, and the characters of the play are extremely conventional. The old countess, the priest, the landowner, the freethinker, the heir to the estate and an old servant. In the lime tree alley of the park, on the trunk of the thirteenth tree, is found an indecorous drawing, masterly carved by some unknown hand. This find throws the dwellers in the chateau into complete confusion. The priest takes upon himself the role of a Sherlock Holmes and begins to "investigate" in the hope of finding the criminal. Finally, after numerous scrapes, he finds a diary kept by the countess and, to his horror, discovers that the drawing was done by the countess herself.

The reviewer of the "comedy" finds in this play a "certain affectionate criticism" of the hypocrisy and conventionality of bourgeois society, from which Gide has sprung. Delighted and indignant, in conclusion the reviewer exclaims: "Why, Gide himself has all his life loved to play at being the Arch Tempter!"

A New Issue

The twenty-first number of *Commune* is primarily devoted to art. It prints the answers to a questionnaire on "Whither Art?" In this number also appears Plekhanov's working plan for "Dramatic Literature and French Art of the 18th Century," an article examining revolutionary art; an article by Leon Moussinac, "Artists Before the Subject," dealing with the inevitable "rehabilitation" of the subjects of Western-European art, an article by Rene Crevel, his first contribution to *Commune*, entitled. "Art Under the Shadow of the Brown House," an article on "Italian Fascism and Art," etc.

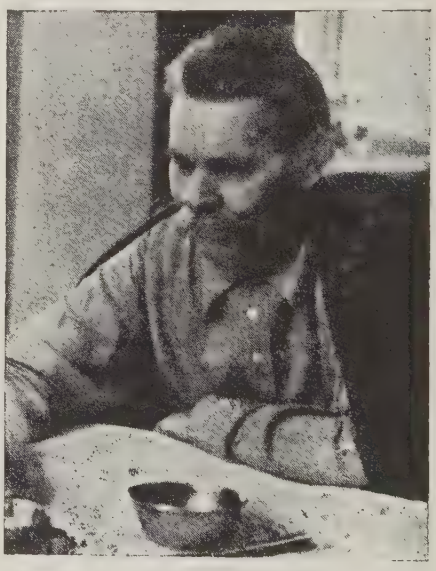
Commune also prints in this issue an excerpt from a speech by Andre Gide, delivered in 1903, on the significance of the spectator. In it Gide discusses the danger to art which lies in the separation of art from life. This issue also contains an excellent article by L. Aragon on John Hartfield, "John Hartfield and Revolutionary Beauty," and an article by Pierre Merin, "The Mad Reporter," on Egon E. Kisch.

In the book review section there are appreciations of several books by South American writers, among them *Huasipungo* by Jorge Icaza (excepts from this novel will appear in *International Literature), Sangre en el Tropico,* by Jerman Robleto and others.

The issue opens with an interesting article by Romain Rolland, "The Role of the Writer in Contemporary Society."

B. Brecht's "Three Penny Novel"

The new novel of the gifted German writer Bert Brecht is almost analogous in content to his *Three Penny Opera.* The reviewer Paul Galand writes in the journal *Unsere Zeit* that in this novel "bourgeois practice is brought face to face with bourgeois ideology. This leads to merciless



Maxim Gorki, beloved Soviet writer in a photo taken recently

criticism, proving that this is the worst of all existing worlds."

"The Swamp Soldiers"—V. Langhoff

Recently a Swiss publishing house issued Wolfgang Langhoff's book *The Swamp Soldiers.* The author is an artist of the Dusseldorf theatre, who was arrested by the national socialists early in 1933, and spent thirteen months behind the barbed wire of a concentration camp. His vivid book has met with great success. The *Rundschau* says of it that: "Langhoff describes life in the concentration camp as if from without. He sees two opposed groups: the Nazi and their prisoners. He shows how the feeling of solidarity grows among the prisoners. His book reveals the concentration camp as a complex and fine organism, as a home of class struggle. And in this struggle solidarity grows stronger and individual fighters are united. Among these the author himself held by no means the last place. One of the most impressive features of this book is that among the pictures of horrible deviltries and the most refined tortures, there are portraits and acts of such force that the reader, having read it, will feel the utmost repugnance for the tortures of the Third Empire, and wonder at the men who not only bore all this, but were not broken by it."

"The Quartered Child"—Ernest E. Nott

The young German writer, Ernest Erich Nott, has written a new book *The Quartered Child,* which enjoys great popularity.

This book is the confession of a young German, shuttled about between war, revolution and counter-revolution. Its hero, Albert Krause, spent his childhood in a workers' suburb of Berlin, where he became intimately acquainted with the proletariat. During the revolution of 1918, he entered school and endured all the humiliations of a poor student. Passing through all the ordeals of hunger and cold, Albert enters the National Socialist Organization "to serve faithfully and honestly for the greater glory of Germany." But soon he is deeply disillusioned with the Nazis. "Traitors, betrayers of our class—that's what we are. Who is guilty of it? If we could only change all this again!" His friend, weaker than he, commits suicide. Albert does not want to die, he wants to live and work in a new way.

Humanite carried a review of the book which noted its great merits, and expressed certainty that its author would grow into an active fighter against fascism.

"The Promised Land"—Leo Lania

The American publishing house of Macmillan has published a novel by the German writer Leo Lania, *The Promised Land.*

Nelson Algren, American writer, whose first book Somebody in Boots *has attracted a great deal of attention*

The theme of the novel is Germany during the last twenty years. The success of this novel in America surpasses that which it had in England. Almost all the newspapers have carried detailed reviews, characterizing it as "the best novel of contemporary Germany."

"Brown Culture"

The Zurich publishing house "Europa" has published a collection of documents assembled by V. Somin and Michaelis, entitled *Brown Culture.* On the basis of quotations from speeches by the Nazi leaders, notes, and information from the German Party and unified press, as well as official statistical data, the collection presents a vivid picture of the collapse of national-socialist culture.

"Tales From Seven Ghettos"—E. E. Kisch

The journal *Das Neue Tagebuch* has printed a review of Kisch's last book, *Tales From Seven Ghettos.* The author of the review remarks that these stories, vividly display Kisch's basic qualities: a just feeling of wrath, an indefatigable curiosity, joyous humor and an original, lively manner of exposition.

New Books by German Writers

The Parisian publishing house "Carrefour" issued the following books during the

spring of 1935: Anna Seghers, *The Road Through February;* Karl Billinger, *Prisoner No. 880;* Bode Uze, *The Hireling and the Soldier;* E. E. Kisch, *Adventures on Four Continents;* I. Becher, *Sonnets and Verses;* F. Weiskopf, *Lizzie—A Young Woman in Germany.*

"Irish Women Rebels"—R. M. Fox

In a review in *The New Leader,* H. S. S. discusses the new book of the English communist writer Ralph Fox, *Irish Women Rebels.* "This book," he writes, "is a valuable contribution to Irish revolutionary literature. In it the author has given several living chapters from Irish contemporary history as well as much information concerning revolutionary activity and the people who inspired it. The subject of these biographical sketches are twelve women who took part in recent strikes. All these women were on repeated occasions thrown into prison for having fought for the freedom of Ireland, for free speech, for the betterment of the conditions of life. They saw how their husbands, their lovers and their brothers died, and, although they bore the brunt in the conduct of the battles, their faith remained unshaken."

Editor-in-chief SERGEI DINAMOV

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Editorial Assistant WALT CARMON

IN THE NEXT ISSUE (11)

The Heart of a Bolshevik

By N. OSTROVSKI

(Recently awarded the Order of Lenin)

STORIES by ANNA SEGHERS (Germany), Lan-Chi (China); POEM by ROBERT GESSNER (USA); ARTICLES by SERGEI DINAMOV and MICHAEL KOLTSOV (USSR), GEORGE LUKACS (Germany), ANDOR GABOR (Hungary); LETTERS FROM WRITERS: BOB BROWN (USA), GEOFFREY INNES (England); BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES; MARGINALIA; DRAWINGS; PHOTOGRAPHS; INTERNATIONAL CHRONICLE.